

Victorian Age

The period extending between 1820 to 1901 corresponding roughly but not exactly with Queen Victoria regime (1837-1901) has been called the Victorian age. The era was characterised by a stable government, growing economy and an expanding voting population. Literature has gone through a considerable change in this period as well.

Literary characteristics of the period

The romanticism of the preceding era was on the wane. The victorian era witnessed a return from solitude to society, from nature to industry, from spiritualism to pragmatism, from lyricism to criticism and from organicism to compromise.

Novels, not poetry that dominated in the preceding period were the predominant form of literature. Charles Dickens, William Thackeray, Bronte sisters, George Eliot, are some of the famous novelists from the period. The period also saw the emergence of Gothic fictions. Gothic literature combines romance and horror in an attempt to thrill and terrify the reader. Gothic tales usually take place in locations such as castles, monasteries and cemeteries. However, the gothic monsters sometimes cross over into the real world, making appearances in cities such as London.

Victorian poetry is characterised by a sense of realism and less idealism towards nature. Besides, Victorian poets displayed an interest in medieval literature of England. Tennyson's *Idylls of the king*, which blended Arthurian legends with contemporary ideas, is an excellent example of this theme.

The Victorian theatre was, by and large, managed by actor-managers. Melodrama, farce, Musical burlesques were popular during this period. Oscar Wilde and George Bernard Shaw became the leading voice of the late Victorian period.