

## Module: British Civilization

### Lesson 2: The Victorian Era

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#### Introduction:

The Victorian Age (1837–1901), named after Queen Victoria, was a time of major change in Britain, marking the shift from a rural, feudal society to an industrial and democratic one. Driven by the Industrial Revolution, the period saw rapid industrialization, urban growth, and the rise of new social classes. Education became more organized and accessible, sports gained popularity, and Victorian ideals shaped family life and gender roles. Despite technological and social progress, many faced harsh working and living conditions. Reforms gradually improved workers' rights and expanded political participation. Overall, the Victorian Age was a transformative era that profoundly influenced British society, politics, and culture.



#### 1. Queen Victoria and Her Influence During the Victorian Age

Queen Victoria reigned from **1837 to 1901**, a period known as the **Victorian Age**. Her reign was not only marked by political and industrial changes in Britain but also by her personal influence on the values and ideals of the era.



### 1.1. Political Influence

- Victoria worked closely with advisers and prime ministers, including **William Lamb, 2nd Viscount Melbourne**, and **Benjamin Disraeli**.
- While her role was largely ceremonial, she **shaped public values and political ideals** through her conduct and opinions.
- Her guidance helped reinforce **conservative policies** and the emerging concept of a **constitutional monarchy**.



## 1.2. Personal Values and Public Image

- Victoria was known for her strict Christian beliefs, moral discipline, and puritanical lifestyle.
- She emphasized seriousness, responsibility, and dedication in both her personal life and public duties.
- Paintings and portraits often depict her with a stern, solemn expression, highlighting her commitment to duty and moral standards.



## 1.3. Social and Cultural Impact

Her personal ideals influenced Victorian society, promoting values such as:

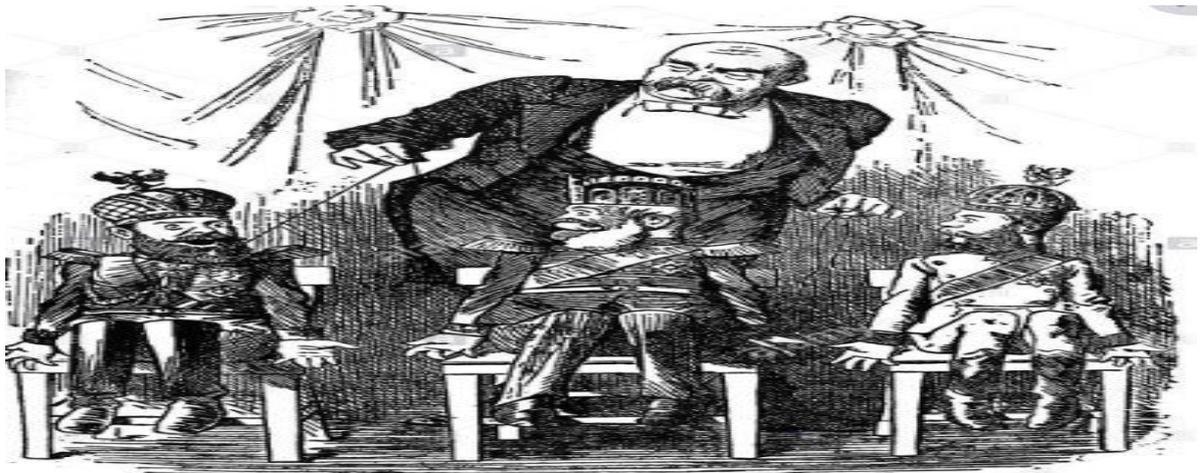
- Moral conduct and discipline.
- Respect for family and social order.
- Emphasis on Christian ethics.

These values became characteristic of British social life during the Victorian Age.



#### 1.4. International Influence

- Victoria was called the “Grandmother of Europe” because her children and grandchildren married into various European royal families.
- Her descendants included influential figures such as Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany and Czar Nicholas II of Russia.
- Through these connections, she exerted a diplomatic and cultural influence across Europe, linking Britain to other major powers.



#### 1.5. Legacy

- Victoria’s reign left a lasting imprint on Britain and Europe, shaping political, social, and cultural ideals.
- Her moral standards, emphasis on discipline, and international family ties contributed



to the distinctive character of the Victorian Age.

## 2. The Victorian British Empire

During Queen Victoria's reign (1837–1901), Britain experienced **significant overseas expansion** and strengthened its position as a global power. The Victorian Era was marked by imperialistic endeavors, economic growth, and military engagements that expanded Britain's influence worldwide. Major conflicts and wars are:

### 2.1. The Opium War (1839–1842)

- Conflict arose from a trade dispute with China.
- Britain smuggled opium to balance trade, leading to addiction and tension.
- China attempted to stop the trade, but Britain responded militarily and won the war, securing favorable trade terms.

### 2.2. The Crimean War (1853–1856)

- Britain and France fought against Russia in the Crimea.
- The war involved struggles for influence in the Middle East and protection of Asian trade routes.
- The Allies defeated Russia, which suffered logistical failures and damaged railroads.

### 2.3. The Boer War (1899–1902)

- Fought in South Africa between the British and Dutch settlers (Boers).
- It was one of the first examples of a “**total war**”, with extensive and prolonged fighting.
- Britain ultimately won, consolidating control over South Africa.

## 3. Expansion of the British Empire

### 3.1. India:

- Control was transferred from the East India Company to the British government in 1858.
- Victoria was declared Empress of India in 1876, symbolizing imperial authority.

### 3.2. Egypt and Other Regions:

- Britain gained control over Egypt and the strategically important Suez Canal in 1869.
- Influence extended to Burma, Malaysia, parts of China, and the Middle East, enhancing global reach.

### 3.3. Economic and Global Dominance:

- The Industrial Revolution and imperial trade networks made Britain the wealthiest nation in the world.
- Phrases like “The sun never sets on the British Empire” and “The workshop of the world” reflected Britain's global supremacy.

#### 4. Achievements and Celebrations

- **Golden Jubilee (1887):** Marked 50 years of Victoria's reign; highlighted Britain's domestic and industrial progress.
- **Diamond Jubilee (1897):** Celebrated the empire's peak power and Victoria's influence over a quarter of the world's population.
- The **Great Exhibition** showcased Britain's industrial and technological advancements.

#### 5. Legacy:

- The Victorian British Empire solidified Britain's role as a global superpower.
- Imperial expansion, military victories, and economic growth shaped political, cultural, and economic history worldwide.
- Queen Victoria's reign became synonymous with imperial strength, industrial progress, and global influence.

#### Conclusion

Queen Victoria's reign marked the height of British power, both at home and abroad. Through her influence, Britain expanded its empire, strengthened its economy, and shaped the values of the Victorian Age, leaving a lasting legacy on global history.