Modern Britain:
Disraeli and Gladstone
Modern Britain: Disraeli and Gladstone

- Adherence to the precepts of free trade prevented British governments to enact trade barriers; the fall-out in the British countryside was profound.
- Many British farmers turned their fields into pastureland.
- British society changed as the old aristocracy that depended on their estates to produce wealth to keep them comfortable lost its underpinning.
- The new lions of the industrial world suffered as prices for manufactured goods fell and a period of deflation ensued.
Modern Britain: Disraeli and Gladstone

- This economic turmoil came at a time when Britain’s industrial might had been challenged and in some ways surpassed by rivals in Germany and the United States.
- Since Britain had industrialized first, its older machinery could not keep pace.
- The marriage of academic science and industrial technology had blossomed in Germany.
- Britain’s fall from its perch atop the industrial ladder was not sudden but followed a gradual pace.
- In his own country the British industrialist was often less considered an employer and more an exploiter of his workers and destroyer of the countryside.
Modern Britain: Disraeli and Gladstone

- The depression of the late 19th century precipitated profound changes to business organization.
- Vertical amalgamation meant the monopolistic control of the entire production from raw material to finished product.
- Companies vested in horizontal amalgamation attempted to undercut or to buy their competitors.
- "Unemployment" first coined.
- During this Depression, workers’ standard of living improved, albeit slightly and slowly; wages rose little, but the cost of products cost him less.
- Domestic peace preserved during a long time of economic distress
Modern Britain: Disraeli and Gladstone

• In the third quarter of the 19th century Tories and Whigs had largely been replaced and their disparate interest groups realigned to form the Conservative and Liberal political parties.

• The politics of reform set the stage for one of the great face-offs between party leaders in British history—that between Benjamin Disraeli, Conservative, and William Gladstone, Liberal.

• Gladstone indicated that as soon as the Liberals regained power, he would introduce a reform bill.

• Disraeli recognized that the Conservatives could not afford to be branded as the unrelenting opponents of reform; so, in 1867 he shepherded a new Reform Act that gave the vote to every male adult householder living in a borough constituency.

• The 1867 reform Act This gave the vote to about 1,500,000 men.
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- Constituencies and boroughs with less than 10,000 inhabitants lost one of their MPs.
- The forty-five seats left available were distributed by:
  - 1) giving fifteen to towns which had never had an MP;
  - 2) giving one extra seat to some larger towns – Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, and Leeds;
  - 3) creating a seat for the University of London; and
  - 4) giving 25 seats to counties whose population had increased since 1832.
- Many Conservatives dissented, but Gladstone and the Liberals backed the measures and it passed.
- Men from the working class now constituted the majority in most boroughs.
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• In parliamentary elections people still had to mount a platform and announce their choice of candidate to the officer who then recorded it in the poll book.
• Employers and local landlords therefore knew how people voted and could punish them if they did not support their preferred candidate.
• In 1872, Gladstone introduced the Ballot Act that removed this intimidation and introduced the secret ballot.
• During his second ministry in 1883, Gladstone pressed for passage of the Corrupt Practices Act that specified how much money candidates could spend during election time.
Modern Britain: Disraeli and Gladstone

• Fearing a diminishment of their countryside power-base, the next leader of the Conservatives Lord Salisbury opposed any increase in the number of people who could vote in parliamentary elections.

• In 1884, he was able to rally enough support in the House of Lords to defeat Gladstone’s attempt to equalize voting rights between men in the cities, towns, and countryside.

• Gladstone persisted, the Lords relented (after concessions), and the legislation added about six million to the total number who could vote in parliamentary elections.
After a prominent role in the Abolition of Slavery movement, women “suffragists” organized to pursue voting rights.

In 1866, a women-only petition requested the right of women to vote with 1,500 signatures.

On their behalf, John Stuart Mill, philosopher, MP and prominent abolitionist, moved an amendment to the 1866 Reform Bill calling for the inclusion of women on the same terms as men.

Until 1903, the suffrage campaigners employed and adapted strategies used in the anti-slavery campaign: presenting petitions; holding meetings in private houses and public halls; raising money; and disseminating propaganda.
Modern Britain: Disraeli and Gladstone

- *The Imperial Colonist* sought to convince educated British women that work in the empire, and that was largely as domestic helps, would serve as a means to many ends.
- British women’s emigration that remained committed to the notion of separate spheres.
- Women as commodities whose excess in the Mother Country meant that they should be “exported” to the Empire as a matter of economic and social practicality.
Modern Britain: Disraeli and Gladstone

- Service to the empire and its needs did not necessarily diverge from the best interests of educated women.
- Female emigration societies connected to Dominions’ governments and the Anglican Church.
- Empire-building was man’s work, and women would be venturing into male spaces.
- The “literature of the empire: taught men and boys that the time they spent on the margins of the British world would make them into real men.
Modern Britain: Disraeli and Gladstone

- In colonial societies lawlessness, immoral bush culture, alcohol, gambling, violence, and mixed race and illicit sex thrived.
- British women were meant to go in and expunge the worst of male tendencies.
- The promoters of female emigration saw the empire as space in which cultured femininity would domesticate the rough hewn periphery.
- On the frontier, the right sort of women would be free to impose their civilizing brand of imperialism, while carving out fulfilling lives for themselves.
Modern Britain: Disraeli and Gladstone

- The “right sort of young woman,” a woman of quality, meant Christian, but not Catholic, British, but preferably English or Scots but not Irish.
- These women of quality would likely end up performing domestic service, and in England that would have been perceived as below their station.
- Often governmental or institutional bodies promised free land or subsidized fares.
- The prevailing opinions in the colonies were that they did not need to be civilized by British women.
Modern Britain: Disraeli and Gladstone

• The emigration societies published narratives that female emigrants lives, just like their male counterparts, were filled with adventure and romance.

• Their “wasted lives” would suddenly transform into heroic sojourns.

• *The Imperial Colonist* goes as far as saying that the émigrés would not have to worry about “losing caste by having to associate with those who are less educated than themselves.”
Modern Britain: Disraeli and Gladstone

(Right) William Gladstone (1810-1898) and Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881)
Modern Britain: Disraeli and Gladstone

- After the Robert Peel led Torys won the election of 1841, Gladstone was given office, but Disraeli, who had expected a government post, was not.
- In 1846, Disraeli led Tory opposition to repeal of the Corn laws and split the Conservative Party.
- Peel was forced to resign for most of the next three decades, the Torys were to be the minority party, with occasional intervals in office.
Modern Britain: Disraeli and Gladstone

- In 1852, during a brief Conservative government, Gladstone eviscerated Disraeli’s (Chancellor of the Exchequer) proposed budget.
- Conservatives settled on Disraeli as leader as he could hold his own in parliamentary debate with the talented Liberal front-benchers.
- When the Liberals divided over a reform bill in 1866, in 1867 Disraeli offered a more “liberal” suffrage bill; it passed and outraged Gladstone.
Modern Britain:
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• As respective party leaders, Gladstone and Disraeli differed on substance and style.
• In debate, Gladstone brought eloquent fire and brimstone while Disraeli offered urbane wit and cynicism.
• The Liberals won the election of 1868 and Gladstone embarked on a process of modernization:
  – Disestablished the Church of Ireland, reformed entry into the army and the civil service, overhauled the judicial system, and introduced the secret ballot.
• In opposition, Disraeli remained more genteel and less aggressive.
Modern Britain: Disraeli and Gladstone

- In 1874 and much to his own surprise, Disraeli (right) led the Conservatives to their first clear victory since 1841.
- Domestically pursued improvement rather than reform.
- Disraeli most interested in foreign policy and in boosting British power.
- Purchased controlling shares of the Suez Canal Company's to protect passage to India.
- Supported Ottoman Empire to prevent Russian advances in Eastern Mediterranean.
- Initiated the legislation that made Victoria Empress of India.
- Gladstone and Liberals won 1880 election; Disraeli retired and died the next year.
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- Upon his return to power in 1880, Gladstone who wished “Justice for Ireland,” confronted a collection of disparate Irish forces—constitutionalists (Home Rulers), Unionists (largely Protestants in the north), revolutionaries (Fenians), and a militant agrarian community (Land League).
Modern Britain: Disraeli and Gladstone

(Left) Charles Stewart Parnell and William Butler Yeats
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To whom would this poem appeal? What is its intent? Identify an aspect that you would like to have explained.

COME GATHER
ROUND ME PARNELLITES
By W. B. Yeats (1938)
COME gather round me Parnellites,
And praise our chosen man;
Stand upright on your legs awhile,
Stand upright while you can,
For soon we lie where he is laid,
And he is underground;
Come fill up all those glasses
And pass the bottle round.

And here's a cogent reason,
And I have many more,
He fought the might of England
And saved the Irish poor,
Whatever good a farmer's got
He brought it all to pass;
And here's another reason,
That Parnell loved a lass.
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And here's a final reason, He was of such a kind
Every man that sings a song
Keeps Parnell in his mind.
For Parnell was a proud man,
No prouder trod the ground,
And a proud man's a lovely man,
So pass the bottle round.

The Bishops and the party
That tragic story made,
A husband that had sold his wife
And after that betrayed;
But stories that live longest
Are sung above the glass,
And Parnell loved his country
And Parnell loved his lass.
Modern Britain: Disraeli and Gladstone

• (Right) “The Heart of Midlothian” an 1852 engraving.
• After all of the attention paid to Ireland and its Home Rule, in Scotland it inspired a great deal of “me-toosim” and “not-here-at-any-price.”
• Gladstone anticipated some amorphous form of Home Rule for North Briton, but much to his and his like-minded colleagues’ surprise, there was no uproar for it.
• The Scottish Home Rule Association formed in 1888 made multiple legislative efforts in the 1890s and were met with either derision or neglect.
• Many hard-line Scottish Protestants were convinced like their fellows in northern Ireland that “Home Rule meant Rome Rule,”
Modern Britain: Disraeli and Gladstone

- The Conservative ministry of Lord Salisbury (left) initiated a special Scottish Department in Whitehall and its creation did alleviate some bureaucratic inefficiencies.
- It calculated that Parliament spent 6 hours per year on specifically Scottish issues while Scotland overpaid the Exchequer by more than 1.1 million Pounds.
- Scotsmen excelled in the Empire and filled a third of all colonial governorships prior to World War II.
Modern Britain: Disraeli and Gladstone

- Welsh interests had never been adequately represented in London; the prevailing wisdom being that whatever was best for England was best for Wales.
- Wales had few advantages and its native language proved a barrier to sympathies from the metropole.
- Welsh coal fed two-thirds of the boilers of Britain’s trains and the Empire’s ships.
- The Red Dragon Revolt of 1874, among miners and steelworkers, inspired a short-lived independence movement.
Modern Britain: Disraeli and Gladstone

- During the Victorian period, due to the great distances involved and slow methods of communication British governors quite frequently took unilateral actions and often decided to start wars and annex territory.
- In Africa, Sir Bartle Frere (upper left) had been given the task to coalesce South Africa’s hodge-podge of British colonies and started a war with the Zulu nation.
- Zulu king, Cetshwayo (lower left) led an army of 40,000 trained warriors.
Modern Britain: Disraeli and Gladstone

• 22 January 1879, the British Empire's longest day—twin battles at Rorke’s Drift and Isandlwana.
• At Rorke's Drift a British garrison of 140 men - fought for 12 hours to repel repeated attacks by as many as 3,000 Zulu warriors.
• Concurrently, at Isandlwana 20,000 Zulu warriors decimated and defeated 1750 British defenders.
• British public opinion demanded a scapegoat for the defeat at the hands of spear-wielding black Africans.
• Queen Victoria counted Commander Lord Chelmsford a friend and defended him.
Modern Britain: Disraeli and Gladstone

• Chelmsford’s (right) used the heroic defense at Rorke’s Drift to divert attention from his culpability in the disaster at Isandlwana.
• He placed blame on a dead subordinate.
• In August 1879, British forces captured King Cetshwayo and the war came to an end.
• In spite of his recall, Victoria repeatedly honored Chelmsford who dropped dead at the age of 78-years-old playing billiards at his club.