

QUEEN VICTORIA



Queen Victoria was born in 1819 and became queen at the age of 18 in 1837 when her uncle George IV died. Her reign was the second-longest at 64 years and was a time of huge social, scientific and technological change. She was the last monarch of the House of Hanover.

VICTORIA'S FAMILY LIFE

Queen Victoria married a German, Prince Albert, in 1840. Together they had nine children; Victoria, Edward, Alfred, Alice, Helena, Louise, Leopold and Beatrice. Edward succeeded her as King Edward VII. When Albert died in 1861, she mourned him by wearing black for the remainder of her life. She became a recluse, avoiding public appearances for 25 years and rarely setting foot in London.

SCIENCE IN THE VICTORIAN ERA

The 19th century saw huge advances in scientific progress. British scientists Michael Faraday, Lord Kelvin, Charles Darwin and James Clerk Maxwell made great discoveries in physics, chemistry and biology. Joseph Lister invented antiseptics, increasing survival from surgery, and Florence Nightingale developed modern nursing techniques to improve hygiene and recovery from disease.



Florence Nightingale

TECHNOLOGY IN THE VICTORIAN ERA

The 19th century also saw vast progress in technology. Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone, Isambard Kingdom Brunel designed and built larger, faster ships, which improved international trade, as well as railways, bridges and tunnels, and Joseph Bazalgette invented the modern sewage system which improved disease control. The car, telegraphy, sound recording, photography and electrical lighting were also invented. Victoria was the first British monarch to ride on a train, be photographed and have her voice recorded.



Benjamin Disraeli

VICTORIA AND SOCIAL REFORM

Queen Victoria was very interested in politics and especially social reform. She was very close to one of her Prime Ministers, Benjamin Disraeli and very enthusiastic about his Reform Act which allowed more men to vote (although not yet women). Victoria had a concern for the conditions in which poor people lived, supporting an increase in their wages and acting as patron to dozens of charities to help them. With Albert, she was involved in the Great Exhibition, a display of the very best in art, science and

technology housed in a massive glasshouse named the Crystal Palace. She also established educational and cultural institutes, such as the Natural History Museum, the Science Museum, the Royal Albert Hall and the Victoria and Albert Museum.

VICTORIA AND THE BRITISH EMPIRE

Since Elizabeth I's reign, Britain had created colonies and trading posts around the world. During Victoria's reign, Britain possessed territories of Canada, Australia, New Zealand and India, countries in Africa, the Caribbean, South-East Asia and Central and South America. These territories were protected by the Royal Navy, the largest and most powerful at that time. At the Empire's greatest extent, the British governed 412,000,000 people and possessed 25% of the world's land.



VICTORIA AND THE MONARCHY

Victoria restored the reputation of the monarchy after the extravagance of her predecessors, George IV and William IV. She shaped a new role for the Royal Family, making it more visible by visiting towns and cities, and opening hospitals, museums and libraries. She was popular at the beginning of her reign but less so when she became a recluse after Albert's death. There was much political upheaval in the nineteenth century and she was the target of eight assassination attempts during her reign. However, she regained her popularity during her Golden Jubilee, celebrating fifty years on the throne.

VICTORIA'S CHARACTER

Victoria had a strict, lonely childhood and suffered much tragedy, losing her husband and three of her children; Alice, Leopold and then Alfred. She is often portrayed as a stern character but was very playful and was often heard roaring with laughter. She was also creative and a talented artist.

Victoria was courageous in the face of the assassination attempts. The day after one of these attacks, she travelled along the same route in her coach hoping the assassin, who had escaped, would try again and be arrested.

She could be stubborn and blunt, especially with politicians if she thought they were doing a bad job, even describing one as "half crazy and really in many ways a ridiculous old man"

Like her predecessor, Elizabeth I, she had very close male friends after the death of Albert and she was fiercely loyal towards them. One was a Scottish servant called John Brown who became a highly-valued advisor and another was an Indian waiter named Abdul Karim. He was suspected by some of Victoria's advisors of being a bad influence on her but she just dismissed their complaints as merely racial prejudice.