

**14.5**

## **Democratic Reforms in Britain**



## **As a Young Historian, I will be able to...**

- Understand how political reforms in Britain affected suffrage and the nature of Parliament.
- Identify the influence of Queen Victoria and the values she represented.
- Describe social and economic reforms enacted by Parliament in the 1800s.
- Describe the efforts by British women to win the vote.
- Explain the struggle for Irish home rule and the impact of famine on Ireland.

# **“Two Nations”**

**Benjamin Disraeli writes about the wealth gap of Britain in his novel *The Two Nations*.**

**Unlike the rest of Europe, Britain achieved change through reform rather than revolution**

**Britain had a constitutional monarchy, a parliament, & two political parties.**

**But less than 5% of population could vote & the wealthy dominated politics**

# Reform

**Rural towns lost populations of people due to Industrial Revolution & lost votes**

**Rotten Boroughs-** Rural towns in England that sent members to Parliament despite having little to no votes

**The parties, Whigs & Tories, began to fight about reforming Parliament**

**Great Reform Act of 1832 redistributed more seats in government in large towns & cities**

**Electorate-** The body of people allowed to vote, granted more voting rights to men



# Chartist Movement

**The chartists stood for the working class & drafted up the People's Charter**

**Universal male suffrage, annual elections, & salaries for members of Parliament**

**Secret Ballot-** People could cast vote without announcing it publicly

**Movement declined, but the reforms were eventually passed.**

# Victorian Age

**Queen Victoria-** Second longest reign in British history & greatly influenced this era

**She valued duty, thrift, honesty, hard work, & respect for everyone in society**

**Britain expanded its Empire during this time & reforms for the poor grew**



# Reforms Increase Parliamentary Democracy

**William Gladstone-** created liberal party of Britain & fights for reforms with Disraeli

**Parliamentary Democracy-** Form of government where Prime Minister & cabinet are chosen by the legislature

Powers of wealthy Lords are restricted & power to veto tax bills dismissed

House of the Commons would become the most important house

# Economic & Social Reforms

**Free Trade-** Trade between countries without quotas, tariffs, or other restrictions

**The corn laws over all grains had high tariffs & free traders hated them because trade was limited**

**Repeal-** When a rule or law is canceled

**Tariffs would be lifted or reinstated based on economic needs of the country.**



# New Ideas

**Abolition-** Law to end slavery & the slave trade

**1833** Parliament passes a law to ban slavery in all British colonies

**Capital Offense-** Harsh laws over murder, shoplifting, stealing, & impersonating a veteran. Jail or death as punishment

**Penal Colonies-** Colonies where convicts were sent to serve time, such as Australia

# **Victories for the Working Class**

**Conditions in factories & mines improved such as  
child labor laws & limited work hours**

**Labor Unions were created to address additional  
rights such as better wages & shorter hours**

**Public health, free education, and better housing  
developments were created**

**A new party, the labour party, eventually grew &  
promoted ideas inspired by Bismarck &  
Germany**



# Women Struggle to Vote

The background of the entire slide is a textured, aged map of the world. The map is rendered in shades of brown and tan, giving it an antique appearance. A compass rose is visible in the lower right quadrant, partially obscured by the text boxes. The map shows the outlines of continents and oceans, with some areas appearing more detailed than others.

**Women from different walks of life tried to promote suffrage or argue against it**

**Emmeline Pankhurst-** Women suffragist who began aggressive tactics to fight for the vote

**Some women would engage in violent protests or hunger strikes to gain the vote**

**1918- Women over the age of 30 could vote in Britain**

# The Irish Question

Ireland was colonized by Scottish & English settlers & the best farmlands were confiscated

**Absentee landlords-** English settlers who owned large estates but did not live on them

Irish liberators began to fight for rights as they lived in poverty & had to pay high taxes & couldn't vote

The potato famine had the Irish arguing for **home rule-** local self government

