

The British Empress: Queen Victoria [B2]

Si considera una delle figure più imponenti del XIX secolo, simbolo dello splendore imperiale del Regno Unito e della sua egemonia economica, politica e culturale. Malgrado l'atteggiamento riservato e un po' scontroso, seppe costruire una monarchia costituzionale moderna e riuscì ad avvicinare l'istituzione al grande pubblico britannico.



A **towering** figure in British history, Queen Victoria was actually a diminutive figure, just one metre fifty in height. By the end of her sixty-three year reign, she **ruled** not only the world's most important economic power at that time, but also an enormous empire that covered 25 per cent of the globe and **numbered** four hundred million **subjects**.

A NEW CONFIDENT AGE

Victoria, her husband Albert, Prince Consort, and their nine children came to represent a new, confident age. She created an innovative role for the royal family, reconnecting it with the public through civic **duties**. The idol of her people, she **restored** dignity and popularity to a **tarnished** crown through

honesty and a sense of duty. She [set the standard](#) for Britain's modern monarchy.

UNHAPPY CHILDHOOD

Born in 1819, Victoria had an unhappy childhood and a [strained](#) relationship with her mother. When she became Queen in June 1837, she asked for one hour alone, and then sent her mother to distant rooms in Buckingham Palace. Her coronation in 1838 was chaotic, with one ring being put on the wrong finger and taking an hour [to remove](#)! When she finally decided on marriage in 1839, she, as the head of state, had to propose to Albert herself. She married in a white dress, starting a new tradition — [brides](#) until then just wore their best clothes.

A COW OR A DOG

The mother of nine children, Victoria hated pregnancy and found [childbirth](#) undignified, [complaining](#) that: "I think much more of our being like a cow or a dog at such moments; when our poor nature becomes so very animal and [unecstatic](#)". She suffered post-natal depression, thought newborn babies ugly and viewed [breast-feeding](#) with [disgust](#). Her children married into the royal families on the Continent, making her "the grandmother of Europe".

****Since it has pleased Providence to place me in this station, I shall do my [UTMOST](#) to fulfil my duty towards my country.****

CONSTITUTIONAL ROLE

During Victoria's long reign, from 1837 to 1901, political power moved from the sovereign to Parliament. The modern idea of a constitutional monarch, a role above political parties, began to evolve. The monarchy took on a ceremonial character. Victoria became the [patron](#) of hundreds of institutions, including numerous charities.

EMPIRE'S EMPRESS

As Britain established itself as the most powerful nation in the world, the [stout](#) Queen Victoria became a potent symbol of its dominance. In 1877 she became Empress of the British Empire and her popularity [soared](#). New technology had already increased royal contact with the public. Railways, newspapers and the invention of photography made the monarchy a constant element in public life. Victoria and Albert became celebrities. However, with increased accessibility came greater vulnerability, and during her reign Victoria survived no less than eight assassination [attempts](#).

WIDOW OF WINDSOR

Queen Victoria is also known for her devotion to Albert. When he died in 1861, she fell into a deep depression, remaining in [seclusion](#) for many years and rarely appearing in public. Victoria died much later, on 22 January 1901. She had become a national icon representing an era of [momentous](#) national change. Small in stature, her indomitable character came to symbolise Britain's ascent to the heights of global dominance.

Glossary

- **seclusion** = in solitudine
- **towering** = imponente
- **numbered** = annoverare
- **restored** = restituire
- **brides** = spose
- **unecstatic** = infelice
- **breast-feeding** = allattamento al seno
- **patron** = benefattrice
- **stout** = robusta
- **ruled** = governare
- **tarnished** = appannata, intaccata
- **strained** = tesa
- **to remove** = togliere, sfilare
- **childbirth** = parto
- **UTMOST** = tutto lo sforzo possibile
- **soared** = aumentare
- **momentous** = epocale
- **duties** = doveri
- **complaining** = lamentare
- **disgust.** = repulsione, ribrezzo
- **subjects** = sudditi
- **set the standard** = definire lo standard
- **attempts** = tentativi, attentati