

## Teachers' notes – The Great Exhibition

### Aims

This unit presents pupils with a range of historical sources that tell us about the Great Exhibition of 1851. The sources are grouped into five themes:

Travelling to the Great Exhibition

Outside the Crystal Palace

Getting into the Great Exhibition

Inside the Crystal Palace

Exhibits

The task is to investigate these sources to answer the key historical question: What was it like to visit the Great Exhibition?

At the end of the unit, pupil's notes can also be used for a range of extension activities, such as creating a scrapbook of the Great Exhibition, writing a visitor's diary entry, creating a role play or designing a poster.

### 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?

For pupils to tackle this unit successfully, it is essential that they understand the LACE process before they get started.

On completing this unit, pupils will have tackled 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**

Pupils will:

- develop an understanding of the different types of historical source materials as evidence for the past
- increase their knowledge and understanding of some of the key aspects of the Great Exhibition
- develop skills in the evaluation of historical evidence, in particular objects
- 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.
- Knowledge and understanding of events, people and changes in the past.

Pupils should be taught: to identify and describe reasons for, and results of, historical events, situations, and changes in the periods studied.

### **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. Every step features support and guidance designed to help pupils to answer the key historical question - What was it like to visit the Great Exhibition?

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.

### **Summary of activities**

#### **Starter activity**

Pupils are given the opportunity to reinforce their understanding of the LACE process in the study of a painting by Henry Courtney Selous, called The Opening of the Great Exhibition by Queen Victoria on 1st May 1851. You can find an interactive version of this painting, packed with useful information about the people in the picture and their roles in the event, on the V&A website:

[Explore the Great Exhibition activity](#)

#### **Main activity**

Pupils use a variety of historical sources to find out about the Great Exhibition and answer the question: What was it like to visit the Great Exhibition?

Using the four steps of LACE (Look, Ask, Conclude, Expand), to interrogate each source, pupils will add text to their electronic notebooks to explain what it says about the Great Exhibition.

At the end of the unit, pupils will have gathered information that can be used to create a scrapbook of the Great Exhibition. They can print their notes, which can provide evidence of learning.

### **Extension activities**

Pupil's notes can also underpin a range of other extension activities, such as, putting on a short role play about visiting the Great Exhibition, writing a diary entry from the perspective of a Victorian visitor, making a poster to advertise the Great Exhibition or creating a group presentation.

See the Interactive whiteboard resources section of these notes for further guidance on extension work.

### **Historical source credits and captions for the Great Exhibition**

#### **Starter**

- Painting, The Opening of the Great Exhibition by Queen Victoria on 1 May 1851 by Henry Courtney Selous, 1851-1852. The painting shows the Archbishop of Canterbury blessing the Exhibition. Commissioners, ministers and dignitaries surround the Royal Family. More than 25,000 people attended the opening day. The artist included Sir Henry Cole, later the first Director of the Victoria and Albert Museum, in the group on the left. Everyone in the painting, apart from two people, sat for their portrait in a studio erected in one of the galleries in the Crystal Palace. This picture began as commercial venture, but because of the interest shown in it by the Queen, Prince Albert and others, it gained a semi-official status as a key record of the event (V&A: 329-1889)

#### **Travelling to the Great Exhibition**

- Report from the Illustrated London News, of an 85 year old woman who walked from Cornwall to visit the Great Exhibition, 1851 (TNA: ZPER 34/19)
- Poster for cheap trains to the Great Exhibition, 1851 (TNA: RAIL: 981/177)

- Pictures from Illustrated London News showing One Shilling Day. This was when the poorer sections of society attended the Great Exhibition, 1851 (TNA: ZPER 34/19)

### **Outside the Crystal Palace**

- Letter to the editor of The Times about the Great Exhibition, 1851 (TNA: HO 45/3623)
- Letter from Sir George Grey of the London Metropolitan Police Force requesting funds to pay for additional policemen and listing a number of possible problems that will require more police (TNA: HO 45/3051)
- Print showing the exterior of the Crystal Palace from the south side, from near the Princes Gate (V&A: 19633)
- Wallpaper design showing the Crystal Place (V&A: 017449)
- Souvenir fan showing an exterior view of the Crystal Palace (V&A:T.290-1971)

### **Getting into the Great Exhibition**

- Tickets for Great Exhibition (TNA: BT 342/2)
- Pictures from Illustrated London News showing One Shilling Day and Five Shilling Days, 1851 (TNA: ZPER 34/19)
- Billy Rawlins' expanding view of the Great Exhibition. This is a concertina toy that provides a peepshow view of the opening of the Great Exhibition by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. It shows the exterior of the Crystal Palace and the arrival of the Royal Party inside, 1851 (V&A: E971-1936)

### **Inside the Crystal Palace**

- Ground plan of the interior of Crystal Palace showing how and where the objects were displayed (V&A: NAL Pressmark EX.1851.31)
- Design for a leather glove with map showing location of the Great Exhibition in London, 1851 (TNA: EX11/159)
- Illustration souvenir print of the inside of the Great Exhibition hall, 1851 (V&A: 19627)

### **Exhibits**

- The machinery department at the Great Exhibition, Illustrated London News (TNA ZPER 34/19)
- Print of the India Court, by Joseph Nash, 1851. The Great Exhibition included displays from British colonial territories, promoting the idea of Britain as a powerful empire. The Indian pavilion raised an interest in India, and the visitors to the India Museum in London's Whitehall doubled in 1851 (V&A: 19536:11)

- Illustration of agricultural machinery exhibited at the Great Exhibition, published by Lloyd Brothers and Co in 1851. The inclusion of an agricultural section proved to be important in appealing to a wider audience (V&A 19538:25)
- A rocking chair similar to one shown at the Great Exhibition. Rocking chairs were originally made with curved rockers attached to the feet of ordinary chairs. This unusual type of rocking chair used the curved frame of the chair to create the rocking motion (V&A: CIRC.20-1961)
- Silver and enamel teapot designed by Joseph Angell and awarded a prize at the Great Exhibition (V&A: M.27A-1983)
- Vase and cover especially made for the Great Exhibition. This one of a pair that stood over a meter high. The vases were popular at the Great Exhibition because of their painted views of the Crystal Palace on one side, and portraits of the Queen and Prince Albert on the other (V&A: CIRC. 481&A-1963)
- Machine-knitted socks. Part of an exhibit by WH Morley. The socks show the range of colours and patterns that could be made in a factory. These patterns were in keeping with the current fashion for all things Scottish, which the Royal family helped to make popular (V&A: T.62E-1859)
- Hand-knitted baby's dress, which won third prize in the hand-knitting section of the Great Exhibition (V&A t.45-1964)
- Various exhibits for preservation of life and property in case of shipwreck, and a threshing machine, Illustrated London News (TNA: ZPER 34/19)
- Plate made for the Great Exhibition to showcase the designer's printing technique. The scene shows Christ rebuking the Pharisees for their criticism of the disciples (V&A: C.629-1921)
- Shoes exhibited at the Great Exhibition. In contrast with shoes today, these are what were called 'straights'. They do not have different shapes for the left and right foot. These shoes are for young rich children. Poor children often did not have shoes, but some wore old and badly fitting shoes, padded out with paper (V&A: T.276&A-1963)
- Walnut table inlaid with porcelain plaque shown at the Great Exhibition in the furniture section. It was made and designed by Henry Eyles to demonstrate his skills (V&A: W.40-1952)