History & literacy: Victoria child criminals poetry

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Teacher’s notes

Aims of workshop:

This videoconference aims to introduce pupils to documents about Victorian child criminals and to the background of Victorian crime and punishment. Through a study of documents held here at the archives, including photographs and prison records, pupils will investigate Victorian attitudes to crime and punishment, as well as the social and economic background of this period. Pupils will then go on to study the Prison Record of a little boy named Henry Munday, and will use his experiences as a stimulus for creative writing.

Documents

- **Document 1: reference PCOM 2/291**  
  Henry Munday’s prison record. He was convicted at Wandsworth Prison in 1873 for Simple Larceny. He had stolen 14 lbs of sugar, and received a whipping and four day’s hard labour as his punishment.

- **Document 2: reference COPY 1/420**  
  Photograph (1895), showing a Whipping Frame

- **Document 3: reference COPY 1/420**  
  Photograph (1895), showing a Treadmill at Pentonville Prison

Resources:

- Worksheet for pupils to brainstorm their ideas during the videoconference
- Worksheet which can be used as a guide for pupils when composing their poem

The workshop

The workshop will begin with a discussion of Luke Fildes’ painting entitled Applicants for Admission to a Casual Ward with the Education Officer. Pupils will consider when the painting is set, whom the people are, what is happening to them and why. Pupils will be asked to consider what options were available to the destitute in the Victorian period. For a copy of Fildes’ painting, please visit: [http://www2.rhbnc.ac.uk/ART/casualty.jpg](http://www2.rhbnc.ac.uk/ART/casualty.jpg)

The second part of the videoconference will look at crime in the Victorian period, and will focus on the life of a child criminal, Henry Munday. Pupils will consider why Henry might have turned to crime, and will be shown further documents by the Education Officer that give information about the experiences he may have endured in Prison. Henry’s prison record is included in the teaching pack for reference and for any follow-up work carried out with the class.

The final part of the session aims to prepare pupils to write a poem about Henry in the first person, with the use of metaphors. The suggested follow-up work for this activity is detailed below. Pupils will consider what Henry’s thoughts and feelings might have been, before brainstorming ideas with the Education Officer. They will need the necessary worksheet for this activity, and it would be helpful if this could be photocopied and handed out to pairs of children just before the session starts. They will be given time during the videoconference to scribe their ideas.

Pupils can then write their poems during a follow-up session in class.
Background information

Henry Munday’s information has been taken from the Record Book of Wandsworth Prison. This book contains records of people – adults and children – who were convicted. Each record contains a photograph of the prisoner, with details of their name, age, address, crime committed and punishment received.

Henry Munday was convicted in 1873 for Simple Larceny. He had stolen 14 lbs of sugar and for his punishment; he received four days’ hard labour and whipping. The youngest convict detailed in this book, was Julia Ann Crumpling, aged 7, who was sentenced to seven days’ hard labour in 1870 for stealing a perambulator.

Wandsworth Prison, along with Coldbath Fields, Tothill Fields and Holloway, was one of London’s Correctional Prisons. Prisons were squalid places, with cells described as ‘whitewashed cubes 7 feet by 13’. The death penalty was imposed for a wide range of offences, with children as young as 12 years being hanged. Those lucky enough to escape execution were often required to do hard labour.

Suggested follow-up activity

Having found out about Victorian crime and punishment, and considered the case of Henry Munday, pupils could go on to write a poem about Henry’s experiences. This could be done in the first person, with the use of metaphors to help them describe Henry’s thoughts and feelings.

Using their completed worksheet from the videoconference, pupils could describe Henry using metaphors for each of the following things: A season or month of the year, a building, an item of clothing, a type of food, and a disease.

More able pupils could choose their own list of things to describe Henry.

For example, ‘I am December, when Christmas has been cancelled. I am the Workhouse, that separates families…’

To end their poems, pupils could enter the punishment that Henry received and finally his name.

A writing-frame is included with these notes, which can be used to guide pupils if appropriate.

Knowledge, skills and understanding

Pupils taking part in this workshop will develop their knowledge, skills and understanding by:

- Placing events, people and changes into correct periods of time
- Studying characteristic features of the Victorian period, including the experiences of children in the past
- Studying information from a range of sources and drawing conclusions about the Victorian period
- To communicate their knowledge and understanding of the Victorian period through creative writing

This videoconference fits in with the QCA scheme of work for History, Unit 11: ‘What was it like for children living in Victorian Britain?’
Useful links

• To find out more about Victorian crime and society
  www.learningcurve.gov.uk

• Book a workshop
  www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/contact/form/educationserviceform.asp?id=7&action=1

• Find out more about workshops
  www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/educationservice
Henry Munday’s prison record. He was convicted at Wandsworth Prison in 1873 for Simple Larceny. He had stolen 14 lbs of sugar, and received a whipping and four day’s hard labour as his punishment.
Transcript 1: reference PCOM 2/291

Henry Munday’s prison record. He was convicted at Wandsworth Prison in 1873 for Simple Larceny. He had stolen 14 lbs of sugar, and received a whipping and four day’s hard labour as his punishment.

Name, No. **Henry Munday 5568** 17 May 73

and aliases ________________

Description: age (on discharge): 13

- Height: 4 ft 4 ½
- Hair: Lt. Brown
- Eyes: Blue
- Complexion: Fresh
- Where born: Clapham
- Married or Single: Single
- Trade or occupation: None
- Distinguishing Marks: None

Address at time of apprehension: 54 Conroy St. Wandsworth Road

Place and date of conviction: **Wandsworth 12 May 73**

Offence for which convicted: **Simple Larceny. Stg 14 lbs of sugar**

Sentence: **4 days H.L. and whipped**

Date to be liberated: 15 May 73

Intended residence after liberation: **as above**

Previous Convictions

Summary:

By Jury:

Remarks, antecedents:
Document 2: reference COPY 1/420

*Photograph (1895), showing a whipping frame*
Document 3: reference COPY 1/420

Photograph (1895), showing a treadmill at Pentonville Prison
Worksheet 1: Henry Munday, the child criminal

Compare Henry to each of these things. Explain your choices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>SEASON/MONTH OF THE YEAR</strong></th>
<th>BUILDING</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eg: WINTER (when it is very cold and bleak)</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>DISEASE</strong></th>
<th>TYPE OF FOOD</th>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>CLOTHING</strong></th>
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Worksheet 2: Writing frame for writing a poem

Name: _______________________

Prisoner’s Name, № _______________________

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<tr>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age_________</td>
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<td>Hair_________</td>
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<td>Eyes_________</td>
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<td>Where born_________</td>
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<tr>
<td>Distinguishing marks_________</td>
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I am

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<th>I am</th>
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