

Lytton Strachey, Queen Victoria, Chapters 1-6

What is Strachey's opinion of his principle characters? How does he reveal this to his readers?

How does he balance or interweave interpretation and information?

What is the effect of Strachey's tendency to speak in his characters' voices, but without using quotation marks? How can you tell when this is happening?

What are Strachey's main sources for his account? Does he buttress all his assertions with the same kind of references? If not, what explains the difference?

How does Strachey rank politics vs. personality as the subject of biography? As the cause of events?

How does "foreignness" figure in Queen Victoria? Is it the same as "Germanness"?

Strachey was working on this book during World War I and it appeared soon afterwards. How might this have influenced his (and his original readers') interpretation of Victoria's reign?

What does Strachey think of Prince Leopold of Saxe Coburg (later King of the Belgians)? Why does he start the book with him? What is his attitude toward Saxe Coburg in general? Why?

Tone is an important tool for Strachey. Think about these sentences (and they are only a few of many possible examples):

The tragedy at Claremont was of a most upsetting kind. (12)

But Owen was of a sanguine temperament. He also numbered among his proselytes President Jefferson, Prince Metternich, and Napoleon; so that some uncertainty must still linger over the Duke of Kent's views. (15)

For it would be a mistake to suppose that either of these two men was actuated by a vulgar selfishness. (53)

He went to sleep in the Cabinet. (57)

Next morning the royal critic was careful to note down her impressions. (63)

Victoria, treasuring every word, preserving every letter, was all breathless attention and eager obedience. (151)

Yet, strange to say, the object of all this vigilance and solicitude continued to be unsatisfactory and appeared, in fact, to be positively growing worse. (154)

Why does Strachey emphasize the Duke of Kent's rigidity when he is introduced? (14)

What does Strachey think of Lord Sefton's description of the Duke of Kent's motives, which he quotes on 18?

Why was it important for the Duke of Kent to specify that his widow would be Victoria's guardian? (24)

What does Strachey characterize Victoria as a representative of the middle classes? As opposed to what alternative? How is it possible for a member of the royal family to fulfill such a role?

Why does Strachey suggest that Victoria grew up without "humor and imagination"? (32) Does this reveal anything about the author?

How does Strachey's account of William IV differ from that offered in the textbook?

How did the balance of power shift within the Duchess of Kent's household as Victoria grew up? What political difficulties did the Duchess encounter by virtue of her position and her character? Why did Victoria cut her ties with her mother as soon as she became Queen?

What does Strachey suggest about Victoria's relations with the Privy Council in his description of her first meeting with them? (47) How does that compare with the parallel set description of her reaction to the death of Albert? (175)

When Strachey says that Melbourne had "an individuality peculiar to the core," (55) does he mean it as criticism or praise?

What is Strachey's opinion of Victoria's own mastery of tone on 65?

What does Strachey think is the relationship between Victoria's physical appearance and her temperament or character?

What conflict between Melbourne's advice and example, in terms of their effect on Victoria, does Strachey allude to on 79 80?

Why does Strachey note that as a child Albert had "a marked distaste for the opposite sex" (84) and that Victoria had no cause for worry about his fidelity?

Who is the "more remarkable Englishwoman" in Brussels during Victoria's visit? (106) What does this ranking reveal about Strachey's sense of values?

What was so troublesome and fascinating about the "boy Jones" episode? (111 112)

How was it possible for Palmerston to order a special train to London on the spur of the moment? (126)

How did Victoria and Albert's marital relationship influence her discharge of her duties as Queen?

How does Strachey characterize Albert's political role? Why was it a problem? What is the constitutional issue raised on 147 148?

Why does Strachey mention the full size statue of Albert in kilts at Balmoral? (157)

Why was the Prince of Wales "a true scion of the House of Brunswick"? (168)

How sympathetic is Strachey to the dissatisfaction that he attributes to Albert? (169 170)