**The Victorian Age**

The Victorian Age includes the long reign of Queen Victoria (from 1837 to 1901); it was a complex and contra dictionary era, mainly based on contradictions: it was the age of progress, useful social reforms and stability, but also of poverty injustice and social unrest.

Victoria was the daughter of Edward (Dike of Kent), she was born in Kensington Palace in London on May 24th, 1819. In 1937 she took the throne at the age of eighteen refusing the influence of her domineering mother she ruled in her own stead. In 1840 she married her cousin Prince Albert; he had a strong influence in Victoria's life at the point that she became submitted to his will. He introduced a strict decorum in court and straitlaced behavior. When Albert died in 1861 she remained in self-imposed seclusion for ten years, this played an important role for Victorians mentality,

The empire
England was the centre of a global empire, England was connected with a wild variety of others cultures. By the end of the nineteen century about one-quarter of the world was part of the British Empire. It included Crown Colonies (ruled from Britain) and Protectorates (only partial sovereignty to Britain). India was directly ruled from Britain after 1857 and Victoria was crowned Empress of India in 1877. Colonies like Canada and Australia became virtually self-governing.
The Protestant aspect of Christianity was seen by many as part of the large battle with the more "Catholic" nations of Continental Europe; Portugal, Spain and France were the Catholic nations who developed successful commercial empires before the England. Religion gave an excuse for military and political competition. In pre-industrial Britain the combination of Christianity, Commerce and Civilization would led to the creation of the settler colonies in North America.

The British had no monopoly on technological innovations but instead was the first nation to harness the power of steam and it provides a technological gap with others nations; Britain was not the only nation to enjoy a technological advantages oven non-European nations but it also had a particular advantage due to industry might and maritime power.

The Victorian Age was also a important period of social and politics reforms: Third Reform Act in 1884 (all male members of working classes could vote); Factory Act in 1833 (prevented child employment for more than forty-eight hours a week); Mines Act in 1862 (no working of woman and children in mines); Elementary Education Act in 1870 (need for general primary school), and the Public Health Act (improved public health).

The nineteen century saw a huge growth in the population of Great Britain due to the effects of the industrial revolution; people searched for employment in towns, it also involved children that worked long hours in dangerous jobs, in difficult conditions and for a very little wage. Since people needed to live near the workplaces, houses became scarce and therefore expensive and in overcrowded conditions. This was particularly relevant in London, where poor living conditions led to death caused by starvation and destitution. Many children were turned out of home and was compelled to live in the workhouses.

Workhouses were a place where those unable to support themselves were offered accommodation and employment; in the workhouses there were also orphaned and abandoned children, those physically and mentally sick, disabled, elderly and unmarked mothers. Husbands and wives were separated into dormitories and many children lived separately form them parents and usually find themselves "hired out". The poor used to wears a uniform (into the workhouses everyone looked the same and outside everyone knew they were poor); life in the workhouses was supposed to be humiliating and shameful, there was instituted a very harsh discipline, they were expected to be silent.

The "Reform Bill" in 1832 expanded the right to vote, it is generally considered the dividend line between the Romantic and the Victorian era. The Victorian era was a complex and contradictory era: on the one side it was an age of progress, stability and great social reforms wile on the other it was characterized by poverty injustice and social unrest. Victorians promoted a strict and rigid code of values with its fundament on the Puritan church, based on personal duty, hard work, respectability and charity; the preeminent idea was that material progress would emerge from hard work.

The Victorian literature was influenced by social changes, but also by Purism (religious moves tent according to Calvinism principles), Transcendentalism (all reality is a single unity, the spiritual principle is over soul) and by the Marxist theories (mechanization was seen as an answer to the problem of poverty). The most popular genres were novels and poetry, and the main topics were industrial progress, education, the workers' conditions of life, childhood, materialistic philanthropy.

The Victorian world is it ruled by a simplification of life in: things are right or wrong, good or bad (Manichean theory); middle class was moralist and Puritan at home, hypocritical and licentious with young women of working-class outside.