Victorian Life: Sorting the Social Scale

Learning objective: To understand the social structure and daily life of people during the Victorian era.

Ellie the elephant has been exploring the archives to learn about Victorian society. She has found descriptions of life for different groups of people. Read the list below and sort them into two categories: 'Life for the Wealthy' or 'Life for the Working Class'.

Word bank: Governess · Chimney sweep · Silk dresses · Workhouse · Maids and butlers · Country estate · Coal dust · Private tutor · Factory shift · Afternoon tea

1. 1. Sort the items from the word bank into their correct category. Why might a child in the Victorian era have a very different experience depending on which group they were born into? (3 marks)

2. 2. Imagine you are a factory worker earning a low wage. If a loaf of bread costs 2p and a pint of milk costs 1p, calculate the cost of 3 loaves and 2 pints of milk. How much change would you get from a £1 coin? (2 marks)

3. 3. Explain one reason why many Victorian children had to work instead of going to school. (2 marks)

4. 4. Describe one piece of technology or invention that changed Victorian life (e.g., the steam train or the telegraph). (2 marks)

5. 5. Ellie remembers that Queen Victoria reigned for over 60 years. Why is it important for historians to look at both the lives of the rich and the poor to understand this period? (2 marks)

Draw: Draw a Victorian street scene showing the contrast between a wealthy family in fine clothes and a working-class child performing a job, such as a street seller.

Extension challenge: Research a famous Victorian invention. Write a short diary entry from the perspective of a person living in the 1880s explaining how this invention has made their daily life easier or more interesting.