

The longest reign in britain history essay

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QUEEN VICTORIA Sara Skrba, 091011 Queen Victoria was the queen that had the longest reign in Britain. She came to the throne when she was eighteen years old. She made many improvements during her reign, and that era during which she ruled was called the Victorian era and it was a period of harmony, good fortune and national perseverance for Britain. Queen Victoria was born Alexandrina Victoria on June 24th 1819. Her parents were Princess Victoria Leiningen of Saxe-Coburg and the Duke of Kent, who was the fourth son of George III. She was brought up carefully, since it seemed likely she would inherit the throne from her earliest years, even though at the time of her birth she was fifth in the line of succession. She was christened in a private ceremony by the Archbishop of Canterbury on June 24th 1819, at Kensington Palace. She was christened Alexandrina, after Emperor Alexander I of Russia, one of her godparents. The name Victoria was chosen after her mother. Both her father and King George III died in 1820 and she inherited the throne after the King's three eldest sons died leaving no surviving legitimate children. She was eighteen when she became the Queen of the United Kingdom. She was coronated on June 28th 1838, and she became the first ruler to reside at Buckingham Palace. In her first year of reign her two major influences were the Prime Minister, Lord Melbourne and her uncle, Prince Leopold. They were cultured men of the world and were wise in the matters of politics. Her own strong will and their example shaped her personality. In May 1839 her first struggle with the established order occurred. At the time the Prime Minister, Melbourne, resigned, and was succeeded by Sir Robert Peel, who was a Tory. He maintained that the ladies of the Queen's Bedchamber should be like the new government, Tories. The Queen disagreed and the affair quickly became a crisis, since she objected to

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dismiss women in her household, who were wives of Whigs. Peel did not want to govern under the constraints imposed on by the Queen, so there was a vote in Parliament that he lost. This allowed Melbourne to return to office. Social convention required Victoria to live with her mother, since she was a young woman and unmarried. They had their differences and disagreements so Victoria sent her mother to live in a private apartment in Buckingham Palace and she often did not wish to visit her. When she spoke to Melbourne about the fact that she disliked the situation, he proposed that she could solve her problem by getting married. She did not want to be rushed into marriage, even though she showed interest in Albert. He was her first cousin and he was well educated, intelligent and handsome. She continued to approve of him and praise him and they felt a mutual attraction. Queen Victoria proposed to him only five days after his arrival at Windsor. Their wedding took place in February 1840, in the Chapel Royal, St. James Palace. Albert was assertive and ambitious but he was criticised because he was of German descent and he had to overcome the criticisms. One of his greatest wishes was to make Britain one of the most powerful nations in the world. Together he and Victoria made an enduring impression in Britain. Albert became a valuable political adviser and he replaced Lord Melbourne as the central and dominant figure in the first half of Victoria's life. Albert's idea of the Great Exhibition in 1851 made him more popular amongst the people. His desire for improvement and change for the working class in Britain also increased his popularity. Victoria, at first, had never given much thought to change, since she was influenced by Melbourne, and he convinced her that it was better not to encourage it. But she viewed the world in a more tolerant and liberal way. Albert and Victoria gave an example to the public with their

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close-knit family life during the Victorian era. Victoria became pregnant in 1840, when there was an attempt made, by Edward Oxford, to assassinate her. This took place while she and Albert were riding in a carriage on their way to visit her mother. Edward Oxford was tried for high treason, but he was acquitted on the ground of insanity. After the attack Victoria became more popular amongst the people, diminishing the dissatisfaction over the affairs and crisis that had occurred. Victoria and Albert had their first child on November 21st 1840. They named her Victoria and over the next sixteen years another eight children would follow her. All of their children married into the royal families across the continent. This is why she became known as 'the grandmother of Europe'. Victoria gave birth to Leopold, in 1853, with the help of chloroform, which was a new anaesthetic back then. She was so surprised by the relief it gave her from the pain of childbirth and she used it again at the birth of Beatrice, her ninth and final child. The members of the clergy opposed it, since they considered it to be against biblical teaching and the members of the medical profession also thought it dangerous. There is a possibility that the Queen suffered from post-natal depression after some of her pregnancies. Albert also wrote in his letters to her about her loss of self-control about a month after she gave birth to Leopold. Victoria's childhood governess, Baroness Louise Lehzen from Hanover, ran her household. She had been a great influence on Victoria and she had supported her with every crisis she went through. However, Albert thought she was not that competent so she was pensioned off and her close relationship with Victoria ended. Victoria's mother died in March 1861 and she was at her side. Victoria was heart broken, since she read through her mother's papers and found that her mother had loved her very much. Victoria thought Lehzen and

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Conroy were to blame for alienating her from her mother. Albert took on many of her duties to help her while she was grieving deeply. He did this even though he had stomach problems and was ill. Later that year Albert and Victoria went to visit their son, the Prince of Wales. They spent a few days there, in Killarney, on holiday. A few months later, Albert heard about the gossip that his son had an affair with an actress and went to Cambridge to confront him. Toward the end of the year Albert came down with typhoid fever and subsequently died on December 14th 1861. Queen Victoria blamed her son for his death, she said that he worried too much over the philandering of the Prince of Wales and that her husband had been 'killed by that dreadful business'. For the remainder of her life she wore black and she rarely went to London in the following years and avoided public appearances. She earned the nickname 'the widow of Windsor' because of this seclusion that she imposed upon herself. Following this isolation from the public the popularity of the monarchy diminished and therefore the republican movement was encouraged to grow. She decided to stay secluded in her royal residences, Windsor Castle, Osborne House and Balmoral Castle, the private estate she and Albert had acquired in Scotland. Despite this fact she did act out her government duties. She had retired for thirteen years and was rarely seen by her subjects. She was advised to appear in public by her uncle Leopold and she did decide to take a drive in an open carriage in London and while she was there she visited the gardens of the Royal Horticultural Society, which were located in Kensington. During the 1870s republican sentiment grew, since the Queen was in seclusion and also because of the establishment of the Third French Republic. There was a republican rally at Trafalgar Square that wanted Victoria removed and some

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Radical MP's spoke against her. She became ill in 1871 because of an abscess in her arm, but it was successfully treated with a new antiseptic – carbolic acid spray. Her son, the Prince of Wales, contracted typhoid fever in November 1871, during the height of the movement of the republicans. It was believed that that same disease had killed his father. Victoria feared that her son would not make it. Miraculously he managed to pull through and he and Victoria were attendees at a public parade that went through London and they also went to a service of thanksgiving in February 27th 1872 in St. Paul's Cathedral. The British East India Company was dissolved in 1857, after the Indian Rebellion. The possessions and protectorates of Britain were formally incorporated into the British Empire. Queen Victoria had a relatively just view of the conflict and she criticised the atrocities. She requested that a statement that threatened the 'undermining of native religions and customs' be replaced by a passage that guaranteed religious freedom. The Prime Minister at the time, Benjamin Disraeli, passed the Public Worship Regulation Act 1874. That act removed Catholic rituals from the Anglican liturgy. The Queen strongly approved of that, since she favoured simple and short services. Disraeli also pushed the Royal Titles Act 1876, and by that act from May 1st 1876, the Queen took the title 'Empress of India'. At the Delhi Durbar on January 1st 1877, the new title was announced. In this way the short sea passage to Britain's properties in the Pacific, South-East Asia, India was protected. On the anniversary of Albert's death in 1878, Alice, the Queen's second daughter, died in Darmstadt of diphtheria. She considered the coincidence to be most mysterious and incredible. The following year, she turned sixty and in May she became a great-grandmother. She felt 'aged' because of the many things that had occurred during the past years.

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In the later half of Queen Victoria's reign the empire was very strong and triumphant, and it was thought of as the empire on which 'the sun would never set'. During her reign Britain was very prosperous and Britain's influence in the colonies grew. In 1837 Queen Victoria celebrated her Golden Jubilee. She marked it on June 20th with a banquet to which 50 princes and kings were invited. On the following day there was a procession and at Westminster Abbey there was a thanksgiving service. On September 23rd 1837 she succeeded George III and became the monarch that reigned the longest in British, English and Scottish history. She asked that they delay the ceremony until 1897, to coincide with her Diamond Jubilee. There was a parade held and the Queen sat in an open carriage during a service held at St. Paul's Cathedral. Queen Victoria died on the Isle of White, on January 22nd 1901, at the age of eighty-one. Her reign as Queen lasted sixty-three years and seven months and it was longer than any female monarch in history and of any other British monarchs. She was the last ruler that came from the house of Hanover. King Edward VII, her son and successor, belonged to the line of his father, the House of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha. He is the great-grandfather of the current Queen of England, Elizabeth II.