

Victorians

1837 – Queen Victoria becomes Queen

1854-1856 – Crimean War (Florence Nightingale and Mary Seacole)

1864 – Clifton Suspension Bridge opens

1864 – Under 10s banned from being chimney sweeps

1880 – Compulsory education for 5-10 year olds

1891 – Free education for 5-13 year olds.

1901 – Queen Victoria dies.





Key Vocabulary

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| Orphan | An orphan is a child whose parents have died, are unknown, or have permanently abandoned them. |
| Orphanage | An orphanage is a residency for orphans so they are cared for, housed and protected. |
| Workhouse | A residency offered to those who could not financially support themselves in exchange for work. They were fed, housed and taught new skills. |
| Act | A set of laws that have been passed by Parliament. |
| Industrial Revolution | A time of major change in the way products were made. Major cities built many factories, mills and plants. |
| Ragged Schools | Free schools which were set up so that education was made accessible to all, including orphans. |

Links to Prior Learning

Prior learning about Florence Nightingale and Mary Seacole – studied in KS1
First chocolate bar produced during Victorian era – studied in Year 3/4

Significant People

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|  Queen Victoria | Queen Victoria was born in 1819. She became queen in 1837 when she was 18 years old. She died in 1901. |
|  George Muller | George Muller was born in 1805. He moved to England in 1829. He opened the his first orphanage in 1836. In 1849, Muller opened a new orphanage in Ashley Down, Bristol to house more children. By May 1870, 1722 children were being looked after by his orphanage. |
|  Isambard Kingdom Brunel | Brunel was a famous Victorian engineer. He designed the Clifton Suspension Bridge. He also designed many other bridges, tunnels, railways and ships. |
|  Thomas Barnardo | Thomas Barnardo founded homes to look after vulnerable children. His first home opened in 1867. During his lifetime, around 60,000 children were cared for. |

Jobs for Victorian Children

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| Chimney sweep | Small, young boys would be sent up chimney flues to sweep away any soot that could be clogging up the flumes. This is a dangerous job for a young child. |
| Domestic servant | Wealthy families would hire domestic servants to run the house for them – most of these were young woman. Jobs would include preparing breakfast, cleaning, washing. |
| Fabric mill | The fabric industry grew during the Victorian era and cotton mills required a large workforce, this included children. The hours were long and the mill was a dangerous place to work. |
| Coal mine worker | Coal miners would go underground, for many hours at a time, and mine coal ready to be sold. There were many different roles for children: trappers, drawers and bearers. |
| Rat catcher | Rats were a big problem in Victorian Britain and they often carried diseases. Catching rats was a popular job for children as it carried less dangers than chimney sweeping or factory work. |

Victorians Legacy in Bristol

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| 1831 – Isambard Kingdom Brunel – Construction started on the Clifton Suspension Bridge. |
| 1836 – George Muller – Wilson Street (Bristol) opened its first orphan house. |
| 1837 – Isambard Kingdom Brunel - The SS Great Britain (the first iron steam ship) was built and made its first transatlantic crossing. |
| 1841 – Isambard Kingdom Brunel – The Great Western Railway from Bristol to London was completed. |
| 1847 – 100 Fishponds Road – the Eastville Workhouse was opened to all families under the Poor Law. |
| 1849 – George Muller – Ashley Down opened its largest orphan house and accommodated over 300 children, |
| 1850 – Dr Bell's National School was opened in Fishponds. |
| 1864 – Isambard Kingdom Brunel – The Clifton Suspension Bridge was completed and opened. |
| 1873 – Fry's Chocolate – the first Easter Eggs were invented. |

Victorian School Life

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| What was the classroom like? | In most Victorian classrooms, class sizes were large (sometimes fitting 100 pupils in them). Pupils often sat at in tiered rows on iron-framed desks facing the school master or mistress. Schoolroom walls were completely bare, except for portraits of Queen Victoria. The schoolroom was often quite dark and dismal due to there being little lighting from small windows and gaslights. Children often wrote on slates instead of paper. They scratched the letters onto the slate with a sharpened piece of slate (which they held like a pencil). |
| What did children learn about? | Most Victorian lessons involved listening to the teacher and copying sentences from the blackboard. The most important lessons were the 'three Rs' – reading, writing and arithmetic (maths). Pupils had to chant things (the times-table facts, for example) outloud until they could do it without making a mistake. PE lessons were called 'drill' and usually took place in the playground. The children didn't get changed for PE and the lessons involved lots of jogging on the spot, marching, stretching and lifting weights (dumbbells). In the afternoons, the girls and boys did different lessons. The boys were taught woodworking (and some schools also taught farming, shoe-making and gardening). The girls were taught how to cook meals, how to do embroidery and how to complete housework (such as washing and ironing). |
| What happened if you broke the rules? | Discipline in Victorian schools was very harsh. Teachers often beat pupils using a cane. Canes were mostly made out of birch wood. Boys were usually caned on their bottoms and girls were either beaten on their bare legs or across their hands. A pupil could receive a caning for a whole range of different reasons, including: rudeness, leaving a room without permission, laziness, not telling the truth and playing truant (missing school). Children were not allowed to write with their left hands; some pupils would have their left hands tied behind them and forced to write with their right hands. If a child made a mistake, they could have been given the 'dunce hat'. This hat would be worn by the child at the front of the class to let everyone know that they had made a mistake. |
| Education Laws | At the start of the Victorian era, schools were not free. This resulted in many children not going to school, but rather going to work. In 1844, Parliament passed a law requiring children working in factories be given six-half-days schooling every week. ' Ragged Schools ' were set up to provide free basic education for orphans and very poor children. In 1870, Parliament passed the Forster's Education Act, requiring all parts of Britain to provide schools to children aged 5 to 12. However, not all these school were free so many could not afford the 'school's pence' each week. As it was not mandatory to attend school many children still didn't go to school. It wasn't until 1880 that schooling became mandatory. |

Life as a working Victorian child

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| Why were children used to undertake jobs? | Victorian child labour was normal in 1800s. In most cases, as soon as the child was able to go out to work, they would. Due to the size of the chimneys, the ideal age for a chimney sweep to begin working was said to be 6 years old, but sometimes they were used beginning at age 4. In the mills, there were many roles that required somebody with a lot of energy to undertake tasks: cleaning under the machines, whilst they were running; carrying cotton and weaving. In some factories, there were more children working than adults. |
| How did the children clean the chimneys? | Child chimney sweeps were required to crawl through chimneys that were only about 18 inches wide. Sometimes their masters would light fires to spur the sweeps on to climb more quickly. The child would shimmy up the flue using his back, elbows, and knees. He would use a brush overhead to knock soot loose; the soot would fall down over him. Once the child reached the top, he would slide down and collect the soot pile for his master, who would sell it. The children received no wages. The health effects of doing this work were devastating. The children often became stunted in their growth and disfigured because of the unnatural position they were frequently in before their bones had fully developed. Their knees and ankle joints were affected most often. The children's lungs would become diseased, and their eyelids were often sore and inflamed. |
| What was the factory like? | Cotton mills were dangerous places to work. Mills were also hot, humid, dusty and extremely noisy. With little ventilation, cotton dust caused eye infections, breathing problems and stomach complaints. Workers spent long hours tending fast moving machinery, which resulted in many serious accidents. Children were especially at risk. Children as young as seven years old could be found working fourteen hours a day in the region's mills. Being small and nimble, they were given dangerous jobs such as climbing underneath moving machinery to remove any cotton pieces that had fallen below - this role was called being a 'scavenger'. |
| Was life dangerous for a working Victorian child? | Life for a working Victorian children was dangerous, for many reasons. To start with, there were hardly any health and safety laws. Each job posed different risks. In there factories, there were some serious accidents where children lost their hair when it was caught in the machine (descalping), hands could be crushed and some children were killed when they went to sleep and fell into the machine. For chimney sweeps, they had to climb up 'flues' (chimneys) and most flues were incredibly thin – there were reports of children becoming stuck up them. Climbing flues often resulted in bloodied body parts and chest infections (due to soot). For miners, as they were working underground, the ground could collapse at any moments, leaving them buried alive. |
| What happened to stop Victorian children from working? | It took time for the government to decide that working children should be protected by laws as many didn't see anything wrong with the idea of children earning their keep. They felt parents had a right to send their children out to work. People worked hard to persuade the public that it was wrong for children to suffer health problems and to miss out on schooling due to work. Legislation was gradually introduced during the nineteenth century to limit child labour. In 1844 the 'Half Time System' was introduced, ensuring that children spent half of each working day at school. However, it was not until the early twentieth century that child labour was finally halted. |