Life in Victorian Britain: A Historical Investigation

Learning objective: To understand the social conditions and major developments during the Victorian era, including the impact of the Industrial Revolution.

Use your historical knowledge to answer the following questions. Provide detailed explanations where required, referencing the changes in industry, schooling, and society.

Ellie the elephant has been visiting the archives to learn about life during the reign of Queen Victoria (1837–1901). It was a time of huge change, where Britain transformed from a country of farmers into a busy hub of machines and factories. While some families grew wealthy, many others faced long, dangerous working hours in factories or mines. Ellie has gathered these questions to test your understanding of how the Victorian era shaped the world we live in today.

Word bank: Industrial Revolution · Workhouse · Urbanisation · Social reform · Factory Act · Education Act · Victorian · Empire

1. Explain two ways the Industrial Revolution changed where people lived in Britain. (2 marks)

2. What was the purpose of the 1870 Forster's Education Act, and how did it affect children like you? (2 marks)

3. If a Victorian factory owner earned £500 in profit but had to pay £150 for coal and £100 for machine repairs, how much profit remained? Why might they have chosen to employ children to save on costs? (3 marks)

4. Describe the conditions inside a typical Victorian workhouse. Why were they feared by the poor? (2 marks)

5. Identify one major invention from the Victorian era and explain how it improved daily communication or travel. (2 marks)

Draw: Draw a 'then and now' split-screen image showing a Victorian street scene on one side and a modern high street on the other, focusing on the differences in transport and clothing.

Extension challenge: Research a significant Victorian social reformer (such as Lord Shaftesbury or Dr Barnardo) and write a short diary entry from their perspective explaining why they wanted to change the lives of children.