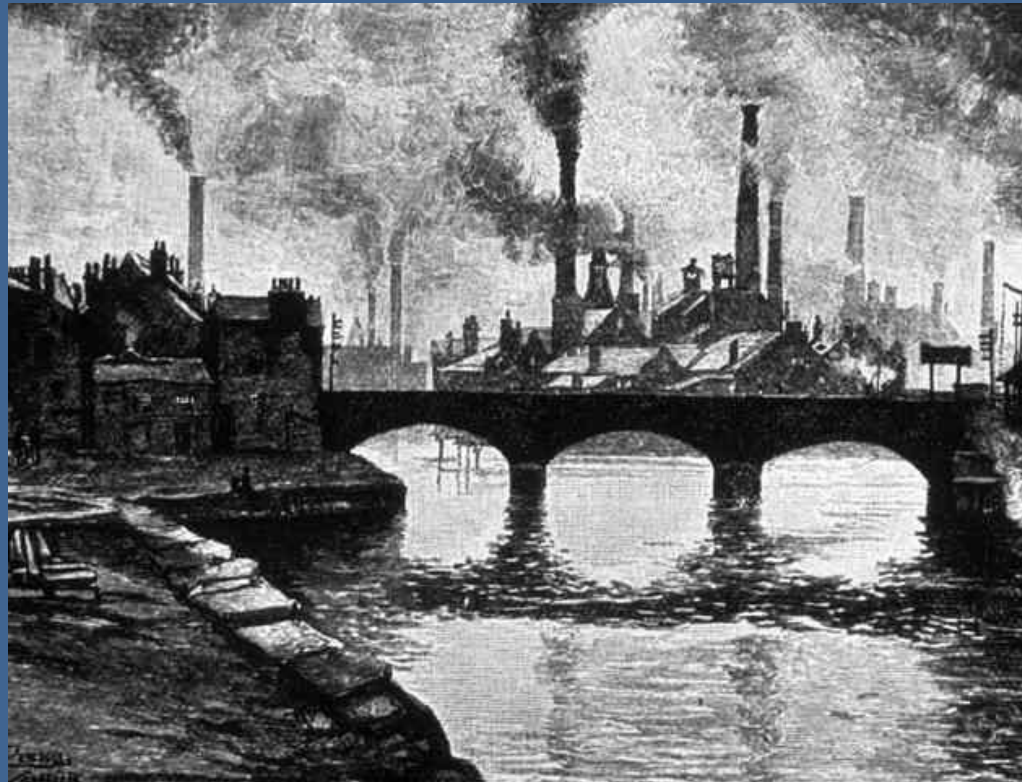


Module 4

The Victorian Era

1837-1901



Website – for Readings

New Seminar Readings are posted every week:
[https://sites.google.com/site/englishliteraturea
blai/](https://sites.google.com/site/englishliteraturea
blai/)

Queen Victoria

- Her long reign provides economic and social stability
- She is married with nine children - Her reign will stress family values
- England becomes the dominant world economic power because Of colonization (especially India) and Industrialization.

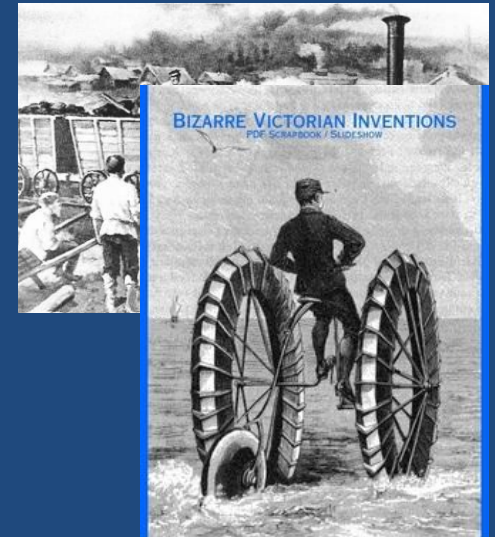
“The sun never sets on the British Empire” (Queen Victoria) –What does this mean?



Queen Victoria
Rules from 1837-1901

Science, Technology and Change

- The Victorian Era is full of life changing inventions and ideas:
 - 1830 - the first and the Railroad opens in England
 - 1851 – The “Crystal Palace” exhibition opens to showcase achievements of science and technology
 - 1847 – Writing in London, Marx publishes *The Communist Manifesto*
 - 1848 – First Women’s College opened in London
 - 1859 - Charles Darwin’s *Origin of the Species* changes the concept of human evolution
 - 1890 – By this date, ¼ of the territory of the earth is under British control.



The Industrial Revolution

- Changes England – huge numbers move to the city To work in factories
- Conditions in factories are terrible. Child labor is common.



Rural families and social structures are broken. Cities become overcrowded and criminal.

At the same time, the era sees the first public schools, hospitals, and amazing technological progress:

Some Victorian writers will praise “progress”, others will condemn it.

Literature in the Victorian Age

- Reaction against the Romantics – Victorians think they are too individualistic, immoral and fantastical
- Victorians favor SOCIALLY USEFUL works based on MORAL PRINCIPALS of improving Mankind
- “Social Realism” becomes the dominant literary movement
- The Individual versus Society becomes the dominant theme:
Human hopes and dreams Versus the harsh realities of the world

The Victorian Novel

Political stability encouraged long works – the Novel becomes the new dominant genre (compare to the Romantics)

Increase in population and education means a lot more readers – the novel is the new popular entertainment, like theater in Shakespeare's time

- Novels are often *serialized*: a chapter is published each week in a magazine. This encourages long, complex plots that will keep readers reading.
- Victorian novels reflected many real elements of their own time:

The French writer Stendhal called the Victorian novel “a mirror wandering down a road” – what might this mean?

Major Novelists of the Victorian Era

Charles Dickens (1812-1870) *Oliver Twist, David Copperfield, Great Expectations, Bleak House, A Tale of Two Cities*, etc. etc.

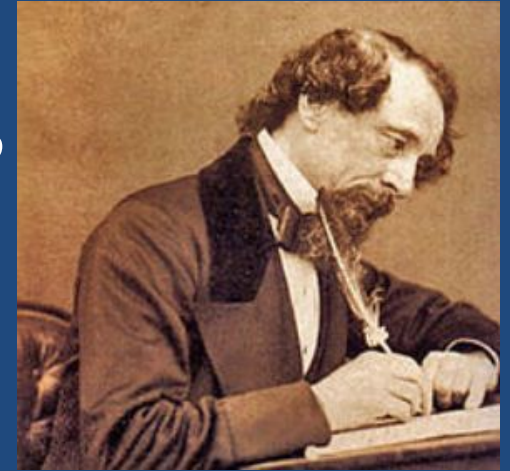
William Thackeray (1811-1863) *Vanity Fair*

Charlotte Bronte (1816-1855) *Jane Eyre*

Emily Bronte (1818-1848) *Wuthering Heights*

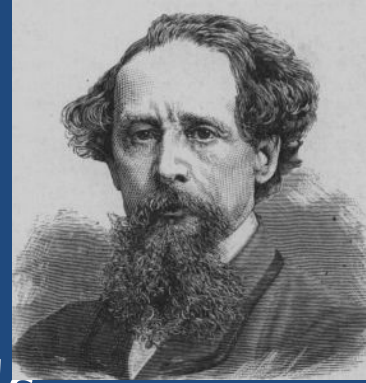
George Elliot (Mary Ann Evans 1819-1880) *Silas Marner, Middlemarch, The Mill and the Floss*

Charles Dickens



- Dickens's novels, which combine biting sarcasm with emotional *pathos* were hugely successful in his time
 - They came out as serials – sometimes Dickens's would give dramatic readings.
- Dickens's novels champion the struggles of the poor and the innocent while lampooning the powerful and corrupt. He focused on social problems such as poverty, child labor, and the cruelty of an impersonal bureaucracy. Although he is called a “realist,” comic and tragic exaggeration are at the heart of his work.
- His work is praised for his mastery of language, deep human themes, humor, and unforgettable characters

Charles Dickens



- Dickens's family was middle class. Dickens's father lost his money and was put in a 'debtor's prison.' Dickens attended a poor and inadequate school. His parents wanted him to become a factory worker.
- Dickens had other ideas – he became a reporter, a journalist, and eventually one of the most successful novelists of his era. His childhood experiences of being poor deeply influenced his writing.

Dickens' novels

- Dickens wrote 21 novels. These are a few of the most important:
- *The Pickwick Papers* The comic adventures of members of the “Pickwick Club”
- *Oliver Twist* – The life of an orphan who escapes the workhouse and becomes involved with a criminal street gang.
- *A Christmas Carol* – Greedy Ebenezer Scrooge is visited by ghosts who teach him the meaning of Christmas.
- *David Copperfield* - The life of David Copperfield as he grows up and struggles with the world.
- *A Tale of Two Cities* – Follows several characters through the French Revolution