

# Victorian Period

1830-1901

# Beginning/Ending: How does one determine the scope of the Victorian Age?

- 1824--Death of Byron/Westminster review (Benthamites)
- 1830--William IV
- 1832--First reform Bill
- 1837--Queen Victoria
- 1887--Queen's Golden Jubilee
- 1901--Queen Victoria's death
- 1914--Beginning of WWI (Edwardian and Georgian Periods)

# Queen Victoria/Victorian Temper

- Victoria's character and the characteristics of Victorianism (5-6)
- Historical Self-consciousness
- “Close thy Byron; open they Goethe” (5)
- Reaction against Victorianism—(7)

# Victorian Issues: Industrial Revolution (1830-48—Time of Troubles)

- Technological innovations—railroad/manufacturing (7)/Speed, time
- Enclosure Acts--economic transformation. By 1865, urban population in England is roughly 50% greater than the rural population
- Reform Bills--1832, 1867, 1884 (7-8)
- Chartism (8)
- Higher standard of living/Creation of urban cities and slums/the Condition of England Question (8)/Laissez-faire economics
- Corn Laws (8-9)
- 1848--Continent--threat of revolution (9)
- The Women Question—Reform and debate throughout the age. Separate Spheres Doctrine (19)/New Woman (20)
- Literacy, Publication, and Reading: Methods and technology/Education/Development of a reading culture (21)

# Victorian Issues: Mid-Period (1848-70)

- Optimism of the Great Exhibition (1851)--Britain as “the workshop of the world.” (10)
- British empire (11-12)
- Debates about religion (12) and science (13-14)
  - Low Church: Evangelicals, Dissenters
  - Broad Church: Inclusive, Moderate (Latitudinarians)
  - High Church: Tractarians
  - Geology: Age of the earth
  - Evolution: Nature of human beings
- Victorian Medievalism--looking to the past

# Victorian Issues: Late Period (1870-1901)

- Problems abroad--the price of maintaining an empire--Crimean War, Sepoy Rebellion (Indian mutiny), Jamaica Rebellion--rise of other countries competing with Britain (14-15)
- Social and political unrest: growth of labor (15-16)
- Critiques of Victorianism and its values (16)
- Nineties: Victorian standards “breaking down”/Beginning of modernist movement (16-17)

# Genres

- Short Fiction/Novel
  - Realism(s)
  - short fiction – periodical publication
  - Age of the novel (e.g., Dickens)
- Poetry
  - As during the Romantic Period, “highest pinnacle”
  - Variety and innovation (e.g., dramatic monologue)
  - Role of the poet/artist? Didactic? Art for art’s sake?
- Prose
  - Didactic purpose – instruct readers and encourage debate about social issues
  - Style – how something is said
- Drama/Theater
  - Melodrama/adaptations of fiction
  - End of the age – satires of Victorian values (e.g., Oscar Wilde)

# Victorian Attitudes

The very nature of these dichotomies can be questioned. Use them as a general starting point for thinking

- Speed/Transition/Present vs. Stability/Past
- Faith vs. Skepticism
- Technology/Science vs. Imagination/Nature
- Individualism vs. the Authority of Society/Culture