

19th century Britain



Britain at the start of the 19th century



A **constitutional monarchy** – head of state is the monarch but real power is in the hands of the Parliament
However, the right to vote – limited to wealthy landowners (an oligarchy rather than parliamentary democracy)

A country undergoing **industrial revolution** > transformation of both the economy and the society (vast migration from the countryside to the cities, change of work patterns and family life, creation of urban working class)

The main character of society – **rigid class structure** and vast differences in wealth

A country with an expanding **empire**, which fuels its economic growth

Regency Period



- Transition between Georgian & Victorian era (linked to the personality of King George IV)
- Period of aristocratic excess and hedonism, but also Napoleonic wars and mass poverty (made worse by the protectionist **Corn Laws** making food imports expensive to protect local farmers)
- A culturally and politically distinct period:
 - Architecture – especially the work of John Nash
 - The Brighton Pavillion
 - Buckingham Palace
 - Regent Park in London ... etc.
 - Literature (Jane Austen, the Romantics)

Peterloo massacre

- The **Peterloo Massacre** – a demonstration at St Peter's Field, Manchester on 16 August 1819
- aim = to demand the reform of parliamentary representation
- Incident = cavalry charged into a crowd of 60,000–80,000
- 15 people were killed and 400–700 were injured.
The massacre was named



Queen Victoria (1819-1901)



Victorian era: age of contrasts

- 
- Long period of overall prosperity
 - Unprecedented technological progress
 - Rapid change in most aspects of life
 - Advances in science and philosophy
 - Peace at home
 - Emphasis on morality
 - Age of stark social differences
 - Millions live in poverty
 - Traditional values and idealized vision of the past
 - Religion/spirituality still central to people's lives
 - Wars abroad
 - Double moral standards

The life of Queen Victoria



- ❑ Queen at 18; the monarchy was unpopular at the time. However, Victoria turned this around.
- ❑ Her personality in her young years > keen sense of humour, loved to laugh, sensual
- ❑ After marrying Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg&Gotha > she lost much of her vivaciousness and became more prudish and matron-like
- ❑ Her beloved husband - a huge impact on her, shaping her public persona from behind the scenes
- ❑ After his death in 1861 > Victoria goes into mourning for the rest of her life

Prince Albert

- ❑ Despite the happy marriage to Victoria, his position was difficult
- ❑ Unpopular in the political circles > never given the title of King (instead, “Prince Consort”)
- ❑ Keen supporter of science, arts and industry
- ❑ Encourages Victoria to take interest in social issues



- ❑ His biggest achievement

Films about Victoria and Albert

▣ ***The Young Victoria***
(about her early years
with Albert)

▣ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q-YPoBU7_aQ

▣ ***Mrs Brown*** (starring
Judi Dench ... about
Victoria's relationship
with her Scottish servant
in her later years)

▣ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H9QmjglssQE&feature=related>



The Great Exhibition of 1851

- ❑ An event demonstrating Britain's position as the world's industrial leader
- ❑ Organized by Prince Albert and others as a celebration of industrial technologies and design
- ❑ Held for 141 days in the specially built Crystal Palace
- ❑ A great success; over 6 million visitors, including Darwin and writers Charlotte Bronte

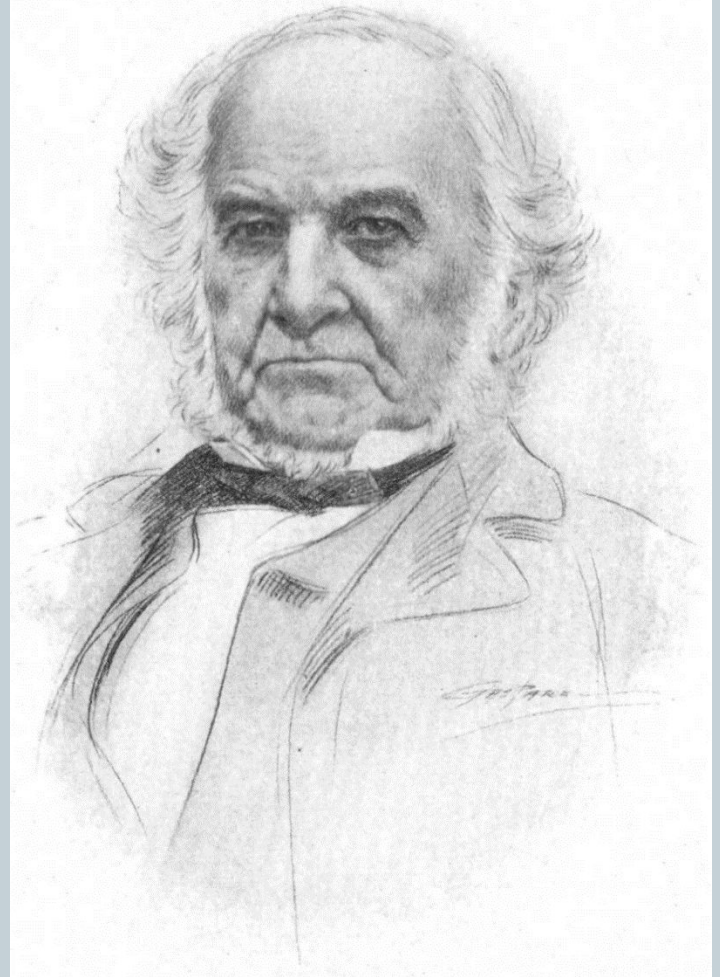


Political scene – a brief look



- 19th century Britain – constitutional monarchy > monarch has few powers and is expected to remain above party politics
- Political trends :
- **Conservatism:** land and traditional values, opposition to change, loyalty to monarchy and support of the Church of England; government *for* the people
- **Liberalism:** freedom of the individual, reform, free trade > *laissez faire*, support of smaller non-Anglican churches; government *by* the people
- Two corresponding parties > Tories and Whigs

Disraeli and Gladstone



Benjamin Disraeli



- ❑ Queen's favourite Prime Minister (Dizzy)
- ❑ Of Jewish origin, a wit, a dandy and a brilliant speaker
- ❑ A lover of Orient and the Empire > responsible for making Victoria the Empress of India, plus gaining a majority of shares in Suez
- ❑ Social concerns too > his governments improved work and living conditions of the poor
- ❑ A writer as well as politician > his novel *Sibyl, or the Two Nations* > deals with the plight of the British working class

William Ewart Gladstone I



- Disraeli's opposite > earnest, deeply religious, obsessed with morality
- People's champion > popular with the lower classes
- A Liberal > a believer in free trade; opponent of Socialism
- *It was not just his belief in free trade: it was his recognition that a complicated structure of taxation could only impede prosperity. He understood what it would take monetarists another century to demonstrate again: that if you cut taxes, you raise more revenue, because of the provision of the incentive to work and take risks.*
- Simon Heffer: *How the great Mr Gladstone saved our fallen country .*

□ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/columnists/simonheffer/6868274/How-the-great-Mr-Gladstone-saved-our-fallen-country.html>

Gladstone's project of saving prostitutes



□ *What Gladstone did when he accosted a prostitute was to offer her a place to sleep, protection from any bully or “mackerel” who might be exploiting her, and an opportunity to think over the following handsome proposition: If she wished to do so, on due consideration, she could go to the home or hostel Gladstone helped to maintain, to stay there, eating three square meals a day and receiving any medical attention she might need, until she was in a fit state to take up the job that Gladstone’s assistants and associates undertook to find for her. If the prostitute found any of this attractive, Gladstone would escort her to his home where she would spend*

The Class system – Upper class

- Old aristocracy (traditional landed families, derive their wealth and power from land ownership)
- New aristocracy (from trade, finance and industry) > often assembled through marriage but never the same prestige (they gained their wealth through “work”)



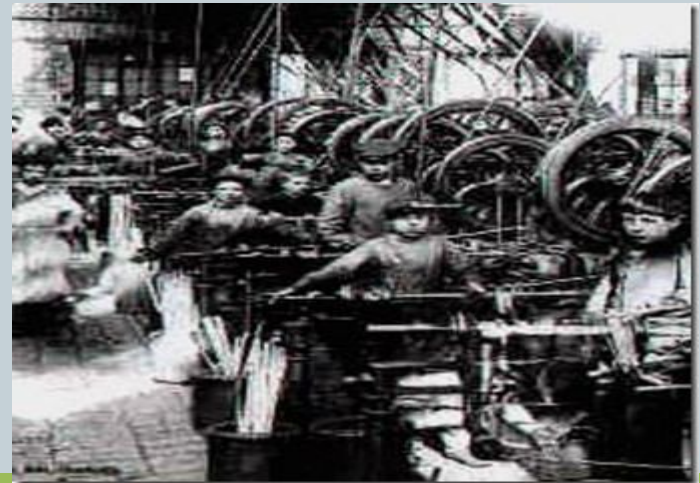
The class system – middle class

- Experiencing a golden age of opportunity
- Businesspeople, office employees, doctors, lawyers, academics
- Comfortable lifestyle
- Rising consumerism
- Strict family values and spirit of “self-help”



The class system – the working class

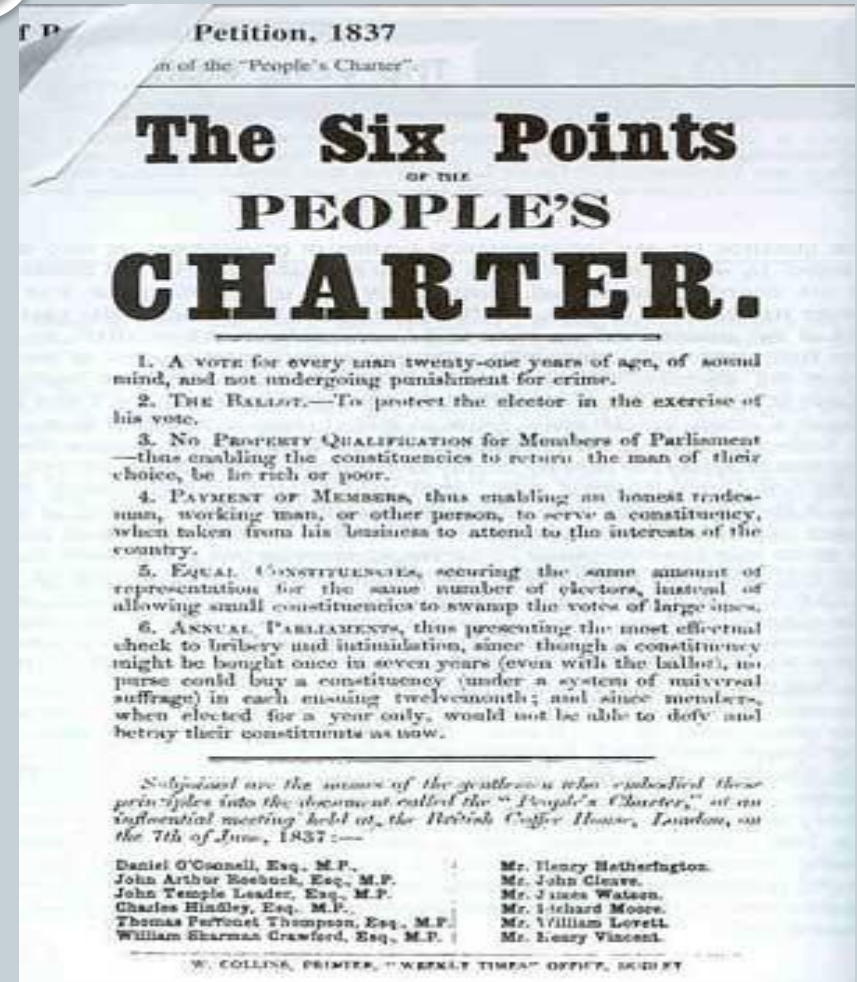
- Highly stratified – from skilled workers (better paid, more job security) to unskilled and seasonal workers (living in acute poverty)
- Life in slums with almost no sanitation > high mortality
- Child labour was widespread
- The poorest > confined to workhouses



- Throughout the 10th

Origins of working-class movement – the Chartists

- The "**People's Charter**," drafted by William Lovett in 1838 –the main programme of working-class movement after the Reform Act 1832. The Chartists' six main demands were:
 - votes for all men;
 - equal electoral districts;
 - abolition of the requirement that Members of Parliament be property owners;



Chartists demonstrating



CHARTIST DEMONSTRATION!!

"PEACE and ORDER" is our MOTTO!

TO THE WORKING MEN OF LONDON.

Fellow Men,—The Press having misrepresented and vilified us and our intentions, the Demonstration Committee therefore consider it to be their duty to state that the grievances of us (the Working Classes) are deep and our demands just. We and our families are pining in misery, want, and starvation! We demand a fair day's wages for a fair day's work! We are the slaves of capital—we demand protection to our labour. We are political serfs—we demand to be free. We therefore invite all well disposed to join in our peaceful procession on

MONDAY NEXT, April 10,
As it is for the good of all that we seek to remove the evils under which we groan.

The following are the places of Meeting of THE CHARTISTS, THE TRADES, THE IRISH CONFEDERATE & REPEAL BODIES:
East Division on Stepney Green at 8 o'clock;
City and Finsbury Division on Clerkenwell Green at 9 o'clock;
West Division in Russell Square at 9 o'clock;
and the South Division in Peckham Fields at 9 o'clock, and proceed from thence to Kennington Common.

Signed on behalf of the Committee, JOHN ARNOTT, Sec.
Henry Hinkley, Printer, 5, Edward Street, (Hoyersend Road)

Victorian philanthropy

- Thomas Barnardo (children's homes)
- Octavia Hill (better housing for workers)
- Florence Nightingale (nursing for soldiers)
- Charles Dickens (shelter for destitute women, children's education)

DR. BARNARDO'S HOMES



Once destitute! Barnardo's are making a man of him!
108,500 CHILDREN ADMITTED.
8,000 CHILDREN BEING SUPPORTED.
5 COME IN DAILY.

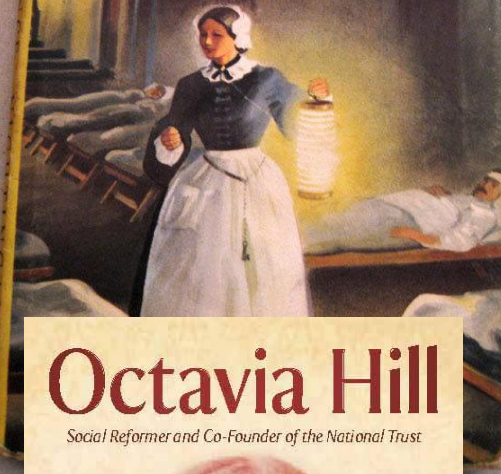
10/-

will feed one child for ten days.

Cheques, etc., payable "Dr. Barnardo's Homes Food Fund," and crossed, addressed Dr. Barnardo's Homes, 338 Barnardo House, Stepney Causeway, London, E.1

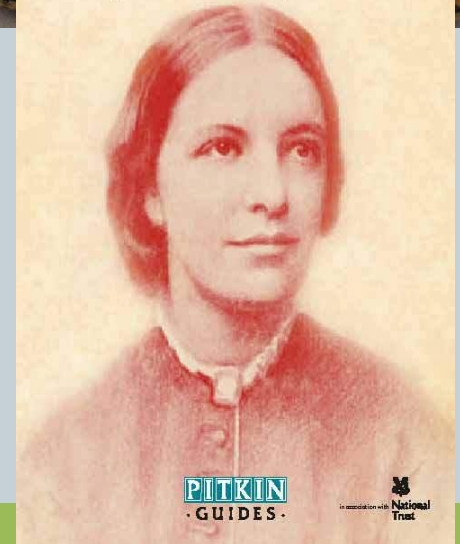
FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE

A LADYBIRD BOOK
An Adventure from History



Octavia Hill

Social Reformer and Co-Founder of the National Trust



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