

Knowledge Organiser Year 6 – Autumn 2 2026 (History)

Social Reform in Victorian Britain

The Victorian Era

- The Victorian era lasted from 1837 to 1901, during the reign of Queen Victoria, who became queen at the age of 18. It was a period of significant industrial, social and technological change, as the Industrial Revolution transformed how goods were produced and transported. The growth of factories and railways created new jobs and opportunities, while towns and cities expanded as people moved from the countryside to find work. However, these changes did not benefit everyone equally, and people's experiences of Victorian life differed greatly depending on their wealth and circumstances.



Queen Victoria

Victorian Society:

- Victorian society was divided by wealth and social class. Wealthier people could afford larger homes, better education and more comfortable lifestyles. Poorer people often experienced overcrowded housing, low wages and difficult working conditions. Although Britain became wealthier during Queen Victoria's reign, these improvements were not shared equally, and many people continued to live in poverty.

Key Vocabulary

Queen Victoria: Queen Victoria was a famous British monarch of the 19th century, known for her long reign and the Victorian Era.

Social Reform: Social reform means making positive changes in society to improve people's lives, often by addressing issues like poverty and inequality.

Public Health: Public health focuses on keeping communities healthy by preventing diseases and providing healthcare services.

Cholera: Cholera is a contagious disease causing severe diarrhoea and was a major health concern in the 19th century.

Wages: Money paid to workers in return for the work they do.

Industrialisation: The development of factories, machines and industries, which changed how people worked and lived.

Key Vocabulary

Parliament: Parliament is a legislative body responsible for making and passing laws.

Inequality: When people have unequal access to wealth, opportunities and living conditions.

Class: A group in society whose position is influenced by factors such as wealth, occupation and social status.

Poverty: The state of having very little money, making it difficult to afford basic needs such as food, clothing and housing.

Wealth: The money and valuable possessions a person owns, which can affect their lifestyle and opportunities.

Key Vocabulary

Primary Source: A primary source is an original document providing first hand historical information.

Secondary Source: A secondary source interprets primary sources, giving context to historical events.

Inference: An idea or conclusion about the past drawn from evidence in a historical source.

Overcrowding: When too many people live in a space that is too small, often leading to uncomfortable and unhealthy conditions.

The Industrial Revolution

- Big Changes: The Industrial Revolution changed the way people lived and worked. It made life more convenient with new inventions, but it also led to challenges like long working hours, dangerous workplaces and poor living conditions. It was a time of both progress and problems.
- Machines and Factories: During the Industrial Revolution, new machines and factories were invented. These machines could make things faster and easier than ever before, like clothes and tools. They were powered by the steam engine, which changed all sorts of activities which required manual labour before. It also allowed people to travel and transport goods far more quickly and efficiently.
- Urbanisation: Many people moved from the countryside to cities to work in factories. This was called urbanisation. Cities grew bigger, but living conditions for workers were often crowded and not very good. Places called 'slums' formed, which were areas with terrible sanitation and living conditions.



Young children working in dangerous factory conditions

Social Reform: Key Acts

- 1842: Mines and Collieries Act
- 1847: Ten Hours Act
- 1870: Elementary Education Act
- 1875: Public Health Act

Living Conditions in Victorian Britain

- Crowded Cities: In Victorian England, many people moved to cities to work in factories. This led to overcrowded cities with small, cramped houses and apartments. Often, several families would live in one house, sharing limited space.
- Poor Sanitation: Sanitation, or cleanliness, was a big problem. There were no proper sewage systems, so waste often ended up in the streets, leading to dirty and unsanitary conditions. This lack of hygiene contributed to the spread of diseases like cholera.

Work and Money: Wealthier Victorians were more likely to own businesses, land or property, giving them greater financial security and choice. Poorer Victorians often depended on wages from jobs such as factory work, mining, farming and domestic service. If they lost their jobs, they could struggle to afford basic needs.

Education, Childhood and Child Labour: Wealthier children were more likely to receive an education and enjoy leisure time, while poorer children often had fewer opportunities. Some worked long hours in factories and mines, sometimes in dangerous conditions, to support their families, missing out on education and leisure.

Task

During our topic on the Victorian era, we are going to learn about how life differed for rich and poor people and how Britain changed during Queen Victoria's reign.

Your task will be to independently research and create a piece of learning on one of the following topics:

- The slums of Victorian Britain
- Working conditions in Victorian factories
- The lives of rich and poor Victorian children
- The Factory Act of 1833
- The Great Stink of August 1858

What can my learning look like?

- A fact file
- A diorama
- A pretend newspaper report from the past

Bring your completed project to school on Monday, 2nd November.

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