Life in the Victorian Era

Learning objective: To understand the social conditions and technological advancements of the Victorian period.

Read the passage carefully and answer the questions that follow in full sentences.

Ellie the elephant, our history expert, explains that the Victorian era, spanning from 1837 to 1901, was a time of remarkable change. During this period, Britain transformed from a rural society into an industrial powerhouse. Massive steam-powered factories appeared in cities, and the railway network expanded rapidly, allowing people and goods to travel faster than ever before. While some families prospered, life for others was incredibly difficult. Many children from poorer backgrounds were sent to work in dangerous coal mines or textile mills to earn a few pence to help their families survive. However, the period also saw important social reforms. Towards the end of the century, laws were passed to improve working conditions and ensure that all children could receive a basic education. Innovations in medicine, such as the discovery of germs, also helped people live longer, healthier lives. As you walk through a Victorian street today, look for the tall chimneys and red-brick terraced houses that still stand as a reminder of this fascinating time in our history.

Word bank: Industrial · poverty · innovation · urbanisation · labour · reform

1. Between which years did the Victorian era take place? (1 mark)

2. Identify two types of workplaces mentioned in the text where children were sent to labour. (2 marks)

3. Why did the expansion of the railway network have a significant impact on British society? (2 marks)

4. Based on the text, what does the phrase 'industrial powerhouse' suggest about Britain during this time? (2 marks)

5. Do you think the Victorian era was a 'golden age' for everyone? Explain your answer using evidence from the text. (3 marks)

Draw: Draw a Victorian street scene featuring a steam train in the distance and a red-brick terraced house in the foreground.

Extension challenge: Research a Victorian invention (such as the telegraph or the flushing toilet) and write a short paragraph explaining how it changed daily life for people in the 19th century.