

📖 Topic Page: [Disraeli, 1st Earl of Beaconsfield Benjamin \(1804 – 1881\)](#)

Definition: **Disraeli** from *Collins English Dictionary*

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1 Benjamin, 1st Earl of Beaconsfield. 1804–81, British Tory statesman and novelist; prime minister (1868; 1874–80). He gave coherence to the Tory principles of protectionism and imperialism, was responsible for the Reform Bill (1867) and, as prime minister, bought a controlling interest in the Suez Canal. His novels include *Coningsby* (1844) and *Sybil* (1845)



Image from:

[BENJAMIN DISRAELI, FIRST EARL OF BEACONSFIELD](#) in [Great Victorian Lives: An Era in Obituaries](#)

Summary Article: **Disraeli, Benjamin**

From *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

British Conservative politician and novelist. Elected to Parliament in 1837, he was chancellor of the Exchequer under Lord Derby in 1852, 1858–59, and 1866–68, and prime minister in 1868 and 1874–80. His imperialist policies brought India directly under the crown, and he was personally responsible for purchasing control of the Suez Canal. The central Conservative Party organization is his creation. His popular, political novels reflect an interest in social reform and include *Coningsby* (1844) and *Sybil* (1845).

After a period in a solicitor's office, Disraeli wrote the novels *Vivian Grey* (1826), *Contarini Fleming* (1832), and others, and the pamphlet 'Vindication of the English Constitution' (1835). Entering Parliament in 1837 after four unsuccessful attempts, he was laughed at as a dandy, but when his maiden speech was shouted down, he said: 'The time will come when you will hear me.' Excluded from Robert Peel's government of 1841–46, Disraeli formed his Young England group to keep a critical eye on Peel's Conservatism. Its ideas were expounded in the novel trilogy *Coningsby*, *Sybil*, and *Tancred* (1847).

When Peel decided in 1846 to repeal the Corn Laws, Disraeli opposed the measure in a series of witty and effective speeches; Peel's government fell soon after, and Disraeli gradually came to be recognized as the leader of the Conservative Party in the Commons. During the next 20 years the Conservatives formed short-lived minority governments, in 1852, 1858–59, and 1866–68, with Lord Derby as prime minister and Disraeli as chancellor of the Exchequer and leader of the Commons. In 1852 Disraeli first proposed discrimination in income tax between earned and unearned income, but without success. The 1858–59 government legalized the admission of Jews to Parliament, and transferred the government of India from the East India Company to the crown. In 1866 the Conservatives took office after defeating a Liberal Reform Bill, and then attempted to secure the credit of widening the franchise by the Reform Bill of 1867. On Lord Derby's retirement in 1868 Disraeli became prime minister, but a few months later he was defeated by Gladstone in a general election. During the six years of opposition that followed he published another novel, *Lothair* (1870), and established Conservative Central Office, the prototype of modern party organizations. In 1874 Disraeli took office for the second time, with a majority of 100. Some useful reform measures were passed, such as the Artisans' Dwelling Act, which empowered local authorities to undertake slum clearance; but the outstanding feature of the government's policy was its imperialism. It was Disraeli's personal

initiative that purchased from the Khedive of Egypt a controlling interest in the Suez Canal, conferred on the Queen the title of Empress of India, and sent the Prince of Wales on the first royal tour of that country. Disraeli accepted an earldom in 1876. The Bulgarian revolt of 1876 and the subsequent Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78 provoked one of many political duels between Disraeli and Gladstone, the Liberal leader; the conflict was concluded by the Congress of Berlin in 1878, where Disraeli was the principal British delegate and brought home 'peace with honour', and Cyprus was ceded to Britain by Turkey. The government was defeated in 1880, and a year later Disraeli died.

quotations

Disraeli, Benjamin

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Gladstone and Disraeli

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Disraeli, Benjamin. (2018). In Helicon (Ed.), *The Hutchinson unabridged encyclopedia with atlas and weather guide*. Abington, UK: Helicon. Retrieved from https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/disraeli_benjamin_1804_1881



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