The Periods of British Literature

Part 2







institution of marriage.

The Victorian Era is an age of British history spanning the 64-year reign of Queen Victoria (1837-1901). It is one of the longest reigns in the history of England. In the year 1837, Queen Victoria succeeded William the IV on the throne of Great Britain and Ireland.

The period is known for economic progress, poverty and exploitation. The gap between the rich and the poor grew wide and with drive for material and commercial success there appeared a kind of a moral decay in the society. The Victorian era saw a wild growth of industries and factories. One very important factor of the age was its stress on morality. The role of the women was mostly that of being angels of the house and restricted to domestic confines. They were financially dependent on their husbands and fathers and it led to a commercialization of the

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE VICTORIANISM

The discoveries of science have particular effects upon the literature of the Victorian Age.

It is simple to mark the following four general characteristics:

- **1. Realism:** Literature of this age comes closer to daily life which reflects its practical problems and interests. It becomes a powerful instrument for human progress.
- **2. Moral Purpose:** The Victorian literature seems to assert its moral purpose. Tennyson, Browning, Carlyle, Ruskin-all were the teachers of England with the faith in their moral message to instruct the world.
- **3. Doubts or Contradictory faiths and philosophies:** It is often considered as an age of doubt and contradictory faiths and philosophies. The influence of science is felt here. Browning the optimist and Hardy the pessimist are regarded as most popular writers of the age. There is realistic literature with Pre-Raphaelite poetry that believes in "art for art's sake".
- **4. Idealism:** Though, the age is characterized as practical and materialistic, most of the writers suggest a purely ideal life. It is an idealistic age where the great ideals like truth, justice, love, brotherhood are emphasized by poets, essayists and novelists of the age.



Novelists:

- Brontë Family: Family of English novelists, including Charlotte Brontë, 1816–55, English novelist, Emily Jane Brontë, 1818–48, English novelist and poet, and Anne Brontë, 1820–49, English novelist.
- Anne Brontë (1820-1849)Anne Brontë was the youngest of the famous trio of literary sisters. Anne's literary endeavours, like those of Emily Brontë, went unacknowledged in her brief lifetime.
- Charlotte Brontë (1816-1855)English novelist and member of the Brontë family. Her most famous novels are Jane Eyre (1847) and Villette (1853).
- Lewis Carroll (1832-1898)English writer; an Oxford mathematics don who wrote Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (1865) and Through the Looking-Glass (1872) and the nonsense poem The Hunting of the Snark (1876).
- Charles Dickens (1812-1870) English author, born in Portsmouth, one of the world's most popular, prolific, and skilled novelists. His most famous works include A Christmas Carol, Great Expectations, Oliver Twist, David Copperfield, A Tale of Two Cities and Hard Times.
- Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930) Writer, the creator of Sherlock Holmes, born in Edinburgh, EC Scotland, UK.
- Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894)British writer of essays, poetry, and novels, including Treasure Island (1883), The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1886), and Kidnapped (1886).



A note on Victorian fiction:

The Victorian era was the great age of the three-volume novel; therefore, few of the classic works are short reads. However, many of them, especially the works of Dickens, were originally published in serial format, meaning that two or three chapters would come out every month or so, and readers would have to wait two weeks or a month to find out what happened next.

For today's readers, that means it is perfectly fine to read these great works a few chapters at a time—IF you ever find yourself able to lay the book aside! The Victorians knew how to tell stories, rich in characters, descriptions, and sentimental plots, perhaps laced with gentle humor, all while engaging in serious social critique. Victorian novels will not leave readers hanging at story's close.

ROMANTIC POETRY

VERSUS

VICTORIAN POETRY





Romantic Poetry used themes such as of nature, pastoral life, medievalism, Hellenism, and supernaturalism

Victorian Poetry
used medieval
myths and legends
as well as realistic
issues such as the
struggle between
science and religion.

Romantic Poetry revered and admired nature.

Victorian Poetry treated nature in more realistic and less idealized view.

Romantic Poetry gave prominence to emotion, imagination and spontaneity.

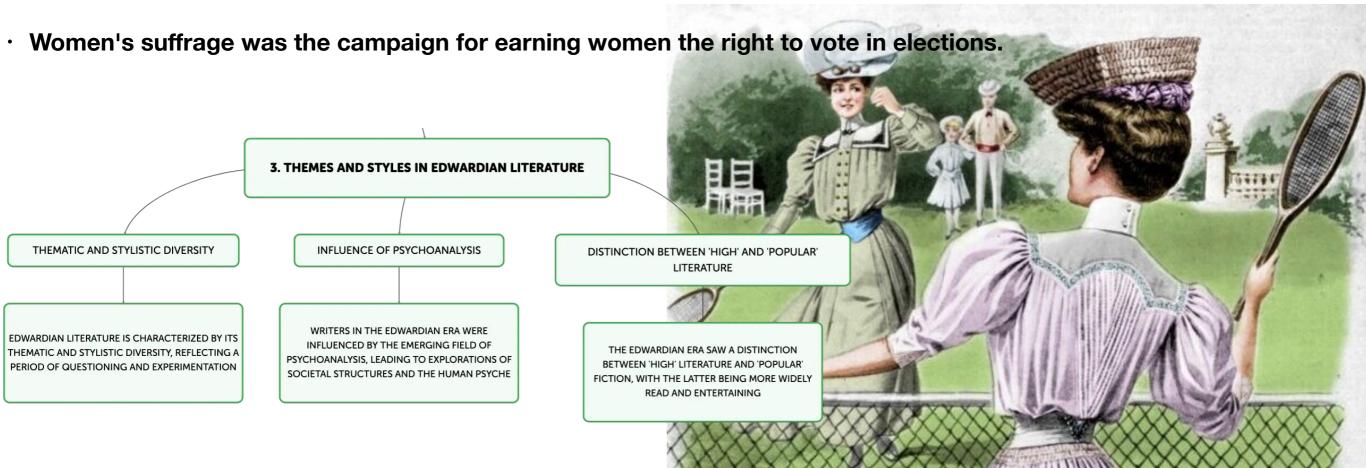
Victorian Poetry gave more importance to intellect and realism.

The Edwardian Period

The Edwardian era is a period of time in British history that commonly dates from the end of the Victorian era in 1901 until the beginning of the First World War in 1914. The period is named after the reign of King Edward VII. Although Edward's reign ended with his death in 1910, the four years that succeeded are also referred to as 'Edwardian'. The Edwardian era is the last in British history to be named after a reigning monarch.

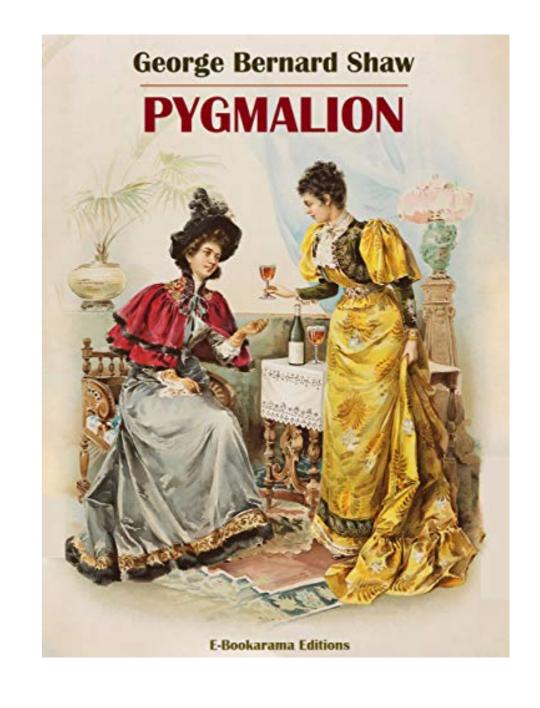
Although it was a relatively short time, it was a period of tremendous change. The Victorian era brought about the **Industrial Revolution**, which rapidly increased the size and population of cities. This increase led to the poor and working classes living among the more wealthy and this, in turn, led to a demand for social change. It was also the time when women's suffrage came to prominence. High-profile campaigns brought women's suffrage to the forefront of political discussion.

 The Industrial Revolution was a period in history when new technology helped develop new forms of production, travel and farming, causing great growth in cities.



Because of the era's short length in time, there is an overlap between Victorian and Edwardian literature. Renowned authors such as **Arthur Conan Doyle** and **Joseph Conrad** were prolific in both periods and could be considered either Victorian or Edwardian.

The Edwardian era saw the origins of movements such as **Modernism**, the **Bloomsbury Group** and, somewhat ironically, the **Georgian poets**. The Bloomsbury group were a collective of authors, painters and critics who would often meet in the **London** district of their name. The majority of these movements chose to move away from the traditional forms of storytelling and poetry to embrace more experimental methods. Authors started using techniques including unreliable narrators and using a **stream of consciousness**. The **Georgian poets**, by contrast, were almost antimodern, producing **lyric poetry** with rural and pastoral themes. Many of these Georgian poets found themselves fighting in the First World War.



Stream of consciousness is a technique used by writers to depict the speed and sometimes randomness of human thought.

Characteristics of Edwardian literature

Edwardian literature followed the Victorian era, and the period had a transformative effect on storytelling. Edwardian literature is a period of time rather than a movement or style, so the work of the time is wide-ranging. This means that there aren't strict characteristics for the work of the time. There are, however, some familiar characteristics developed in Edwardian literature that are still used today. Below are some of the more common themes.

The Victorian era marks the period of time during the reign of Queen Victoria - from 1837 until 1901. In that period, Great Britain became an immense global power, and its empire expanded as far as Asia and the Caribbean. The Edwardian era gave writers cause to reflect on the imperial rule and its flaws. Edwardian literature became more critical of imperialism compared to Victorian literature. The Edwardian writers became more political, they examined issues including the class system, colonialism, and other societal issues like women's suffrage.

Some authors in the Victorian era also addressed social issues, with the **novelists Charles Dickens** and **Thomas Hardy** condemning **child labour in their works**. A large percentage of Victorian literature tried to move away from the **Romanticism** that preceded it; stories of the wealthy 'upper' class and their romantic travails.

Novels concerning more 'everyday' characters increased during the Edwardian era.



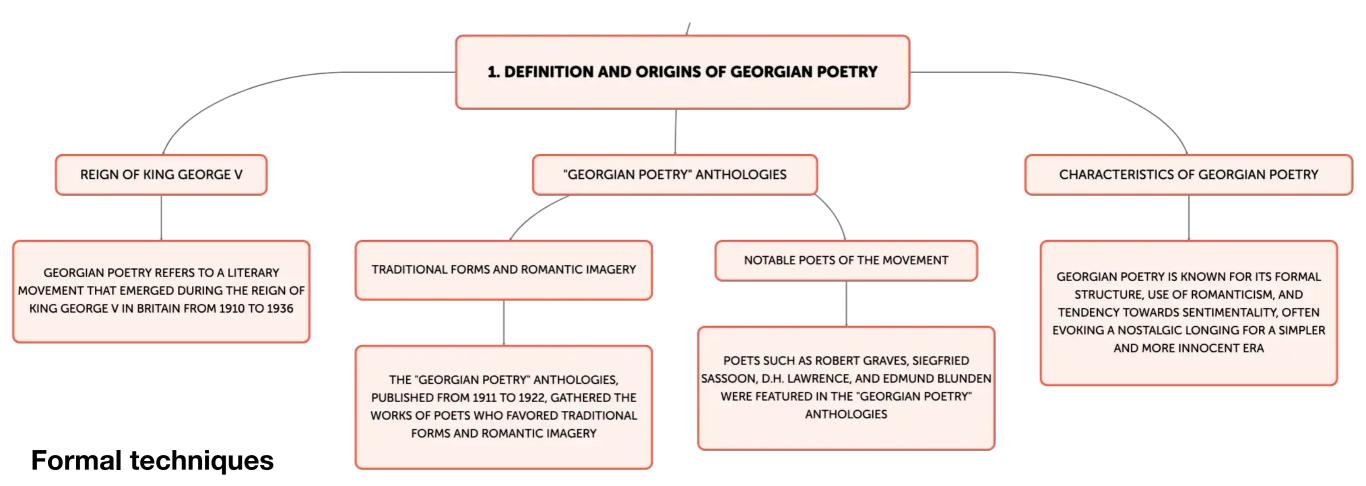
The Georgian period in history runs from 1910 up until the death of King George V in 1936. It was a turbulent time in British history, the First World War began in 1914. The years following the war saw an increasing rise in fascism that preceded World War II. It was also a period of rising communism and socialism, which brought fear to the British elite. Both Ireland and India began movements to gain independence from Great Britain and its empire.

In literature, the Georgian period was known for the emergence of Modernism. Modernism was a movement where writers began to experiment with new ways to present stories or tell their poetry. Writers such as Virginia Woolf and T.S. Eliot were at the forefront of literary Modernism. Georgian poetry was, in many ways, a rejection of Modernism.

Georgian poetry movement

The Georgian poets were a collective of British poets who predominantly worked during the reign of King George V. The poets' work was anthologised in several volumes in the years between 1910 and 1922, each known as *Georgian Poetry*. Some of the Georgian poets included the writers; **Robert Graves**, Edmund Charles Blunden, **D.H. Lawrence** and **Siegfried Sassoon**, among its more famous poets.

The Georgian poets arrived between two important movements in poetry, the **Aestheticism** of the Victorian period and **Modernism**, which followed the outbreak of the First World War. Georgian poetry was seen as a rejection of **Aestheticism** and the movement's motto 'art for art's sake' and its devotion to unnatural beauty. The work of the Georgian poets was often romantic and sentimental, and it has often been described as 'innocent'.



Georgian poetry is perhaps most famous for its use of formal techniques to produce a more traditional form of poetry. Formal techniques in poetry refer to a poem's use of **rhyme** scheme and meter. Meter is the rhythm and use of syllables in each line. The most commonly used metric form in English is **iambic pentameter**, as used in Robert Graves' poem 'The Cool Web' (1927). A poem's **rhyme scheme** determines its end rhymes. Most Georgian poetry uses strict meter and **rhyme** schemes.

lambic pentameter is a metric form that consists of five pairs of syllables. The first syllable is stressed, followed by an unstressed syllable, so there are ten syllables in each line.

- The aim of the Georgian poets was to use traditional forms of poetry to write about romantic ideals.
- The three characteristics of Georgian poetry are formal techniques, Romanticism and sentimentality.

Modernism in Literature

Literary modernism gave authors more freedom to experiment with their modes of expression than in the past. The experiences and feelings of the person are frequently highlighted in the free-flowing inner dialogues and non-linear storylines seen in modernist works. Writers of modern literature include W.B. Yeats, Joseph Conrad, Samuel Beckett, D.H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, T.S. Eliot, and William Carlos Williams.

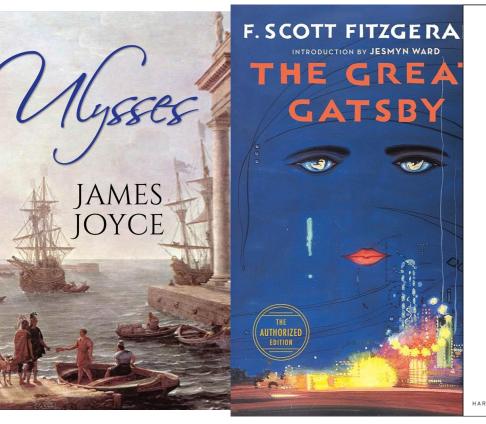
The modern period in English literature begins with the 20th century and continues till 1965. The period saw an abrupt break away from the old ways of interacting with the world. In all the previous periods experimentation and individualism were highly discouraged but With the onset of the modern period, both these things became virtues. There were many cultural shocks with the beginning of modernism. The blow of the modern age was World War 1 and 2. These wars began in the year 1914 and lasted till 1919 and 1939 to 1945 respectively. The aftermath of the world wars was traumatic for everyone.

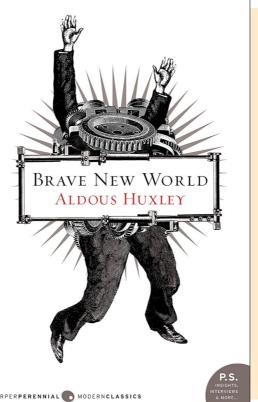
Characteristics of modernist literature:

- 1. **The process of experimentation:** Modernist literature used a variety of innovative writing strategies that defied accepted principles of narrative structure. The use of mixed images and themes, absurdity, nonlinear tales, and stream of consciousness—a free-flowing internal monologue—are a few of these strategies.
- **2. Individualism:** Instead of emphasizing society as a whole, modernist literature frequently concentrates on the individual. Stories follow characters as they adjust to a changing environment, usually coping with challenging situations and issues.
- **3. Different points of view:** To highlight the subjectivity of each character and give the reader a range of points of view that might be taken into consideration, many modernist writers wrote in the first person with several characters.
- **4. Open verse:** In place of the conventional poetic form, many modernist poets chose free verse, which lacks a recurring rhyme scheme, metrical framework, or musical rhythm.
- **5. Creative techniques:** Many modernist authors use literary techniques like symbolism and imagery to make their writing easier to understand and to build a better bond with the reader.

Modern world people are more into independence, they don't want to be bound by parental authority, whereas Victorians believed in maintaining the home life, they consider themselves a family person. Moreover, the feeling of love was getting limited to sex in modern times, love had become less of a romance and more like a greed. Such things portray the decline in the values, emotions and feelings of the people of the modern period. Literary work also portrays a similar lifestyle. If writers tried to write on the themes of the Victorian age then it would be no longer a striking piece of literature. Therefore, you will find the literature of the modern period having less zeal for love, natural beauty and sentiments. Modern writers come up with fresh points of view to suit the conventional audience.

W.B. Yeats' words, "Things fall apart; the center cannot hold," are often referred to when describing the core tenet or "feeling" of modernist concerns.





Some of the most notable writers of this period include the novelists James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Aldous Huxley, D.H. Lawrence, Joseph Conrad, Dorothy Richardson, Graham Greene, E.M. Forster, and Doris Lessing; the poets W.B. Yeats, T.S. Eliot, W.H. Auden, Seamus Heaney, Wilfred Owens, Dylan Thomas, and Robert Graves; and the dramatists Tom Stoppard, George Bernard Shaw, Samuel Beckett, Frank McGuinness, Harold Pinter, and Caryl Churchill.

Post-Modern Period

The postmodern period begins about the time that World War II ended. Many believe it is a direct response to modernism. Some say the period ended about 1990, but it is likely too soon to declare this period closed.

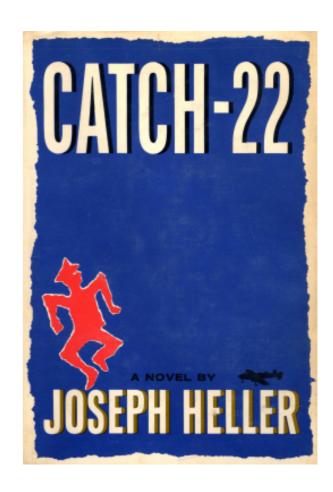
World War II ended in 1945 and its conclusion marked an important shift in Great Britain's global role. For the first time, Britain was a secondary imperial power, something that was painful for many British citizens. The expectations after the war were that the economy would again rise, but inflation and unemployment led to an overall increase in national cynicism.

Postmodernism found most of its success in America and was difficult to identify in England, as many Modernist writers continued to write well into the 1940s and 50s. Postmodernism incorporates the idea that the world is in a state of incompleteness.

Postmodernists believe that there are many truths and that knowledge comes from perspective.

Preference for fragmented narratives, intertextuality, and self-reflection. Literature from this time period questions the idea of unchanging reality and explores subjectivity, language fluidity, and the social effects of the medi

Irony, playfulness, black humor



Characteristics of post-modernist literature:

- Embrace of randomness. Postmodern works reject the idea of absolute meaning and instead embrace randomness and disorder.
 Postmodern novels often employ <u>unreliable narrators</u> to further muddy the waters with extreme subjectivity and prevent readers from finding meaning during the story.
- 2. Playfulness. While modernist writers mourned the loss of order, postmodern writers revel in it, often using tools like <u>black humor</u>, wordplay, <u>irony</u>, and other techniques of playfulness to dizzy readers and muddle the story.
- 3. Fragmentation. Postmodernist literature took modernism's fragmentation and expanded on it, moving literary works more toward collage-style forms, temporal distortion, and significant jumps in character and place.
- 4. Metafiction. Postmodern literature emphasized meaninglessness and play. Postmodern writers began to experiment with more meta elements in their novels and <u>short stories</u>, drawing attention to their work's artifice and reminding readers that the author isn't an authority figure.
- 5. Intertextuality. As a form of collage-style writing, many postmodern authors wrote their work overtly in dialogue with other texts. The techniques they employed included pastiche (or imitating other authors' styles) and the combination of high and low culture (writing that tackles subjects that were previously considered inappropriate for literature).

Samuel Beckett, Joseph Heller, Anthony Burgess, John Fowles, Penelope M. Lively, and Iain Banks.

Postmodernists believe in accurately reflecting the current state of society, which is broken, disconnected, obscure, irrational and multifaceted. Numerous literary theories flourished with the influence of postmodernism such as feminist theory, queer theory and ecocriticism.



Postmodern literary theory is characterised by the critique of modernity and a digression from modernist aesthetic and literary style.

Postmodernist fiction rejects the idea of the absolute and embraces chaos, disorder, and fragmentation of reality.

 Unreliable narrator, playfulness in narration and intertextuality are often the marks of the postmodern novel.

 Metafiction and self-referential style is often associated with postmodernist fiction.

 A key characteristic of postmodernist theory and fiction is the difficulty of locating fixed and absolute meaning within the text.



Useful Links:

Youtube:

- 1. (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JST1lcSvVGU)- British Literature
- 2. (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nIIDcnfoH5A)- Literature in the Victorian Era | A Historical Overview
- 3. (*Highly recommended*): A beginner's guide to Critical Literary Analysis (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qf6RCtDeK4q)
- 4. Analyze ANY Poem With These Steps! (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o3x-g5qRCYw)
- 5. Literary Devices Every Reader Should Know 1/2:(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aRsAaqklB9M); watch?v=86kknll27_E), (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aRsAaqklB9M);
- 6. (Highly recommended): POV: First person vs. Second person vs. Third person Rebekah Bergman (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B5vEfuLS2Qc)
- 7. What makes a poem ... a poem? Melissa Kovacs (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JwhouCNq-Fc)
- 8. Types of characters: (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QjByX2ZG3oY)
- 9. How to Analyze a Short Story Using "The Tell-Tale Heart" (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zkQB_wPDCcc)