

## Teachers' resources - Women

### Aims

This unit provides pupils with a range of historical sources that tell us about women's lives in Victorian times. Pupils select and investigate these sources through playing an online version of the Victorian board game, Maricourt (in itself a fascinating insight into Victorian attitudes towards women's roles and behaviour).

The task is to investigate these sources to answer the key historical question: What can we find out about women's lives in Victorian times?

At the end of the unit, pupils' notes can also form the basis of extension activities, such as writing a comparison of how rich and poor Victorian women lived, or comparing and contrasting how Victorian women lived with British women's lives today.

### 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 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**

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 women's lives were like during the reign of Queen Victoria
- recognise some of the similarities and differences between the experiences of wives, mothers and working women in Victorian times
- 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 life like for women 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.

### **Summary of activities**

#### **Introduction**

To open the topic of the role of women in Victorian society, teachers might wish to discuss this extract from *The Princess* by Alfred Tennyson (1847).

Man for the field and woman for the hearth:  
Man for the sword and for the needle she:  
Man with the head and woman with the heart:  
Man to command and woman to obey;

They could explore the idea that most Victorians believed that a woman's place was in the home, looking after the household, husband and children. A popular phrase described the ideal role for the Victorian women as the 'angels in the house',

The angelic wife was expected to obey her husband at all times, be passive, charming, gentle, self-sacrificing and innocent. It is also important to note that women had the same legal status as children at the start of Victoria's reign.

Alternatively, teachers may prefer to look at any of the visual sources available in this unit to introduce the ideal Victorian woman, and then consider if this concept was a true reflection of the lives and roles of all Victorian women.

#### **Starter activity**

Pupils are given the opportunity to reinforce their understanding of the LACE process by studying the cover of the Victorian board game, Maricourt.

### **Main activity**

Pupils use a variety of historical sources to find out about life for Victorian women from a wide range of backgrounds, and answer the question: What can we find out about women's lives in Victorian times?

To access the sources in this unit, pupils play an online version of the Victorian board game called Maricourt. The object of the game is to collect sources by answering multiple-choice questions. At the end of the game, each player will have collected a random selection of sources. These will form the basis of their study of Victorian women.

Maricourt can be played by 1-4 players at the same time. Alternatively, the game can be used as a teacher-led class or group activity on the interactive whiteboard. Pupils move around the board after throwing a pair of dice. As they navigate the board they examine a random selection of sources including illustrations, letters, photographs, paintings, newspapers, census returns and objects that relate to the role of Victorian women. They will have to answer correctly a quiz question relating to the source to move after throwing the dice. Twenty-four sources are used in all so it means that groups playing together will see a good cross section of objects and documents between them.

### **Extension activities**

Pupils are given a code to recall their collection of sources. They can use the electronic notebook and the LACE methodology to make further notes on the lives of Victorian women. These notes can be used to form the basis of a piece of work, such as writing a comparison of how rich and poor Victorian women lived, or comparing and contrasting how Victorian women lived with British women's lives today.

## Historical source credits and captions for Victorian women

- The Maricourt board game was made in 1898 (TNA: COPY 1/143f4)
- Layette pincushions, from 1830-60. Layette pincushions were like birth congratulation cards sent today. The pins were often arranged to show good wishes, sometimes in verse. They were also very practical presents to give, because pins were often used to fasten clothes and other textiles together (V&A Misc.149-1985, Misc.238-1988 and Misc.93-1985)
- Photograph of women cycling, 1898. The traditional role of women was questioned in the Victorian period and some women openly defied convention. They educated themselves by reading widely and took up what were seen as 'un-ladylike' activities such as smoking and cycling. The free movement of the bicycle was seen as a symbol of equality and personal freedom (V&A:E.2283:191-1997)
- Letter sent to Police Commissioner for South West London regarding homes for destitute women in London, 1889. Transcript available (TNA: MEPO: 2/203 001-3)
- Poster advertisement for coal, 1897 (TNA: COPY 1/136 f231)
- Papier-mâché needlework box, 1850 (V&A: W.150-1919)
- Extract from Once A Week, magazine, from an article about female colliers working in the mines in Wigan in 1864. Transcript available (TNA:HO 45/7779)
- Mothers and Daughters magazine cover from May 1897 (TNA: COPY 1/134 f543)
- The Governess painting by Richard Redgrave, 1844 (V&A: F.A 168[0])
- Miss Maud Howard, 1873.(TNA: 1/23f518)
- Photograph of Mrs Marzella and her birds, a theatre/music hall act, 1898 (TNA:1/438ptB f523)
- Watercolour showing women at work in Doulton's Lambeth pottery works, 1893 (V&A: E 923-2002)
- The doubling room at Dean Mills near Manchester from the Illustrated London News in 1851. The yarn is doubled and processed into thread, or prepared for weaving (TNA: ZPER 34/19)
- 1861 census for part of Paddington in London (TNA: RG9 /12 001-3)
- Crime sheet for Harriet Gibbings, 1873 (TNA: PCOM 2/291)
- Photograph called Washday on the Isle of Skye, 1901 (TNA: COPY 1/450f26)
- A Garden Scene, painting by Thomas Musgrave Joy c1830-60. This group perhaps also represents the three ages of woman (V&A: P.42-1962)
- Photograph of Lady Cricket Team, 1890 (TNA: COPY 1/400/f284)
- Advertisement for a ladies' school in the Illustrated London News, 1869 (TNA: ZPER 34/54)

- Mourning locket, 1871. These were very popular from the 1860's to the 1880's. Queen Victoria ordered a number on the death of her mother and more after Prince Albert's death in December 1861 (V&A: M.28-1991)
- Princess Beatrice, the youngest child of Queen Victoria and Albert, the Prince Consort, was born in April 1857. Soon after, the Queen and her family went to stay at their retreat, Osborne House where this photograph was taken, 1857. The photograph has been re-touched to improve its appearance and flatter the sitters. Brush-work is evident in parts of the image (V&A: Photograph 68:0321)
- Pair of women's shoes, 1855-1865 (V&A: 2006AW2421-01)
- Silk corset stiffened with whalebone, 1864 (V&A: 2006AY0349-01)
- Dresses: A: 1858-1860; B: 1879-1881 (V&A: T.702-1913 & V&A: T.238&A-1916; Crinoline: (V&A: CIRC. 87-1951) Crinoline frame made from hoops of spring steel covered in braid. The bustle was made from steel wire and constructed to compress when the wearer was sitting down (V&A: T.131C-1919)
- Throwing off Her Weeds, painting by Richard Redgrave, 1846 (V&A: FA.170[O]) The picture shows a young widow impatient to discard her black mourning clothes. The seamstress is showing her a lilac-coloured dress, considered appropriate for a woman in the last phase of mourning. At this time, the mourning period for a husband was expected to be at least two years. Visual clues suggest that the woman is soon to be married again: there is a bridal bonnet in the hat-box in the foreground, and a sprig of orange blossom (a flower which was usually worn or carried at weddings) on the dressing table