Were the rich just as likely to catch diseases as the poor?
Prince Albert married Queen Victoria in 1840 and they had nine children, but in December 1861 he fell ill and died. Prince Albert had caught TYPHOID, a disease that is caused by drinking either dirty water or milk, or eating dirty food. The usual cause of typhoid was allowing drinking water to be polluted by sewage.

The death of her husband was a great shock to Queen Victoria. How could one of the most important people in Britain die from a disease like this? Was this common? Were rich and poor just as likely to die from diseases like this at the time of the Great Exhibition?

The big killer disease of the mid-nineteenth century was CHOLERA which was caused in a similar way to the disease Prince Albert had died of. Cholera had arrived in Britain for the first time in 1831, probably arriving on ships bringing imports from China.

Doctors had little idea about the causes of cholera. Most accepted the miasmatic (read on!) theory of disease. They believed that diseases were caused by the air somehow being polluted by waste. This came about because severe outbreaks of disease often happened in hot summers when there was a great deal of rubbish lying in the streets. As the rubbish rotted, it gave off a stronger and stronger smell. This, many doctors believed, caused disease.
Cholera was most dangerous in the new industrial towns of the north or in the centre of big cities like London. Here people lived in crowded housing. Most people got their water from a tap in the street and often the supply was pumped out of a nearby river. This river could easily be used for sewage disposal at the same time. In London, one water company drew water out of the River Thames from a point right next to the outlet of the Great Ranelagh Sewer.

In the new industrial towns, cholera was even more dangerous because many of the houses had been built quickly with no attempts at planning. Often there was no sanitation and no fresh water. In one street in Bolton the people used a trench at the back of the houses as a toilet, which was cleared out and the mess stacked up against the end wall of the last house. The mess was taken away every six months.

There was a second big outbreak of cholera in 1848, a third in 1853 and a fourth in 1866. Each time thousands of people died swiftly and in terrible pain. They suffered violent vomiting and diarrhoea, coupled with very bad stomach pains. The actual cause of death was often dehydration (not enough water).
In 1842 Edwin Chadwick published his 'Report on the Sanitary Conditions of the Labouring Population of Great Britain'. He had surveyed different areas around the country and calculated the average life expectancy of people from different classes and areas. The results were startling to say the least.

Chadwick claimed that people living in the countryside lived far longer than people in towns. He compared Rutland, a rural county with no large towns, with the new industrial cities of the north.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average life expectancy</th>
<th>professional trades</th>
<th>tradesmen</th>
<th>labourers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rutland</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leeds</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liverpool</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manchester</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolton</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chadwick's report led to the setting up of a Royal Commission and then to the Public Health Act of 1848. He became one of the Commissioners.

Unfortunately many people found Chadwick rather rude and he often provoked opposition. In 1854 he was forced to retire. This letter was sent to 'The Times' to explain why he was unpopular.

'We prefer to take our chance with cholera than be bullied into health. There is nothing a man hates so much as being cleansed against his will or having his floor swept, his hall whitewashed, his dung heaps cleared away and his thatch forced to give way to slate. It is a fact that many people have died from a good washing.'

**John Snow (1813-1858)**

John Snow was the eldest son of a farmer and born at York on 15th March 1813. He was educated at a private school in York until the age of fourteen, when he was apprenticed to a surgeon living at Newcastle-on-Tyne. He worked as surgeon in the mines and later as unqualified assistant during the cholera epidemic of 1831-2. Snow continued his medical training in London. In October 1838 he became a licentiate of the Society of Apothecaries, having been admitted a member of the Royal College of Surgeons of England in May 1838. He graduated as an M.D. of the University of London on 20 December 1844, and in 1850 he was admitted a licentiate of the Royal College of Physicians.

Snow's great breakthrough theory was that cholera spreads through means of an impure water supply. He outlined his ideas in an essay about the communication of cholera which was published in 1849, and awarded a prize by the Institute of France. In 1855 a second edition was published, with a much more detailed investigation into the water supply in certain districts of South London during the epidemic of 1854.

Snow was also interested in the properties of ether, then newly adopted in America as an anaesthetic. He made great improvements in the method of giving patients the drug. He obtained permission to demonstrate his results in the dental out-patient room at St. George's Hospital surgery which was highly successful. Nevertheless, Snow appreciated the value of other anaesthetizing drugs, notably chloroform. He gave this to Queen Victoria on 7 April 1853, during the birth of Prince Leopold, and again on 14 April 1857 at the birth of Princess Beatrice. Snow died unmarried on 16 June 1858, and was buried in the Brompton cemetery.
Source I

Task

1a Why has the letter been written?

1b What had happened in the hospital?

1c Would the treatment received in the hospital have helped to stop cholera spreading?
This is a letter written on 5th January 1832. It was sent from the Board of Health to the Newcastle Board. The writer is talking about conditions in Gateshead hospital.

5th Jan 1832

Sir,

The highly inadequate and improper state of the temporary hospital appropriated for the relief of Cholera Patients in the Township of Gateshead has been reported to the B of Health with an agitation that five children were actually placed in one bed, and three in another bed in that hospital. I am directed by the B to require that you will start with as little delay as possible every circumstance connected with such a want of humanity, which if founded in truth must prove highly disgraceful to the memory of that B.

Yrs Trly,

W Moorean

(PRO ref: PC 1/93)

http://www.learningcurve.gov.uk/victorianbritain/healthy/source1.htm
Source 2

Task

2a How many new cases were reported?

2b How many of the deaths were reported?

2c How many cases of cholera were there altogether?

2d How many people had died?

2e Approximately what percentage of people who caught cholera actually died from the disease?
These are the minutes of a meeting of the Board of Health held on 13th January 1832. It includes a report of the numbers of cases of cholera in Sunderland, Newcastle and Gateshead.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disease</th>
<th>Sunderland</th>
<th>Newcastle</th>
<th>Gateshead</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Cases</td>
<td>573</td>
<td>657</td>
<td>437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recovered</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deceased</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sick</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remaining</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Task

3a What is the poster saying it can help prevent?

3b The poster gives advice on how to avoid getting cholera. Some advice is good, some is bad.
   i) Write down three good pieces of advice.
   ii) Write down three bad pieces of advice (choose the worst!).

3c What else is the poster offering apart from advice?

3d The poster suggests two things that can be bought for protection against cholera. What were they? Would either of these have been of any use?
This is a poster that was put up in London in 1848, during the second outbreak of cholera.

**Prevention of Cholera.**

1. We would urge the necessity, in all cases of cholera, of an instant recourse to medical aid, and also under every form and variety of imposition; for, during the prevalence of this epidemic all disorders are found to merge in the dominant disease.

2. Let immediate relief be sought under disorder of the bowels, especially, however slight. The innocuity of cholera may thus be rapidly and at once prevented.

3. Let every impurity, animal and vegetable, be quickly removed to a distance from the habitation: such as slaughter-houses, pig-sties, cesspools, necessaries, and all other domestic nuisances.

4. Let all uncovered drums be carefully and frequently cleansed.

5. Let the grounds in and around the habitation be drained, so as effectively to carry off matters of every kind.

6. Let all partitions be removed from within and without habitations, which necessarily supplies ventilation.

7. Let every room be daily thrown open for the suspension of fresh air, and this should be done about noon, when the atmosphere is most like to be dry.

8. Let all scullery be used in domestic cleansing, in place of water cleaning.

9. Let excessive fatigue and exposure to damp and cold, especially during the night, be avoided.

10. Let the use of cold drinks, and cold liquors, especially under fatigue, be avoided, or when the body is heated.

11. Let the use of cold acid fruits and vegetables be avoided.

12. Let excess in the use of alcohol and fermented liquors and tobacco be avoided.

13. Let a poor diet, and the use of impure water in cooking, or for drink, be avoided.

14. Let the wearing of wet and insufficient clothing be avoided.

15. Let a handled or wooded belt be worn round the body.

This has been found serviceable in checking the tendency to bowel complaint so common during the prevalence of cholera. It has been in this county, with always hard to commence with boodooes in the bowels, and in this stage in very tractable. It should however, be noticed, that the boodooes frequently unattended by pain or uneasiness, and final death has often occurred from the notion that colic must be attended with cramps. In the latter stage have referred to, there is often no giving up, and it is at this point that the outcome can be most easily arrested. In all such cases it is from twenty to forty drops of Mr. T. F. Ten's Cholera Tincture to be administered in half a glass of brandy, and the symptoms will abate immediately.

16. Let persons sneezing be carefully observed.

17. Let every cause tending to depress the moral and physical energies be carefully avoided.

18. Let crowding of persons within houses and apartments be avoided.

19. Let sleeping in low and damp rooms be avoided.

20. Let fires be kept up during the nights in sleeping or adjoining apartments, the night being the period of most danger from shock, especially under exposure to cold or damp.

21. Let all bedding and clothing be daily exposed during winter and spring to the sun, and in the summer to the heat of the stove.

22. Let the dead be buried in places remote from the habitations of the living.

By the familiar adoption of simple means such as these, cholera, or any other epidemic, will be made to lose its power; so that it is that "internal sanitary arrangements, and not precaution and sanitary laws, are the safeguard of nations."

Every one should provide themselves with the ANTI-CHELERA TINCTURE, as the most ready and effectual Remedy in Cholera, Pneumonia, Dysentery, Cholera, and Other Complaints.

1 Bottle at 2s. 9d.—5s. 6d.—1s. 6d. and 2ls. Duty included.

The Anti-Cholera Funds, for perpetuating the All Sanitary and destroying the Contagious influence of Cholera, Typhus Fever, and other Infectious Diseases.

They are particularly recommended for the Sick, Chambers, Hospitals, Churches, Chapels, Literary Institutions, Theatres, Assembly Rooms, Counting Houses, Factories, the Rail and Road of Vessels, &c.

In Boxes, at 6d.—1s., and 2s. each, or Cartage free, at 1s.—1s. 6d. and 2s.

Packages for Extensive Buildings, at 10s.—20s.—40s. and 60s.

ANTI-CHELERA TINCTURE DEPOT.

41. COLEMAN STREET, CITY, LONDON.

N.B. Money Orders must be made payable to Dr. James Lemoine.

(PRO ref: MH 13/245)

http://www.learningcurve.gov.uk/victorianbritain/healthy/source3.htm
Source 4

Task

4a Where does he say the worst outbreaks of cholera took place?

4b Where were there not many, if any, cases of cholera?

4c How does he explain the differences?

4d What does he believe were the causes of cholera?

4e Do you think that people in 1848 had any better idea of the ways to treat cholera than they had had in 1832? (Source 1)

4f If all the suggestions made in source 3 and 4 had been followed, would this have prevented an outbreak of cholera?

In October 1848 this letter was written to the General Board of Health (set up by the Public Health Act 1848). The writer is describing the cholera epidemic of 1832 which he had witnessed.

http://www.learningcurve.gov.uk/victorianbritain/healthy/source4.htm
Cholera — influenced by bad and stagnant water which absorbs the poison.

24 High Street, Moscow.
19th October 1832.

My Lord,

...
Caper, S. Ricci, Guines, and S. Omer, but in the intermediate County, being a sweep of hills, were populated and forming a circumference of many miles, there was not a death arising from Cholera. At the City of Bristol a fourth of which is built on the marshes through which the River Avon and the floating docks pass, the cases of Cholera were very numerous, whereas the other parts arising to very high ground, and well supplied with spring water were very free from it.

This now generally admitted by the medical profession, and by other scientific bodies that the Cholera is not contagious, but that the atmosphere travels in a pure and sterile state, the inhaling of which does not produce Cholera, and my impression is that it chemically infects exposed water in a gaseous state, and the poorer Caper, using such water as a beverage and partaking of it in their food are consequently the greatest sufferers.
The same places as in 1832 no doubt will be revisited by the cholera if there should not have been any improvement in the supply of water.

Hence and numerous vapours with ground fog in the autumnal and springtime Fevers, but those earlier
I am emboldened to state will not predispose to the

"disease of Norwich cholera."

With the highest respect,

I have the honour to be

My lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient and very humble servant,

[Signature]

The Right Honble
The Earl of Norwich

(PRO ref: MH 13/245)

http://www.learningcurve.gov.uk/victorianbritain/healthy/source4.htm
Source 5

Task

5a How many people had signed the petition in Ormskirk?

5b What are the reasons for sending the letter?

5c Which of the reasons would help prevent cholera? Which would not?
This is a letter written by the Chairman of the Sanitary Committee of Ormskirk to the General Board of Health in 1848. Towns could ask the General Board to set up a Local Board, but at least ten percent of the ratepayers had to sign a petition. The General Board would then send an inspector to town to inspect the sanitary state of the town.
induced our purpose, but foreseeing that there is no sufficient available power of dealing summarily with such depredations which have become frequent from our Neighbour to Liverpool, quite a threat to the Town, it will await better, as a permanent remedy. The

Transport, breeding too an ample supply of water, without which no efficient sanitary measure can be carried out. The attendance of an Officer is only as practicable as currently required, in the meantime. J. A. Chairman of the Sanitary Committee, under the direction of the Governor and all the order of the Commissioners, as far as practicable. Shall be glad to give it publicity to the inhabitants of the official attendance, to make the necessary inquiries and have it given of any information to enable the Executive

been all his assistance. Perhaps you will inform them. The Surveying Officers will make the necessary inquiries to himself or the will expect the inhabitants to bide peace.

Sam B. Yarmey my stenotype

15 Oct 1823

(PRO ref: MH13/138)
Source 6

Task

6a What was the inspector going to look into?

6b Would his enquiries have helped to identify possible causes of cholera outbreaks in the town?

Look back at source 5

6c In what ways do these sources suggest that cholera was being taken more seriously in Britain?
This poster appeared in the town of Ormskirk in Lancashire in October 1848. It was signed by the inspector appointed for Ormskirk.

PUBLIC HEALTH ACT, 1848.

(WHEREAS, in pursuance of the Public Health Act, 1848, the General Board of Health have directed Robert Robinson Esquire, one of the Superintending Inspectors appointed for the purposes of the said Act to visit the Town and Township of Ormskirk in the County of Lancashire, and there to make public enquiry and examine witnesses with respect to the matters following; that is to say,

The Sewerage, Drainage, and Supply of Water.
The Number and Sanitary Condition of the Inhabitants.
The Local Acts of Parliament (if any) for Paving, Lighting, Cleansing, Watching, Regulating, Suppling with Water, or Improving, or having relation to the purposes of the said Act.
The natural Drainage Areas.
The existing Parochial or other Local Boundaries.
The Boundaries which may be most advantageously adopted for the purposes of the said Act.

And other matters in respect whereof the General Board of Health is desirous of being informed for the purpose of enabling them to judge of the propriety of reporting to Her Majesty or making a provisional order with a view to the application of the said Act, or any part thereof to the said Town and Township.

Now, therefore, I the said Robert Robinson, do hereby give notice, that on the first day of November next, at Eleven o’Clock in the forenoon, at the Town Hall I will proceed upon the said enquiry, and that I shall then and there be prepared to hear all persons desirous of being heard before me upon the subject of the said enquiry.

Dated this twentieth day of October 1848.

Robert Robinson

(PRO ref: MH 13/138)

Source 7

Task

7a. Why was this petition sent? What were the people objecting to?

7b. Why do they believe that a Local Board of Health is not needed?

A petition sent by people in Ormskirk to the General Board of Health.

http://www.learningcurve.gov.uk/victorianbritain/healthy/source7.htm
Source 8

Task

8a. What is the main reason for the outbreak of cholera suggested in this source?

8b. What conditions in Newcastle upon Tyne and Gateshead caused cholera to spread so easily?

8c. The end of the source says that some men are against efforts to improve living conditions in the worst parts of the city. Can you explain this?
This is part of newspaper report from October 1853; this was at the time of the third outbreak of cholera.

PRECAUTIONS AGAINST CHOLERA.

The advanced scientific information of the day shows that Cholera and Fever are as capable of being prevented as that once fatal malady the Small-pox. By the introduction of Vaccination, the latter complaint has been driven from amongst the higher and more intelligent classes of the community. Cholera (that new plague) can also be prevented by proper sanitary arrangements. This dreadful pestilence has for the third time visited our shores; on two former occasions, it has gone nearly over the same ground; it then seized on those places remarkable for their ill-judged position, or from the great neglect of means of cleanliness, adequate to extent and progress of the population.

Since the last visitation of Cholera, Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Gateshead have made but little improvement in their condition, the numbers of persons have increased, particularly amongst the poor. The houses in many instances are peculiarly placed that the one catches the refuse of the other. The river Tyne is even polluted with filth; and, without entering into distressing particulars, these towns were in 1853 the ready vehicle to convey this scourge once more to England. The pestilence has passed over its regular course. Who can say if Newcastle had been put into a proper state of defence to meet the enemy which will sweep away many thousands, this island might not have altogether escaped the visitation. The Plague, before the Fire of 1666, found constant harbour in London, and spread itself in different directions. After the Fire it only slightly attacked the metropolis and was speedily banished from the country.

We do not mean to state that the disease so fearfully known by the...

(PRO ref: ZPER 34/23)

http://www.learningcurve.gov.uk/victorianbritain/healthy/source8.htm