

The Victorian Novel



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THE VICTORIAN AGE

Where did it develop?

United Kingdom

Why it is called Victorian Age?

It is called Victorian Age because it was the period of Queen Victoria's reign

When did it develop?

From June 1837 until 22 January 1901

What happened?

The reign was a long period of prosperity for the British people and British Empire



- TRANSPORTATION
- INDUSTRY
- COMUNICATION
- OTHER INNOVATION

What were the main trends?

- PURITANISM → Progress
- UTILITARIANISM → Wealth
- DARWINISM → Scientific Approach



Queen Victoria

(Alexandrina Victoria; 24 May 1819 – 22 January 1901)

- Monarch of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland from 20 June 1837 until her death and Empress of India
- Daughter of Prince Edward, Duke of Kent and Strathearn and Princess Victoria of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld
- Her reign is longer than that of any other British monarch, and is the longest of any female monarch in history





The Victorian Novel

Definition: A novel is a book of long narrative in literary prose.
The novel became the most popular form of literature thanks to:

- Technological advancement in printing
- The enormous growth of middle classes
- Publication in instalments in the pages of periodicals

Themes :

- The birth of a new class(working class)
- Poverty
- The industrial system of production
- The clash between classes
- The desire to rise and the fear of falling down the social ladder
- The growth of towns
- The struggle for democracy
- Education and children
- Middle class family life

Main Features of Victorian Novel

- **Characteristic elements**



REALISM
GROTESQUE
PATHOS



Exaggeration of the tones

- **The role of the narrator**

Novelists felt they had a moral and social responsibility

- **The setting**

The city, which was the main symbol of the industrial civilization

- **Characters**

They are deeply analyzed

They are recognizable and considered real



Type of novels:

Novel of manners

- Economical and social problem
 - Description of a particular social class
- (*Pride & Prejudice* by Jane Austen)

Social-Problem Novel

- Turmoil of the 1830s and 1840s
- (*Hard Time* by Charles Dickens)

Novel of formation

- Character's development from youth to maturity
- (*David Copperfield* by Charles Dickens)

Psychological novel

- Psychological and moral complexity of human beings
- (*The strange case of dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* by Louis Stevenson)

Realistic Novel

- Society
 - People Behaviour
- (*Tess of the d'Urbervilles* by Thomas Hardy)

Nonsensical Novel

- Different conception of space and time
- (*Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll)

Charles Dickens (7 February 1812 – 9 June 1870)

- Most popular novelist of the Victorian Age
- At the age of 12 he was sent to a workhouse
- He wrote 14 novels and many short story
- His novel were published in instalments
- He travelled in America, Switzerland, France and Italy and wrote accounts of his journeys
- He was critical of the injustices of Victorian society
- He had 10 children



Characters in Dickens Novels

- **Flat characters:** A flat character is a character who does not undergo substantial change or growth in the course of a story.
 - *Oliver Twist (*Oliver Twist*): never loses his sense of morality or kindness
 - *Mr. Bounderby (*Hard Times*): is a boastful man and he never changes his mind in the course of the story
- **Dickens creates caricatures**
 - *Mr. Bounderby (*Hard Times*): Dickens use physical appearance to do a caricature
- **Characters are moral teacher**
 - *Nicholas Nickelby (*Nicholas Nickelby*): teaches us that loyal people win
- **Children are the most important characters**

Dickens always side with the children and the outcast.

Main themes in Dickens' Novels

In Dickens' novels the plot is secondary to the creation of characters, and the whole book works to show the reader the harsh realities of the industrial world, and to offer a criticism to Utilitarianism.



OLIVER TWIST

- treatments and exploitation of children in the workhouses

NICHOLAS NICKELBY

- treatments of students in boarding school
- treatments of teacher in boarding school
- The education system

HARD TIMES

- Principles of utilitarianism
- Rich people who use their power irresponsibly
- Industrial city

Oliver Twist



- TITLE:** it is the protagonist's name
- SETTING:** Dinning hall of the work house, an institution for poor people
- STORY LINE:** Oliver and his companions can only eat small rations of food and they are hungry. Oliver asks for more and all are stupefied
- THEMES:** Children, poverty, hypocrisy of Victorian society
- NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE:**Third person omniscient narrator, telling and showing
- READER'S POSITION:** The reader is not free because of the narrator's filter
- PURPOSE:**
 - He juxtaposes sad and comic details
"[...] Oliver Twist and his companions suffered the tortures of slow starvation [...] he was afraid he might some night happen to eat the boy who slept next him [...] They implicitly believed him."
 - He ridicules what he intends to criticise
"Oliver Twist has asked for more!"
"For more!" [...] "Compose yourself, Bumble, and answer me distinctly. Do I understand that he asked for more, after he had eaten the supper allotted by dietary?"

Nicholas Nickelby

- TITLE** : it is the protagonist's name
- SETTING**: Dotheboys Hall, a school for boys in Yorkshire
- STORY LINE**: Nicholas starts working as a teacher Squeers School. He shows to boys his modes of education.

- THEMES**:

- Children's treatments

- "Into these bowls Mrs. Squeers [...] poured a brown composition [...] and was called porridge. A minute wedge of brown bread was inserted in each bowl "*

- "He could not but observe how silent and sad the boys all seemed to be. [...]The children sat crouching and shivering together"*

- Teacher's treatment

- "Having further disposed of a slice of bread and butter, allotted to him in virtue of his office [...]"*

- Bad education

- "We go upon the practical mode of teaching, Nickelby [...] When the boy knows this out of book, he goes and does it."*

- Ignorance of Mr. Squeers

- " A horse is a quadruped, and quadruped's Latin for beast [...]"*

- NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE**:Third person omniscient narrator, telling and showing

- READER'S POSITION**:The reader is not free because of the narrator's filter



Hard Times



- **TITLE** : it refers to a difficult period in which the story takes place
- **SETTING**: Coketown
- **STORY LINE**: Mr. Bounderby is a rich man and he is proud to be a self-made man. He is described in his physical appearance and personality. Now he is speaking with Mrs Gradgrind.
- **THEMES**: Industrialization, Utilitarianism and poverty
- **NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE**: Third person omniscient narrator, telling and showing
- **READER'S POSITION**: The reader is not free because of the narrator's filter
- **THE PURPOSE**: Dickens wants to show that an approach to life based on interest and rationalism is not proper and suitable for an happy life