

Victorian Life: A Historical Investigation with Ellie the Elephant

Learning objective: To analyse and evaluate the impact of Victorian social reforms and daily life on different classes of society.

Use this investigative file to record your research into the Victorian era. Ellie the Elephant has provided some key themes to help you structure your findings. Use your historical knowledge to explain the contrasts between the lives of the wealthy and the working class, and justify why certain changes were necessary for the nation.

Word bank: Industrial Revolution · Social Reform · Workhouse · Philanthropy · Urbanisation · Victorian Era · Apprentice · Hierarchy

1. The Industrial Shift: Explain why the rapid growth of factories and machinery transformed the way families lived in Victorian Britain compared to previous eras. (3 marks)

2. Social Hierarchy: Compare and contrast the daily lives of a wealthy Victorian child and a working-class child. What were the main differences in their education and leisure time? (4 marks)

3. Historical Evidence: If you were a historian discovering a diary from 1860, what specific details would you look for to determine if the author lived in a city or the countryside? (3 marks)

4. Justifying Change: Why were social reforms, such as the Factory Acts or the introduction of compulsory schooling, considered essential for the progress of the Victorian nation? (4 marks)

5. Evaluation: To what extent did the Victorian era improve the lives of ordinary citizens? Justify your answer using evidence of medical or transport advancements. (4 marks)

6. Consequence Analysis: What might have happened to the British economy if the government had chosen not to regulate child labour in mines and factories? (3 marks)

Extension challenge: Imagine you are a Victorian inventor. Write a formal proposal for a new machine that would have helped improve the safety or efficiency of a Victorian factory. Explain how your invention solves a specific problem of the time and describe the materials you would use to construct it.