

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

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 violet 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

