PROFESORES DE ENSEÑANZA SECUNDARIA · INGLÉS · JUNTA DE EXTREMADURA

TEMA

47

The English Industrial Revolution and Its Influence as a Model of Historical Transformation. Social and Political Change through the Literature of the Period. C. Dickens

La revolución industrial inglesa; su influencia como modelo de transformación histórica. Los cambios sociales y políticos a través de la literatura de la época. C. Dickens.

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Material de elaboración propia a partir de las fuentes oficiales que se citan al final del tema. No es un temario oficial ni sustituye a la normativa publicada.

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1. INTRODUCTION

'Now, what I want is, Facts.' With these words Mr Gradgrind opens the lesson in *Hard Times*, the novel in which Charles Dickens confronted the Industrial Revolution more directly than anywhere else. The line is a good place to start, because it contains the question that runs through this topic: are facts enough to understand a transformation as deep as the one that turned Britain into the first industrial society, or do we also need the imagination of those who lived it? Historians give us the facts: machines, factories, laws, population figures. Novelists give us what the facts leave out: the smoke, the hunger and the voices of the people who were changed by them.

In this topic I will follow that double path. First, I will examine the English Industrial Revolution itself: its technology, its economy and its geography. Secondly, I will study its social consequences, namely population growth, urbanisation, the factory system and the condition of the working class. Thirdly, I will turn to the political response, from the Reform Act of 1832 and the New Poor Law of 1834 to Chartism, the repeal of the Corn Laws and the Great Exhibition of 1851. Fourthly, I will explain why the English case has been used as a model of historical transformation. Fifthly, I will see how the literature of the period registered these changes, with a panoramic view of Carlyle, Disraeli, Gaskell, Kingsley and the poets of protest, and then a closer study of Charles Dickens. Finally, I will consider the pedagogical and didactic implications of the topic for the Secondary English classroom.

Before moving on, I would like to mention the sources consulted: Asa Briggs's *The Age of Improvement* (2000 edition), Pat Hudson's *The Industrial Revolution* (Edward Arnold, 1992), M. J. Daunton's *Progress and Poverty: An Economic and Social History of Britain 1700–1850* (Oxford University Press, 1995) and Friedrich Engels's *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845). I have also checked dates and texts in the BBC History archive, the Victoria and Albert Museum, legislation.gov.uk, Dickens Journals Online of the University of Buckingham and Project Gutenberg. For the curricular framework I have followed Organic Law 3/2020 (LOMLOE), which modifies Organic Law 2/2006 on Education, Royal Decrees 217/2022 and 243/2022, and the Extremaduran Decrees 110/2022 and 109/2022.