

Teachers' notes - Childhood

Aims

This unit provides pupils with a range of historical sources that tell us about children's lives in Victorian times. These are grouped into four themes: school, work, home and play.

The task is to investigate these sources to answer the key historical question: What was it like to be a child in Victorian times?

At the end of the unit, pupil's notes can also form the basis of a written report on the lives of Victorian children.

Method

Before attempting this unit, pupils should have completed **Start Here**. This will ensure that they are familiar with the enquiry-based method, LACE, which underpins their learning. LACE gives pupils four steps to help them to think and work like a historian using sources. These are:

Look: Describe what you can see

Ask: What questions do you need to ask, and answer, to make sense of what you have seen?

Conclude: What have you learned about the issue that you are investigating from this source?

Expand: What more would you like to know about? How can you find out?

Sources

On completing this unit, pupils will have looked at a variety of different types of source. As a follow up to the on-screen work, you might like to lead a discussion on the nature of the different types of sources pupils have used in their investigation. What are the strengths and weaknesses of different types of source? What kind of information does each source provide? Why are some sources more difficult to use?

Why do some objects survive? How do the four steps of LACE help us find out about the past by examining objects?

With a written source we can learn both from what is being said, and how it is being said. Ask pupils to think about the different types of document they have seen, and how these differ in terms of tone of voice. There is a huge range of different types of document included in the resource – letters, newspapers, government reports, advertisements, plans and maps. Encourage pupils to think about the different ways in which these provide insight.

It is helpful to discuss the idea that the artist or photographer has chosen to depict a scene in a particular way. Both paintings and photographs may have been made to convey a particular message.

Learning objectives

In this unit, pupils will:

- develop an understanding of different types of historical source materials as evidence for the past
- develop skills in the evaluation of source material
- increase their knowledge and understanding of what it was like to be a child during the reign of Queen Victoria
- combine information from a number of sources when presenting what they have learnt.

Key stage 2 curriculum links

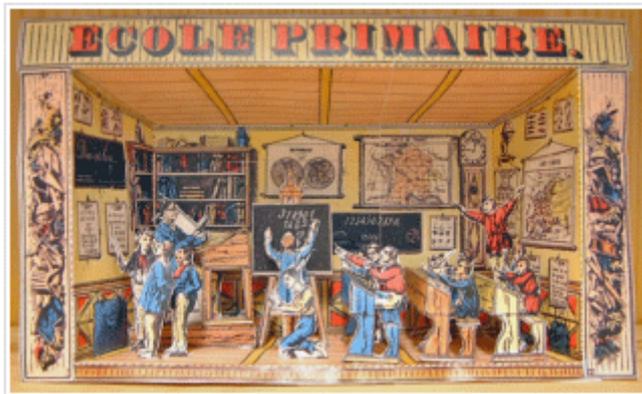
This unit is relevant to teachers following National Curriculum History - Breadth Study: Unit 11a: Victorian Britain.

- A study of the impact of significant individuals, events and changes in work and transport on the lives of men, women and children from different sections of society
- Links to **Citizenship** - developing good relationships and respecting the differences between people. Pupils should be taught to think about the lives of people living in other places and times, and people with different values and customs

Using this resource

This unit is designed for use online. Children's engagement with the historical sources is augmented by full and simplified transcripts of documents, audio transcripts, the ability to zoom into images to explore them in detail and a glossary. Every step features support and guidance designed to help pupils to answer the key historical question - What was it like to be a child in Victorian times?

The unit also features an electronic notebook where pupils can record their ideas about each source they evaluate. The notes that pupils complete during this unit can be printed and used as the basis for a further piece of work.



Teachers may also like to know that it is possible to make a facsimile of this cut-out schoolroom, which is used in the topic 'School'. See [Build a cut-out school for instructions](#).

Summary of activities

Starter activity

Pupils are given two different photographs to introduce the topic of children in Victorian times and practice LACE, the method for working with sources that they learnt in the introductory unit.

See Interactive whiteboard resources in these notes, for more detailed ideas, and additional tools and images for using with your class.

Main activity

Pupils use a variety of sources to find out about life for Victorian children, and answer the question: What was it like to be a child in Victorian times?

There are four themes to explore; school, work, home and play. Pupils investigate all four to create a rounded picture.

Extension activities

Once the unit is completed, pupils can use their notes to create a short report on the life of children in Victorian times.

Historical source credits and captions for childhood

Starter

- Photograph of the Duchess of Albany with her son and daughter taken in 1887 (TNA: COPY 1/381 f308)
- Photograph of a bootblack or shoe-polisher taken in 1877-8 (V&A: PH.351-1982)

Homes

- Building design by Richard Norman Shaw for a detached house with basement in Bedford Park, London, 1877. This design was part of plans for a new garden suburb (TNA: COPY 1/39 f348)
- Painting called *Contrary Winds*, by Thomas Webster (1800-1886), of children playing in a cottage. Oil on panel. Great Britain, 1843 (V&A: 2006AM5336-01)
- Extract from a letter complaining of an uncovered drain that has been causing illness. Transcript provided (TNA: MH13/261)
- Photograph showing a street scene in the small town of Prestonpans, Haddingtonshire, Scotland, 1898 (TNA: COPY 1/438 f271)
- A photograph taken in 1898 called *The old folks at home*, showing an indoor cottage scene (TNA: COPY 1/438 f173)
- Illustrated London News drawing of Peabody buildings (Dwellings for the Poor) and descriptive article, 1869. Transcript provided (TNA: ZPER 34/54)
- Four pictures from a catalogue for furnishing a twelve roomed house for £500, 1898 (TNA: COPY: 1/155 f194, COPY 1/155 f198, COPY 1/155 f88, COPY 1/155 f90)
- This house is a copy of a house that existed in Kilburn High Road, North London. It was made in 1900 for the owner Mr Samuel Loebel, as a present for his daughter (V&A: MISC.5-1972)
- Panelled room from the Grove, Harborne, Birmingham, designed in 1877–78 by John Henry Chamberlain. It is richly decorated with inlaid, painted and gilded wood. This room was used to display the owner's collection of blue and white ceramics (V&A: W.4:1 to 39-1964)

School

- Photograph of the schoolroom in Miss Miles' doll's house, 1890 (Catalogue ref: V&A: W.146-1921)
- Drawing of the school room at Regent's Park Road Boys' Home from the Illustrated London News 1870 (TNA: ZPER 34/56)
- Extract from a report on education or schooling received by children in Hexham Union Workhouse, 1847. Transcript provided (TNA: MH 32/41)
- My Own ABC, alphabet set. An educational game for Victorian children, 1840. The aim is to mix the letters up, select a set number and make either as many words from the letters as possible or as long a word as possible (V&A E.1742-1954)
- Sample of handwriting showing copper plate style writing, 1837. This example was used to test candidates who wanted to work as clerks for the Great Western Railway Company. Children would also have to copy text in this way to perfect their handwriting (TNA: RAIL 1014/3/32)
- An instruction book for girls called, Simple directions in needlework and cutting out for the use of the National Female Schools of Ireland. Published in 1835(V&A: T.2 to C-1942)
- Making a sampler was part of a girl's school education throughout the eighteenth century and into the early 1900's. This sampler dates from 1836-1840. It contains details of a family who have a different name to the maker. Therefore, it may have been made as a commission or a present (V&A: T.94-1939)

Play

- Advertisement for children's clothing manufacturer showing children playing with hoops, 1897 (TNA: COPY1 /134 f219)
- These toys were made in Germany and come from the Lindner Sample Book or toy catalogue, 1840 (V&A: MISC.3-1957)
- Victorian doll made in Germany, 1874-1876. The doll is made of wax, moulded plaster and cloth. Her eyes are made of glass (V&A: MISC.33-1966)
- Snakes and ladders board game, 1895. The game was intended to show children that, by being good and obedient, life would be rewarding. Bad behaviour would, however, be punished (V&A: MISC.423-1981)
- Painting called Contrary Winds, by Thomas Webster (1800-1886), of children playing in a cottage. Oil on panel. Great Britain, 1843 (V&A: 2006AM5336-01)
- A wooden spinning top from around 1860. Sometimes children decorated these with chalk (V&A: MISC.75: 2-1971)
- Jack-in-the box toy, 1820-1850. Despite their frightening qualities such toys were not only cheap and popular, but also helped to provide children with their first awareness of basic scientific principles (V&A: MISC.606-1992)
- Zoetrope toy, 1890-1900. Optical toys were very popular in the nineteenth century. Many were used as family entertainment. They were seen to be both educational and fun, and were given scientific names, often derived from Greek. Zoetrope translates as 'wheel of life'. Pictures are printed on a strip of paper, which is placed inside the drum. This is then spun, and to anyone looking through the slits it appears that the image moves (V&A: MISC.76&: 1 to 4-1963)

- Amy Miles' dolls' house, 1890. A house like this would have belonged to a very rich family. Next to the kitchen is a bicycle and there is a billiard room on the first floor. There are several labour saving gadgets, including a telephone and carpet sweeper. The bathroom has a boiler for heating up water. For such a large house, there is only one bedroom but there is a nursery and a schoolroom (V&A: W.146-1921)
- My Own ABC, alphabet set. An educational game for Victorian children, 1840. The aim is to mix the letters up, select a set number and make either as many words from the letters as possible or as long a word as possible (V&A: E.1742-1954)
- Advert for a Children's Chemistry Set, 1897 (TNA: COPY1/134 f486)

Work

- Census for Haigh, near Wigan, 1861. This is a coalmining area and whole families would have worked in the coalmines. The census was a survey of all people and households in the country held every ten years since 1801 (TNA: RG9 /2769 003)
- Extract from a school attendance and time record book for children working in Ramsden Mill in Rochdale. Lancashire, 1836 (TNA: C106/44)
- Extract from a letter written by a local vicar, John Duff Schomberg, about a nine-year old boy killed in a coal mine, 1854 (TNA: HO 45/5385)
- This is a sample of block-printed cotton fabric probably made in a Lancashire factory in 1850. It is edged in braid which suggests that it was recommended for curtains or upholstery. This example was exhibited at the Great Exhibition of 1851 in the category for cotton goods (V&A: CIRC.481-1965)
- Extract from a report on schooling received by children in Kendal Union Workhouse, 1847. It shows that children were also taught trades (TNA: MH 32/41)
- The Piping Shepherd by Alfred Downing Fripp. The painting was produced between 1870 and 1889 and shows a romanticised view of rural childhood (V&A: 1198-1886)
- Two illustrations from a journal called The Graphic, 1884. They show children from the East End and West End of London (TNA: ZPER 35/11)
- Illustration from the Illustrated London News showing shoemaking at a Boys Refuge in Great Queen Street, 1850. Boys were taught a trade to help them support themselves in the future (TNA: ZPER 34/34)
- Photographs of children working as match seller, shrimp seller and shoeshine (TNA: COPY 1/369 f246, TNA: COPY 1/369 f257, TNA: COPY 1/369 f25)