

CHAPTER
23
SECTION 2

Note Taking Study Guide

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC REFORM IN BRITAIN

Focus Question: What social and economic reforms were passed by the British Parliament during the 1800s and early 1900s?

As you read this section in your textbook, complete the chart below by listing reforms in Britain during the 1800s and early 1900s.

Reforms in Britain	Political	 • • • • • •
	Social	 • • • • • • • • • •
	Economic	 • • • • •

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Section Summary

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC REFORM IN BRITAIN

During the 1800s, the British Parliament passed important laws. One issue was **free trade**, or trade without restrictions between countries. The Corn Laws caused fierce debate. These laws imposed high tariffs on imported grain. Farmers and landowners benefited, but the tariffs made bread more expensive. In 1846, Parliament **repealed** the Corn Laws. Another important reform, brought about by the **abolition movement**, was the end of the slave trade in 1807. By 1833, Parliament had banned slavery in all British colonies. Other reforms reduced the number of **capital offenses**, or crimes punishable by death. Instead of being put to death, many petty criminals were transported to **penal colonies** in Australia and New Zealand.

Working conditions in the industrial age were grim and often dangerous. Gradually, Parliament passed laws to regulate conditions in factories and mines. Other laws set minimum wages and maximum hours of work. Trade unions became legal in 1825 and worked to improve the lives of their members. Both the Liberal and Conservative parties enacted reforms to benefit workers, including free elementary education. The Labour Party, formed in 1900, soon became one of Britain's major parties. In the early 1900s, Parliament passed laws to protect workers with old-age pensions and accident, health, and unemployment insurance.

During this time, women struggled for the right to vote.

When mass meetings and other peaceful efforts brought no results, Emmeline Pankhurst and other suffragists turned to more drastic, violent protest. They smashed windows, burned buildings, and went on hunger strikes. Not until 1918 did Parliament finally grant suffrage to women over 30.

Throughout the 1800s, Britain faced the "Irish Question." The Irish resented British rule. Many Irish peasants lived in poverty while paying high rents to **absentee landlords** living in England. Irish Catholics also had to pay tithes to the Church of England. The potato famine made problems worse. Charles Stewart Parnell and other Irish leaders argued for **home rule**, or self-government, but this was debated for decades. Under Gladstone, the government finally ended the use of Irish tithes to support the Church of England and passed laws to protect the rights of Irish tenant farmers.

Review Questions

1. Why did the Corn Laws cause fierce debate in Britain?

2. How did the government under Gladstone help improve conditions in Ireland?

READING CHECK

What are capital offenses?

VOCABULARY STRATEGY

What does the word *drastic* mean in the underlined sentence? Note that the suffragists first tried "peaceful efforts" before turning to "more *drastic*, violent protest." The next sentence describes this. Use these context clues to help you understand what *drastic* means.

READING SKILL

Categorize Sort the laws that were passed to help workers into three categories.
