

# The Great Exhibition in 1851

## DOCUMENT 1

In 1849, Prince Albert, husband of Queen Victoria and president of the Royal Society of Arts, conceived the idea of inviting international exhibitors to participate in an exposition. The exhibition opened in the Crystal Palace on May 1, 1851.

The Crystal Palace, designed by Sir Joseph Paxton, was a remarkable construction of prefabricated parts. It consisted of an intricate network of slender iron rods sustaining walls of clear glass. The main body of the building was 1,848 feet (563 meters) long and 408 feet (124 meters) wide; the height of the central transept was 108 feet (33 meters).

The Crystal Palace established an architectural standard for later international exhibitions that likewise were housed in glass conservatories.

The Great Exhibition of 1851 was a hugely significant event for the Victorian era as we know it. It helped to highlight the strengths of Britain and the Empire and introduced many to the creations of the rest of the world. It helped encourage and increase interest in industry, science and the arts. The Victorian period is known for many things, and many people, but this event in particular was a fantastic contribution to the nineteenth century and the work that was done to encourage the development in industry.

### VOCABULARY

**Intricate** : complexe

**Slender** : mince, fin

**Rods** : tiges

**To sustain** : soutenir

**Wide** : large

**Exhibition** : exposition

**Iron** : metal

**To increase** : augmenter

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**DOCUMENT 2**



Source: *The Foreign Department, viewed towards the transept* - J. McNeven, 1851

**The Great  
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Source: *La reine Victoria et la famille à l'ouverture de la grande exposition, Hyde Park, Londres, 1 mai 1851* - Henry Courtney Selous, British Galleries.

**ACTIVITÉ 1**

**Read doc 1 and answer the questions:**

**a-** When was the Crystal Palace built ?

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**b-** For what occasion was it built ?

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**c-** What materials was it made of ?

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ACTIVITÉ 2

Underline the sentence showing it was a great success for the United Kingdom.

ACTIVITÉ 3

Look at doc 2

a- What did J.McNeven want to show by painting this scene?

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b- What is the ceiling made of?

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c- Why was this an amazing novelty?

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ACTIVITÉ 4

On the doc 3, we can see Queen Victoria and her family inaugurating the Crystal Palace. What did it mean for the country?

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