



With so many families learning from home at the moment, we have put together some activity ideas for families to look at, based on the workshops we normally do with schools.

The following pages are based on the topic of Victorian Schools, and there are fun facts, activities, challenges and things to think about. Each page will focus on something different, but don't feel like you have to do the whole topic in one day.

Have fun, and remember that if you need any extra help, our museum learning team are only an email away, and are happy to help in any way they can!



At the museum you can explore our Victorian Street and discover what everyday life was like over one hundred and twenty years ago, when children were shopping or playing with their friends. But what was life like for Victorian children when they were at school?

Victorian Era 1837-1901

When we talk about the Victorian era, or Victorian times, we are talking about what life was like in England when Queen Victoria ruled the country.

When Victoria first became Queen, very few children in England went to school. Lucky children from rich families either had their parents pay to send them to school, or had a Governess (a teacher who lived with them).

But most families were poor, and instead of going to school children as young as seven had to get jobs instead to help look after their families- dangerous, dirty, low-paid jobs.

Towards the end of the Victorian era, it became the law that all children between the ages of 5-12 had to go to school. While this was a very good thing, schools back then weren't the nice places they are today...





The first thing you would have noticed about a Victorian classroom is that it is likely that there would have been a lot more children crammed into one classroom than you would expect- it was normal to have 70 children in a class with only one teacher!

You would have been sitting in rows, all facing in the front, so that you didn't get distracted. And you wouldn't have had nice things on the walls to help you with your work- there was just a blackboard, and maybe a poster of the school rules. A Victorian classroom wasn't fun or colourful.

Without electricity, the room would have been cold- there would have probably only been one small fireplace to warm up a whole classroom, and it would have been at the front of the room next to the teacher. The teacher would have chosen her favourite children to sit at the front near the fire, and any naughty children were sat at the back of the room where it was the coldest.



An example of a typical Victorian Classroom

Things to think about!

Imagine you are in a Victorian Classroom. How would it feel in the winter?

How would it feel in the summer?

Activity: *Can you draw and label a Victorian Classroom?*

Challenge: Victorian school children were expected to all do the same thing, and not be individuals. This was unfair, and could make children very unhappy.

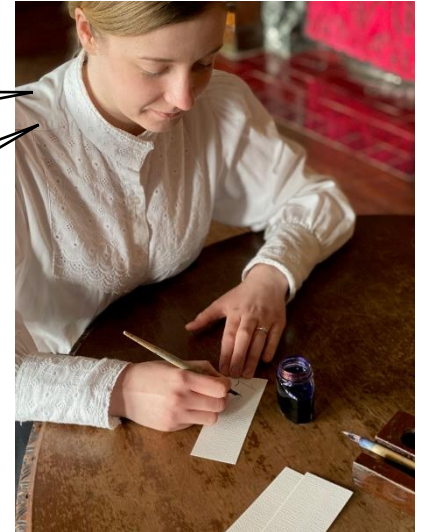
Some people are lucky enough to be able to write with both their left and right hand easily, but most people have one hand they find it easier to write with, and find using the other uncomfortable. But in a Victorian school all children had to write with their right hand, no matter what. They would get in lots of trouble if they ever wrote with their left.

To see how difficult it would be if you were forced to write with the wrong hand all the time, write your full name five times with the opposite hand to the one you usually use.



*Children should be seen and
not heard!*

*Do not speak until you are
spoken to!*



In Victorian times, adults were seen as far more important than children. Children were not considered special, and were expected to do what they were told at all times. Children had to stand up when an adult walked into a room to show them respect, and were not allowed to speak during their lessons unless they were given permission to by the teacher.

Children were expected to look smart, be on time and not fidget or get distracted during lessons. They would always have to call their teacher, who was usually a woman 'Miss'. The Headteacher would usually be a man and would be called 'Sir'.



Things to think about!

*How would you feel knowing that children were seen as far less important than adults?
Has anyone in your family ever heard the expression 'Children should be seen and not heard'?*

Activity: Create a poster showing all of the Victorian Classroom Rules

Challenge: If you are learning from home, decide as a family your top five 'Home Classroom Rules' for you all to follow. How are they different to the rules in a Victorian classroom? Are they kinder?



Nowadays, if we do something naughty at school we might get sent to talk to our headteacher, or miss our playtime. It gives us time to think about what we have done, and an adult talks to us about the choices we have made and helps us to make better ones in the future.

But in a Victorian school a teacher wasn't interested in helping you. The teacher wanted to frighten you into doing what you were told next time. They would shout at you in front of the class, and call you nasty names. They would try and humiliate you.

If you got a little confused when doing your work, the teacher would think it was because you hadn't been listening properly. Instead of helping you to get it right, the teacher would make you wear a 'Dunces Cap'. *Dunce* is an old fashioned way of calling someone stupid.

If the teacher thought you had done something naughty, you would be caned. The cane was a thin wooden stick that a teacher would hit you with, most often across your hands.



An example of a cane

Things to think about!

How would you feel knowing that your teacher could call you nasty names and shout at you in front of the whole class? Would you be scared to go to school if you thought your teacher might cane you?

Activity: *Imagine you have travelled back in time to be a schoolchild in a Victorian school for a day. Write a letter or a postcard home telling someone all about your day, and how it made you feel.*

Challenge: What do you think this object was used for in a Victorian Classroom?

Hint: Can you think of some **Who, What, Where, When** and **How** questions to help you work it out?

You'll find the answer on the next page!



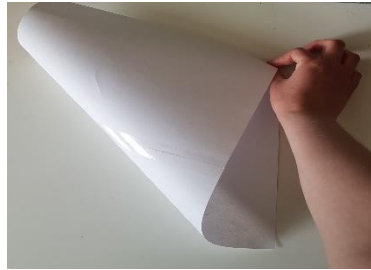


Follow the instructions below to create your own dunces cap.
When you are finished, why not share a picture of your cap to
our social media page?



Step One

With your paper
landscape, pull the
bottom left corner to the
top right corner.



Step Two

Creating a cone shape,
then pull the top left
corner around and
secure with sellotape.



Step Three

Write 'D' and 'Dunce' on
your cap and then cut off
the excess paper you
don't need at the bottom.



You will need...

Black felt tip
Scissors
Sellotape
A3 White Paper (you can
always Sellotape two A4
pieces together, or use
newspaper)

FINAL CHALLENGE

Recreate a Victorian
school lesson at home
with your family.
Why not mix things up
and have the children
pretend to be the
teacher instead of the
adults?

Try to be a little kinder
and avoid the nasty
punishments though!

This object is a Finger Stock!

It was a punishment used to stop children fidgeting in class and make sure they were paying attention. The teacher would make you wear these- your fingers would go through the holes in each one and it would stop you from being able to move your hands properly.

This punishment may not have hurt you the same way being caned would, but it would start to feel very uncomfortable if you wore the finger stocks for more than a few minutes.

