



Unit – Introduction to 19th century literature

A: Key Terms

The Industrial Revolution: The Industrial Revolution began in the 18th century, when agricultural societies became more industrialized and urban

Darwinism: the theory of the evolution of species by natural selection advanced by Charles Darwin.

Allegory: a story, poem, or picture that can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning, typically a moral or political one.

Caricature: a picture, description, or imitation of a person in which certain striking characteristics are exaggerated in order to create a comic or grotesque effect.

Genre: a style or category of art, music, or literature.

Poverty: the complete lack of the means necessary to meet basic personal needs, such as food, clothing and shelter.

Workhouse: a place where those unable to support themselves were offered accommodation and employment

Supernatural: attributed to some force beyond scientific understanding or the laws of nature.

Stave: An old English word for chapter

Gothic: a genre or mode of literature and film that combines fiction and horror, death, and at times romance.

Benthamism: the philosophy of utilitarianism as first expounded by Jeremy Bentham in terms of an action being good that has

a greater tendency to augment the happiness of the community than to diminish it

Pathetic Fallacy: a kind of personification that gives human emotions to inanimate objects of nature; for example, referring to weather features reflecting a mood.

C: Key Novels

- Frankenstein by Mary Shelley 1818
- Oliver Twist by Charles Dickens 1837
- Wuthering Heights by Emily Bronte 1847
- Jane Eyre by Charlotte Bronte 1847
- Great Expectations by Charles Dickens 1860
- Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde by Robert Louis Stevenson 1886
- The Picture of Dorian Gray by Oscar Wilde 1890
- Tess of the d'Urbervilles by Thomas Hardy 1892

D: Literary figures

Elizabeth Barret Browning 1806-1861
 Alfred Lord Tennyson 1809 – 1892
 Charles Dickens 1812-1870
 Charlotte Bronte 1816 – 1855
 Emily Bronte 1818-1848
 Christina Rossetti 1830-1894
 Thomas Hardy 1840-1928
 Oscar Wilde 1854-1900

B: Society

Social class: society was strictly layered - not only into rich and poor, or even upper, middle and lower class, but hundreds of 'grades'. People were expected to 'know their place', and the Church taught them to be content in their 'station'.

Social problems: many people were becoming aware of the need to improve the condition in which the poor found themselves.

Women: Women did not have the right to vote or own property. At the same time, women participated in the paid workforce in increasing numbers following the Industrial Revolution. Feminist ideas spread among the educated middle classes, and the women's suffrage movement gained momentum in the last years of the Victorian era. Middle class women were seen as belonging to the domestic sphere, and this stereotype required them to provide their husbands with a clean home, food on the table and to raise their children.

Church and religion: Britain was overwhelmingly Christian. The Church dominated religion and the morals of the time.

Family: Family was at the centre of Victorian society. People had large, extended families

E: Key Dates

- 20 June 1837** Victoria comes to the throne after the death of William IV
- 8 May 1838** People's Charter advocates social and political reform
- 1 August 1838** Slavery is abolished in the British empire
- September 1845** Irish potato famine begins
- 28 March 1854** Britain and France declare war on Russia and the Crimean War begins
- 24 November 1859** Charles Darwin's 'On the Origin of Species' is published
- 18 July 1872** Voting by secret ballot is introduced
- 2 August 1880** Education becomes compulsory for children under ten
- 22 January 1901** Victoria dies and is succeeded by Edward VII