CAPITOLO

1

Steam, Cities and Facts: the Early Victorians and Dickens

"Two nations; between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy; who are as ignorant of each other's habits, thoughts, and feelings, as if they were dwellers in different zones, or inhabitants of different planets..." — Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil, or The Two Nations (1845), Book II, ch. 5

OBIETTIVI

1. I can describe early Victorian Britain — railways, industrial cities, the New Poor Law, Chartism, free trade and the Great Exhibition — and explain the label "Victorian compromise".
2. I can explain how Victorian novels were published and outline the work of Charles Dickens, especially *Hard Times*.
3. I can analyse caricature, repetition and irony in three passages by Dickens and compare his narrator with Verga's.
4. I can choose the right tense when I write about a text, its author and its reception.
5. I can summarise a text orally in one minute and write short answers of 100–130 words on literature and history.
6. I can plan my exam year and explain how John Snow used data to trace an epidemic.

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English 5 · Parte I · The Victorian Age · versione 1.0
Capitolo 1: Steam, Cities and Facts: the Early Victorians and Dickens · pagine 21–48 del volume completo · estratto per lo studio

On 1 May 1851 thousands of people walked into a glass building in Hyde Park to see the products of "all nations": steam engines and printing presses, cotton from Manchester and steel from Sheffield. Less than two miles away, in the narrow streets of Soho, families drew their water from street pumps, and three years later one of those pumps would kill hundreds of them in ten days. Victorian Britain was both places at once: the richest, most inventive country in the world, and a country of slums, workhouses and cholera. Its novelists set out to show the second face to the readers of the first.

This chapter opens the year — and the last part of the history you began in English 3 — with the early Victorians and with Charles Dickens. You will read *Hard Times*, the novel of "Facts", and the workhouse chapter of *Oliver Twist*; you will learn to choose the right tense when you write about a text, and to answer a literature question in ten lines; you will compare Dickens with Verga, and you will follow a doctor who stopped an epidemic with a map.

1.1 History and Society: Steam, Cities and Reform, 1832–1870

English 4 ended in 1832, with the Great Reform Act and the death of Walter Scott (English 4, chapter 14). Five years later, on 20 June 1837, an eighteen-year-old princess became queen. **Victoria** reigned until 22 January 1901 — sixty-three years, the longest reign in British history until Elizabeth II — and gave her name to the age. Figura 1.1 places the events and the books of this chapter on one axis.

1.1.1 The railway age and the industrial city

In 1830 the Liverpool and Manchester Railway opened, the first line built to carry passengers and goods between two cities by steam power alone. Within twenty years Britain had more than six thousand miles of track: Brunel's Great Western linked London and Bristol in 1841 (English 2, chapter 3), and in the "railway mania" of the 1840s investors poured money into hundreds of new companies. The railway changed the sense of time itself. Every town had kept its own local time, set by the sun; to make timetables work, the companies adopted London (Greenwich) time, and by the end of the 1840s most of the country lived on **railway time** (*ora ferroviaria*), a single national time that the law recognised only in 1880.

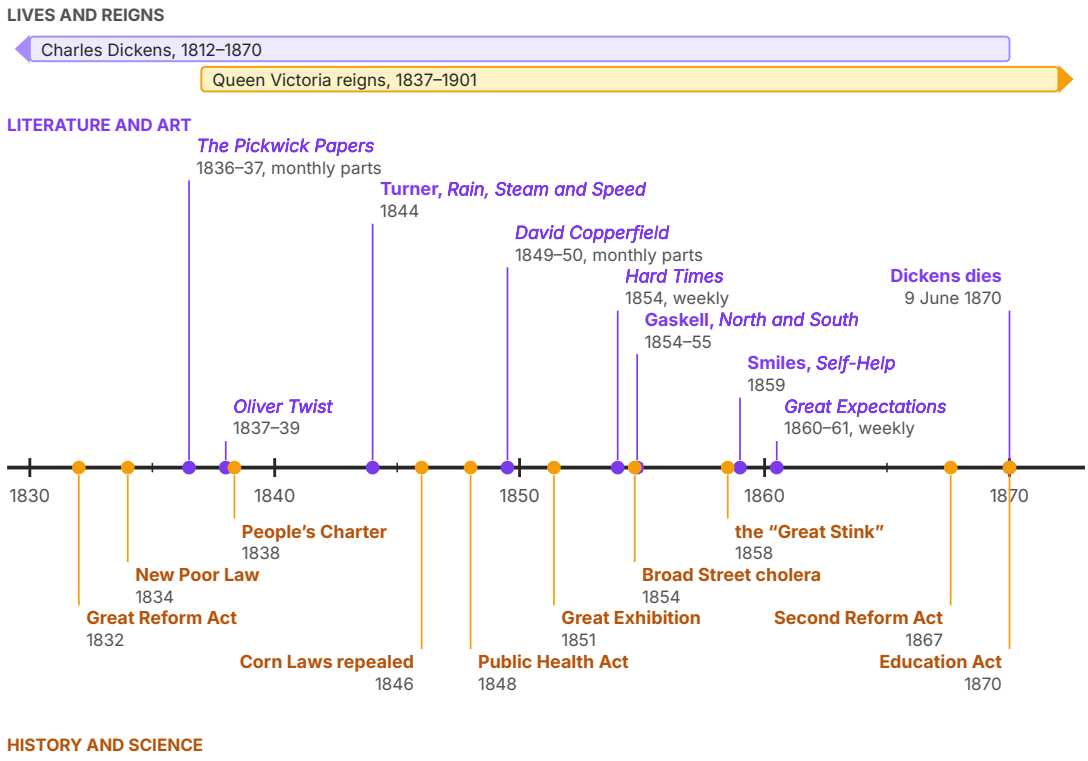

Figura 1.1 Britain and the novel, 1830–1872, on a proportional axis (ticks every 5 years, labels every 10): works and art above the axis (violet), events below (amber). Dickens was born in 1812, before the left edge; Victoria reigned until 1901, beyond the right edge.

Steam also built the cities. The census of 1851 showed, for the first time, that more people in England and Wales lived in towns than in the countryside. Manchester, Leeds, Birmingham and Glasgow grew faster than anyone could house them. Workers lived in back-to-back terraces and cellars, often a family to a room, with shared privies and no clean water. In 1842 the reformer Edwin Chadwick published his *Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population*, which showed that the poor of the industrial towns died far younger than the well-off. Cholera, a new disease in Europe, struck in 1831–32, 1848–49, 1853–54 and 1866. The Public Health Act of 1848 allowed towns to create boards of health; in the hot summer of 1858 the stench of the Thames — the "Great Stink" — drove Parliament to fund Joseph Bazalgette's sewers for London, built from 1859.

1.1.2 The poor, the Charter and free trade

The reformed Parliament dealt with poverty in its own way. The New Poor Law of 1834 made the workhouse the only help for the able-bodied poor (English 2, chapter 2), and kept life inside

deliberately harder than the worst life outside, so that only the desperate would apply. To many working people it seemed a law against the poor rather than for them.

Their answer was **Chartism** (*cartismo*), the first national working-class political movement in Britain. In May 1838 its leaders published the **People's Charter**, which demanded six reforms: a vote for every man over twenty-one; voting by secret ballot; no property qualification for Members of Parliament; payment for MPs, so that working men could afford to sit; constituencies of equal size; and a new Parliament every year. Huge petitions with millions of signatures were presented in 1839, 1842 and 1848; Parliament rejected all three. Chartism faded after 1848, but in the end every point except annual parliaments became law (equal constituencies only approximately).

Another campaign succeeded at once. The Corn Laws kept the price of bread high by taxing imported grain, which protected the landowners. The Anti-Corn Law League of Richard Cobden and John Bright, a movement of Manchester manufacturers, argued for **free trade** (*libero scambio*): no duties on imports, cheap food and open markets. In 1846, as the potato crop failed in Ireland (chapter 9), the Prime Minister Robert Peel repealed the Corn Laws and split his own party. Free trade became the economic creed of the age, together with **laissez-faire** (*liberismo*, literally "let do"), the belief that the state should interfere as little as possible with business, wages and prices. The Factory Acts (English 2, chapter 2) and the Ten Hours Act of 1847, which limited the working day of women and young people in textile mills, show that the belief was never absolute.

ERRORE FREQUENTE

✗ «I cartisti ottennero il suffragio universale nel 1848.» → ✓ Le petizioni del 1839, 1842 e 1848 furono **tutte respinte**; i punti della Carta divennero legge uno per volta, molto più tardi (voto segreto 1872, indennità ai deputati 1911, suffragio maschile 1918), e i parlamenti annuali mai.

✗ «I vittoriani erano tutti puritani e bigotti.» → ✓ È una caricatura nata dopo, in parte dagli stessi scrittori del Novecento. L'età vittoriana fu anche l'età del dibattito, delle riforme, della scienza, dei romanzi che denunciavano la società vittoriana stessa.

1.1.3 The Great Exhibition and Victorian values

On 1 May 1851 Victoria opened the **Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations** in Hyde Park. Prince Albert had championed it; the gardener and engineer Joseph Paxton designed its building, an iron frame filled with nearly 300,000 panes of glass, more than 560 metres long, which the magazine *Punch* nicknamed the **Crystal Palace**. Its parts were made in factories and assembled on site in a few months. Until it closed on 11 October there were more than six million visits; on "shilling days" working people came by special trains. The profits bought land in South Kensington for the museums that still stand there.

The Exhibition expressed the values that the middle classes liked to see in themselves: hard work, *respectability*, duty, religious faith and confidence in progress. Samuel Smiles's best-seller

Self-Help (1859) opened with a maxim that sums them up: "Heaven helps those who help themselves." The same society tolerated child labour, overcrowded slums and the workhouse, and many Victorians were painfully aware of it. Historians and critics have called this balance between progress and poverty, reform and order, public morality and private doubt, the **Victorian compromise** (*compromesso vittoriano*). It is a later label, used in many school histories, not a term the Victorians used; it is useful as long as you remember that it describes a tension, not a settled agreement.

Change came slowly but it came. The Second Reform Act of 1867 roughly doubled the electorate by giving the vote to many working men who were householders in the towns, and the Education Act of 1870 began a national system of elementary schools (English 2, chapter 2). Dickens died in the same year: the period of this chapter ends with him.

DA RICORDARE

1832–1870 at a glance. Reform Act 1832 · New Poor Law 1834 · Victoria 20 June 1837 · People's Charter May 1838 · Chadwick's report 1842 · repeal of the Corn Laws 1846 · Public Health Act and last Chartist petition 1848 · Great Exhibition 1 May – 11 October 1851 · Broad Street cholera 1854 · the "Great Stink" 1858 · Second Reform Act 1867 · Education Act and death of Dickens 1870.

1.2 Literature: Dickens and the Victorian Novel

For the Victorians the novel was what television series are for us: the common entertainment of the nation, followed week by week and discussed in kitchens and drawing rooms. It was also the main way in which middle-class readers learnt how the other half lived.

1.2.1 The novel and its market

Most Victorian novels reached their first readers in pieces. **Serialisation** (*pubblicazione a puntate*) is the publication of a novel in instalments, before or instead of a complete edition. Dickens made it famous with *The Pickwick Papers* (1836–37), which came out in monthly parts: thin paper-covered numbers, usually of thirty-two pages with two illustrations, sold for one shilling each, with a double number at the end. Other novels appeared weekly or monthly inside magazines — *Oliver Twist* in *Bentley's Miscellany* (1837–39), *Hard Times* in Dickens's own weekly *Household Words* (1854). Serialisation made novels cheaper, built a huge readership and shaped the books themselves: every instalment needed a strong ending to bring readers back, characters had to be recognisable at once after a month's gap, and authors could change the plot while readers' letters arrived.

The other great format was the **three-volume novel** (*romanzo in tre volumi*, nicknamed the "triple-decker"): a new novel sold at 31 shillings and sixpence, a price few readers could pay. It was bought mostly by circulating libraries (English 4, chapter 6), above all Mudie's Select Libra-

ry, founded in London in 1842, whose subscribers paid a guinea a year and borrowed one volume at a time. Figura 1.2 compares the three routes from author to reader.

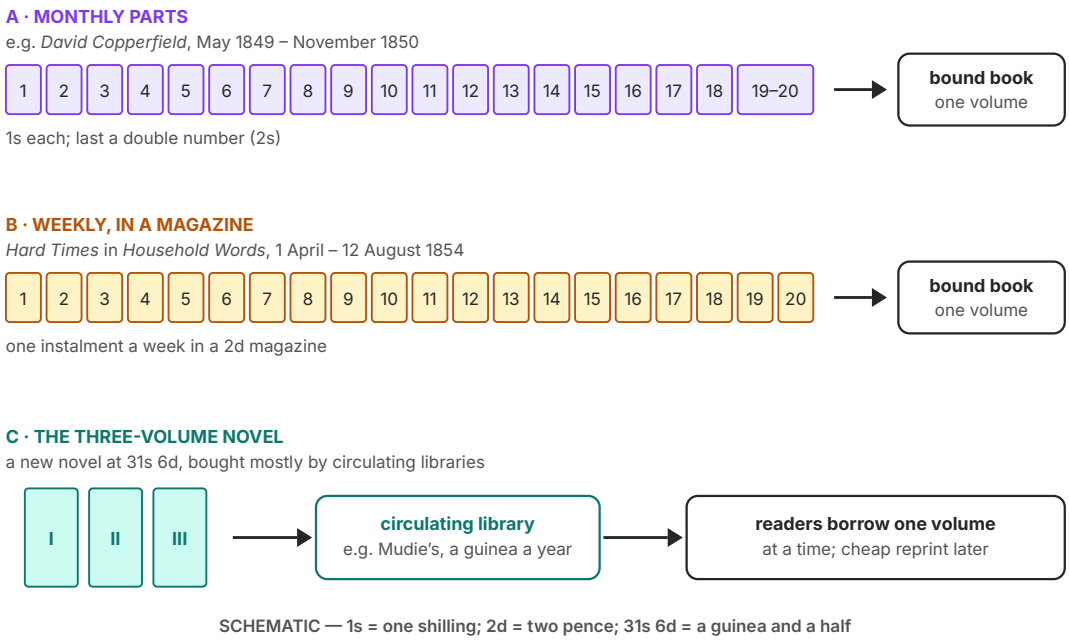

Figura 1.2 Three ways of publishing a Victorian novel (schematic). A: monthly parts, then the bound book; B: weekly instalments in a magazine, then the book; C: the three-volume edition, sold mainly to circulating libraries.

The Victorian novel was, above all, realistic (on *realism*, English 4, chapter 6): it described ordinary people, money, work and the contemporary city, usually through an omniscient narrator who knows the characters' thoughts and judges them openly. In the 1840s and 1850s a group of novels took up what Thomas Carlyle had called, in *Chartism* (1839), the "Condition-of-England question": Disraeli's *Sybil, or The Two Nations* (1845), Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1848) and *North and South* (1854–55), Dickens's *Hard Times* (1854). Critics call them **condition-of-England novels** (*romanzi sociali*), or industrial novels: fiction about the relations between rich and poor in the factory towns.

1.2.2 Charles Dickens (1812–1870)

You met Dickens in English 1 and English 2: born in Portsmouth on 7 February 1812, sent at twelve to work in a blacking factory while his father was in a debtors' prison, he never forgot what it meant to be a poor child. He became a journalist, then, with *Pickwick*, the most popular novelist in Britain at the age of twenty-four. He wrote fifteen novels (the last unfinished), edited two weekly magazines (*Household Words*, 1850–59, and *All the Year Round*, from 1859), campaigned for schools for the poor and, from 1858, gave public readings of his work that filled halls

in Britain and America. He died at Gad's Hill, in Kent, on 9 June 1870 and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

His early novels are comic and episodic; the later ones are darker and carefully built, with many plots that meet at the end. *Oliver Twist* (1837–39) follows an orphan from the workhouse to the London underworld of Fagin. *David Copperfield* (1849–50), his favourite, is a first-person story of growing up that uses his own memories of the blacking factory. *Great Expectations* (1860–61), told by Pip, a village boy who becomes a gentleman with money from an unknown benefactor, questions the very idea of a "gentleman". Dickens's world is crowded with characters drawn by a few exaggerated features — a phrase, a gesture, a body that matches the mind. This is **caricature** (*caricatura*): the comic exaggeration of a person's most striking traits. In Dickens it is never only comic; the exaggeration makes a social type impossible to forget.

IN SINTESI

Dickens's novels in this book. *A Christmas Carol* (1843, English 1) · *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859, English 1) · *Oliver Twist* (1837–39, English 2 and T3 here) · *David Copperfield* (1849–50) · *Hard Times* (1854, T1–T2) · *Great Expectations* (1860–61). Formats: monthly parts (*Pickwick*, *David Copperfield*); weekly in a magazine (*Hard Times*, *Great Expectations*); monthly in a magazine (*Oliver Twist*).

1.2.3 *Hard Times* (1854): Facts against Fancy

Hard Times appeared in *Household Words* every week from 1 April to 12 August 1854 and as a book later that year, dedicated to Carlyle. It is the shortest of Dickens's novels and his only novel set in a northern industrial town, Coketown. In January 1854 Dickens had visited Preston, in Lancashire, where cotton workers had been locked out of the mills for months. Its three "books" have agricultural titles — *Sowing*, *Reaping*, *Garnering* — because the novel shows what an education produces years later.

Thomas Gradgrind, a retired merchant and later an MP, runs a school where children are taught "nothing but Facts"; his own children, Louisa and Tom, are brought up without stories, games or feelings. In the classroom Sissy Jupe, the daughter of a circus performer, cannot define a horse, although she has lived with horses all her life; the pale pupil Bitzer can ("Quadruped. Graminivorous…"). The results arrive in time. Louisa, who has never been allowed to feel, marries Josiah Bounderby, a rich mill-owner and banker thirty years older, because her father's statistics show nothing against it. Tom robs Bounderby's bank and lets the blame fall on Stephen Blackpool, an honest weaver, who dies after falling into a disused mine shaft. Gradgrind's system collapses; Sissy, who was never "educated" by it, is the only one who knows how to help.

Behind Gradgrind stands a philosophy. **Utilitarianism** (*utilitarismo*) is the theory, developed by Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832) and later by John Stuart Mill (*Utilitarianism*, 1861), that an action is right if it produces happiness and wrong if it produces pain; its principle is usually summarised as "the greatest happiness of the greatest number". In practice many Victorians joined

it to **political economy** (*economia politica*), the new science of wealth of Adam Smith, Malthus and Ricardo, and used both to judge laws and institutions by measurable results. Dickens satirises a crude version of these ideas — people treated as numbers, life reduced to what can be counted and sold — and sets against it the circus, imagination and what he calls "Fancy".

APPROFONDIMENTO

Was Dickens fair to the utilitarians? Gradgrind is a character, not a portrait of Bentham, and the real utilitarians were reformers who fought for public health, schools and prisons that did not torture. John Stuart Mill had been educated exactly like Louisa: Greek at three, political economy at thirteen. In his *Autobiography* (1873) he tells how at twenty, in 1826, he fell into a long depression, and how the poems of Wordsworth (English 4, chapter 12) helped him out of it: they seemed to him "the very culture of the feelings, which I was in quest of". In other words, the most famous utilitarian of the age reached Dickens's conclusion by himself.

ERRORE FREQUENTE

✗ «*Hard Times* uscì a fascicoli mensili, come tutti i romanzi di Dickens.» → ✓ Uscì a puntate **settimanali** nella rivista *Household Words* (1854). Non tutti i romanzi di Dickens uscirono in fascicoli mensili.

✗ «Gradgrind è Bentham.» → ✓ Gradgrind è un **personaggio** inventato che incarna una versione rozza delle idee utilitaristiche ed economiche del tempo; Bentham era morto nel 1832.

1.3 Texts: Facts, Smoke and Gruel

Two extracts from *Hard Times* — the complete first chapter and the first description of Coketown — and the board of the workhouse in *Oliver Twist*, the chapter that English 2 stopped at the famous request for "more". Read each text twice: once for what happens, once for how the narrator makes you see it.

1.3.1 T1 · Charles Dickens, *Hard Times*, I.1: "The One Thing Needful"

Context. This is the whole of the first chapter. We are in a school in Coketown. The first speaker is not named until chapter 2, where we learn that he is Thomas Gradgrind. The chapter's title echoes Jesus's words to Martha in Luke's Gospel: "one thing is needful".

Tabella 1.1 T1 — *Hard Times*, Book I, ch. 1 (Project Gutenberg eBook #786, transcribed from the 1905 Chapman and Hall edition; capitals, single quotation marks and spelling as printed)

‘NOW, what I want is, Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts: nothing else will ever be of any service to them. This is the principle on which I bring up my own children, and this is the principle on which I bring up these children. Stick to Facts, sir!’

The scene was a plain, bare, monotonous vault of a school-room, and the speaker’s square forefinger emphasized his observations by underscoring every sentence with a line on the schoolmaster’s sleeve. The emphasis was helped by the speaker’s square wall of a forehead, which had his eyebrows for its base, while his eyes found commodious cellarage in two dark caves, overshadowed by the wall. The emphasis was helped by the speaker’s mouth, which was wide, thin, and hard set. The emphasis was helped by the speaker’s voice, which was inflexible, dry, and dictatorial. The emphasis was helped by the speaker’s hair, which bristled on the skirts of his bald head, a plantation of firs to keep the wind from its shining surface, all covered with knobs, like the crust of a plum pie, as if the head had scarcely warehouse-room for the hard facts stored inside. The speaker’s obstinate carriage, square coat, square legs, square shoulders,—nay, his very neckcloth, trained to take him by the throat with an unaccommodating grasp, like a stubborn fact, as it was,—all helped the emphasis.

‘In this life, we want nothing but Facts, sir; nothing but Facts!’

The speaker, and the schoolmaster, and the third grown person present, all backed a little, and swept with their eyes the inclined plane of little vessels then and there arranged in order, ready to have imperial gallons of facts poured into them until they were full to the brim.

Glosses. *root out*: pull up by the roots, destroy · *vault*: a room with an arched roof, like a cellar or a tomb · *commodious cellarage*: plenty of storage space underground (ironic) · *bristled*: stood up stiffly · *skirts*: edges · *knobs*: small round lumps · *carriage*: the way a person holds the body · *nay*: in fact, even · *neckcloth*: a cloth tied round the neck (a cravat) · *backed*: stepped back · *vessels*: containers (here, the children) · *imperial gallons*: a British unit of liquid (about 4.5 litres).

Analysis

A voice without a face. The chapter begins in the middle of a speech, without a narrator. Gradgrind’s words are short commands built on one noun, *Facts*, repeated five times in the first paragraph and printed with a capital letter, as if it were a god. His metaphors come from gardening — *plant*, *root out* — the same metaphors that give the novel’s first book its title, *Sowing*.

A body made of facts. In the second paragraph the narrator takes over and turns the speaker into a caricature. The sentence “The emphasis was helped by…” returns four times (*anaphora*, English 4, chapter 11), and each time a part of the body becomes a building: a *wall* of a forehead, eyes in *cellars* and *caves*, a head with no *warehouse-room* left. The word *square* recurs: the man is all straight lines, like a geometrical figure. Even his neckcloth seems to strangle him “like a stubborn fact”.

Children as containers. The last sentence reveals the audience: the pupils are *little vessels* arranged on an *inclined plane*, ready to be filled with *imperial gallons of facts*. The language of measurement and trade turns education into a process of filling jars. Dickens’s satire works through a single extended metaphor, and the reader reaches the judgement before the narrator states it.

1. Which words does Gradgrind repeat, and what do the capital letters suggest?

2. Find the gardening metaphors in the first paragraph. How do they connect with the title of Book I?
3. List the parts of the speaker's body that the narrator describes. Which images of buildings are used?
4. Why is the adjective *square* repeated? What kind of mind does it suggest?
5. Explain the metaphor of the *little vessels*. What is the children's role in this school?
6. The chapter is only about three hundred words long. Why might Dickens have chosen such a short opening for a weekly instalment?

1.3.2 T2 · Charles Dickens, *Hard Times*, I.5: Coketown

Context. Chapter 5, "The Key-note", introduces the town as Gradgrind and Bounderby walk across it. Dickens calls Coketown "a triumph of fact". The editors have left out one short simile (six words), which uses the period's contemptuous language for colonised peoples; the gap is marked [...].

Tabella 1.2 T2 — *Hard Times*, Book I, ch. 5 (Project Gutenberg eBook #786, 1905 Chapman and Hall text; [...] marks a short omission by the editors)

> It was a town of red brick, or of brick that would have been red if the smoke and ashes had allowed it; but as matters stood, it was a town of unnatural red and black [...]. It was a town of machinery and tall chimneys, out of which interminable serpents of smoke trailed themselves for ever and ever, and never got uncoiled. It had a black canal in it, and a river that ran purple with ill-smelling dye, and vast piles of building full of windows where there was a rattling and a trembling all day long, and where the piston of the steam-engine worked monotonously up and down, like the head of an elephant in a state of melancholy madness. It contained several large streets all very like one another, and many small streets still more like one another, inhabited by people equally like one another, who all went in and out at the same hours, with the same sound upon the same pavements, to do the same work, and to whom every day was the same as yesterday and to-morrow, and every year the counterpart of the last and the next.

Glosses. *as matters stood*: as things really were · *interminable*: endless · *uncoiled*: unrolled (like a snake) · *dye*: the chemical used to colour cloth · *piles of building*: huge buildings (the mills) · *piston*: the part of an engine that moves up and down · *counterpart*: an exact copy.

Analysis

Structure. Each sentence begins with the same frame — *It was a town of…*, *It had…*, *It contained…* — and then grows longer, adding clause to clause with *and*. The rhythm imitates the machinery it describes: regular, repeated, unstoppable.

Images. The colours are wrong (*unnatural red and black*, a river that runs *purple*); the smoke becomes *serpents* that never uncoil; the steam engine becomes an *elephant in a state of melancholy madness*. Dickens animates the machines and mechanises the people: the inhabitants are *like one another*, go in and out *at the same hours*, do *the same work*. The word *same* appears five times

in the last sentence. Time itself loses its shape: every day is the same as yesterday and tomorrow.

1. Find the sentences that begin with *It*. What effect does the repetition create?
2. Which colours are mentioned, and why are they called *unnatural*?
3. Explain the two animal images. Are they comic, frightening or both?
4. How many times does the word *same* appear in the last sentence? What does Dickens suggest about the lives of the workers?
5. Is Coketown a real town? What did Dickens see before writing the novel?

1.3.3 T3 · Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, ch. 2: the board

Context. Oliver, born in a workhouse, has spent his first nine years in a "branch-workhouse" for children and has just been brought back to the main one. The *board* is the committee of local gentlemen, the guardians, who ran the workhouse under the New Poor Law of 1834. The scene of Oliver asking for more comes later in the same chapter.

Tabella 1.3 T3 — *Oliver Twist*, ch. 2 (Project Gutenberg eBook #730)

> The members of this board were very sage, deep, philosophical men; and when they came to turn their attention to the workhouse, they found out at once, what ordinary folks would never have discovered—the poor people liked it! It was a regular place of public entertainment for the poorer classes; a tavern where there was nothing to pay; a public breakfast, dinner, tea, and supper all the year round; a brick and mortar elysium, where it was all play and no work. "Oho!" said the board, looking very knowing; "we are the fellows to set this to rights; we'll stop it all, in no time." So, they established the rule, that all poor people should have the alternative (for they would compel nobody, not they), of being starved by a gradual process in the house, or by a quick one out of it. With this view, they contracted with the water-works to lay on an unlimited supply of water; and with a corn-factory to supply periodically small quantities of oatmeal; and issued three meals of thin gruel a day, with an onion twice a week, and half a roll of Sundays.

Glosses. *sage*: wise · *folks*: people · *tavern*: a pub · *elysium*: paradise (the Elysian Fields of Greek myth) · *knowing*: showing that one understands a secret · *set this to rights*: correct this · *compel*: force · *contracted with*: made an agreement with · *gruel*: a thin liquid food made by boiling oats in water · *of Sundays*: on Sundays.

Analysis

Irony from the first line. The narrator praises the board (*very sage, deep, philosophical men*) while showing their stupidity and cruelty: this is verbal irony (English 4, chapter 7). He adopts their point of view — *the poor people liked it!* — and lets the absurdity speak. The list of comforts (a *tavern*, four meals a day, an *elysium*) is what the board imagines, not what the workhouse was.

The trap. The central sentence is a false choice: the poor are "free" to starve slowly inside the workhouse or quickly outside it. The parenthesis *(for they would compel nobody, not they)* mimics the board's self-satisfied voice. The diet is described with bureaucratic precision — *unlimi-*

ted water, *small quantities* of oatmeal, *an onion twice a week* — and the precision is the accusation.

1. Find three adjectives the narrator uses to praise the board. Does he mean them?
2. What, according to the board, is wrong with the workhouse?
3. Explain in your own words the "alternative" offered to the poor.
4. Why does the narrator give exact quantities for the food?
5. Which principle of the New Poor Law (see the History section) is Dickens attacking?
6. Compare the narrator of T3 with the narrator of T1. Which one comments more openly?

1.4 Language: Tenses for Writing about Texts and History

This year you will write about texts, authors and periods in almost every lesson, and in the exam. The tense you choose tells the reader *which world* you are talking about: the world inside the text, the historical world of the author, or the long life of the text among its readers. You met the **literary present** (*presente letterario*) — the present simple used to tell the plot of a text and describe what a text does — when you learnt to write a summary (English 3, chapter 3) and a commentary (English 4, chapter 6). Here it becomes one of three choices, shown in Figura 1.3.

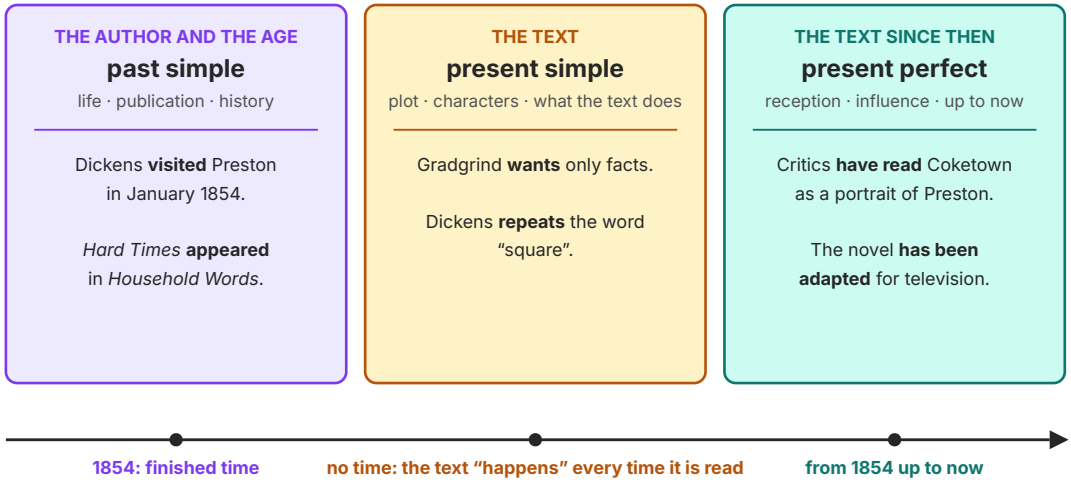

Figura 1.3 Choosing the tense when writing about a text: past simple for the author and the age, present simple for the text, present perfect for its reception up to now. Examples from this chapter.

1.4.1 Three worlds, three tenses

Tabella 1.4 Tenses for writing about texts and history

You are writing about…	Tense	Examples
the **text**: plot, characters, narrator, what the author does in the text	present simple	*Gradgrind **questions** Sissy. In T2 Dickens **compares** the steam engine to an elephant.*
events that happen **before** a point in the plot	present perfect (or past simple)	*Louisa, who **has** never **been** allowed to feel, marries Bounderby.*
the **author's life**, the publication, the **historical** context	past simple (past perfect for an earlier past)	*Dickens **visited** Preston in 1854; the workers **had been** locked out for months.*
the **reception** of the text, its influence, up to now	present perfect	*Critics **have** often **compared** Coketown with Preston.*
a critic's or a scientist's **argument**, as a position still under discussion	present simple	*Mill **argues** that pleasures differ in quality. Snow **shows** that the deaths cluster round the pump.*

Three points need care. First, **the present describes the text, the past describes the book as an object**: *Hard Times **attacks** utilitarianism* (the text), but *Hard Times **appeared** weekly in 1854* (the event). Second, **when you report a writer's ideas**, use the present if you are discussing the ideas (*Smiles **believes** in self-help*) and the past if you are telling history (*Smiles **published** Self-Help in 1859, and it **sold** very well*). Third, **do not use the present perfect with a finished time**: ✗ *Dickens has written Hard Times in 1854.*

In a summary, keep the plot in the present and avoid long chains of past perfects: the reader does not need *Tom had robbed the bank after Louisa had married Bounderby*. Tell the events in order — *Louisa marries Bounderby; later Tom robs the bank* — and use *later*, *meanwhile*, *by then*, *in the end* to show time.

> **ERRORE FREQUENTE**
>
> ✗ *Dickens has written Hard Times in 1854.* → ✓ *Dickens **wrote** Hard Times in 1854.* (con una data finita, mai il present perfect)
>
> ✗ *Since 1854 critics read Coketown as Preston.* → ✓ *Since 1854 critics **have read**…* (un periodo che arriva fino a oggi)
>
> ✗ *Gradgrind wants facts, but Sissy didn't know how to define a horse.* → ✓ *…but Sissy **doesn't know**…* (nella stessa analisi, la trama resta al presente)

ESEMPIO SVOLTO

Mixing the tenses correctly in one paragraph. Task: "Introduce *Hard Times* in about 80 words."

1. **Context (past):** *Dickens **wrote** Hard Times in 1854, after a visit to Preston, where cotton workers **had been** locked out of the mills.*
2. **The text (present):** *The novel **is set** in Coketown, a northern mill town. Gradgrind **brings up** his children on "nothing but Facts", and the results **are** disastrous: Louisa **marries** a man she does not love, and Tom **becomes** a thief.*
3. **Reception (present perfect):** *Many critics **have read** the novel as an attack on utilitarianism, although some **have argued** that Dickens simplifies it.*
4. **Check:** each tense matches its world; no present perfect with *in 1854*; the plot is in order, without past perfects.

GRAMMAR IN ITALIANO

Il presente letterario. In inglese si usa il **present simple** per raccontare la trama e descrivere che cosa fa un testo (*Gradgrind wants facts*), il **past simple** per la vita dell'autore e la storia (*Dickens wrote*), il **present perfect** per la fortuna critica fino a oggi (*critics have read*).

Confronto con l'italiano. Anche in italiano si racconta la trama al presente (*Renzo e Lucia devono sposarsi, ma don Abbondio…*): è lo stesso presente letterario, parente del *presente storico* con cui si rende viva una narrazione al passato. La differenza è nel passato: per la vita dell'autore l'italiano usa il passato remoto o il passato prossimo (*Dickens scrisse / ha scritto*); l'inglese vuole **sempre il past simple** con una data o un tempo finito, e riserva il present perfect al periodo che arriva fino a oggi.

1.5 Skills: Summarising and Short Answers

1.5.1 Vocabulary: industry, poverty and reform

The words in Tabella 1.5 describe the Victorian city and the attempts to change it. Many of them are still used today, in news about housing, health and work.

Tabella 1.5 Industry, poverty and reform: key words

Word	Meaning	Example
workhouse (n.)	an institution where the poor lived and worked (English 2, chapter 2)	Oliver was born in a *workhouse*.
slum (n.)	a very poor, overcrowded area of a city	Cholera spread fastest in the *slums*.
sanitation (n.)	clean water, drains and the removal of waste	Chadwick demanded better *sanitation*.
overcrowding (n.)	too many people living in one place	*Overcrowding* made the disease worse.
wages (n. pl.)	money paid, usually weekly, for work	The mill-owners cut *wages*.
hardship (n.)	a situation that is very difficult to live with, especially poverty	The workers faced years of *hardship*.
reform (n./v.)	a change that improves a law or system	The Charter demanded political *reform*.
charity · *philanthropy* (n.)	help given to people in need · the wish to help others, especially with money	Victorian *philanthropy* built schools and hospitals.
mill · *mill-owner* (n.)	a factory, especially for cotton or wool · its owner	Bounderby is a *mill-owner* and a banker.

Word formation: -ism, -ist and -ian

In English 2 (chapter 8) you formed nouns with *-ism* and met the *-ist* who believes in them (*realism, activist*). Writing about ideas and periods needs the whole family, with *-ian* added (Tabella 1.6). *-ism* names a belief, movement or system; *-ist* names a person who holds it or practises a field; *-ian* makes nouns and adjectives from names and fields. Watch the stress: *-ian* moves it to the syllable before the suffix (DARwin → darWINian, HIStory → hisTORian, LIbrary → liBRARian), while *-ism* and *-ist* usually leave it where it was (REalism, REalist). Some words take two suffixes: *utility* → *utilitarian* → *utilitarianism*. The word *scientist* itself is a coinage of these years: William Whewell proposed it in 1834.

Tabella 1.6 Suffixes for ideas, people and periods

Suffix	Meaning	Examples
-ism	a belief, a movement, a system	*Chartism, utilitarianism, realism, Romanticism, capitalism*
-ist	a person who believes in or practises something	*Chartist, realist, economist, novelist, scientist*
-ian	a person or adjective linked to a name or field	*Victorian, Dickensian, utilitarian, historian, librarian, Darwinian*

1.5.2 Reading: Facts, Facts, Facts

Before you read. What changes when you move from school to university, or from one country to another? Read the first post of the year on the club's blog. The tasks are in the exercises (*Towards INVALSI*).

Tabella 1.7 Reading text — Giulia's post on The Link blog

Facts, Facts, Facts
The Link, Year Five · posted by Giulia, Sunday 22 September

Welcome back, everyone, and welcome to The Link, Year Five. Four years ago I spent a whole school year at Hillside Academy in Bristol; since then this blog has kept our two classes in touch, and last year it became the Link Reading Club. This year everything has moved: Sam is studying English at university in England, Callum has started geography in Edinburgh, Aoife is doing marine science in Galway, and I am still in Turin, in the fifth and last year of liceo, with the maturità waiting at the end of it like the final level of a video game. There is no Bristol class any more, so the club is now my class and three friends at university. We have decided to keep it anyway, with the same shape as last year: a shared blog, a video call on the first Sunday of every month, and four novels in the year.

My year, in numbers. In March I take the INVALSI English test, on a computer: only reading and listening. Prof.ssa Rossi says we must take it to be admitted to the exam, although the level we reach does not decide whether we are admitted. In June comes the exam itself. Our CLIL subject is physics, so I will soon be explaining relativity in English, which is frightening. And every Wednesday afternoon I do my PCTO hours in the education office of a science museum, where I help to prepare workshops for primary-school children. Marta, who is in my class again, made a colour-coded calendar of the whole year in the first week. She has already lost it.

Sam sent me a paragraph for the blog, so here it is in his words: "Week one. My first lecture was in a room with about two hundred people, and nobody took the register. Nobody! The reading list has a Victorian novel for almost every week, which is roughly one brick per week. The real teaching happens in seminars of twelve students, where you cannot hide. On Thursday our tutor asked each of us to summarise a novel in one minute without notes. I talked for two and a half minutes and never reached the ending. I live in halls and share a kitchen with seven people, so I have learnt more about pasta than about Victorian fiction." (Sam, please. Pasta is not a fact you learn. It is a skill.)

Our first novel is *Hard Times*, and there are three good reasons for it. It is the shortest of Dickens's novels. Its first chapter is set in a classroom, which seemed right for a year of exams. And it was first published in weekly

instalments, so Callum suggested that we read it the way the Victorians did, one instalment a week and no spoilers. Then he calculated that at that speed we would finish in February, so we have agreed on two instalments a week. As a geographer, Callum says he is mostly interested in Coketown's "black canal" and its river that "ran purple with ill-smelling dye": he wants to draw a pollution map of the town. Aoife's first question, as usual, was whether there is any sea in it. There isn't. She is reading it anyway.

So here is the question for our first call, on Sunday 6 October. Mr Gradgrind wants "nothing but Facts". This year my life is full of facts: dates for history, formulas for physics, scores for INVALSI. Elena says Gradgrind would have loved our timetable. But on Wednesday, at the museum, a seven-year-old asked me why the sky is dark at night if there are so many stars, and I realised that I didn't know — and that the question was more interesting than any answer I could have memorised. Is Gradgrind completely wrong, or only half wrong? Post your answer below, with one quotation from the first five chapters.

1.5.3 Speaking: summarising a text orally in one minute

In class, in a seminar and at the exam you will often be asked: *What is it about?* A good oral summary gives the topic in one sentence, the main events or ideas in order, and the point — what the text means or does. It uses the literary present, simple linkers and no more than one short quotation. One minute is about 130–150 spoken words.

Tabella 1.8 Useful language — summarising a text orally

Function	Phrases
introducing the text	*This is the first chapter of… · It's an extract from…, written in…*
giving the topic	*It's about… · Basically, it deals with… · The text is set in…*
telling what happens	*What happens is that… · First… then… · In the end…*
giving the main point	*The main point is that… · What Dickens is really saying is… · The key idea is…*
quoting briefly	*As Gradgrind puts it, "nothing but Facts". · There's a line that sums it up: …*
closing	*So, in a nutshell… · To put it in one sentence…*

1. **Pair work.** Student A summarises T1 in one minute; Student B times the summary and checks: topic, events, point, one quotation, present tense. Then swap: B summarises T3.
2. **Chain summary.** In groups of four, summarise a novel or film everybody knows. Each student speaks for fifteen seconds and continues from where the previous one stopped, using a linker from Tabella 1.8. The last student gives the main point.

LEARNING TO LEARN

The exam year: a plan. The fifth year has two fixed points for English: the INVALSI test in March (reading and listening, on a computer; taking it is a requirement for admission to the exam, the level you reach is not) and the oral exam in June, where English may or may not be one of the subjects — check the decree and the ordinance published by the Ministry each year.

- **A shared calendar.** Mark INVALSI, the mock tests, the end of each term and the exam. Work backwards: what must be done by Christmas, by March, by May?
- **A vocabulary notebook by themes.** Not by chapter, but by theme: *work and poverty*, *science*, *war*, *identity*. Each entry has the word, an example from a text and, where useful, the Italian equivalent. Themes are what the exam asks you to connect.
- **Short, regular practice.** One INVALSI-style reading or listening task a week is worth more than ten in February.
- **Transfer.** The same notebook works for Italian and Latin: a theme page on *lavoro* can hold Verga, Dickens and the Latin words for work and poverty.

1.5.4 Writing: short-answer literature questions

Many Italian teachers test literature with short-answer questions, a format once called *trattazione sintetica*: a precise question, an answer of 10–12 lines (100–130 words), no introduction and no conclusion. A good **short-answer question** response (*risposta breve*) contains three elements: a **definition** or direct answer in the first sentence, an **example** from a text, and a **link** — to the context, to another author, or to another subject. Read the two model answers.

Tabella 1.9 Model text — two short answers (109 and 112 words)

1. What is utilitarianism, and how does Dickens criticise it in *Hard Times*?
Utilitarianism is the theory, developed by Jeremy Bentham and later by John Stuart Mill, that an action is right if it produces happiness and wrong if it produces pain; its principle is usually summarised as "the greatest happiness of the greatest number". In *Hard Times* (1854) Dickens attacks a crude version of it through Thomas Gradgrind, who wants children to learn "nothing but Facts". In the first chapter the pupils are *little vessels* to be filled with facts. The consequences are tragic: Gradgrind's daughter Louisa marries a man she does not love. Dickens opposes imagination to calculation, which links the novel to the Romantic idea of imagination (English 4).

2. Why was serialisation important for the Victorian novel?
Serialisation is the publication of a novel in instalments, in monthly parts or in a magazine. It was important for three reasons. First, it made novels cheaper: a monthly part of a Dickens novel cost one shilling, while a three-volume novel cost 31s 6d. Second, it created a huge readership that waited for each episode, as audiences do with television series today. Third, it shaped the form of the novels: every instalment needed a strong ending, and characters had to be recognisable after a long gap. *Hard Times*, for example, appeared weekly in *Household Words* in 1854. In Italy, too, many nineteenth-century novels first appeared in instalments in newspapers and magazines.

Analysis. Each answer begins with the definition, which repeats the key words of the question. The evidence is short and precise (a date, a price, a quotation). The last sentence opens a link. Notice the tenses: present for the text (*Dickens attacks*), past for history (*a monthly part cost*).

- Does my first sentence answer the question directly?
- Have I included a definition, an example and a link?
- Is every date, title and name correct?
- Have I used the literary present for the text and the past for history?
- Is the answer between 100 and 130 words, with no introduction and no conclusion?

Your turn. Answer two questions in 100–130 words each: a) What was Chartism, and what did it ask for? b) How does Dickens use caricature in T1?

1.6 Connections: Dickens and Verga; Turner; John Snow

1.6.1 Compare with Italian literature: Dickens and Verga

Forty years after *Oliver Twist*, in a new Italian kingdom, Giovanni Verga (1840–1922) also wrote about a child at work. "Rosso Malpelo" (first published in 1878 and collected in *Vita dei campi*, 1880) tells the story of a boy who works in a red-sand quarry in Sicily. It opens like this:

> *Malpelo si chiamava così perchè aveva i capelli rossi; ed aveva i capelli rossi perchè era un ragazzo malizioso e cattivo, che prometteva di riescire un fior di birbone.*
>
> — Giovanni Verga, "Rosso Malpelo", in *Vita dei campi* (Milano, Treves, 1881, as transcribed on Wikisource)

"Malpelo was called that because he had red hair; and he had red hair because he was a malicious, wicked boy, who promised to turn out a real rogue." (translation by the editors). The sentence is not the narrator's judgement: it is the voice of the quarry, of the people who have already decided that a red-haired boy must be bad. The reasoning is absurd — he has red hair *because* he is wicked — and the absurdity shows the prejudice.

Both writers show children destroyed by work and by institutions, and both want the reader to see a reality that comfortable readers ignored. But their narrators are opposite. Dickens's narrator is present everywhere: he comments, jokes, uses irony and appeals to the reader's feelings (T3). Verga's **verismo** (the Italian realist movement of the 1870s and 1880s) aims at **impersonality** (*impersonalità*): the author disappears, and the story is told in the language and with the values of the community it describes. In the letter to Salvatore Farina that introduces "L'amante di Gramigna" in the same collection, Verga hopes for a novel in which *«la mano dell'artista rimarrà assolutamente invisibile»* ("the hand of the artist will remain absolutely invisible", translation by the editors). Dickens's hand is never invisible: it is the hand of a performer who read his novels aloud to thousands.

1.6.2 Screen, music and art: Turner's *Rain, Steam and Speed*

In 1844 J. M. W. Turner (1775–1851) exhibited at the Royal Academy a painting called *Rain, Steam and Speed – The Great Western Railway*, now in the National Gallery in London. A train crosses the Thames at Maidenhead on Brunel's railway bridge, coming straight towards the viewer out of a storm of rain and light. The landscape dissolves into golden and grey brushstrokes; only the black front of the engine and the bridge are solid. In the foreground, if you look closely, a small hare runs across the tracks ahead of the train, and on the river below a boat floats in the mist. Critics have read the painting both as a celebration of speed and as an elegy for the slower world the railway was replacing. Compare it with Coketown: Turner makes the machine sublime (English 4, chapter 10), Dickens makes it a mad elephant.

1.6.3 Science: John Snow and the Broad Street pump

In 1854 most doctors believed that cholera spread through **miasma** (*miasma*), a poisonous "bad air" rising from rotting matter. The London doctor John Snow (1813–1858), a pioneer of anaesthesia, thought differently: since cholera attacked the gut, it must be swallowed, and probably with water. At the end of August 1854 an outbreak exploded around Broad Street in Soho. Snow wrote that "within two hundred and fifty yards of the spot where Cambridge Street joins Broad Street, there were upwards of five hundred fatal attacks of cholera in ten days". He obtained the list of the dead from the General Register Office, visited their homes and found that most of them had drunk water from the pump in Broad Street. On 7 September he presented his evidence to the parish guardians, and on 8 September the handle of the pump was removed.

His map, published in the 1855 edition of his book *On the Mode of Communication of Cholera*, marked each death with a short bar at its address. Figura 1.4 redraws the idea in a simplified form: the deaths cluster around one pump, and the exceptions confirm the rule.

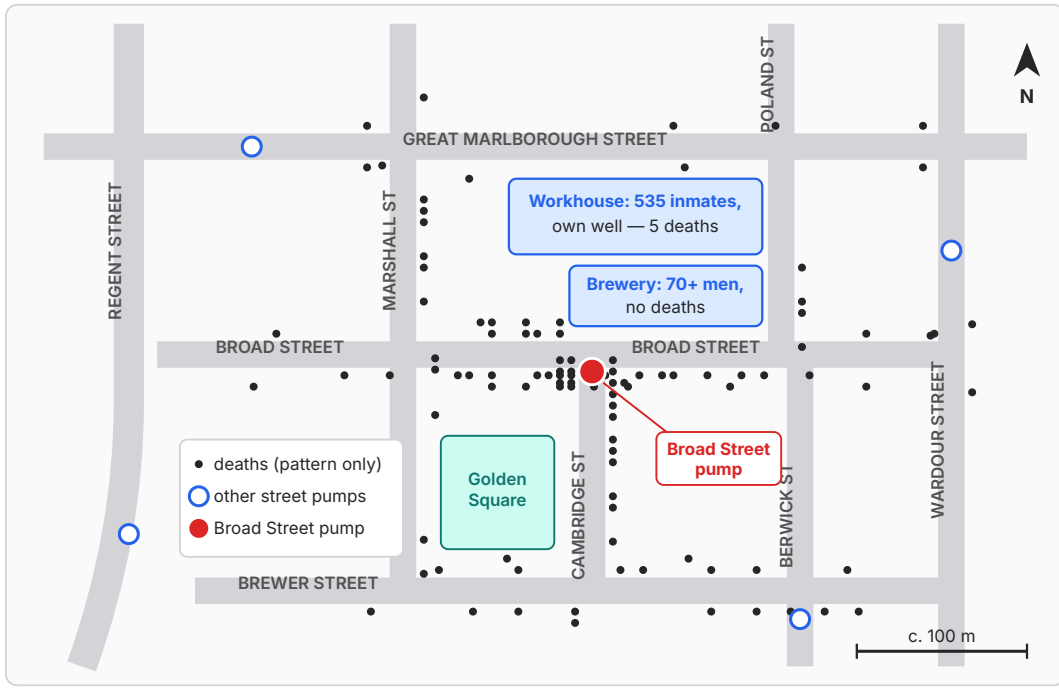

Figura 1.4 The Broad Street outbreak, 1854: a schematic map after John Snow's (not a copy; street positions approximate). The dots show the pattern only — Snow's table counts 616 fatal attacks between 19 August and 30 September, house by house. The workhouse and the brewery had their own wells; their figures are Snow's.

COLLEGAMENTI

Statistics and epidemiology: reading a pattern. **Epidemiology** (*epidemiologia*) is the study of how diseases are distributed in a population, and why. Snow's argument rested on comparisons. The workhouse in Poland Street, almost surrounded by streets full of deaths, had 535 inmates and only five deaths: it had its own well. The brewery in Broad Street employed more than seventy men and none died: they drank beer, or water from the brewery's own deep well. A widow in Hampstead, miles away, died after drinking water brought to her from the Broad Street pump, because she preferred its taste.

Snow also used a **natural experiment** (*esperimento naturale*): a comparison that real life sets up by chance. In south London two companies supplied water to the same streets: one took it from the Thames where it was polluted by sewage, the other from a cleaner point upstream. In the first seven weeks of the 1854 epidemic, Snow counted 315 cholera deaths per 10,000 houses supplied by the first company and 37 per 10,000 supplied by the second — "between eight and nine times" as many, in his words. The bacterium responsible, *Vibrio cholerae*, was identified by Fi-

lippo Pacini in Florence in 1854 and by Robert Koch in 1883–84; Snow, who died in 1858, never knew its name.

ERRORE FREQUENTE

✗ «Snow fermò l'epidemia togliendo la maniglia della pompa.» → ✓ Quando la maniglia fu tolta (8 settembre) i casi stavano già calando, anche perché molti abitanti erano fuggiti; lo scrisse Snow stesso. Il suo merito è la **prova**: i dati mostrarono che la malattia viaggiava con l'acqua.

DA RICORDARE

For the exam. Starting point: Turner's *Rain, Steam and Speed* (1844) — a train emerging from rain and light on Brunel's bridge. Three links it opens:

- **English:** Coketown in *Hard Times* (T2) — the same machine seen as a monster; the railway and the industrial city, 1830–1851.
- **Italian:** Verga and the myth of progress — in the preface to *I Malavoglia* (1881) the "fiumana del progresso" and those it leaves behind; Malpelo in the quarry.
- **Physics:** the steam engine as a heat engine — heat turned into work, and why no engine can turn all of it (the second law of thermodynamics).

SINTESI

- **Victoria** reigned from 1837 to 1901. Railways (from 1830) created national **railway time**; by 1851 more people in England and Wales lived in towns than in the country.
- The industrial cities had slums, no sanitation and repeated cholera epidemics; Chadwick's report (1842), the Public Health Act (1848) and Bazalgette's sewers (from 1859) began public health.
- The **New Poor Law** (1834) made the workhouse the only help for the able-bodied poor. **Chartism** demanded six political reforms (the People's Charter, 1838); its petitions were rejected in 1839, 1842 and 1848.
- The repeal of the **Corn Laws** (1846) made **free trade** and **laissez-faire** the economic creed of the age.
- The **Great Exhibition** (1851) in the Crystal Palace celebrated industry and progress; the **Victorian compromise** is a later label for the age's balance between progress and poverty, reform and order.
- Victorian novels were published through **serialisation** (monthly parts or magazines) and as **three-volume novels** for circulating libraries such as Mudie's.
- **Charles Dickens** (1812–1870) wrote *Oliver Twist*, *David Copperfield*, *Hard Times* and *Great Expectations*; his characters are often built by **caricature**.
- *Hard Times* (1854, weekly in *Household Words*) satirises a crude **utilitarianism** through Gradgrind's "Facts" and the mill town of Coketown; it is a **condition-of-England novel**, like Gaskell's *North and South*.
- In T1 Dickens uses repetition and building metaphors for caricature; in T2 anaphora and animal images for the machine town; in T3 verbal irony against the workhouse board.
- Write about texts in the **literary present**, about authors and history in the past simple, and about reception up to now in the present perfect.
- Verga's **verismo** aims at **impersonality**; Dickens's narrator comments openly. Turner painted the railway as sublime in *Rain, Steam and Speed* (1844).
- John Snow traced the Broad Street cholera outbreak (1854) to one pump: a founding case of **epidemiology**, against the **miasma** theory.

ESERCIZI

History and Literature

1. ● Which of these was NOT one of the six points of the People's Charter?
   - **A.** a secret ballot
   - **B.** payment for Members of Parliament
   - **C.** votes for women over thirty
   - **D.** annual parliaments

2. ● *Hard Times* first appeared…
   - **A.** in weekly instalments in *Household Words*.
   - **B.** as a three-volume novel for circulating libraries.
   - **C.** in twenty monthly parts sold at one shilling each.
   - **D.** in *Bentley's Miscellany*, like *Oliver Twist*.

3. ●● The expression "Victorian compromise" is…
   - **A.** a later label for the tension between progress and poverty, reform and order in the age.
   - **B.** the name of the agreement that ended Chartism in 1848.
   - **C.** a phrase coined by Queen Victoria in 1851.
   - **D.** the official name of the Second Reform Act.

4. ● Put these events in chronological order and write the date of each: the Great Exhibition opens · the New Poor Law · the repeal of the Corn Laws · Victoria becomes queen · the Second Reform Act · the People's Charter · the Broad Street cholera outbreak · the Education Act.

5. ●● True or false? Correct the false statements. a The census of 1851 showed that most people in England and Wales lived in towns. b The Chartist petitions were accepted by Parliament in 1848. c Paxton's Crystal Palace was made of stone and glass. d *Hard Times* is the longest of Dickens's novels. e Dickens visited Preston before writing *Hard Times*. f Bentham was still alive when *Hard Times* was published.

6. ●● Explain each term in one or two sentences, with an example from the chapter: a serialisation b utilitarianism c caricature d condition-of-England novel e laissez-faire.

7. ●●● Short answer (100–130 words): Why did the Great Exhibition of 1851 become a symbol of the age? Include a definition, an example and a link.

Text Analysis

8. ●● In T3 the phrase “for they would compel nobody, not they” is…
   - **A.** the narrator’s sincere praise of the board’s generosity.
   - **B.** a quotation from the New Poor Law.
   - **C.** Oliver’s comment on the board.
   - **D.** ironic: it mimics the board’s self-satisfied voice while the “choice” is a trap.

9. ●● T1: Find the sentence that is repeated in the second paragraph and the four features of the speaker it introduces. What does the repetition do to the reader’s image of the speaker?

10. ●● T2: Copy two images that make machines alive and two phrases that make people mechanical. Then explain the contrast in two sentences.

11. ●● T3: Paraphrase in modern English: “they established the rule, that all poor people should have the alternative… of being starved by a gradual process in the house, or by a quick one out of it.”

12. ●● Compare T1 and T3 (80–100 words). Both are satires of institutions. Which institution does each attack, and which technique does each use?

13. ●●● Write a PEE paragraph (80–100 words): “In T2 Dickens makes Coketown a place where time stands still.” Use one short quotation.

14. ●●● Link to an Italian text. Compare the first sentence of “Rosso Malpelo” with the first paragraph of T3: whose point of view does each narrator adopt, and does the narrator agree with it?

Language

15. ● Choose the correct sentence for an essay on *Hard Times*.
   - **A.** Dickens has published *Hard Times* in 1854.
   - **B.** In the first chapter Gradgrind demands nothing but facts.
   - **C.** In the first chapter Gradgrind had demanded nothing but facts.
   - **D.** Since 1854 critics discuss the novel.

16. ● Complete with the correct form of the verb in brackets. a In T2 the narrator (compare) the piston to an elephant. b Dickens (visit) Preston in January 1854. c Since 1948, when F. R. Leavis called it a “moral fable”, many critics (read) *Hard Times* as a moral tale. d Louisa (marry) Bounderby because her father’s figures (show) nothing against it. e Snow (die) in 1858, before the bacterium (identify) by Koch. f The novel (adapt) several times for radio and television.

17. ●● Find and correct the tense mistake in each sentence. a In *Oliver Twist*, the board decided that the poor like the workhouse. b Gaskell has written *North and South* for *Household Words*. c Turner paints *Rain, Steam and Speed* in 1844. d Critics compare Coketown with Preston for over a century. e Sissy can’t define a horse, although she lived with horses all her life.

18. ●● Rewrite this summary in the literary present, removing unnecessary past perfects: “Gradgrind had taught his children only facts. Louisa had married Bounderby, and Tom had robbed the bank, and Stephen had been accused. In the end Gradgrind had understood his mistake.”

19. ●● Write one sentence for each world (author and history, text, reception) about one of these: *Oliver Twist* · Turner’s *Rain, Steam and Speed* · Snow’s map.

20. ●● Complete the paragraph with the verbs in the correct tense: *Elizabeth Gaskell (1) (publish) North and South in Household Words in 1854–55. In the novel, Margaret Hale, a clergyman’s daughter from the south, (2) (move) to Milton, an industrial town in the north, where she (3) (meet) the mill-owner John Thornton. Critics (4) often (compare) the novel with Hard Times, which (5) (appear) in the same magazine a few months earlier.*

21. ●●● Translate into English, choosing the tenses carefully. a Nel romanzo, Gradgrind educa i figli soltanto con i fatti. b Dickens scrisse *Hard Times* dopo aver visitato Preston. c Da allora molti critici hanno letto Coketown come un ritratto di Preston.

Vocabulary

22. ● Complete with words from Tabella 1.5. a Cholera spread fastest where there was no proper _____ . b In the _____ families lived six to a room. c The workers went on strike when their _____ were cut. d Oliver was born in a _____ . e Bounderby owns a cotton _____ . f Victorian _____ paid for schools, hospitals and parks.

23. ●● Complete the table with the missing forms: a Chartism → a person: … b real → a belief: … → a person: … c Victoria → adjective: … d Darwin → adjective: … e utility → adjective / person: … → the theory: … f economy → a person who studies it: …

24. ●● Mark the stressed syllable in CAPITALS, then say which pairs change stress: history / historian · library / librarian · economy / economist · comedy / comedian · novel / novelist.

Writing and Speaking

25. ●●● Writing (2 × 100–130 words). Answer the two questions in the Writing section (Chartism; caricature in T1), following the checklist.

26. ●● Speaking (1 minute). Summarise orally one of the three texts of this chapter, or a novel you have read, using at least four phrases from Tabella 1.8.

Towards INVALSI

27. ●● (B1) Read “Facts, Facts, Facts”. What has changed in The Link this year?

    A. It has stopped reading novels.

    B. There is no Bristol class any more: it now links Giulia’s class with three friends at university.

    C. Giulia has become the only member.

    D. It now reads one novel per term.

28. ●● (B2) Why does Giulia think *Hard Times* "seemed right for a year of exams"?
    - **A.** Because it is short and easy.
    - **B.** Because Prof.ssa Rossi chose it.
    - **C.** Because its first chapter takes place in a classroom.
    - **D.** Because it is about INVALSI.

29. ●● (B1) Answer in no more than four words. a Which test does Giulia take in March? b What is her class's CLIL subject? c On which day does she work at the museum? d With how many people does Sam share a kitchen? e How many instalments a week will the club read? f When is the first video call?

30. ●● (B2) True, false or not given? a Taking the INVALSI test is necessary for admission to the exam. b Marta has lost her calendar. c Sam's first lecture had about twelve students. d Sam managed to summarise a novel in one minute. e Callum is studying physics in Edinburgh. f Aoife has read *Hard Times* before.

31. ●●● (B2) Who…? Write G (Giulia), S (Sam), C (Callum), A (Aoife), M (Marta) or E (Elena). a made a plan and lost it b suggested reading like the Victorians c wants to make a map d complains that nobody checks attendance e asked about the sea f thinks Gradgrind would like the school timetable g did not know the answer to a child's question

Towards the Exam

32. ●●● Starting point: John Snow's map of the Broad Street outbreak (1854) — streets, a pump, and the deaths marked house by house. Talk for 3 minutes and link it to two other subjects.

33. ●●● Starting point: the quotation "Now, what I want is, Facts." (Dickens, *Hard Times*, 1854). Talk for 3 minutes and link it to two other subjects.

PER APPROFONDIRE

- [SAN] A. Sanders, *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*: the chapter on Victorian literature from 1830 to 1880, with Dickens and the novel of the industrial city.
- [NOR] S. Greenblatt (ed.), *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, vol. E: the introduction to the Victorian age and the section "Industrialism: Progress or Decline?".
- [WIL] R. Williams, *Culture and Society 1780–1950*: the chapter on the industrial novels, with *Hard Times*.
- [ABR] M. H. Abrams, G. G. Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*: the entries "Victorian period", "novel" and "realism and naturalism".
- [SWA] M. Swan, *Practical English Usage*: the entries on the present tenses in summaries and stories and on the past and present perfect.
- [HEW] M. Hewings, *Advanced Grammar in Use*: the units on present and past tenses.

Glossario del capitolo

Caricature
caricatura — the comic exaggeration of a person's most striking traits, as in Dickens's Gradgrind.

Chartism
cartismo — the working-class movement (1838–c. 1848) that demanded the six political reforms of the People's Charter.

Condition-of-England novel
romanzo sociale — a Victorian novel about the relations between rich and poor in the industrial towns (*Hard Times*, *North and South*).

Epidemiology
epidemiologia — the study of how diseases are distributed in a population, and why.

Free trade
libero scambio — trade between countries without taxes on imports.

Impersonality
impersonalità — in Verga, the technique by which the author disappears and the story seems to tell itself in the community's voice.

Laissez-faire
liberismo — the belief that the state should interfere as little as possible with business, wages and prices.

Literary present
presente letterario — the present simple used to tell the plot of a text and to describe what a text does.

Miasma
miasma — "bad air" from rotting matter, believed before germ theory to cause diseases such as cholera.

Natural experiment
esperimento naturale — a comparison between groups that real life creates by chance, as in Snow's two water companies.

Political economy
economia politica — the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century science of wealth, production and trade (Smith, Malthus, Ricardo).

Railway time
ora ferroviaria — the single national (Greenwich) time adopted by the British railways in the 1840s.

Serialisation
pubblicazione a puntate — publication of a novel in instalments, in monthly parts or in a magazine.

Short-answer question
domanda a risposta breve — a question to be answered in 10–12 lines with a definition, an example and a link.

Three-volume novel
romanzo in tre volumi — the expensive first edition of a Victorian novel, bought mainly by circulating libraries.

Utilitarianism
utilitarismo — the theory (Bentham, Mill) that an action is right if it produces the greatest happiness of the greatest number.

Verismo
verismo — the Italian realist movement of the 1870s–1880s (Verga, Capuana), aiming at an impersonal representation of reality.

Victorian compromise
compromesso vittoriano — a later critics' label for the age's balance between progress and poverty, reform and order.

Soluzioni

1. C (the Charter asked for the vote for every man over twenty-one; votes for some women over thirty came only in 1918).

2. A (1 April – 12 August 1854; the book followed later that year).

3. A (a label used by later historians and critics, not a Victorian term).

4. New Poor Law (1834) → Victoria becomes queen (20 June 1837) → People's Charter (May 1838) → repeal of the Corn Laws (1846) → Great Exhibition opens (1 May 1851) → Broad Street cholera outbreak (August–September 1854) → Second Reform Act (1867) → Education Act (1870).

5. a T. b F — all three petitions (1839, 1842, 1848) were rejected. c F — it was made of iron and glass. d F — it is the shortest. e T (January 1854, during the lock-out of the cotton workers). f F — Bentham died in 1832.

6. a Publication of a novel in instalments, monthly or weekly (*Pickwick* in monthly parts; *Hard Times* weekly in *Household Words*). b The theory that actions are right if they produce happiness, "the greatest happiness of the greatest number" (Bentham, Mill); satirised in its crude form through Gradgrind. c Comic exaggeration of a person's most striking traits (Gradgrind's "square" body in T1). d A novel about the relations between rich and poor in the industrial towns (*Hard Times*, *North and South*, *Sybil*). e The belief that the state should interfere as little as possible with the economy (the creed behind free trade after 1846).

7. Model: The Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations, opened by Victoria on 1 May 1851 in Hyde Park, became a symbol of the age because it displayed Britain's industrial power and its faith in progress. Its building, Paxton's Crystal Palace, was itself a product of industry: an iron frame and nearly 300,000 panes of glass, made in factories and assembled in months. There were more than six million visits, and on "shilling days" working people arrived by train, so the Exhibition also showed the new railway age. Yet the same years saw slums, workhouses and cholera: the Exhibition shows one face of the "Victorian compromise", while Dickens's Coketown shows the other. Accept other relevant links (Turner, the railway, Snow).

8. D.

9. "The emphasis was helped by the speaker's…": forehead, mouth, voice, hair (the paragraph also mentions the forefinger and the eyes). The anaphora builds the man piece by piece, like a machine or a building, and makes him rigid and comic: the reader sees a caricature, not a person.

10. Machines alive: "interminable serpents of smoke"; the piston "like the head of an elephant in a state of melancholy madness". People mechanical: "people equally like one another"; "who all went in and out at the same hours… to do the same work". Dickens reverses the natural order: machines have life and feelings, while human beings are reduced to identical, repeated movements.

11. Model: They decided that poor people could choose between dying of hunger slowly inside the workhouse and dying of hunger quickly outside it — that is, there was no real choice at all.

12. Model: T1 attacks a school based on "nothing but Facts", T3 the workhouse board created by the New Poor Law. T1 works through caricature: the narrator describes the teacher's body with repeated building images and turns the children into "little vessels". T3 works through verbal irony: the narrator praises the board as "sage" and "philosophical" and repeats their view that "the poor people liked it", so that their own logic condemns them. In both, precise, almost bureaucratic language (gallons; an onion twice a week) becomes an accusation.

13. Model: Point — Dickens presents Coketown as a place without change or progress. Evidence — the inhabitants live a life in which "every day was the same as yesterday and to-morrow, and every year the counterpart of the last and the next". Explanation — the repeated "same" and the long, balanced sentence make past, present and future identical; the town that symbolises industrial progress is, for its workers, an endless repetition. The machine rhythm of the prose imitates the piston that works "monotonously up and down".

14. Model: In "Rosso Malpelo" the narrator adopts the point of view of the community of the quarry, which believes that red hair means wickedness; he does not comment, so the reader must notice the prejudice (impersonality, verismo). In T3 Dickens's narrator adopts the board's point of view ("the poor people liked it!"), but makes it obviously absurd through irony and exaggeration, so that his disagreement is clear. Both techniques expose a collective prejudice; Dickens's narrator is present and judging, Verga's is invisible.

15. B (literary present for the text; A needs *published*; C an unnecessary past perfect; D needs *have discussed*).

16. a compares b visited c have read d marries · show e died · was identified (Koch's work, 1883–84, came after Snow's death) f has been adapted.

17. a decides (keep the plot in the present) b wrote c painted d have compared e has lived.

18. Gradgrind teaches his children only facts. Louisa marries Bounderby; later Tom robs the bank and lets Stephen be accused. In the end Gradgrind understands his mistake.

19. Example (Snow): History — Snow drew his map after the outbreak of 1854. Text/argument — The map shows that the deaths cluster around the Broad Street pump. Reception — It has become one of the most famous images in the history of epidemiology. Accept correct sentences with the right tense in each world.

20. 1 published 2 moves 3 meets 4 have often compared 5 appeared (had appeared is also acceptable).

21. a In the novel, Gradgrind educates (brings up) his children only with facts / on nothing but facts. b Dickens wrote *Hard Times* after visiting (after he had visited) Preston. c Since then many critics have read Coketown as a portrait of Preston.

22. a sanitation b slums (overcrowded slums) c wages d workhouse e mill f philanthropy (also: charity).

23. a Chartist b realism · realist c Victorian d Darwinian e utilitarian · utilitarianism f economist.

24. HIStory / hisTORian (changes) · LIbrary / liBRARian (changes) · eCONomy / eCONomist (no change) · COMedy / coMEDian (changes) · NOVel / NOVelist (no change). The -ian suffix moves the stress; -ist and -ism usually do not.

25. Model a: Chartism was the first national working-class political movement in Britain. Its leaders included William Lovett, who drafted the Charter, and Feargus O'Connor. In May 1838 its leaders published the People's Charter, which demanded six reforms: a vote for every man over twenty-one, a secret ballot, no property qualification for MPs, payment for MPs, equal constituencies and annual parliaments. The Chartists collected millions of signatures, but Parliament rejected their petitions in 1839, 1842 and 1848. The movement faded after 1848; nevertheless, all its demands except annual parliaments later became law. It shows that the Reform Act of 1832 had left most working men without a vote. Model b: Caricature is the comic exaggeration of a person's most striking traits. In T1 Dickens builds Thomas Gradgrind through his body: a "square wall of a forehead", eyes in "two dark caves", a head with no "warehouse-room" left. The sentence "The emphasis was helped by…" is repeated four times, and the word "square" recurs, so the man becomes a geometric, mechanical figure. The caricature is a social judgement: a mind that accepts only facts is as rigid as the body that carries it. The narrator never says that Gradgrind is wrong; the images say it for him. Dickens uses the same technique for many characters, which makes them memorable for readers of instalments.

26. Model (T2, about 130 words): This is an extract from chapter 5 of *Hard Times*, published in 1854. It's about Coketown, the industrial town where the novel is set. Basically, the narrator describes the town from the outside: the red brick blackened by smoke, the tall chimneys, a black canal and a purple river, and the huge mills where the steam engine works all day. Then he moves to the people, who all look the same and do the same work at the same hours. What Dickens is really saying is that the town has turned human beings into parts of a machine. There's a line that sums it up: "every day was the same as yesterday and to-morrow". So, in a nutshell, Coketown is a triumph of fact and a disaster for people.

27. B.

28. C.

29. a the INVALSI English test b physics c (on) Wednesday (afternoons) d seven (people) e two f Sunday 6 October.

30. a True. b True. c False (about two hundred; seminars have twelve). d False (he spoke for two and a half minutes and never reached the ending). e False (geography). f Not given (the post only says that she "is reading it anyway").

31. a M b C c C d S e A f E g G.

32. Traccia: describe the map (Soho, 1854; deaths clustering round one pump; the workhouse and brewery exceptions) → the scientific point (miasma vs water; observation, data, a natural experiment; the handle removed on 8 September) → English: the industrial city and public health (Chadwick 1842, the Great Stink 1858), Dickens's slums and Coketown's polluted river → science: epidemiology, *Vibrio cholerae* (Pacini 1854, Koch 1883–84) → maths: rates per 10,000 houses (315 vs 37) → Italian or history: cholera in nineteenth-century Italy (e.g. Naples 1884) or Manzoni's plague. Use the past for history, the present for what the map shows.

33. Traccia: context (1854, Coketown, Gradgrind's school; serialised in *Household Words*) → meaning (education reduced to facts; utilitarianism and political economy satirised; Fancy and the circus as the answer) → technique (caricature, repetition, the "little vessels") → Italian: Verga and the language of the community ("Rosso Malpelo"), or the positivist faith in facts in late-nineteenth-century Italy → philosophy: Bentham and Mill's utilitarianism (and Mill's own crisis) → science: the role of data in Snow's work, where facts saved lives — a balanced conclusion.