Victorian Age

INDUSTRIALISATION

The intense industrialisation of the North and the Midlands, unhealthy working conditions and the developing power of a new middle class of factory owners became the subject of literature.

It is in the Victorian Age that industrialisation becomes so intense as to cause major changes in Britain's demography and structure. Britain's economy changed from being an agrarian and maritime economy to being one based on factory-based industry meaning that an enormous flux of people moved from the countryside into industrialized towns.

A new class was born, the industrial middle class whose (=il cui) belief in progress and their materialistic and utilitarian philosophy, promoted a factory system which brought enormous wealth to themselves and to the country. On the other side were the workers, both victims and beneficiaries of this system. The injustices of their lives inspired many to organise and attempt to fight the system: this is how Trade Unions(=sindacati) were born.

THE EMPIRE

Britain's prosperity and sense of optimism, inspired also by industrialisation, has its roots (=radici) in the expansion and exploitation of the territories included in the British Empire. Imperialism was an economic reality but also a state of mind (a conviction that Britain had the right to control, exploit, civilise other nations.

WOMEN

It is not until the early 20th century that women began to emerge from behind the shadow of male dominance: 19th century England is a man's world. Victorian morals expected that women had to be dedicated to the care of the family, either as a daughter or a wife, and above all be of spotless virtue. Women had little control over their finances, all of a woman's property automatically became the property of her husband on marriage. Only towards the end of the century women were allowed education. Women of the lower classes were supposed to work and their working conditions were abominable and only in 1842 work down mines became illegal for women and children.

The optimism, wealth and progress of the Victorian Age brought about a new definition of class whose barriers became less rigid, definitely important to understand also 20th century Britain from a social and historical point of view.