

Work and School Life

These resources look at the working and school lives of Victorian children and links to QCA History unit 11 - *What was it like for Children Living in Victorian Britain*.

The activity suggestions use contemporary documents, objects, paintings and photographs to encourage historical enquiry, thinking skills and group collaboration. Many of the activities have cross curricular links.

If you enjoy learning about the working and school lives of Victorian children, why not come along to the Harris Museum & Art Gallery for a facilitated Victorians workshop to find out more?

Using a Census

Objectives:

- To use a census return to find out about Victorian jobs.
- To ask and find answers to questions, and recording relevant information.

NC History – 2b, 4a, 4b, 8a, 11a

NC English – En1: 3a-f En2: 3a-g

NC ICT – 1a-c

QCA History – units 11 and 12

Key Vocabulary:

Census

Occupation

Profession

Give out or display the census (**document 1**).

- What is a census?
- Challenge: How much can you find out about Victorian jobs in 30 seconds just by using the column “Rank, profession or occupation”?

Now have a closer look.

- Which jobs do you recognise?
- Which don't you recognise? Can you make a guess of what it might have involved?

In pairs, small groups or as a class, think about what else you would like to know about the jobs. For example:

- What are the jobs you haven't heard of?
- What did the jobs involve?
- Who did the job – men, women, children?
- How old were the people doing the job?
- What did they earn?
- How many hours a day/week did they work?
- What did they wear to work?
- Was it a skilled or unskilled job?
- Did they have any holidays? How many and when?
- Do people still do the job today? Does it have the same name? How is it the same and different?
- If people don't do the job anymore, why might this be?

Which questions are you likely to find answers to? Where?

Either:

Look at the rest of the information on the census.

- Does any of the information help to answer the questions?
- Use other sources to add to the information on the census and to find information that cannot be answered from it.

OR:

Research the questions using the internet, books etc then compare your findings with the data on the census. Do they tie together?

Discuss It:

- What does the census tell you about the industry in Preston at this time? Do most of the people on your street all work in the same industry?
- What do you notice about where many of the people on the census were born? Can you find out why there were so many Irish people living in Preston in the nineteenth century?
- Create you own class or school census. Think about the information you want to collect, for example, year group, class name, monitor jobs and favourite subject. Discuss safety issues around data collection.

Take it Further:

Produce short presentations about your research. Some ideas are:

- Making posters
- PowerPoint
- Pages to go in a class information book
- A piece of drama

Together with knowledge gained from the 'Homes' section, you will build up a good picture of the lives of the households listed on the census.

Form household groups with each member taking on the role of one of the people from the census.

- Mime their job for others to guess what it is.
- Hot seat the characters with the rest of the class asking them about their working lives.
- Create a short scene entitled 'At the end of the day', with family/household members interacting and talking to each other about their day at work.

Be inspired to write creatively after your research and drama work.

Some suggested ideas are:

- Draw what you think a character from the census looked like. Write a first person comment about how they feel about their work in a speech bubble. Cut out the figure and put them all up on display with their speech bubble to create a "talking" street scene.
- A diary entry about your working day.
- A short story about an incident at work.
- Poetry inspired by the jobs listed on the census, for example, an acrostic using the job title, or a poem about the conditions in the cotton mills.

TEACHER NOTES:

The Census:

The first census was taken in 1801 and has been taken every 10 years since, except in 1941 during the Second World War. The census is a way of counting all the people and households in the UK. The information collected is used to help the government plan for the needs of the country, for example, where new or improved housing is needed.

Irish immigrants:

Many people emigrated from Ireland to England as a result of the potato famine of the mid to late 1840s. The population of Ireland was reduced by about 20-25% as a result of the famine. Other economic, social and political factors also encouraged people to leave Ireland throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Glossary of Occupations

CARDER - Carding is the process of brushing the cotton fibres so they all run in the same direction before being spun into yarn. Before industrialisation this was done by hand. The carder on this census would have been responsible for operating the carding machine in the mill. It was a skilled job.

COTTON FRAME TENTER - After cloth was dyed, the tenter stretched it on a frame, called a "Tent" for drying. They also maintained the frame.

COTTON WEAVER - Operated a loom producing cloth.

DOFFER - Replenished the empty bobbins on the looms.

GRINDER - Maintained the carding machine.

HOUSEKEEPER - Senior female servant who kept the household accounts and hired and fired the lower female servants.

SCHOLAR - A school pupil.

TWISTER - Worked the machine that twisted yarns or threads together.

WINDER - Transferred yarn from the bobbins ready for weaving on the loom

Comparing Town and Country Jobs

Objectives:

- To find out about some of the jobs done by children in the towns and countryside.
- To collect information from a range of sources and draw conclusions about the Victorian period.
- To understand that ways of life differed greatly across Victorian Society.
- To understand that there are many representations of the Victorian period.

NC History – 3, 4a, 4b, 11a.

NC English – En1: 3a-f

QCA History - Unit 11.

Key Vocabulary:

Birdscaring

Gleaning

Harvest

Cotton mill

Select a picture to work with and print it out or display it on the whiteboard (**documents 2-6**):

- Ask the children to share something they find interesting about the picture and why.
- Use the suggested questions with the pictures to develop observation, enquiry and thinking skills.
- Imagine you could step into one of the pictures and talk to one of the characters. What would you ask them?
- Write a diary entry or a day in the life account for one of the children in one of the pictures.

How reliable are the pictures as a form of evidence:

- Do some research to find out about the job shown in the picture. Does the picture give a good sense of what the job was like? Why or why not?
- Do the pictures portray the job in a particular light? Why might this be?
- Compare pictures of town and country jobs. What are the similarities and differences between them?
- Do you think one medium (painting/photograph) gives a more accurate portrayal than another? Why might this be?
- Do you think the artists had experienced these jobs? How would that affect the accuracy of the picture? Does this matter?

TEACHER NOTES:

Child Labour in the Victorian Era:

Most Victorians had a very different attitude towards child labour than we do today. Sending young children out to work was an economic necessity for most families, and was taken for granted by parents and children. Children would work long hours in often unpleasant or dangerous conditions. They did not earn much, but even a few pennies would be enough to buy food for the family.

Some Victorians campaigned to improve the conditions children worked under, which led to a reduction in their working hours and the introduction of elementary education. Such campaigners included Lord Shaftesbury and Sir Robert Peel.

Birdscaring
Sir George Clausen, 1896
(Document 2)

Questions for observation and thinking:

- What season do you think it is? Why do you think this?
- What do you think the boy is doing?
- What is the weather like? What clues are there in the picture?
- What time of day do you think it is? Why do you think this?
- What do you think the object in the boy's hand is for? How do you think it works?
- Why do you think there is a fire?
- Step into the boy's shoes - how are you feeling? What can you see, smell, hear, feel, taste? What are you thinking?
- Do you think the boy looks healthy/happy?
- How old do you think the boy is?
- Why do you think the farmer wanted the birds to be scared away?
- Do you think it would be a difficult job? Which bit in particular? Why?
- Do you think it would be a dangerous job? Why?
- Imagine this was your job. Which aspects would you have enjoyed and which would you have disliked?

Take it Further:

- Find out a little about the life/working conditions of bird scarers? Does the picture show an accurate reflection of the reality?
- Write a senses poem about bird scaring, or a letter or diary entry written from the point of view of a bird scarer.
- Design and make a bird scaring device. Does it work?

TEACHER NOTES:

Bird scarers were like human scarecrows. Their job was to stand in a farmer's field and scare away the birds so they didn't eat the crops and seeds. They did this by making a noise or chasing them off. Bird scarers started work at a very young age and worked out in the fields whatever the weather for very long hours, often from dawn until dusk for a few pence.

The object in the boy's hand is called a clapper and would be waved to make a noise that scared the birds away.

Tired Gleaners
Frederick Goodall, 1855
(Document 3)

Questions for observation and thinking:

- What do you think gleaning was? Look it up in a book or on the internet to find out.
- Why do you think people went gleaning? Why do you think it would be mostly women and children that did this job?
- What do you think is in the bundle by the child sitting down?
- Do you think the children know each other?
- How old do you think the youngest child could be?
- Do you think it would be a difficult job? Which bit in particular? Why?
- Do you think it would be a dangerous job? Why?
- How would you have coped with this job? Which aspects would you have enjoyed/disliked?

TEACHER NOTES:

Gleaning was the gathering of grain left in the fields that had not been collected during harvest. It was usually done by women and children who lived in the nearby cottages whilst the men were at work. Gleaning enabled them to supplement their diet cheaply as they would have had little money to buy food.

Shepherd Boys and Scarecrow
Paul Falconer Poole, 1849
(Document 4)

Questions for observation and thinking:

- What do you think the boys are doing?
- Do you think this is their job? What makes you think this?
- Does the title match the image?
- What kind of lifestyle do you think the boys have? What evidence from the picture makes you think this?
- Where is the painting set?
- What time of year do you think it is?
- Can you see the scarecrow? Do you think it was effective? Why?
- Do you think the boys know each other?
- Why do you think one is playing a recorder/flute?
- Do you think the boys enjoy their job?
- Do you think it would be a difficult job? Which bit in particular? Why?
- Do you think it would be a dangerous job? Why?
- How would you have coped with this job? Which aspects would you have enjoyed/disliked?
- Compare this form of bird scaring with that in *Birdscaring* by Sir George Clausen. Which method of bird scaring do you think the children would prefer to use and why?
- Do you think the painting is a realistic portrayal of Victorian country children? What makes you think this? Why might the artist have portrayed the children in this way?

Horrockses Yard Works (Document 5)

Questions for observation and thinking:

- Can you see any men in the picture?
- How old do you think the little girl at the front could be?
- Look at all the machinery. How do you think a child would feel working in this mill? Why?
- What do you think they make in the mill?
- What do you think you would be able to hear, smell, feel, see and taste in this mill?
- How could you communicate with your workmates if it was too noisy to talk in the mill?

Take it Further:

- Write a senses poem about what you would hear, smell, feel, see and taste in the cotton mill.
- With a partner, make up a way of communicating a simple sentence without talking.
- Do some research to find out what types of jobs children would have done in the cotton mills.

TEACHER NOTES:

John Horrocks, founder of Horrockses cotton manufacturers, was born in 1768 and established the first weaving sheds in Preston in 1800. The Yard Works and Centenary Mill were the largest mills, although there were many other smaller mills owned by other companies throughout the town. The rise of the cotton mill changed the landscape and lifestyle of Lancashire towns throughout the Victorian era.

The mills were very noisy and dangerous places to work due to the machinery. The workers developed a system of sign language to communicate with each other over the din of the machinery. The mills were also very hot and humid places as this climate kept the cotton in good condition. Many people became ill with respiratory and lung conditions caused by breathing in the cotton dust.

The majority of employees were women and children who worked long hours. It was common for adults to work for around 12 to 14 hours a day, and half a day on Saturday, with children working around 6-10 hours a day, with the possibility of time in school on top of that. Despite the long hours and poor conditions, mill workers were generally better paid than other members of the working class.

The last mills in Preston were built during the 1890s and early 1900s. The industry went into decline after the Second World War and cotton ceased to be manufactured in Preston in the 1960s when

Horrockses was sold off. Cotton could now be produced and imported more cheaply in Asian countries such as India. Man made, synthetic materials were also becoming more popular than cotton.

Lipton's Grocers (Document 6)

Questions for observation and thinking:

- What do you think was sold in this shop?
- Where do people buy their food today?
- How many children work at the shop?
- Are they boys or girls?
- What kind of jobs do you think they would have done? Do some research to find out.
- Do you think the boys enjoyed their job?
- Do you think it would be a difficult job? Why?
- Do you think it would be a dangerous job? Why?
- Would you have wanted to do this job? Which aspects would you have enjoyed/disliked?
- Have you heard of Lipton's? What do they sell today?

School Days

Objectives:

- To compare modern and Victorian schooling.
- To find out about events, people and changes using a range of sources.
- To ask and answer questions and to select and record information.

NC History – 2a, 3, 4a, 4b, 11a.

NC English – En1: 3a-f

QCA History – unit 11

Key Vocabulary:

Log book

Pupil teacher

Half timer

Slate and pencil

Orphan

Look at the picture of Shepherd Street School (**document 8**)

- Does the classroom look like yours? Why or why not? Make a list of the similarities and differences.
- How many children do you think there are? Make an estimate and then count as many as you can.
- Do you think the children are the same age? How old do you think they are?
- How many adults can you count? How many adults are in your classroom?
- What do you notice about their hair? (The girls' in particular!) We're not sure why their hair is like this. Have you got any ideas?
- What do you think it would be like to be in this class? What would you like about it? What wouldn't you like?
- If you could ask one of the people a question, what would it be? What do you think their answer would be?

Look at the picture of the slate and pencil to stimulate discussion and historical enquiry (**Document 9**).

- What do you think this object is?
- What materials is it made from?
- How do you think you would use it?
- Has the object been used a lot? What makes you think this?
- What reasons can you think of for not writing on paper or in books?
- What are the advantages of this object?
- What are its disadvantages?
- Would you like to use it in your lessons? Why?
- If you could ask the object a question what would it be?
- What do you think the answer would be?
- Write a description of a “day in the life” of the object.

Use the document *Extracts from the log book of St Mary's Street Wesleyan Methodist School (Document 10)*.

Read through the extracts.

- Are there any words or terms you don't understand? What do you think they could mean?
- What is different compared to your school? What is the same or similar to your school?
- What do we learn about Victorian schools from the log book entries? Whose opinion are we getting? Whose opinion don't we get? How could we find out what their opinion might have been?
- Why do you think log books were kept?
- How does the school recruit pupils?
- Find out what a half timer was.
- What do you think it would have been like to be a half timer?
- What reasons are there for children not attending school?
- What reasons can you think of for children not attending school today?
- Do you think the mills and schools worked together to help the children get an education? What evidence is there to support your ideas?
- What do you think a pupil teacher was?
- What do the children do when they leave school?
- Write about an event from a log book from a participant's or eye witness point of view.

Take it Further:

- Turn your classroom or hall into a Victorian classroom and hold a dictation or handwriting lesson
- Hold a drill lesson in the hall. Make this more realistic by getting the whole year group or school together in ordered rows with one teacher leading a strict drill with them all.
- Discuss the issue of abandoned "street urchin" children/orphans. Why were children abandoned? How would being abandoned make you feel? Why were there larger numbers of orphans in Victorian times? What might have happened to them if the missions and charities didn't help?
- Find out if your school has log books and where they are kept. Have a look at one if possible. Does it record any key or interesting events?

TEACHER NOTES:

Shepherd Street School.

The children in this picture are probably orphans or were abandoned by their parents. Shepherd Street School was part of the Shepherd Street Mission, which took care of such children. At the time, the area around Shepherd Street was one of the poorest in Preston.

It is possible that all the children have short hair because of the nature of the school. Short hair may have helped with the treatment and prevention of lice. It could also have been a form of discipline by making everyone look the same. These are the most likely explanations, but we cannot be certain.

Slate and pencil

Paper was an expensive commodity, so pupils used slate boards and pencils because they could be wiped clean and used again. The pencil is made out of a softer grade of slate and could break easily. They made a shrieking noise against the slate board.

1870 – Education Act.

This Act stipulated that elementary schools were to be established in areas where they didn't already exist. Elementary schools provided education for children between the ages of five and 13 years. A fee of about 2d a week was usually charged, which many families could not afford, especially as sending a child to school meant they could not go to work and contribute to the family's income.

1880 – Education Act.

Elementary education was made compulsory for children aged five to 10 but fees could still be charged.

1891 – Education Act.

Elementary education became free for children up to the age of 11.

1893 – Education Act.

The school leaving age was raised to 11 years.

1899 – Education Act.

The school leaving age was raised to 12 years.

Log books

Schools receiving money from the government were required to keep a daily log of school events so that inspectors could check that public money was being well spent. They included information about attendance and reasons for absence, visits from inspectors, special occasions, school closures and appointments of new staff.

Half timers

Half-timers were children who spent half their day in school and half working in the cotton mills. The system was introduced in 1844 and lasted until 1918 when it was phased out under new legislation that required children up to the age of 14 to receive full time education.

Half timers were required to attend school for 3 hours every weekday. Because they were not at school full time, they paid a reduced fee. The system was therefore beneficial for the family income as school costs were cheaper and the children were still able to bring in a wage.