Reforms in The British Empire

*Human Legacy*,
Chapter 23.1, pages 685-690.
“Before the 1800s Britain was dominated by the interests of wealthy landowners and aristocrats. During the 1830s, however, industrialization led to rapid change in society. The growth of factories created a new class of workers, but these new industrial workers were not well represented in government. Recognizing the changing times, some British citizens began to call for social and political reform.”

Reform Act of 1832

• Britain Before 1832
  – Parliament controlled by landholding aristocrats
  – New Industrial cities had no representation
  – Only wealthy male property owners had suffrage
  – Members of Parliament not paid
    • Only wealthy could serve

• Provisions of Reform Act
  – Burrows realigned to reflect population shifts
    • Industrial cities gained representation in Parliament
  – Suffrage extended to middle class men (50% increase)
Sadler and Factory Act

• **Sadler Report**
  – Michael Sadler a member of Parliament
  – Investigates treatment of children in textile factories
  – Exposes harmful conditions
    • Long hours, low pay & physical abuse
    • Danger of work

• **Factory Act of 1833**
  – Teenagers limited to 12hr workday
  – Children 9-13 had to receive 2hrs of schooling/day
Other Reforms

- **Slavery Abolition Act 1833**
  - Slavery abolished from the British Empire over a 4 year period
  - Owners compensated

- **Public Health & Crime laws**
  - Improve conditions in industrial cities
Chartism

- **Chartists**
  - Several million strong
  - Petition Parliament in 1839
    - Peoples’ Charter

- **Demands**
  - Universal male suffrage
  - Secret ballots
  - Annual elections
  - Pay for Members in the House of Commons

- **Results**
  - Parliament rejects petition
  - Uprisings in 1848
  - Demands gradually implemented
Victorian Era Voting Reforms

“In 1837 Queen Victoria became the ruler of Great Britain, Her reign, the longest in Britain’s history, lasted until 1901 and is called the Victorian Era. It was a time of great change in Britain, including voting reforms that made the country more democratic. Britain had long been a constitutional monarchy, but the voting reforms of the Victorian Era made it increasingly democratic.”

~Human Legacy, page 688.
Disraeli and Gladstone

- **Benjamin Disraeli**
  - Prime Minister
  - Member of Conservative party
  - Extends suffrage for men 1867 (33% become eligible)
  - Establishes secret ballots

- **William Gladstone**
  - Prime Minister
  - Member of Liberal party
  - Sought progressive reforms
  - Extends suffrage in 1885
Women’s Suffrage

• Women’s Status
  – Could not own property
  – Were not legal guardians of their children

• Enlightenment
  – Mary Wollstonecraft advocates women’s rights

• Views on Suffrage
  – Queen Victoria Opposes
  – Disraeli in favor
  – Emmeline Pankhurst (pictured)
    • Advocates destructive tactics
    • Founder of women’s Social and Political Union (WSPU)
  – Women over 30 gain suffrage in 1918; all adult women in 1928
Changes in the British Empire

“Beyond Britain people living in other parts of the British Empire were also moved by the spirit of reform. In the mid-1800s people in Ireland, Canada, Australia and New Zealand took steps to rule themselves.”

~*Human Legacy*, page 689.
Ireland

- Act of Union 1801
  - Ireland becomes part of the UK

- Irish Resentment
  - Disliked British landlords
  - Industry hurts Irish agriculture

- Problems in Ireland
  - Potato famines 1845-1851
    - 1 million starve
    - 1.5 million emigrate to United States
  - Ireland forced to export food during famine
  - Ireland fights for home-rule in 1860s
  - Granted limited self-government in 1920s
Canada

- **Canadian Diversity**
  - Some areas English speaking
  - Other areas French speaking

- **Reform Efforts**
  - Rebellions in 1837
  - Lord Durham appointed governor in 1838
    - Moves Canada towards independence peacefully
  - Gains *dominion* status in 1867
    - Self-governing Colony
Australia and New Zealand

- **Australia**
  - Originally a penal colony
  - Gold & copper discovered in mid 1800s
  - Becomes Commonwealth of Australia in 1901
    - Self-rule
    - Independent Parliament
    - Still part of British Empire

- **New Zealand**
  - Maori people give land for self-rule (become a dominion)
  - Grant women suffrage in 1893
    - First country to grant women suffrage