



## WOMEN-WRITERS IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

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**Annotation:** A comprehensive overview of the significant social and political changes experienced by women during the Victorian era, highlighting the pivotal role of writing in advocating for women's rights and challenging traditional gender norms. It discusses how women writers utilized literature to address issues such as limited career opportunities, educational barriers, and political disenfranchisement, ultimately contributing to the emergence of feminism and the redefinition of gender roles. The concept of the "New Woman" and its impact on societal reforms, as well as the works of prominent female authors like Charlotte Bronte and their portrayal of strong female characters. Additionally, it touches upon the challenges faced by female writers in a male-dominated literary landscape and the public demand for novels that depicted themes of independence and female sexuality.

**Keywords:** Victorian era, women's rights, social change, feminism, gender roles, literature, female authors, pseudonyms, equality, societal norms, New Woman, Charlotte Bronte, George Eliot, political disenfranchisement, gender inequality, societal reform, female protagonists, independence, gender-neutral pseudonyms, feminist movement

### INTRODUCTION:

The Victorian era witnessed significant social and political transformations, especially regarding the roles and rights of women. Women of this time actively pursued social and constitutional liberties akin to men, utilizing writing as a powerful tool to raise awareness about their circumstances. Their literary contributions not only supported themselves financially but also served as a means to advocate for women's rights and challenge societal norms. This period saw restrictions on women's career opportunities, educational prospects, and political participation, prompting many women to write and publish anonymously or under pseudonyms to demand equality and amplify their voices. Notable female novelists like Charlotte Bronte and George Eliot emerged during this time, contributing to the burgeoning feminist movement and challenging traditional gender roles.

### ABSTRACT:

The Victorian era marked a period of significant social and political change, particularly regarding women's rights and roles in society. Women utilized writing as a means to advocate for equality and challenge societal norms, addressing issues such as limited career options, educational barriers, and political



disenfranchisement. Notable female authors like Charlotte Bronte navigated the male-dominated literary scene by publishing under gender-neutral pseudonyms, contributing to the rise of feminism and the portrayal of strong female protagonists. This paper explores the impact of women's writing on Victorian society, highlighting themes of independence, equality, and the evolving concept of the "New Woman."

Significant social and political change occurred throughout the Victorian era, particularly in relation to the responsibilities of women. Women established actively pursuing the similar social and constitutional liberties as males, and writing was one of their key tools for raising awareness of their predicament. Women wrote to support themselves, make literary contributions, and—above all—to fight for women's rights and transform British society. The problems women in 19th-century Britain faced included limitations on their career options, education prospects, and the ability to vote and own property. Many women made the decision to write about topics and publish their works in order to demand equality while making their voices heard. Feminism subsequently started to gain popularity as a result of women's disappointment with obvious injustice and an increasingly catastrophic social and political atmosphere. During that time frame, Charlotte Bronte and George Eliot were a couple of the more well-known female novelists. In order to guarantee that their written work would be accorded the same respect as those written by men, many Victorian-era women published their works anonymously or under pseudonyms. All of the Bronte sisters used gender-ambiguous pseudonyms, which gave female writers the confidence to develop characters in whatever way they pleased without worrying that their gender would be disparaged or that their work would not be regarded seriously.

During the Victorian era, the concept of the "New Woman" was likewise well-liked and played a vital role in culture. The stereotyped Victorian woman was illiterate, totally dependent on men, and lived a domestic existence; in contrast, the New Woman was anything more than. Rather, the New Woman was self-sufficient, educated, independent, and intellectual. Significant societal reforms that improved women's rights, redefined gender roles, and overthrew masculine supremacy were made possible in large part by this concept. Novels about the New Woman typically centered on strong-willed female protagonists and expressed discontent with the Victorian woman's role in marriage and society at large. They work to mend the connections between the sexes, encourage women's career goals, and reinterpret a woman's place in marriage and other social conventions.

One of the most well-known authors of realistic Victorian fiction, Charlotte Bronte wrote most of her books under the alias "Currer Bell," which was gender-neutral. Bronte developed strong female characters with moral integrity, intelligence, and freedom of thought for her works. She wrote for the women—principals, governesses, and spinsters among them—whom she considered as being oppressed by the system. Bronte felt compelled to write about these ladies because



she believed they were all trapped by society or uncontrollable circumstances. Middle-class single women had no option but to become governesses or turn to prostitution in order to make ends meet. The governess, on the other hand, suffered from being excluded in the home and classified as a hybrid between a family member and a servant. She also earned inadequate compensation and no job security. Because it examined women's roles in society, the governess book gained appeal due to the enormous number of middle-class women who were forced to accept the unclear role of governess. The most well-known governess book is *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte, a fictitious autobiography following the orphan as she grows up and takes on the role of governess at Thornfield Manor. Jane is a courageous, resourceful, and rebellious woman who overcomes many challenges in a culture where men predominate. In the end, Jane falls in love with Rochester, but she rebels against society by marrying him because she is in love, not for the money or the status that comes with being married to a man.

When the nineteenth century came around, male writers who were condescending toward women and believed they lacked the intellectual capacity to create literary works of a caliber worthy of competition exceeded the number of female writers. Although enormous changes in politics, economy, and social structure at the turning point of the century afforded women access to higher educational opportunities and a chance to establish lives free from the constraints of domestic fiction. Women's awareness of gender inequality and their subjugated function and status in nineteenth-century society increased as a result of the new, contemporary developments. Female writers had to publish anonymously or behind male pseudonyms in order to enter the male-dominated literary scene and stand beside the males without drawing criticism. Women attempted to overcome the social, political, and legal restrictions placed on them by society as the century went on. Their literary works were influenced by a number of social reform movements spearheaded by women that called for equal treatment for men and women in rights.

The actual conditions of the oppressive society were ultimately reflected in the books written by women writers, who also exposed the public opinions and would prefer that the majority of women felt but couldn't bring themselves to voice. Readers obtained so enthralled with the themes of independence and female sexuality as they were represented in the marriage and love constitutional documents that they proceeded to demand new novels on a daily basis. Due to the enormous public demand, a large number of novels written by women were produced, which greatly increased the popularity of these writers and helped them surpass all expectations as best-selling authors.

Even though being under the impression that writing was a man's category, women began to write books that accurately depicted women's roles in Victorian society by capitalizing on the enormous demand for fiction. Female writing was considered with disagreement by many male critics who believed that a novel



produced by a woman should be feminine, concern the women's proper area, and promote a domestic angle. The primary themes of the writings of females during the first half of the twentieth century were independence and equality, referred to as women continued to seek these goals through the female heroines in their works of literature despite abusing criticism that displayed women as inferior to men.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

In conclusion, the Victorian era witnessed a transformative period for women, marked by significant advancements in social and political rights, largely driven by the efforts of female writers who utilized literature as a means of advocacy and social change. Through their works, women challenged societal norms and gender roles, contributing to the emergence of feminism and the empowerment of women in British society. Authors like Charlotte Bronte played a crucial role in portraying strong female protagonists and shedding light on the struggles faced by women in a patriarchal society. Despite facing criticism and challenges from male critics, female writers persevered and ultimately contributed to the diversification of literature and the promotion of themes of independence and equality. Overall, the Victorian era stands as a pivotal period in the history of women's rights, with literature serving as a powerful tool for social transformation and the advancement of gender equality.

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