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Thank you to the SIU-C Honors Program for granting me the opportunity to pursue this project. A special thank you to Francesca Burkett for forcing me to work on it until it was finished.

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**THE GREAT DEBATE, BRITAIN 1868-1876:
AN EXPLORATION OF BRITISH POLITICS VIA REACTING TO THE PAST**
Ryan Jurich

A thesis submitted to the University Honors Program
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Honors Certificate with Thesis

Approved by
Dr. Joseph Sramek
Professor, School of History and Philosophy

Southern Illinois University, Carbondale
May 11, 2023

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A final thank you and apology is owed to everyone I have ever bored to death with a monotonous half hour lecture on mid-century Victorian politics, including nearly all of my friends, and several bewildered strangers.

Biography

RYAN JURICH is a senior in the International Studies, History, and Economics undergraduate programs at Southern Illinois University Carbondale. He began writing “The Great Debate, Britain 1868-1876” after working with Dr. Joseph Sramek (SIU-C) on his own Reacting to the Past program, titled “Reform or Revolution? Britain, 1841-1848”. Ryan currently works for the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute as an intern for the Jackson County State’s Attorney’s Office. He will attend George Washington University to pursue a master’s degree in International Economic Development Policy in the Fall of 2023, after which he plans to join the U.S. State Department’s Foreign Service.

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Introduction

Project Overview and Goals

The Victorian era (ca. 1830 – 1900) in Britain saw massive economic and social transformations brought about by industrialization and the emergence, for the first time, of a modern class society. Government itself was transformed during this period as the British parliament found itself having to grapple with national issues such as poor relief, the Irish potato famine of the mid-1840s, and whether an economic policy of free trade capitalism ought to prevail over protectionist interests. Later, in the 1860s and 1870s, the questions of suffrage and democracy, women's rights, and labor rights came to the fore. The era saw the interplay of major modern political ideologies such as conservatism, classical liberalism, utilitarianism, radicalism, and socialism. Lastly, the period is known for some of its great political and intellectual figures, including statesmen and intellectuals such as William Gladstone, Benjamin Disraeli, Sir Robert Peel, Edwin Chadwick, Karl Marx, and John Stuart Mill, who continue to inspire and shape our modern world more than a century later.

This research project focused on creating an innovative way for students of history to learn about the various political, economic, and social changes shaping and being shaped by the decisions of the British government in the latter half of the 19th century by using the Reacting to the Past curriculum framework. In particular, it focused on the historical first ministries of William Gladstone and Benjamin Disraeli, their famous feud on the floor of the House of Commons and in the pages of every British newspaper, and their respective influence in shaping the modern world's conception of liberal and conservative ideologies. The content of this project was split into three parts: an exploration of the historical context of this period in order to create a historically accurate background for the new class curriculum, creating a solid educational curriculum using the Reacting to the Past framework as outlined by the Barnard College

Reacting Consortium, and finally a review of the first playtest of this curriculum in an honors class at Southern Illinois University Carbondale during the Fall 2022 semester.

This new class curriculum, which resulted in the creation of a Reacting to the Past game titled *The Great Debate: Britain, 1868-1876*, is situated entirely within the Houses of Parliament of Great Britain and Ireland and simulated, at the outset, the course of William Gladstone's eventful first premiership. By occurring almost entirely within Parliament, this curriculum teaches not only the central ideological and social issues of the late Victorian age, but also the processes that led to the eventual formation of the modern ideologies of liberalism and conservatism in Britain and throughout the modern world. Historically, Gladstone's first premiership, while ultimately leading to a great defeat in the 1874 general election, instrumentally shaped the composition and views of the Liberal Party. Similarly, Benjamin Disraeli's ability to maintain his leadership of the Conservative Party while promoting his personal views of conservatism formed most of the Conservative Party's core tenants. Students in this game are able to explore this ideological space and see firsthand how and why both parties developed the way that they did.

Most students necessarily take on the role of Members of Parliament (or MPs), while others play the role of journalists, and a few become members of the House of Lords. MPs introduce legislation and debate the important questions of the day, while attempting to fulfill personal objectives of their own. Journalists represent the growing influence of public opinion and will use their influence to comment on the proceedings of Parliament and advocate for the adoption of certain positions or reforms. Lords have the special task of reminding both of these groups of the residual power of Britain's aristocracy, while also providing important assistance (or hindrance) to the leaders of the political parties.

Throughout this curriculum, students engaged with a variety of ideologies and social forces, including conservatism, liberalism, republicanism, reformism, socialism, communism, imperialism, and suffrage. They were encouraged to debate using the works of Edmund Burke, John Stuart Mill, and Karl Marx, among others. Questions surrounding the Anglican Church and state religion more generally, the status of Ireland, the meaning of the British Empire, and the right to vote were discussed, as were more general aspects of late 19th century reform movements.

Methods and Timeline

Reacting to the Past, used at over 500 colleges and universities worldwide including several Honors programs, is an innovative and award-winning pedagogy that emphasizes experiential learning. Students grapple with major works and ideological conflicts which shaped the world through playing a real historical character and advancing his or her character's ideas and goals through both cooperative and competitive gameplay. In the process, students not only learn about historical events or major ideas far more deeply than in more traditional pedagogies but also appreciate more profoundly than in a lecture hall or classroom discussion the role of historical contingency in shaping historical events. They also learn various intangible "soft skills" relating to public speaking, rigorous analysis of primary texts, and the arts of persuasion.

This project dealt with the process of researching and writing just such a "game", with the understanding that the term "game" is in this case being used to define a rigorously academic curriculum for history education. The term game is used throughout this work, with this definition in mind. All standard historical research skills apply, including appropriate analysis of primary and secondary sources, interpretation of events and extraction of cause and effect, and a comprehensive analysis of the various influences upon the decision-making processes of various

individuals and groups. Most of the research and game creation process for this project had already been completed throughout 2021, to ensure a working curriculum in time for the Fall 2022 semester. The actual work of the class was completed at the end of the Fall 2022 semester. The curriculum created from this project was proposed for induction and testing by the Barnard College Reacting Consortium, a group of likeminded professors and students from colleges and universities across the nation, for their annual conference in June. This curriculum will be presented and workshopped at that conference in June of 2023.

Resources and Literature

This project necessitated the review and editing of major works by influential writers of the age, including Thomas Paine, Alexis de Tocqueville, John Stuart Mill, Edmund Burke, Otto von Bismarck, Friedrich Engels, Karl Marx, and Josephine Butler, among others. This project also involved the review and editing of the speeches and writings of influential politicians, including Sir Robert Peel, Lord Palmerston, and Benjamin Disraeli. This project also includes the review of biographies and other writings of the following: Lord Granville Leveson-Gower, Lord Robert Gascoyne-Cecil, Lord Charles Gordon Lennox, Lord Edward Stanley, William Gladstone, Henry Bruce, William Forster, John Bright, A. J. Mundella, Chichester Parkinson-Fortescue, Edward Cardwell, Robert Lowe, Benjamin Disraeli, Gathorne Gathorne Hardy, Lord John Manners, Stafford Northcote, Spencer Horatio Walpole, R. A. Cross, John Thaddeus Delane, Frederick Greenwood, Thornton Leigh Hunt, Frank Harrison Hill, Algernon Borthwick, Charles Bradlaugh, and others.

Other important works on the period were consulted, as listed in the “Selected Bibliography and Reference Works” section of this document, along with relevant estimates of

political outcomes (for the purposes of determining potential election chances of individuals and parties) and relevant economic and social data.

Desired Outcomes and Significance

This final project, as a completed class curriculum, is intended to be presented to the Reacting to the Past Consortium at their annual conference in June, with the hope of getting it recognized as a “game in development”, putting it on track to be a recognized and published educational curriculum. A presentation on the research which went into this project will be presented to professors from history departments across the country, to allow for their comments, criticism, and advice.

This project resulted in the creation of a curriculum, or “game”, which expands the available literature for Reacting to the Past classes, helping professors across the country introduce this exciting and important period of British and global history to students across the nation.

Gamebook Sample

What’s in a Gamebook?

In a Reacting course, the gamebook is the gateway by which students enter into and immerse themselves in the course’s time period. Each gamebook contains the same key elements, useful to both students and professors alike: an introduction to Reacting to the Past, historical context about the major players and ideas of the period, and an explanation of the main mechanism of the game. The gamebook for *The Great Debate* is the culmination of over a year’s worth of research into late 19th century British society and politics. It is presented here, in an abbreviated form, to display that research.

Game Synopsis

The Great Debate: Britain, 1868-1874 is situated entirely within the Houses of Parliament of Great Britain and Ireland and simulates the course of William Gladstone's eventful first premiership. Preceding decades have seen numerous governments form and fall. Sir Robert Peel's decision to repeal the Corn Laws in 1846 had split the Tory faction in two, creating political chaos. Since 1859, the various ideologies of Parliament had been steadily coalescing into two main groups: the Liberal Party, composed of former Peelites and Whigs, and the Conservative Party, formed from the remains of the Tories. By 1868, the two great Prime Ministers and political parties of the late Victorian Age were emerging. With most of the old guard from the 1840s and 1850s either dead, sick, or removed to the House of Lords, the Liberal government is led by William Gladstone, and the Conservative opposition led by Benjamin Disraeli. Both are bitter political rivals and former colleagues of Sir Robert Peel, and both seek to solidify their vision of their respective parties' futures.

Introduction to Reacting

Reacting to the Past is a series of historical role-playing games. After a few preparatory lectures, the game begins and the students are in charge. Set in moments of heightened historical tension, the games place you in the role of a person from the period. By reading the game book and your individual role sheet, you will find out more about your objectives, worldview, allies, and opponents. You must then attempt to achieve victory through formal speeches, informal debate, negotiations, and conspiracy. Outcomes sometimes differ from actual history; a postmortem session sets the record straight. The following is an outline of what you will encounter in Reacting and what you will be expected to do.

Game Setup

Your instructor will spend some time before the beginning of the game helping you to understand the historical context for the game. During the setup period, you will use several different kinds of material:

- The game book (from which you are reading now), which includes historical information, rules and elements of the game, and essential historical documents.
- A role sheet, which provides a short biography of the historical person you will model in the game as well as that person's ideology, objectives, responsibilities, and resources. Some roles are based on historical figures. Others are "composites," which draw elements from a number of individuals. You will receive your role sheet from your instructor.
- In addition to the game book, you may be required to read historical documents or books written by historians. These provide additional information and arguments for use during the game.

Read this material before the game begins. And just as important, go back and reread these materials throughout the game. A second reading while *in role* will deepen your understanding and alter your perspective. Once the game is in motion, your perspectives may change. This will make some ideas begin to look quite different. Students who have carefully read the materials and who know the rules of the game will invariably do better than those who rely on general impressions and uncertain memories.

Game Play

Once the game begins, class sessions are presided over by students. In most cases, a single student serves as some sort of presiding officer. The instructor then becomes the Gamemaster (GM) and takes a seat in the back of the room. Instructors are, of course, available

for consultations before and after game sessions. Although they will not let you in on any of the secrets of the game, they can be invaluable in terms of sharpening your arguments or finding key historical resources. The presiding officer is expected to observe basic standards of fairness, but as a fail-safe device, most Reacting to the Past games employ the “Podium Rule,” which allows a student who has not been recognized to approach the podium and wait for a chance to speak. Once at the podium, the student has the floor and must be heard. Role sheets contain private, secret information that you must guard. You are advised, therefore, to exercise caution when discussing your role with others. Your role sheet probably identifies likely allies, but even they may not always be trustworthy. However, keeping your own counsel and saying nothing to anyone is not an option. In order to achieve your objectives, you *must* speak with others. You will never muster the voting strength to prevail without allies. Collaboration and coalition building are at the heart of every game.

Some games feature strong alliances called *factions*. As a counter-balance, these games include roles called Indeterminates. They operate outside of the established factions, and while some are entirely neutral, most possess their own idiosyncratic objectives. If you are in a faction, cultivating Indeterminates is in your interest, since they can be persuaded to support your position. If you are lucky enough to have drawn the role of an Indeterminate you should be pleased; you will likely play a pivotal role in the outcome of the game.

Game Requirements

Students in Reacting practice persuasive writing, public speaking, critical thinking, teamwork, negotiation, problem solving, collaboration, adapting to changing circumstances, and working under pressure to meet deadlines. Your instructor will explain the specific requirements for your class. In general, though, a Reacting game asks you to perform three distinct activities:

Reading and Writing. This standard academic work is carried on more purposefully in a Reacting course, since what you read is put to immediate use, and what you write is meant to persuade others to act the way you want them to. The reading load may have slight variations from role to role; the writing requirement depends on your particular course. Papers are often policy statements, but they can also be autobiographies, battle plans, newspapers, poems, or after-game reflections. Papers provide the foundation for the speeches delivered in class.

Public Speaking and Debate. In the course of a game, almost everyone is expected to deliver at least one formal speech from the podium (the length of the game and the size of the class will determine the number of speeches). Debate follows. It can be impromptu, raucous, and fast paced. At some point, discussions must lead to action, which often means proposing, debating, and passing a variety of resolutions. Gamemasters may stipulate that students must deliver their papers from memory when at the podium, or may insist that students wean themselves from dependency on written notes as the game progresses. Wherever the game imaginatively puts you, it will surely not put you in the classroom of a twenty-first-century American college. Accordingly, the colloquialisms and familiarities of today's college life are out of place. Never open your speech with a salutation like "Hi guys" when something like "Fellow members of parliament!" would be more appropriate.

Always seek allies to back your points when you are speaking at the podium. Do your best to have at least one supporter second your proposal, come to your defense, or admonish inattentive members of the body. Note-passing and side conversations, while common occurrences, will likely spoil the effect of your speech; so you and your supporters should insist upon order before such behavior becomes too disruptive. Ask the presiding officer to assist you. Appeal to the Gamemaster as a last resort.

Strategizing. Communication among students is an essential feature of Reacting games. You will find yourself writing emails, texting, attending out-of-class meetings, or gathering for meals on a fairly regular basis. The purpose of frequent communication is to lay out a strategy for achieving your objectives, thwarting your opponents, and hatching plots to ensnare individuals troubling to your cause. When communicating with a fellow student in or out of class, always assume that he or she is speaking to you in role. If you want to talk about the “real world,” make that clear.

Controversy

Most Reacting to the Past games take place at moments of conflict in the past and therefore are likely to address difficult, even painful, issues that we continue to grapple with today. Consequently, this game may contain controversial subject matter. You may need to represent ideas with which you personally disagree or that you even find repugnant. When speaking about these ideas, make it clear that you are speaking *in role*. Furthermore, if other people say things that offend you, recognize that they too are playing roles. If you decide to respond to them, do so using the voice of your role and make this clear. If these efforts are insufficient, or the ideas associated with your particular role seem potentially overwhelming, talk to your Gamemaster.

When playing your role, rely upon your role sheet and the other game materials rather than drawing upon caricature or stereotype. Do not use racial and ethnic slurs even if they are historically appropriate. If you are concerned about the potential for cultural appropriation or the use of demeaning language in your game, talk to your Gamemaster.

Amid the plotting, debating, and voting, always remember that this is an immersive role-playing game. Other players may resist your efforts, attack your ideas, and even betray a

confidence. They take these actions because they are playing their roles. If you become concerned about the potential for game-based conflict to bleed out into the real world, take a step back and reflect on the situation. If your concerns persist, talk to your Gamemaster.

Historical Chronology

- 1841—1846 Second Ministry of Sir Robert Peel
- 1845 William Gladstone resigns as President of the Board of Trade in protest of the Maynooth Grant Act of 1845, but still votes to pass the act in parliament
- 1845—1849 Great Famine in Ireland leads to the death or emigration of millions
- 1846 Sir Robert Peel successfully passes the Importation Act of 1846, repealing the Corn Laws, with Whig support. He is defeated on a vote on an Irish Coercion Bill in June and subsequently resigns as Prime Minister. The Tory faction splinters between supporters of Peel (“Peelites”) and staunch Tory conservatives
- 1846 Lord Russell forms a government with Whig support
- 1847 Passage of the Factories Act of 1847 (“Ten Hours Act”)
- 1848 Revolutions of 1848, known as the “Springtime of Nations”, spreads throughout Europe. Proclamation of the French Second Republic. Publishing of the *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei*, or *The Communist Manifesto*
- 1848 Passage of the Public Health Act of 1848 along utilitarian lines at the urging of Edwin Chadwick, creating local boards of health responsible for regulating community health risks in response to cholera outbreaks
- 1850 Passage of the Factory Act of 1850 (the “Compromise Act”)
- 1850 Death of Sir Robert Peel
- 1852 Dissolution of Lord Russell’s government and formation of the first Derby-Disraeli ministry (“Who? Who?” ministry)
- 1852 Passage of the New Zealand Constitution Act of 1852, granting self-government to the Colony of New Zealand
- 1852 Successful referendum in France proclaiming Napoleon III “Emperor of the French” and creating the French Second Empire
- 1852 Dissolution of Lord Derby’s minority government in December and formation of a coalition government under Lord Aberdeen with Whig and Peelite support
- 1853 Passage of the Factory Act of 1853

- 1853 Outbreak of the Crimean War in October between the Russian Empire and the Ottoman Empire, with the United Kingdom, French Empire, and Kingdom of Sardinia-Piedmont supporting the Ottoman Empire
- 1855 Dissolution of Lord Aberdeen's government due to popular discontent over its handling of the Crimean War and formation of Lord Palmerston's first ministry with Whig and Peelite support
- 1855 Resignations of William Gladstone, Sir James Graham, and Sidney Herbert from Viscount Palmerston's government due to Peelite discontent with Palmerston's leadership
- 1856 Treaty of Paris signed ending the Crimean War in favor of the Ottoman Empire. Britain experiences over 40,000 losses, mostly due to illness
- 1856 Passage of the Factory Act of 1856
- 1856 Outbreak of the Second Opium War between Qing China and the United Kingdom, with the French Empire and United States supporting the United Kingdom
- 1857 Passage of the Matrimonial Causes Act 1857, moving the institution of divorce from ecclesiastical courts to civil courts
- 1858 Dissolution of Lord Palmerston's government and formation of the second Derby-Disraeli ministry
- 1858 Passage of the Government of India Act of 1858, nationalizing the East India Company as a response to the bloody Indian Rebellion of 1857
- 1859 Meeting in June of leading Whigs, Peelites, and Radicals in London in opposition to Lord Derby's government, resulting in the eventual formation of the Liberal Party
- 1859 Dissolution of Lord Derby's minority government and formation of Lord Palmerston's second ministry
- 1860 Convention of Peking ends the Second Opium War in favor of the United Kingdom and French Empire
- 1861 Formal proclamation of the Kingdom of Italy following the Second Italian War of Independence and the Expedition of the Thousand, largely concluding the Risorgimento (Italian Unification)
- 1861 Elevation of Lord Russell to the House of Lords
- 1861—1865 American Civil War
- 1862 Passage of the Companies Act of 1862 regulating UK company law
- 1863—1864 Second Anglo-Ashanti War
- 1864 Passage of the Contagious Diseases Act of 1866, regulating the spread of venereal disease in the armed forces, creating controversy in Victorian society

1865	Death of Viscount Palmerston, Lord Russell succeeds as Prime Minister
1866	Dissolution of Lord Russell's government and formation of the third Derby-Disraeli ministry
1866	Riots and demonstrations in Trafalgar Square, Hyde Park, and the West End in London in favor of parliamentary reform and an expansion of the electorate
1867	Passage of the British North America Act of 1867, beginning the confederation of the Canadian colonies
1867	Fenian Rising of 1867 in Ireland sees numerous republican uprisings throughout Ireland and "outrages" committed in England
1867	Passage of the Factories Acts Extension Act of 1867
1867	Passage of the Representation of the People Act of 1867, massively expanding the electorate in the United Kingdom to all male heads of household
1868	Lord Derby moves to retire from political life due to ill health, Benjamin Disraeli becomes the chief leader of the Conservatives in the House of Commons
1868	General Election of 1868, dissolution of Lord Derby's government and formation of William Gladstone's first ministry

Major Issues for Debate

The following issues and concepts are explored through this game:

- The various prominent political ideologies of the period, such as conservatism, liberalism, republicanism, socialism, communism, imperialism, and suffrage.
- The development of many of the debates which continue to consume liberal and conservative politics up until the present day, including the rights of workers, separation of church and state, and the role of the government in society.
- The ability of political representatives to:
 - Respond to public pressure and concerns by working within an acceptable semi-democratic process.
 - Balance the need to win the next election with a variety of economic, domestic, and foreign concerns.
 - And, balance the need for party unity with the need to secure their own vision of political success.
 - The role of modern media to command and direct public pressure on political representatives to achieve tangible results.

- The political legitimacy of a government, how it is gained, maintained, and even lost.

The political and social questions which the parliament of 1868-1874 wrestled with were a continuation of long-standing issues. The combative nature of parliamentary politics meant that the resolution of one part of a debate often merely set the groundwork for the next stage of that same debate. The passage of Catholic Emancipation in 1829 did not end the controversies over the role of the Anglican Church in relation with the state, nor did the passage of the Great Reform Act in 1832 end discussion over the size and qualifications of Britain's electorate. With each new reform, new details were added and old ones discarded. By the 1860s, a further expansion of the electorate and the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland, once seemingly incredible ideas, began to seem more and more realistic.

The main difference between the early Victorian and the mid-to-late Victorian period was not in the shape of its central controversies, but in its cast of political players. Palmerston, Russell, Derby, and Peel are all dead or dying in 1868. A new breed of parliamentarians has risen to take their place, led by men like Gladstone or Disraeli. Each of these characters interprets the actions and opinions of their forebearers differently. The creation of the modern Liberal and Conservative parties did not see the creation of new disputes, but rather the continuation of old ones, albeit with new leadership. The generations that come after will face much the same condition.

But reform, once achieved, is often nearly impossible to revoke. The conservatives of 1868 can no more re-instate the Corn Laws than they can shrink the British Empire to the British Isles. Nor do many wish to do so, seeing the political folly in attempting any such reactionary measures. The best conservatives can only attempt to stem the tide of radical reforms, while the

best of the liberals can only attempt to ensure that the reforms they do create are beneficial and long lasting. At a minimum, several main issues should be debated by the new parliament:

- The disestablishment of the Irish Church, attempts to better the condition of landlord and tenant relations in Ireland, and support for education within Ireland—all in keeping with Gladstone’s goal of finally solving the “Irish Question” which has plagued Britain for centuries.
- The creation of a national system of education, whether secular or religious in nature.
- The legalization of trade unions, or at least a discussion of workers’ rights.
- Efforts to enforce temperance ideology on an unwilling populace in the name of moral right.
- Britain’s relationship with the continent and its empire, international diplomacy, and the effects of colonialism.

Debates on these issues should often blend together, as indeed they often do in real politics. The achievement of personal victories must be balanced against the need for party unity. The pressure of the public must be balanced against concerns for the future. In dealing with these and many other issues, players must confront their assumptions about politics, power, and the origins of the modern world.

Introduction to the Commons

The House of Commons is the lower house and *de facto* primary chamber of the Parliament of the United Kingdom, though in 1868 this understanding is still disputed by some in the House of Lords. It is the primary focus of this game, and its sole involved location. *The Great Debate* begins directly after a General Election in the UK. As such, the composition and membership of the House of Commons has already been decided at game start – though significant choices remain to students when it comes to the formation of voting blocs and the

selection of cabinet ministers. A session of parliament is presided over by the “Speaker of the House”, a position that will usually be filled by the instructor. The Speaker is a non-partisan actor who will serve only to ensure that debates remain on track and that all members of parliament observe the rules of parliamentary procedure.

Each session of Parliament will open with “Prime Minister’s Questions Time”, also known as PMQ’s. The Speaker should first call on the Prime Minister to deliver an address to the house, during which they may discuss any event(s) given to the Cabinet, as well as the Cabinet’s decision on the event and any other pertinent economic or policy information. The Speaker should then call for questions from the opposition. This is the perfect opportunity for lesser known members of the House to question the party leaders. After the opening session of PMQ’s, the Speaker will call for new or continuing business from the House, with the Government being given preference if they have any bills to propose. If the Government has nothing to discuss, debate should then be allowed to proceed on any topic, bill, or amendment that the Speaker sees fit to approve discussion of. Bills proposed to the House traditionally undergo a three-stage vetting process. For the purposes of the game, proposed bills will have only one vote. Players must ask the Speaker if they would like to introduce a bill/amendment or if they would like to vote on a bill/amendment. However, the Speaker will likely not approve any motion to quickly end debate on a bill if there has not been enough time to properly discuss it. Finally, after a full session of Parliament, the Speaker must call for an end to debate. Debate being ended, the Speaker will then formally announce the closing of Parliamentary business for that day. If a gavel is present, it is recommended that they give it an official-sounding rap.

Party Leaders

In the British parliamentary system, the Leader of the Opposition and the Prime Minister are the declared leaders of the two largest parties, respectively—the Prime Minister being the leader of the largest governing party and vice versa. Both leaders will have the responsibility of forming a cabinet, whose members will now have additional responsibilities. Members of the frontbenches are responsible for formulating national policy and resolving intra-factional conflict. The brunt of the latter of those two burdens will be laid at the feet of the leaders of the parties, the Leader of the Opposition and the Prime Minister. When interests collide, such as when members of a faction want the same Cabinet position, desire to pass mutually exclusive bills, or would like a kind word from the party leader in the press, faction leaders must decide who to favor and who to dismiss.

Cabinet members should chiefly back their party leader's decision, seeing as it was the faction leader who put them in the position in the first place. A Cabinet position is a place of prestige, and to lose such a position in disgrace would be a great embarrassment. Therefore, Cabinet members should be careful not to go against their faction leader's wishes, especially when it comes to matter of intra-faction disputes. In this way, backbenchers will be constantly vying to win over the leaders, whilst party leaders must carefully manage group dynamics to ensure a stable coalition. Meanwhile, members of the Cabinet and Shadow Cabinet should typically form a loyal foundation for a party leader (when chosen carefully), while the details of their rolesheets will have them primarily focused on debating policy with their counterparts in the House of Commons.

In 1868, the positions of Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition are fixed to William Gladstone and Benjamin Disraeli. However, each party will need to choose who to

promote as the head of their party before each election. If either the Conservatives or the Liberals decide to support a different character, this character will be selected to serve as Prime Minister or Leader of the Opposition (depending on the outcome of the election) and asked to form a government.

Backbenchers

Backbenchers, or those members of Parliament who are not members of the Cabinet or Shadow Cabinet and who therefore sit on the back benches in the House of Commons, will each have a bill which they are trying to pass. The entire point of a backbencher's existence is to get their specific agenda item passed into the statute book—perhaps out of an honest desire to do good, or perhaps to achieve political fame. They will have many ways of attempting to gain support for their bill, but in all cases a more involved backbencher should have more luck than a quieter one.

A backbencher who works with other members of Parliament may be able to cobble together an omnibus bill which combines multiple ideas from multiple members. This will ensure some support, but in most cases, backbenchers will need support from the prominent members on the front benches to succeed. Cultivating relationships with these prominent members is therefore of the utmost importance. If a member of the government is favored by the Prime Minister, they may have a much easier time persuading them than if they were disliked – though this may require a backbencher to cede a favor in turn.

Finally, a backbencher may be able to turn to public support to attempt to win over other members of Parliament. If a backbencher stands out in debates and promotes certain policies, or else conducts other somewhat shadier deals, they may be mentioned positively in articles written by journalists and editors. For each positive article, a backbencher gains support from the paper's

reader base. As an example, a Reforming Parliamentarian who fights tooth and nail to promote suffrage may be well rewarded when reforming newspapers begin to speak highly of them. In such cases, it may be hard indeed for a Prime Minister to refuse to support such a well-liked member's propositions. If that same well-liked member were to withdraw their support for the government, the Prime Minister may very well find themselves losing the next election. That said, backbenchers who betray their party, ideals, or other well-liked members of the faction may find themselves on the wrong side of public opinion and sliding further into irrelevance.

Assigning Voting Power

The main role of members of parliament (or, "MPs") is, of course, to vote on bills, amendments, and other motions. Since all 658 members of parliament in 1868 cannot be represented in the game, each MP in the game will command the votes of both themselves and a certain amount of their followers in their respective parties.

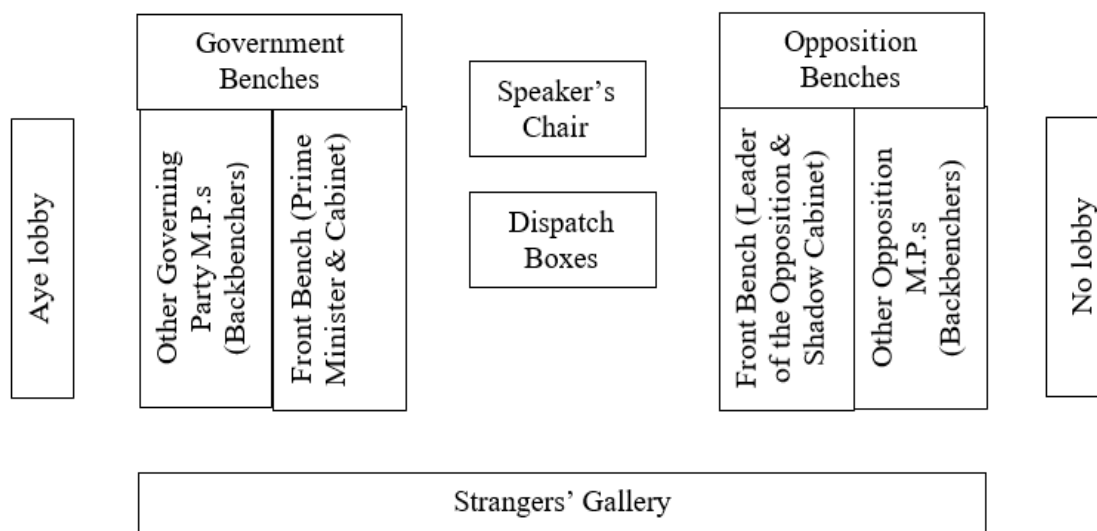
During votes on bills, each MP will have a certain number of votes that they will command as a representation of the 658 voting members of parliament. Your instructor will follow a special algorithm for assigning voting power at the start of each game, depending on the amount of students in each class. The 658 votes for parliament are multiplied by the percentage of votes each party gains in an election to see how many votes each party receives. At the start of the game, these percentages are fixed to the historical results of the 1868 General Election. However, the choices players make in the game may affect the outcome of any and all subsequent elections.

The amount of votes each party wins is divided by the number of voting members of each party. Forty votes additional votes are given to the leader of each party, with those forty votes being removed proportionally from the remaining voting members.

Organizing Parliament

To improve immersion into the historical period students will be acting out, students may expect their instructor to arrange the classroom in such a way as to simulate an actual parliament. This can easily be done by rearranging desks within the classroom. A small amount of free space should be created in the center of the classroom, with desks set two rows deep facing each other on either side of the space. The first row represents the front bench of parliament where the cabinet members sit, while the second row is where the backbenchers sit. One desk should be set facing the free space in the front of the room, representing the speaker's podium. A final section of desks should be set facing the free space and the speaker's podium in the back of the room, representing the space where lords not selected for the cabinets may sit. This is where the voting lobbies are located in the British parliament, although for the purposes of the game voting lobbies have been removed. Journalists should be allowed to sit around the room, either behind the lords or behind the MPs.

A view of the traditional setup for parliament is given below:



The Basic Rules of Parliamentary Procedure

“Parliamentary procedure” is the respected set of rules and traditions by which debates on legislation and other proposals are conducted. The formal nature of parliamentary procedure, especially British parliamentary procedure, is such that it may prove a daunting challenge to students who are unfamiliar with it.

To ensure that this game is accessible to students as an appropriate learning environment, many of the rules of parliamentary procedure may be overlooked. However, to retain at least a small degree of historical immersion, students should strive to master the following:

- During the parliamentary phase of a game session, the usual “podium rule” of most reacting games is suspended: only a member of the House of Commons who has been first recognized by the Speaker may speak, and they must deliver their speeches while standing from their seat in the House of Commons.
- All other persons sitting in the room are welcome to hiss, boo, cheer, or shout “here, here” as the speech proceeds but they must allow the speech to continue without intervening. In a similar spirit, there can be no filibustering of a speech by a member of parliament.
- Members of Parliament (or MPs) may never refer to another MP by name. Rather, they should say “My right honorable/honorable friend” if referring to a member of his own party or the “The right honorable/honorable gentleman” when referring to a member of the opposite party or parties. Alternative forms that are also acceptable are “The Prime Minister” or “Leader of the Opposition”, or using the constituency name in the address, e.g., “the right honorable member for Oxford” (if referring to Edward Cardwell).
- Questions must always be addressed through the speaker. Thus, “Does the right honorable/honorable member believe...”

- Students should not feel afraid to speak even if they are not completely comfortable with these rules—these rules are meant to simulate a degree of historical immersion, but not hinder a student’s ability to learn and engage with the class.
- A student who would rather use the names of MPs than memorize their correct constituencies will be allowed to do so if this helps them better understand the game’s content. Parliamentary speeches in the 19th century would often go on for multiple hours—just because a rule has historical precedent does not mean it would be feasible for the game.

Assignments

Assignments in *The Great Debate* vary from player to character. All assignments are listed in each player’s rolesheets. In brief, assignments come in five main forms:

Writing Bills or Amendments

Some players will be required to write bills in order to participate in the game—others may only wish to write bills/amendments to bills in order to meet their other objectives. The length and timing of those bills which are required by some character’s rolesheets is listed within that rolesheet. In short, if your rolesheet does not require you to write a bill/amendment to a bill, you will only need to do so if you feel that it would help you achieve your other objectives.

Speeches Introducing Bills or Amendments

All bills/amendments to bills must be introduced by a short speech explaining your reason for introducing that legislation. Again, the length and parameters for such an assignment are described in every character’s rolesheet. All speeches should reference relevant political subjects and texts.

Election Manifestoes

All members of a political party are required to write an election manifesto after the announcement of a new election. Manifestos should explain that character's personal political beliefs and reasons for supporting their political party, while also referencing both in-game and out-of-game events and writings. Again, the length and parameters for such an assignment are described in every character's rolesheet. Those characters who are required to write bills will have shorter manifesto requirements than those who are not. All speeches should reference relevant political subjects and texts.

Pamphlets and Articles

Some characters, but especially journalists, will not be writing bills or giving parliamentary speeches. Instead, they will write articles referencing the actions of the parliamentarians and providing important political commentary—all with the goal of achieving their own objectives. The length and parameters of such writings are described in each character's rolesheet. If members of parliament so wish, they may consider asking a newspaper journalist to publish an article they have written. Doing so may give that author social fame and other benefits.

Oral Participation

Every character in the game will likely give at least one speech—doing otherwise is a clear sign that the student is not participating in the class. Take care not to simply read your speeches off of notecards, as you will need to persuade both fellow members of parliament as well as the instructor of the strength of your arguments. While extemporaneous debates and speeches do not need to be well-polished nor necessarily well-cited, pre-prepared speeches

should be both. Relevant references to important texts, events, or other ideological arguments are expected of a great parliamentary orator. Speeches required to meet this standard include those required to introduce parliamentary bills.

In relation to those speeches which are not pre-prepared, no one expects that students will be able to give smooth and clear talking points without practice. Students should not feel afraid to speak if they have not had time to prepare their arguments—one of the great benefits of arguing with classmates after all is that each should be just as understanding of the difficulties of public speaking. The Speaker of the House of Commons will ensure that students are not interrupted (as much as possible) and that decorum is maintained. Any student may be recognized by the Speaker whenever they so wish, so long as they do not interrupt another student. Speeches required to introduce amendments to bills or any other type of debate are included within this category of speech.

Finally, each instructor will tell his or her students beforehand how the various elements of this game correspond to the grading scheme for the course. There are three potential elements that may be considered: written papers and speeches, in-and-out of class participation, and final electoral manifestoes. The victory conditions described in the rolesheets of each character should not count towards a student's overall grade, although no victory condition is impossible to achieve.

Basic Objectives

Some may see politics as a game between winners and losers, especially in a system where power is divided by two main political parties. However, personal agendas, causes, and viewpoints often means this is not the case. Indeed, even those who see winners and losers may often disagree as to who those winners and losers are. To be somewhat clearer, every player in

this game has a set of both personal and factional objectives. While the goal would be to achieve victory in both, such may often prove impossible. Players must decide which to value more: their own personal desires or the needs of their party.

Members of the press will have opinions of their own, and may be seeking to convince members of parliament to pass certain acts of legislation. Their social influence and the mouthpiece of the people gives them a great deal of power, even though they are not members of parliament. Members of the House of Lords will use their immense influence to affect the workings of parliament and the lives of those MPs who work within it. They will often have their own opinion on important subjects and bills, and will likely do their utmost to use the means they have at their disposal to make those opinions known. For each party, winning the next election is a necessity for victory. For party leaders, managing internal disagreements and shaping the future of their respective parties is the ultimate objective. For the regular members of the party, passing or preventing legislation on certain issues will be their prime focus. For all players, making decisive arguments against their opponents and gathering popular acclaim will be necessary for achieving their goals. Popular acclaim can be granted by the instructor, press, and lords. The more popular an MP is, the more weight will their words (and vote) carry. For faction leaders, ignoring a popular MP may spell the doom of their designs and objectives. Finally, players should know that *no victory condition is entirely impossible to achieve*. With that said, players may find that achieving some victory conditions is *extremely difficult*.

Schedule of Assignments and Class Activities

The various foreign, domestic, and economic events that may occur throughout the new parliamentary session are, of course, as yet unknown to you. Just as any person has little knowledge of the future, so too do the members of this new parliament have little knowledge of

what lays in store for the British Empire. But one thing that is within the control of the MPs is the legislative agenda. This agenda is technically set by the Speaker, however the Government and therefore the Prime Minister will almost always be given preference. While the decision of which bill proposals to support and which to ignore will ultimately be up to the Prime Minister (In 1868, this is William Gladstone), a few things are certain:

- Gladstone seeks to spend that majority of his time attempting to deal with the “Ireland Question”, or the on-going struggle between Britain and Ireland to find a peaceful way to exist under the same monarch. As such, you know that a few long-running debates will come back to forefront.
- There will likely be a bill on the disestablishment of the Anglican Church in Ireland, known as the Irish Church. This will likely be the first bill that Gladstone proposes in 1869.
- A bill reforming tenant-landlord relations in Ireland will be proposed by around 1871. Such a bill was first proposed by Chichester Parkinson-Fortescue in 1866, and he will likely propose more of the same.
- In addition to this, parliament will likely see bills attempting to create a national system of education, bills enforcing restrictions on alcohol, and perhaps even bills related to Trades Unionism. The shape and timing of these bills is all up to the Prime Minister and his party.
- The first session of the new parliament will be held in December of 1868, as the election results were only announce in November. This session will likely be something of introductory session, where no members will have bills prepared. Players should spend this time lobbying for Cabinet Positions, meeting their new friends and foes, and dealing with any events that may arise from the arrival of a new Liberal government in the halls of Westminster.

- After the game ends, the instructor will conduct a debriefing session during which players will have the opportunity to reveal any secret schemes and explain their actions. This session is usually an important time to come out of your character and discuss any remaining frustrations you may have held. It also provides an important opportunity to compare the results of the game with the historical outcomes.

Counterfactuals with the Game

Most of the main counterfactuals of the game involve a simplification of parliamentary procedure. In the Parliament of the United Kingdom today, bills in the House of Commons go through a “three readings” process whereby bills are debated on and passed three times—to debate the merits, specifics, and amendments to the bill respectively. Bills are then sent to the House of Lords, where the same process is repeated, before finally being sent to the reigning monarch for royal assent. For the purposes of the game, this process is represented by one vote in the Commons and one in the Lords, with the assent of the monarch (represented perhaps by the instructor) being all but assured. This is only one example of the types of processes that have been simplified. Members of parliament are not required to fulfill the election oaths, nor will they have to win a by-election to remain in the Commons when given a cabinet seat, nor will they have to write or attend a State Opening of Parliament by the Queen. These formal traditions, which would have been more historically accurate and perhaps interesting to act out, have been done away with to focus the game more succinctly on the issues. Wherever possible, the core traditions of parliament have been maintained.

Debates in the commons have also been recreated to better suit the game. Students are not expected to give speeches hours long in length, nor will they be required to write bills that are dozens of pages in length. This does not mean that the debates and bills they do create should be

simple or ill-researched, but rather that a reacting game cannot sustain the type of heavy debate which normally accompanies a bill's passage through parliament.

Finally, a note on cabinets and shadow cabinets. There are, of course, more than four cabinet ministers. In reality, the typical number is often closer to twenty-five. The four cabinet positions which are available in the game (Prime Minister, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Home Secretary, and Foreign Secretary) represent the "Four Great Offices of State", and are intended to serve as a representation of the cabinet's functions. It should be noted too that, while members of the House of Lords were often selected to serve in cabinets during the time period of the game, they were not allowed to sit on the floor of the Commons. Thus, they would send secretaries to represent their views, and would not actually engage in debates in the Commons in-person. Again, for the purpose of the game, this has been removed so that the characters playing the lords will be better involved with the main focus of the game.

Counterfactuals with the Rolesheets

Some minor ahistorical changes have been made with regards to a few of the characters involved in this game. Wherever possible, these changes have largely been aesthetic in nature, and should not change anything major about the character's beliefs or historicity. These changes are listed as follows:

- Charles Gordon-Lennox, 6th Duke of Richmond, should appear in all games. In his time, he was seen as a somewhat aloof conservative, valued for his moderate temperament but not for any particular political skill. In this game, he is given more insight and impetus than he had historically to serve as a moderate counterbalance to the more radical conservative and liberal lords.

- Edward Stanley, 15th Earl of Derby, should only appear in large games. While he technically did not inherit his title until his father's death in 1869, he is included as a member of the House of Lords in 1868.
- Thornton Leigh Hunt, the liberal-leaning editor for *The Daily Telegraph*, historically dies in 1873. Despite this, he is allowed to remain a character in the game in 1874.
- John Stuart Mill, a liberal Member of Parliament from the Radicals expansion, was only a MP from 1865-1868 and died in 1873. However, he can be included in this game due to his enormous influence as one of the great thinkers of the age.
- Isaac Butt, a conservative Member of Parliament from the Radicals expansion, only became a MP in 1873. However, if one wants to include a more direct voice for Irish issues (something which became much more of an issue after the 1874 election), he can be included in this game.

Roles and Factions: House of Lords

The House of Lords is the upper house of the government of the United Kingdom. Since William Pitt the Younger's death it has also been the principal home of Prime Ministers, although in more recent years the House of Commons has become indispensable to governance. The House of Lords in 1868 is overwhelmingly populated by conservatives, but its members know they hold a tenuous position as an aristocratic remnant in an increasingly modern age. Uncertain allies, and in some cases avowed rivals, the House of Lords is murky territory for any Prime Minister.

Roles and Factions: Members of the House of Commons

The 1868 General Election, held from November to December of that year, was the first election held after the passage of the 1867 Reform Act, which substantially expanded the UK's electorate. It was also the last election in which only two political parties held sway in the House of Commons—although the term “party” was little more than a loose connotation at that time. William Gladstone's liberals have won a landslide majority, beating the outgoing Conservative Party by more than 100 seats. Whether Gladstone can maintain party unity and win the next election is entirely another matter. While it may seem that the conservatives have been badly beaten, an irate press, a conservative House of Lords, and the fractured nature of the political personalities within the Liberal Party may prove Gladstone's undoing.

The Liberal Party

The Liberal Party in 1868 is still in the early stages of its political adolescence. Formed from the various Whig, Peelite, and Radical factions opposed to the second Derby-Disraeli ministry in 1859, its composition is still fractured by old allegiances and conflicting ideals. Lord Palmerston led the liberals in government for six years before his death in 1865. Lord Russell's resumption of the leadership nearly saw the dissolution of the party. But Lord Russell has now largely retired, and the Liberals have been led to electoral success by William Ewart Gladstone, the former Peelite. Whether Gladstone will succeed in maintaining this fragile coalition and creating a true Liberal Party may depend entirely on the outcome of his premiership.

The Conservative Party

The Conservative Party in 1868 is in the final stages of recovering from the tremendous events of 1846, when it was split in two by the tory Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel. While many

of Peel's followers (or "Peelites") would go on to serve in whig and liberal governments, the remaining staunchly tory members of his party would go on to form the Conservative Party. Over the past twenty years they have been held together by the Earl of Derby and his supporters, spending most of that time in opposition. Now they are led by Benjamin Disraeli, who has already asserted himself as a popular and masterful politician. Time will tell whether the conservatives will accept Disraeli's leadership or seek to replace him.

Roles and Factions: Editors, Journalists, and other Creative Types

The power of Britain's government is ultimately controlled by the politicians and lords who occupy parliament. But as any good journalist knows, the opinion of the masses when properly motivated and led can upset the whole structure by which that power is maintained. This has become increasingly true in recent years, as newspapers in Britain have grown to reach tens of thousands of readers across the nation. The expansion of voting eligibility throughout the past century means politicians must pay especially close attention to the mood of the public. In modern society, it is the members of the press who prove true that old maxim that the pen is indeed often mightier than the sword.

Reacting in Practice

Writing a Game

The most difficult part of writing any Reacting game is choosing a topic. Of course, all periods and places in history are filled with interesting characters and events; but very rarely do circumstances align to create moments which perfectly crystallize the grander scope of history. Those moments which reveal the ever-changing social, political, and cultural changes that are constantly at work in our world make for perfect Reacting games.

The British parliament from 1868-1876 is one of those moments. In this short time span, the first truly modern political parties emerged for both the liberal and conservative ideologies. Social change from the industrial revolution, radical pressure from oppressed interest groups, and the continuing breakdown of the post-Napoleonic era continental system all strained both members of parliament and the British public alike. The reaction or inaction of parliament to each new change was the result of a perfectly complex series of events. Recreating the in-depth complexity of these changes for the purposes of a classroom simulation is impossible. Attempting to recreate them as accurately as possible is the goal of any Reacting instructor.

For this purpose, mechanisms were designed which specifically emulated key components of British society and governance. Some of these components were known to students; some were known to the instructor alone. To facilitate this knowledge difference, students are provided with a “gamebook” which describes all the information they will need to know about the Reacting game they are about to partake in, including historical background, major characters, and basic information about the game’s mechanisms. Instructors are provided with a separate instructor’s manual which provides them with all the information they will need to effectively manage the classroom. The mechanisms which allowed for an as-accurate-as-possible recreation of the British parliament in this time period involved five key areas: the status of the British economy, British foreign affairs, the social prestige of each individual student, the basic customs and functions of the British parliament, and elections. Each of these mechanisms was designed so as to best create a simulation with historically accurate results and choices.

The status of the British economy is tracked in-detail by the instructor alone; only the instructor knows specifically how this mechanism functioned. Students, however, are periodically presented with decisions which affected the British economy; they know only what

the possible effects might be. A decision to reform the army, for instance, may result in a great boon to the economy as cost-cutting efficiency measures are introduced. A decision to intervene in a foreign conflict, such as the Franco-Prussian War, might severely disrupt the burgeoning stock market, greatly affecting the British economy. These decisions attempt to teach students that what may be economically prudent may not always be politically viable.

The status of British foreign affairs is dealt with in a similar manner. This mechanism attempts to simulate the complex ideas of nationalism, imperialism, and “national prestige” which so often motivated the diplomatic efforts of the great powers of the 19th century; after all, it was over a “scrap of paper” that Britain entered the slaughter of WWI. Students are often presented with diplomatic questions which would affect Britain’s status relative to other world powers. A decision to pay reparations for American ships sunk by British-built, Confederate-bought warships during the American Civil War may further the cause of Anglo-American rapprochement yet bind Britain to accept the pronouncements of international courts. A decision to purchase a colony in Africa from the Netherlands might result in a colonial war with the neighboring Ashanti Kingdom. These incidents attempt to teach players that seemingly clear-cut history is often much murkier than it appears.

The exact social prestige of each individual student is, again, tracked by the instructor alone. Students have many options to both increase and decrease both their own prestige and that of others. In short, this mechanism attempts to simulate the social politics of Victorian Britain. Lords, for instance, have a great deal of patronage which they may deal out to students whom they find they can work with. Meanwhile, journalists can positively or negatively affect the political careers of politicians by rallying the public. Both the lords and journalists have their own goals, whether they be a staunchly conservative duke intent on empowering likeminded

members of the Conservative Party, or a muckraking editor out to champion the cause of social reform.

The actual functioning of parliament is clear to all players, as described in the gamebook. The selection of cabinet members (a limited and valuable commodity), the introduction and passage of bills through the House of Commons and Lords, and even some of the basic customary rules of parliamentary procedure are all implemented. In this domain, the instructor rules as Speaker of the House of Commons (or, alternatively, the Lord Speaker of the House of Lords), able to moderate debate without breaking historical immersion. Students use this historical setting to debate the issues of the day and attempt to complete their various objectives, whether this be simply holding their parties together (a must for Gladstone and Disraeli) or attempting to pass a controversial bill (a victory condition of most radicals and die-hard Tories). It is in this arena that the most visible portions of the game take place, with most other conversations, decisions, and intrigues taking place behind closed doors. Some important issues are decided on by members of the Cabinet alone. The Cabinet consists of the most important officers within the government, though for the purposes of the class they are relegated to consisting of the four “Great Offices of State”. That is to say, the Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Foreign Secretary, and the Home Secretary. This group, selected by the Prime Minister, will often meet in private to decide questions which will affect the economy, foreign affairs, and party ideology. The opposition too has a similar group, simply referred to as the “Shadow Cabinet”, or “Shadow Government”. Meanwhile, during regular debates, the journalists sit on the sidelines, ready to record material for the next edition of their papers.

All of these mechanisms combine to model accurate elections. The very first session of the game occurs after the historic 1868 election. Therefore, the game begins with historically

accurate vote counts for each party. Depending on the number of students, votes are apportioned evenly among each party, with a slight bonus to the leader of each party. An election may take place at any time throughout the game. To simulate this, the game is broken down into three areas: 1868-1870, 1871-1873, and 1874-1876. Historically, the 1874 election returned massive gains for the Conservative Party, catapulting them into the government. If Gladstone's Liberal Party made roughly historic decisions on questions of economic and foreign policy, and passed the reforms which they historically passed, they will see this outcome occur. Using the historic 1868 and 1874 elections as a baseline, the Liberal Party will stand a better chance if an election is forced upon them in the 1868-1870 or 1871-1873 periods. Once an election is called, each student is asked which party they will be voting for. The social prestige of each student will change the total effect of their vote; a character with a high social standing will influence more of their followers to vote along with them, whereas a character with a negative social prestige may actually lose votes for their favored party. Lords all change the outcome equally, as do journalists—however, journalists have a much more significant effect on elections. A party which has managed to successfully win over the popular press will be richly rewarded. Lastly, the effect of economic and foreign policy decisions is applied, each bending the outcome of the election toward or away from the baseline historic outcomes. It is the goal of each party to win elections. However, the arc of historical accuracy requires that Gladstone is almost certainly doomed to suffer electoral defeat if he successfully passes the reforms he intends to pass—that is, so long as Disraeli can hold his wavering conservative coalition together.

Options for Further Development

There is a clear future for further developments to *The Great Debate*. More roles will need to be added, mechanisms will need to be refined, and unfinished sections will need to be

completed. Three main areas will need to be focused on due to feedback received from this playtest: the involvement of lords in gameplay, the extension of the timeline to 1876, and better guidelines for the creation of bills. The lord characters of this playtest often felt as if they had been prevented from getting too involved in the game. Traditionally, members of the House of Lords are not allowed to sit or debate in the House of Commons. The game attempted to account for this in a myriad of ways, but ultimately only disconnected the lords from the game in a way which was only intended for those students who felt more comfortable playing journalist roles. Going forward, lords will be treated the same as Members of Parliament in terms of debating ability, even if this breaks with the reality of parliament. Second, the main complaints of all characters revolved around the Liberal Party never getting a chance to be in opposition and the Conservative Party never getting a chance to govern. The simple solution is to extend the timeline to 1876, ensuring both parties will experience being in and out of power. This will not significantly affect the core aims of the class and will benefit all students. Finally, the creation of better guidelines for bills is designed to close a few loopholes. Students who are unsure what to include in their bill, or who may be tempted to include ahistorical items, will now have clear do's and do-not's drawn in their rolesheets.

One clear benefit to the world of Reacting provided by the experiences of this game is the use of one-off "events". The economic and foreign policy decisions which the cabinets of each party would have to make each session represented an original innovation. Their testing in this game possibly represents their first introduction into a Reacting class. Students reacted with universal appreciation for this mechanic. Not only do written events provide a way for the instructor to introduce historically accurate topics to students while remaining in-character, but students also find it easier to make decisions when they are presented with important contextual

information contained in the descriptions of their available decisions. It is hoped that this mechanism will be appreciated and adopted by others when the game is introduced at the annual Reacting Consortium Conference in June.

Reacting in the Classroom

All Reacting games follow a strict schedule, as outlined in the gamebook. This schedule can be roughly split into three coherent sections: a preparation and discussion phase, a game session phase wherein the Reacting to the Past curriculum is applied, and a short debrief phase often consisting of only one class period.

The preparation and discussion phase is in many ways the most important part of any successful Reacting to the Past curriculum. During this phase, students are introduced to the key concepts, works, and characters of the period they will be studying. While Reacting to the Past emphasizes its innovative technique for history education, this phase is traditionally a lecture and discussion phase. In some ways, this is the result of Reacting expanding upon tried-and-true methods of instructing rather than attempting to supplant them. For most Reacting to the Past courses, this phase may take up to half the semester as students complete a deep dive into their assigned role. Of course, the better the preparation, the better the class. It is understandably difficult for 21st century students to adapt to the world of 19th century politics. The honors class which was taught in the Fall of 2022 consisted of just 11 students. During the first day of the preparation phase for *The Great Debate*, these students were assigned their respective roles and introduced to the basic mechanics of the game. At this point, students are not yet expected to go “into character” as it were—this expectation for historical arguments and game-playing was only expected during the second phase of the class. In the first initial startup session, students were given a brief background on the political developments of the period, introduced to key figures,

and asked to read one work by either Edmund Burke, Sir Robert Peel, Alexis de Tocqueville, John Stuart Mill, or Karl Marx. Selected readings were made available to them from both the gamebook and other assorted material. Startup session two involved a historical background in the culture of the period. Students were asked to read one work by either Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Oscar Wilde, Charles Dickens, or H.G. Wells. Again, selected readings (in many cases including only excerpts) were made available to students. The third and final startup session involved a discussion of the key areas up for debate in the 1860s and 1870s, including the 1867 Reform Act and further proposals for democratic reforms, the Irish question, the Anglican Church and the issue of disestablishment, temperance, trade unionism, public education, further utilitarian reforms for the army, civil service, and electoral system (e.g., the introduction of a secret ballot), and other smaller issues.

After this introduction period, students began full immersion into *The Great Debate*. Game Session 1 (December 1868) involved an initial faction break, wherein members of each political party were able to meet to devise strategy. Each game session began this way, though breaks could last from five minutes up to twenty depending on the day. Then, both the Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition were asked to introduce their picks for their respective cabinets. While no bills were required to be introduced just yet, each party did have to respond to a demand to implement army reforms. The Conservative Party decided against the idea entirely, while the Liberal Party (whose decision would become law, as the Liberal Party begins the game in government) decided on a course of moderate reform. Immediately, sparks flew during debate. In Game Session 2 (1869), the Liberal Party introduced one of their assigned reforms; a bill disestablishing the Anglican Church in Ireland. Immediately the Conservative Party launched into a full-throated defense of the Anglican Church as a pillar of stability and tradition in Ireland,

but the Liberal Party successfully parried these attacks by referring to the delicate and distinctly Catholic nature of complaints arising from Ireland. The Liberal Party had the votes, and they carried the day. In Game Session 3, the first newspapers were published from the sole journalist. *The London Times* took a moderate stance, but generally favored the arguments of the Liberal Party, greatly boosting their morale. A new bill was introduced in an attempt to reform landlord and tenant relations in Ireland, the second of the Liberal Party's major Irish reforms. This bill immediately became mired in controversy as the Conservative Party proposed amendment after amendment, and the Liberal Party began to give ground. A modified bill was sent to the House of Lords, which surprisingly rejected the bill on the grounds that it significantly altered the constitution of Britain. The Liberal Party now had to decide whether to attempt to force the Lords to accept their bill or to compromise and pass a less extreme bill. In Game Session 4 (1873), the Liberal Party acquiesced to the demands of the lords and passed a watered-down bill. Enthusiasm for reform had now definitely begun to ebb, and the newest edition of *The Times* showed significant support for the Conservative Party. A bill was introduced to provide public education for English children, but the conservative tide had convinced its authors to attempt to introduce education through funding a program within the Anglican Church. By Game Session 5 (1874), the final few bills to be introduced were nearly torn to shreds by Conservative Party arguments, and defeatism had set in for the Liberal Party. With an election on the horizon, their campaigning seemed tired. When players were asked to vote, Disraeli won the full support of the Conservative Party, defeating his challengers. *The Times* decided to endorse Disraeli as well, dealing a significant blow to the Liberal Party's hopes. Finally, while the Liberal Party had managed foreign affairs and the economy well, their too-conservative domestic reforms and too-

liberal Irish reforms had seriously alienated voters. When the mechanism swung into action, the Conservative Party won a predictable and historic landslide.

The debrief session for this game consisted of only a single day of out-of-character discussions. Covid and final exams unfortunately reduced the number of attendees. Students expressed an enthusiasm for the game overall, though the Liberal Party students expressed some fatigue with governing for so long, while the Conservative Party students expressed some dissatisfaction with their lack of ability to govern after the election. The game has since been modified to extend its scope to 1876 to accommodate this useful criticism. In their reflections, students expressed an appreciation for the time period and for the unique perspective they gained. Many students had been selected to play roles which did not agree with their own views—those students who were asked to play conservative characters expressed a variety of opinions on this subject—while the student asked to play Disraeli remarked on the fascinating experience of playing a religious minority (Disraeli's family had converted from Judaism to Anglicanism during his lifetime) in the leadership position of a conservative faction facing down attacks on his heritage from his liberal opposition. The positive learning experiences of students combined with the relatively successful first play test was a welcome outcome for the game's creator.

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