

Victorian Innovations: A Historical Sorting Challenge

Learning objective: To understand the impact of Victorian inventions and social developments on modern life.

Ellie the elephant has been visiting the local history museum and has found a collection of artefacts and ideas. Some are from the Victorian era (1837–1901) and some are modern inventions that came much later. Sort the items below into two columns: 'Victorian Era' or 'Modern Era'. For each Victorian item, write one sentence explaining how it changed the lives of people living during Queen Victoria's reign.

Word bank: Steam locomotives · Smartphones · Penny Black postage stamps · Electric lightbulbs · Tablets · The Electric Telegraph · Internet routers · Sewing machines

1. Sort the items from the word bank into two groups. Which of these were invented during the Victorian period? (4 marks)

2. Explain why the invention of the Penny Black stamp was a significant turning point for communication in Victorian Britain. (2 marks)

3. Compare and contrast the way Victorians sent messages using the Electric Telegraph with how we send messages today. What are the main differences? (3 marks)

4. Justify your answer: Do you think the invention of the steam locomotive had a positive or negative impact on the Victorian landscape and environment? Why? (3 marks)

5. What might happen if the Victorians had not developed the sewing machine? How would this have changed the lives of those working in textile factories? (3 marks)

6. If you could show a Victorian child one item from the 'Modern Era' list, which would you choose and why do you think they would be most surprised by it? (3 marks)

Draw: Draw a 'Victorian Invention' in the centre of a page. Around the outside, draw three ways that specific invention is still used or has evolved into something we use in our own homes today.



Extension challenge: Imagine you are a Victorian inventor. Write a short, persuasive pitch (no more than 100 words) for a new, fictional invention that would help people in the year 1880. Describe what it does, how much it costs in Australian dollars and cents, and why it is essential for the modern Victorian household.