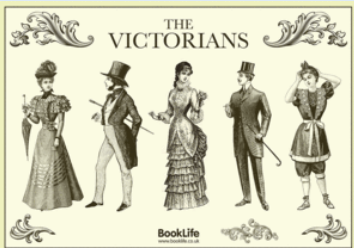


The Victorians

Overview

The Victorian period (1837 - 1901) was a time of growing industrialisation, invention and empire. However, the country was divided as a large proportion of people did not share in the growth of prosperity. Textile factories had sprung up across the country, particularly in Lancashire. They relied on cotton grown by enslaved people in the Americas, on consumers in the British Empire, and on low-paid British workers. Factory conditions were poor and working-class factory workers lived in cramped, overcrowded houses. In contrast to this, in 1851 the Great Exhibition was held in Crystal Palace in London. It was opened by Queen Victoria and showcased new inventions, technology and exhibits from around the world. The exhibition was open for five months and attracted 6 million visitors. When Queen Victoria was crowned in 1837, Britain already controlled Canada, large parts of India, Australia, New Zealand and the Caribbean. Together, these colonies made up the British Empire. As the Victorian period progressed, the British Empire grew, in search of wealth and in competition with other European powers, such as Germany and France. By the time of Queen Victoria's death in 1901, the British Empire was the largest the world had ever seen, and a quarter of the world's people were British subjects.



Victorian Schools

At the start of the Victorian period, very few children went to school. Wealthy children were often taught at home by a governess and wealthy boys were sometimes sent to public school when they were ten. Girls from these families stayed at home and were taught skills such as cooking, sewing and how to play musical instruments. Children from poorer communities often worked in factories and on farms. The 1833 Factory Act made education a right for all children. But poor families often needed their children to work and earn money for the family, so they couldn't go to school. In 1880, a law was passed that made school compulsory for all children between the ages of five and ten. In 1889, the school leaving age was extended to 12. This gave all children access to free education and also helped to end child labour in factories. Rules in Victorian schools were strict. Corporal punishment was allowed and children could be caned if they broke the school rules. Lessons focused on three main areas: reading, writing and arithmetic.

Public health and everyday life

The population of towns and cities rapidly increased in the Victorian period as people moved to find work. Working class people often lived in cramped, back-to-back terraced housing. These houses were often poor quality and families lived in overcrowded conditions, often living in one room in a house. This overcrowding led to poor public health and was a consequence of the industrial revolution. Factories opened and people moved to towns and cities to work in them. The houses that factory workers lived in were often built quickly, and were poor in quality. A lack of proper sewers, clean running water, overcrowding, and heavily polluted air contributed to outbreaks of disease such as cholera, tuberculosis and typhus. In 1889, a British sociologist called Charles Booth carried out a survey that found one third of people in London were living in poverty. This helped raise awareness of the poor living conditions and put pressure on the government to take action.

Queen Victorian ruled throughout the Victorian era. She became Queen when she was 18 in 1837 and reigned until she died in 1901. Her death also ended the Victorian era.

Benjamin Disraeli was prime minister of Great Britain twice during the reign of Queen Victoria. He worked hard to improve the lives of ordinary people.



KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER

Key Vocabulary

Victorian Era	
Monarch	
Reigned	
British Empire	
Cane	
Sovereign	
Slum	

Additional Vocabulary

Key Dates

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