

Life in the Victorian Era

Learning objective: To understand the daily lives and social conditions of children during the Victorian period.

Read the text carefully and answer the questions below using evidence from the passage.

Ellie the elephant was busy researching the Victorian era in the local library. She discovered that life changed dramatically between 1837 and 1901. During this time, the Industrial Revolution meant that many families moved from the countryside to crowded, smoky cities to work in factories. For many Victorian children, life was very different from today. Children from wealthy families often had private tutors or went to boarding schools, where they learned history, French, and math. However, poor children were not always so lucky. Many had to work long hours in dangerous jobs, such as climbing inside chimneys to sweep away soot or working in dark textile mills. There were no laws to protect them from these harsh conditions for most of the century. Ellie noted that while inventions like the steam train made travel faster, the gap between the rich and the poor remained enormous. By the end of the era, laws were eventually passed to ensure all children received a basic education, which began to change their futures for the better.

Word bank: Industrial Revolution · workhouse · chimney sweep · Victorian · social class · education

1. Identify two types of dangerous jobs mentioned in the text that poor Victorian children had to do. (2 marks)

2. What does the text suggest about the difference in education between rich and poor children at the start of the Victorian era? (2 marks)

3. Why might families have chosen to move from the countryside to the cities, even though the cities were crowded and smoky? (2 marks)

4. Based on the text, what was one positive technological advancement that occurred during the Victorian period? (1 mark)

5. Do you think the introduction of laws for compulsory education was the most important change for Victorian children? Explain your reasoning. (3 marks)

Draw: Draw a scene comparing a Victorian classroom with a modern classroom, showing the different ways children might have learned.



Extension challenge: Research one Victorian invention, such as the telegraph or the penny black stamp, and write a short paragraph explaining how it changed the way people communicated.