

## 19<sup>th</sup> Century Victorian England – “The Golden Age of the Middle Class”

- Great expansion in size, power, and wealth
- Factory Owners and Industrial Capitalists and bankers joining with older traditional middle class of merchants and professionals
- Develop a great “class consciousness” = feeling that they were in a special group – a real sense of identity
- “The only class you could fall out of”
- Benefitted from the societal changes of the 19<sup>th</sup> century industrial world that allowed talent to rise and not have social status based on birth or rank but on hard work, self-reliance, education, and thrift = the “self made man”
- Middle Class wants to set themselves apart: appearance, proper and highly moral behavior and dress, ornate homes and furnishings, education
- **WHAT WILL THE MIDDLE CLASS BE POLITICALLY?? = “Liberal”**
- Middle Class/Victorian Age Features:
  - tea time
  - domestic servants – maids, butlers
  - department stores
  - “the Golden Age of Funerals” – elaborate
  - Sports: horse racing, soccer, cricket, tennis, bicycle riding
  - CHRISTMAS!
  - Literature! = the Novel – Charles Dickens “A Christmas Carol” (1843)



Queen Victoria

1837 - 1901

## The British Middle Class – 19<sup>th</sup> Century

### Family / Women's Roles

- **Father** = symbol of authority
- The sole income = “breadwinner”
  - “separate spheres”
  - “the family home”
- “**Middle class domesticity**”
  - **Women**
    - raise children
    - protect children
  - take charge of home—manage household
  - keep order, cleanliness
  - manage servants

### Children

- Long childhood encouraged
- Protected from the adult world
- Games, toys—fun but also to teach (dolls, puzzles)
- Participation in sports for boys
- Boy Scouts formed (GB-1908) - combined, sports, adventure, military

### Christmas

- Greatly declining as a holiday by the 1830's—impact of the Ind Rev—factory work = no time, no \$
- Victorians revive—had been re-established by 1840's
- First Christmas tree and Card sent in England in 1840
  - Charles Dickens writes “A Christmas Carol” 1843
    - Holiday fit in well with the highly ritualized and stylized lives of the Victorians

### Consumer Culture

#### “Consumerism”

- Consumerism represents the increasing disposable income of all classes, but especially the middle class in the 19th century
- Consumerism had to be encouraged to keep pace with the quantity of products due to mass production
  - **ADVERTISING**
    - newspapers
    - “product crazes”
- **Bon Marche / Harrods** Department Stores

### Lifestyle

- **Tea Time!!**
- **Cigarettes**—first cigarette shop opened in England in 1863—impact of the Crimean War (British soldiers observed the Russians—bring back habit)
- **Funerals**—“Golden Age of Funerals” - very elaborate—many rituals—long period of mourning—impact of photography = “post mortem photography”
  - posing of bodies— (late 1800's 3/20 infant mortality, average life expectancy is 40)
- **Leisure activities/sports**—tennis, horse racing, cricket, bicycling (big craze in late 1800's)
- **Team sports**—baseball, basketball, football, soccer
- **Olympics**—modern games revived 1896
- **Travel** = vacations