CHAPTER

23 Growth of Western Democracies
1815–1914

The People Demand Reform

A series of political reforms during the 1800s and early 1900s transformed Great Britain from a monarchy and aristocracy into a democracy. While some British politicians opposed the reforms, most sided in favor of reforming Parliament.

❝No doubt, at that very early period, the House of Commons did represent the people of England but. . . . the House of Commons, as it presently subsists, does not represent the people of England. . . . The people called loudly for reform, saying that whatever good existed in the constitution of this House—whatever confidence was placed in it by the people, was completely gone. ❞
—Lord John Russell, March 1, 1831

Listen to the Witness History audio to learn more about democratic developments in Britain.

◀ Parliamentary Election of 1836
Though most were unable to vote, many townspeople gathered in the marketplace to cheer or harass the candidates.

Queen Victoria of Great Britain and Ireland

THE RIGHT TICKET FOR YOU!
YOU ARE TRAVELLING ON A SAFE LINE
AND ARE ASSURED A SAFE RETURN

A Liberal Party poster from 1911

Chapter Preview 🔊

Chapter Focus Question How did Britain, France, and the United States slowly extend democratic rights during the 1800s and early 1900s?

Section 1
Democratic Reform in Britain

Section 2
Social and Economic Reform in Britain

Section 3
Division and Democracy in France

Section 4
Expansion of the United States

Use the ☑ **Quick Study Timeline** at the end of this chapter to preview chapter events.

CALIFORNIA
GOLD REGION DIRECT!

JOSEPHINE.
BURTHEN 400 TONS, CAPT.

10th November Next.
RODNEY FRENCH.

Advertisement for transportation to California during the Gold Rush

❓ Concept Connector ONLINE

To explore Essential Questions related to this chapter, go to PHSchool.com
Web Code: nad-2307

Fashions of the rich (above right), and poverty on the streets of London, circa 1877 (above)

Two Nations

One day a wealthy Englishman named Charles Egremont boasted to strangers that Victoria, the queen of England, "reigns over the greatest nation that ever existed."

"Which nation?" asks one of the strangers, "for she reigns over two. . . . Two nations; between whom there is no [communication] and no sympathy; who are as ignorant of each other's habits, thoughts, and feelings, as if they were . . . inhabitants of different planets."
What are these "two nations," Egremont asks. "THE RICH AND THE POOR," the stranger replies.
—Benjamin Disraeli, *Sybil*

Focus Question How did political reform gradually expand suffrage and make the British Parliament more democratic during the 1800s?

Democratic Reform in Britain

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Objectives

- Describe how reformers worked to change Parliament in the 1800s.
- Understand the values that Queen Victoria represented.
- Summarize how the Liberal and Conservative parties helped bring a new era to British politics.

Terms, People, and Places

rotten borough
electorate
secret ballot
Queen Victoria

Benjamin Disraeli
William Gladstone
parliamentary democracy

Note Taking

Reading Skill: Identify Main Ideas As you read this section, complete an outline of the contents.

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I. Reforming Parliament
    A. Reformers press for change
        1.
        2.
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In the 1800s, Benjamin Disraeli and other political leaders slowly worked to bridge Britain's "two nations" and extend democratic rights. Unlike some of its neighbors in Europe, Britain generally achieved change through reform rather than revolution.

Reforming Parliament

In 1815, Britain was a constitutional monarchy with a parliament and two political parties. Still, it was far from democratic. Although members of the House of Commons were elected, less than five percent of the people had the right to vote. Wealthy nobles and squires, or country landowners, dominated politics and heavily influenced voters. In addition, the House of Lords—made up of hereditary nobles and high-ranking clergy—could veto any bill passed by the House of Commons.

Reformers Press for Change Long-standing laws kept many people from voting. Catholics and non-Anglican Protestants, for example, could not vote or serve in Parliament. In the 1820s, reformers pushed to end religious restrictions. After fierce debate, Parliament finally granted Catholics and non-Anglican Protestants equal political rights.

An even greater battle soon erupted over making Parliament more representative. During the Industrial Revolution, centers of population shifted. Some rural towns lost so many people that they had few or no voters. Yet local landowners in these rotten boroughs still

sent members to Parliament. At the same time, populous new industrial cities like Manchester and Birmingham had no seats allocated in Parliament because they had not existed as population centers in earlier times.

Reform Act of 1832 By 1830, Whigs and Tories were battling over a bill to reform Parliament. The Whig Party largely represented middle-class and business interests. The Tory Party spoke for nobles, land-owners, and others whose interests and income were rooted in agriculture. In the streets, supporters of reform chanted, "The Bill, the whole Bill, and nothing but the Bill!" Their shouts seemed to echo the cries of revolutionaries on the continent.

Parliament finally passed the Great Reform Act in 1832. It redistributed seats in the House of Commons, giving representation to large towns and cities and eliminating rotten boroughs. It also enlarged the **electorate**, the body of people allowed to vote, by granting suffrage to more men. The Act did, however, keep a property requirement for voting.

The Reform Act of 1832 did not bring full democracy, but it did give a greater political voice to middle-class men. Landowning nobles, however, remained a powerful force in the government and in the economy.

The Chartist Movement The reform bill did not help rural or urban workers. Some of them demanded more radical change. In the 1830s, protesters known as Chartists drew up the People's Charter. This petition demanded universal male suffrage, annual parliamentary elections, and salaries for members of Parliament. Another key demand was for a **secret ballot,** which would allow people to cast their votes without announcing them publicly.

**Meeting of the Unions
on Newhall Hill, Birmingham**

Twice the Chartists presented petitions with over a million signatures to Parliament. Both petitions were ignored. In 1848, as revolutions swept Europe, the Chartists prepared a third petition and organized a march on Parliament. Fearing violence, the government moved to suppress the march. Soon after, the unsuccessful Chartist movement declined. In time, however, Parliament would pass most of the major reforms proposed by the Chartists.

✔ **Checkpoint** How was the British Parliament reformed during the early 1800s?

The Victorian Age

From 1837 to 1901, the great symbol in British life was **Queen Victoria.** Her reign was the longest in British history. Although she exercised little real political power, she set the tone for what is now called the Victorian age.

Symbol of a Nation's Values As queen, Victoria came to embody the values of her age. These Victorian ideals included duty, thrift, honesty, hard work, and above all respectability. Victoria herself embraced a strict code of morals and manners. As a young woman, she married a German prince, Albert, and they raised a large family.

A Confident Age Under Victoria, the British middle class—and growing numbers of the working class—felt great confidence in the future. That confidence grew as Britain expanded its already huge empire.

The Birmingham Political Union's enormous rallies (above) and calls for reform are credited with the final passage of the Great Reform Bill of 1832. As one politician said of the BPU, "To this body, more than to any other, is confessedly due the triumph (such as it was) of the Reform Bill. Its well-ordered proceedings, extended organisation, and immense assemblages of people, at critical periods of its progress, rendered the measure irresistible."

From Monarchy to Democracy in Britain

In the early 1800s, Britain's government was a monarchy and an aristocracy under the rule of Queen Victoria ① and the aristocrats and landowners in the House of Lords. ② A series of reforms during the 1800s and early 1900s transformed Britain's government into a democracy. The first of these reforms was the Great Reform Act of 1832, by which seats in the Parliament were redistributed to give more representation to growing industrial areas. The act also expanded the vote to include about one in five adult men. The Second Reform Act in 1867 was spearheaded by Benjamin Disraeli, ④ a Conservative leader who hoped to defeat his liberal rival William Gladstone ③ and
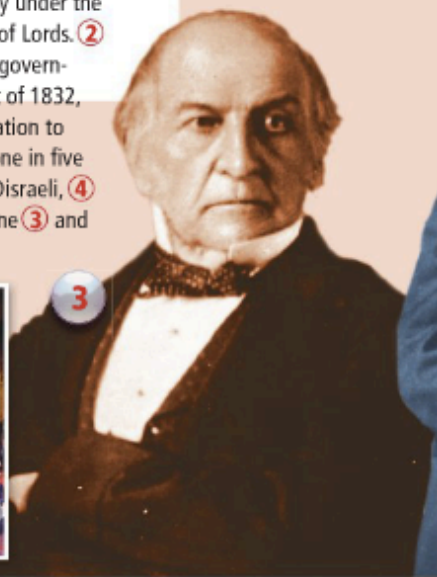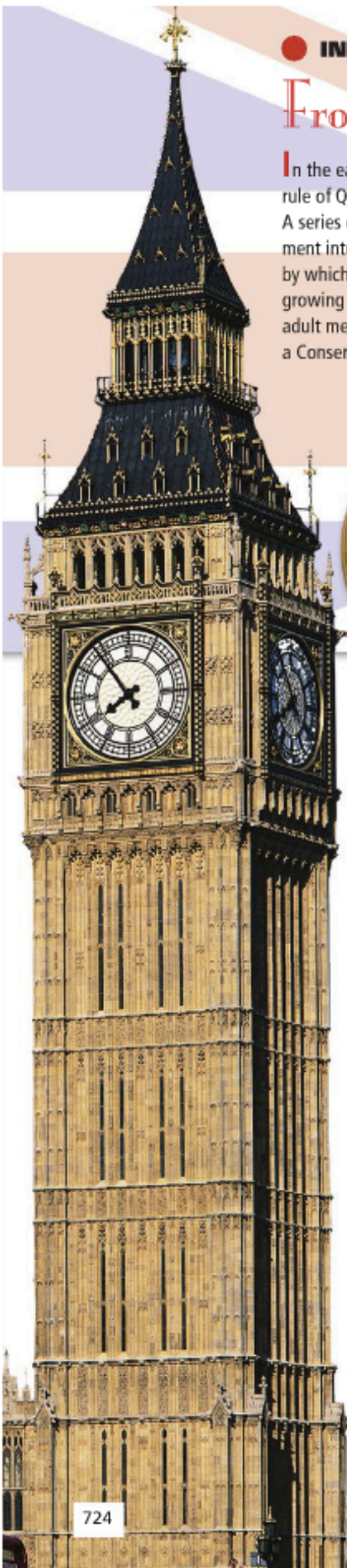
Victoria, the empress of India and ruler of some 300 million subjects around the world, became a revered symbol of British might.

During her reign, Victoria witnessed growing agitation for social reform. The queen herself commented that the lower classes "earn their bread and riches so deservedly that they cannot and ought not to be kept back." As the Victorian era went on, reformers continued the push toward greater social and economic justice.

✓ **Checkpoint** What values did Queen Victoria represent and how did these values relate to economic reform?

A New Era in British Politics

In the 1860s, a new era dawned in British politics. The old political parties regrouped under new leadership. Benjamin Disraeli forged the Tories into the modern Conservative Party. The Whigs, led by William Gladstone, evolved into the Liberal Party. Between 1868 and 1880, as the majority in Parliament swung between the two parties, Gladstone and Disraeli alternated as prime minister. Both fought for important reforms.

Expanding Suffrage Disraeli and the Conservative Party pushed through the Reform Bill of 1867. By giving the vote to many working-class men, the new law almost doubled the size of the electorate.

In the 1880s, it was the turn of Gladstone and the Liberal Party to extend suffrage. Their reforms gave the vote to farmworkers and most other men. By century's end, almost-universal male suffrage, the secret ballot, and other Chartist ambitions had been achieved. Britain had truly transformed itself from a constitutional monarchy to a **parliamentary democracy,** a form of government in which the executive leaders (usually
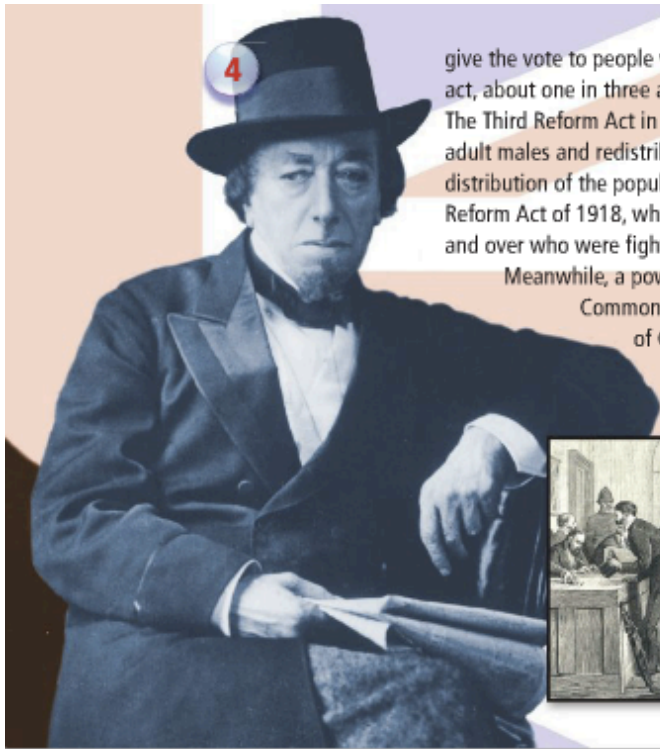
give the vote to people who might vote for his Conservative party. As a result of the act, about one in three adult men could vote, including many working-class men. ⑤ The Third Reform Act in 1884–1885 further extended the vote to two out of three adult males and redistributed seats in Parliament to more accurately reflect the distribution of the population. The outbreak of World War I brought about the Fourth Reform Act of 1918, which extended suffrage to all men over 21, and those aged 19 and over who were fighting the war. Women over 30 were also given the vote.

Meanwhile, a power struggle between the House of Lords and the House of Commons resulted in the Parliament Bill of 1911 which gave the House of Commons ⑥ supremacy over the House of Lords.

a prime minister and cabinet) are chosen by and responsible to the legislature (parliament), and are also members of it.

Limiting the Lords In the early 1900s, many bills passed by the House of Commons met defeat in the House of Lords. In 1911, a Liberal government passed measures to restrict the power of the Lords, including their power to veto tax bills. The Lords resisted. Finally, the government threatened to create enough new lords to approve the law, and the Lords backed down. People hailed the change as a victory for democracy. In time, the House of Lords would become a largely ceremonial body with little power. The elected House of Commons would reign supreme.

✓ **Checkpoint** How was Parliament reformed during the late 1800s and early 1900s?

Thinking Critically

1. **Recognize Ideologies** Which group in the early 1800s do you think most feared the "democratization" of Britain? Why?
2. **Identify Central Issues** How did the Parliament Bill in 1911 reflect the same trends occurring as a result of the reform acts?

SECTION 1 Assessment

Terms, People, and Places

1. What do each of the key terms listed at the beginning of the section have in common? Explain.

Note Taking

2. **Reading Skill: Identify Main Ideas** Use your completed outline to answer the Focus Question: How did political reform gradually expand suffrage and make the British Parliament more democratic during the 1800s?

Comprehension and Critical Thinking

3. **Summarize** How did the Reform Act of 1832 change Parliament?
4. **Categorize** What middle-class values are associated with the Victorian age?
5. **Identify Central Issues** What reforms did the Liberal and Conservative parties achieve?
6. **Draw Conclusions** Why do you think the Chartists demanded (a) a secret ballot, (b) salaries for members of Parliament?

● Writing About History

Quick Write: Gather Information If you were assigned to write a biographical essay on Queen Victoria, Benjamin Disraeli, or William Gladstone, what questions about these individuals would you want to answer in your essay? Choose one of these people and create a list of such questions about that person.