

Course Themes: Final Thoughts

Victorian Literature

Empire: Final Thoughts

- Definitions of/Differences between imperialism and colonialism (See Course Notes-- Postcolonialism). These exist as a reciprocal relationship
- Considering empire not only as historical fact but also in terms of moral responsibility and culpability
- Defining and reinforcing Englishness by setting against Otherness: physical features, cultural customs, behavior and attitudes
- Various ideas about and responses to empire, e.g., White Man's Burden and "violence begets violence"/use of force to enact moral responsibility and humanitarianism
- Empire as a blank space in which to create stories (fiction and real): adventure, reinforce cultural values, the opportunity to create wealth, opportunity, identity
- What is the best, right way to manage an empire vs the very notion of empire itself

Education

- What type of education best serves children?: Facts, practical, utilitarian (NA 72-73; 12)/Imagination, feeling, self-expression. Combine these? What type of education do children need? Inclusion of morality and ethics?
- The ways in which social class and gender affect education and shape curriculums
- How should teachers be trained/how should they teach? The challenges teachers face in urban and rural schools
- What should the purpose of a university be?: Useful (career preparation) vs Liberal (formation of the mind/character) knowledge
- The link between education and democracy/individualism/freedom

Individualism, Society, and Democracy

- How does one live as an individual and belong to a community or society?
- Notion of identity/selfhood: Stable self, divided self, multiple selves
- Individualism—personal desire, choice—freedom and free will—determine one’s own identity. If excessive, can lead to disorder, lack of common standards, and even anarchy
- Society—Order and stability—accepted rules of behavior, standard values and attitudes. If excessive, can be restrictive and confining, loss of individuality
- Do the demands of belonging to a society (e.g., giving up some freedoms or personal desires) actually allow individuals to be free and secure? Do we need to be “watched” in order to act morally and ethically? Does individuality make a society better, more productive and more innovative/progressive, even if there are occasional risks that individuals will violate the rights of others?