**Final Copy:**

**Overview:**

The Victorian age was a period of literature and art that is commonly agreed to have ranged between 1798 to 1832, overlapping with Queen Victoria's rule. The era shares her name due to her great national and international influence during this time, and her aid in progressing the arts. Another event that shaped the development of the Victorian age would be the Industrial Revolution, and subsequent evolution of science and urbanisation, influencing the common themes in literature, such as working and industrialisation, during this time. The Victorian age signified a turn from Romantic literature, as it focused more on objectivism and applied a greater emphasis on the lives of ordinary, middle- and low-class people at the time. This era is often regarded as the Golden Age of English literature, as it is the peak of English influence in terms of art in an international scale, and is characterised by an influx in prose fiction, contrasted to the predominance of poetry in early periods of literature.

Victorian literature commonly depicts the difficulty and hardness of industrial life in which hard work, and perseverance wins in the end. It also explores British Imperialism; work and the middle class; industrialisation; and a pessimism towards religion and spirituality.

Some notable writers are: Charles Dickens, Oscar Wilde, Anthony Trollope, Mary Ann Evans (under the penname George Eliot)

**Extract:**

**The Coal Miner**

Black drops of rain fell from dark, foreboding clouds as they rolled in, plunging the town into great darkness. Plants mourned the sun. Chimneys exhaled smoke, blending into the chilling air as it drifted up, allowing the occasional dying ember to float out, only to be smitten by a volley of heavy, large droplets, which in turn, flowed into the nearby river, now matte black due to industrial by-product, rendering it impossible to drink; athirst workers resorted to cheaper alcohol over water. The now unfruitful trees in the bordering forest were covered in soot from the factories, suffocating them, as they slowly wilted away. The ground, dark and dead from years without sunlight starving all the once verdant grass.

The city, however, thrived – growing across the land – a tumour spreading its tendrils out for more resources. Roads grew; within them, the eternal darkness caused the horses and dogs to become amorphous beasts as they melded into the shadows. Along with the foot passengers, they became a congealed mass, as it moved rhythmically, completely apathetic towards the unfavourable weather. The river of unidentifiable masses flowed around corners, through intersections, and into buildings, all going somewhere. There was conversation, there was barking, there was neighing, but it was all eclipsed by the synchronous clanging of iron picks on the hard, cold, rock ground, reverberating throughout the town, miners looking for one thing: coal, the lifeblood of the city.

The chiming of the bell echoed down the narrow, claustrophobic hallways of the mine, signifying the end of their workday. A wave of down-trodden, demoralised miners flowed out of the coal mines covered in mud and sweat and soot, carrying the scent of brimstone along with them. They would meet officers from the coal company, who would hand out their monthly pay, before dispersing into the crowd. Walking along with them was Stanley Conrad, counting the little money that he received, noticing that he was underpaid, but uncomplaining, fearing the possible loss of his job.

This made him one of the company’s best workers: unquestioning, diligent, desperate, afraid. Unable to secure a more thriving career and perpetually working. Walking along the dark streets, he winced as sharp stones caught in his broken leather soles dug into his skin, his shoes providing no protection. A cold gust goes past him, his tattered jeans providing no warmth, and his old jacket drenched and blackened by the rain. He peered into the glass windows of shops on either side, knowing that he would be unable to purchase any of the vanities that he found within. However, part of him also knew he was fortunate, having seen beggars and vagrants lie in little alleys, half asleep. Having shoved his pay for the month into his pocket, he scurried home, as he had every other day, hoping that no trouble would befall him.

Conrad had lived in this Kennucktown for his entire life, unable to escape the shackles of his family's debt. Despite his shortcomings, he had been able to have a family, which he worked desperately, day and night, to keep together. He would trudge to work every day, hoping, praying, that that day might be the day where he would strike gold and that everything would work out for him; his optimism was unparalleled, and blinding him from the truth of his situation. He would have drunk away his problems along with his fellow miners, but he lacked the money to do so, as, despite being the most diligent miners in the town, he was never paid equally with his colleagues, forever keeping him in debt.

Despite his efforts, trouble followed him everywhere. Last year, it was a storm, that ravaged his house, causing substantial damage. Last week, it was disease, forcing him to use his family’s savings on medicine. Tonight, he had the misfortune of meeting his boss, Sir William. Stanley had been slaving away in the mines when he was interrupted by a rather rotund man, who asked him who Stanley was. Stanley knew this man, his face plastered outside of the hellish hole that he mined. Sir William, manager of the town's mines.

Sir William was not as dull as he looked, he noticed everything, the nervous fidgeting with the pick, the broken shoes, and his ripped pants, but what caught his attention most was the glint of desperation in Stanley's eyes. When it came time to pay his workers, he had removed 3 pence from Stanley's name; he was met with no retaliation.

**Rationale:**

This is my original extract of a Victorian-esque creative novel, exploring the difficulty of Industrial life, particularly for middle- and lower-class workers whilst attempting to appeal to as broad of an audience as possible, from every age group and social class. This piece gained inspiration from some of the famous works of the Victorian era, specifically *Bleak House* and *Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens as well as *The Warden* by Anthony Trollope.

The exposition of the piece is highly sensorial and shows a very detailed construction of the setting. This was inspired by the descriptive introduction of *Bleak House* by Charles Dickens, where he uses sensory imagery and a myriad of literary techniques such as metaphor, similes, and personification to accurately and vividly portray the environment in which his story takes place. Further on into the extract, there is an exploration into the character, Stanley Conrad where his personality, background, and troubles are revealed, a common feature in Victorian novels, as seen in *Oliver Twist* and *The Warden* written by Charles Dickens and Anthony Trollope respectively, and immersing the reader into the protagonist’s life.

Much like many novels of the Victorian era, this extract utilises a third person omniscient point of view, however predominantly focusing on a small cast of characters, as can be seen in *Oliver Twist*. On top of that, the characters portrayed are standard, stock characters, with Stanley being the stereotypical poor but hard worker and Sir William being a rich and cunning businessman.

As for central themes explored in my story, the story depicts the difficulty of work during the Industrial Revolution, a common motif in Victorian literature, and follows the misfortunes of Stanley Conrad, inspired by the continuous tragedies that faced the protagonist in *Bleak House*.

**Draft (Narrative):**

**The Coal Miner [DRAFT]**

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