

جامعة الانبار
كلية التربية للعلوم الإنسانية
قسم : اللغة الانكليزية
مادة : الرواية الفكتورية
مرحلة: الثالثة
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محاضرات مادة الرواية الفكتورية

In the year 1837, Queen Victoria ascended the throne of Great Britain and Ireland and succeeded William the IV. She served for a period of 64 years, till her death in 1901 and it is one of the longest reigns in the history of England. The period was marked by many important social and historical changes that altered the nation in many ways. The population nearly doubled, the British Empire expanded exponentially and technological and industrial progress helped Britain become the most powerful country in the world. While the country saw economic progress, poverty and exploitation were also equally a part of it. The gap between the rich and the poor increased significantly and the drive for material and commercial success was seen to propagate a kind of a moral decay in the society itself. The changing landscape of the country was another concern. While the earlier phase of Romanticism saw a celebration of the country side and the rich landscape of the flora and fauna, the Victorian era saw a changing of the landscape to one of burgeoning industries and factories. While the poor were exploited for their labor, the period witnessed the rise of the bourgeoisie or the middle class due to increasing trade between Britain and its colonies and

the Reform Bill of 1832 strengthen their hold. There was also a shift from the Romantic ideals of the previous age towards a more realistic acceptance and depiction of society.

Victorian Era is seen as the link between Romanticism of the 18th century and the realism of the 20th century. The novel as a genre rose to entertain the rising middle class and to depict the contemporary life in a changing society. Although the novel had been in development since the 18th century with the works of Daniel Defoe, Henry Fielding, Laurence Sterne, Samuel Richardson and the others, it was in this period that the novel got mass acceptance and readership. The growth of cities, a ready domestic market and one in the oversea colonies and an increase in printing and publishing houses facilitated the growth of the novel as a form. In the year 1870, an Education Act was passed which made education an easy access to the masses furthermore increasing literacy rates among the population. Certain jobs required a certain level of reading ability and simple novels catered to this by becoming a device to practice reading. Also the time of the daily commute to work for men and the time alone at home for women could be filled by reading which now became a leisure activity. As a response to the latter, the demand for fiction, rose substantially.

The novels of the age mostly had a moral strain in them with a belief in the innate goodness of human nature. The characters were well rounded and the protagonist usually belonged to a middle class society who struggled to create a niche for himself in the industrial and mercantile world. The stress was on realism and an attempt to describe the daily struggles of ordinary men that the middle class reader could associate with. The moral tangents were perhaps an attempt to rescue the moral degradation prevalent in the

society then and supplied the audience with hope and positivity. These moral angles allowed for inclusion of larger debates in fiction like the ones surrounding “the woman question”, marriage, progress, education, the Industrial Revolution. New roles for women were created because of the resultant economic market and their voice which was earlier not given cadence was now being spotted and recognized and novels became the means where the domestic confinement of women was questioned. Novels reflecting the larger questions surrounding women, like those of their roles and duties. In the latter half of the century, Married Women’s Property Acts was passed, the women suffrage became an important point of debate, and poverty and other economic reasons challenged the traditional roles of women. The novel as a form became the medium where such concerns were raised.