



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 Servants, 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!



Did you know that Preston Park Museum used to be a home? Around 70 years ago we filled the rooms with big glass cases and interesting things from the past for people to visit and look at. But during the Victorian era the Ropner family lived in the house. They weren't the only ones living there though. Who else was living in the house with them?

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 was Queen, Britain had a large empire overseas and was a very wealthy and important country. But that did not mean everybody in Britain was rich. Most ordinary people were actually very poor and had little money.

Some poor people worked in industry, such as building railways or mining. In the countryside some people worked on farms as laborers. In towns and cities many worked in factories. Jobs were dangerous and paid very little.

But many poor people went into service and worked in rich households as servants. In 1891 Britain had almost two million indoor servants.



In Victorian times, it was expected that rich people employ servants to look after them and do all of the jobs they didn't want to. A very wealthy family could have lots of servants, all of them with their own specific jobs. The servants would live in the house where they worked so that they were always there if needed.

When Victoria first became Queen, many families were so poor they needed everyone who could to work and earn money to survive. That means that at the start of the Victorian era many servants were children, some as young as seven.

As a servant you would have to get up very early in the morning and work until you went to bed. It was normal to work from six in the morning until eleven at night. You might have only got one afternoon off each week. You got paid very little and the jobs you were doing were tough and would make you feel exhausted!

Some country houses in Victorian times could have between ten and fifty servants.

There were housekeepers, stewards, scullery maids, cleaning maids, nursery maids, footmen, stable boys, gardeners, governesses... and even more!



A maids uniform on display at Preston Park Museum

How is being a servant different to being a slave?

It is important to remember that being a servant was different to being a slave. A slave is someone who is legally owned by someone else and is forced to obey them. Slavery was outlawed in Britain five years before Victoria became Queen.

A servant is someone who is paid to do a job for someone. Being a servant was hard work, and they weren't always treated kindly by the families they looked after. But although servants may not have always been paid lots of money, they still had the freedom to quit if they really wanted to, and they didn't belong to the family they worked for.

However, if you left your job it could be very difficult to find another somewhere else, and your new family probably wouldn't have treated you much nicer than the last one.

Challenge: Think of the jobs in your house the grown-ups don't enjoy doing. Can you make a list of all of the household jobs they wish they could have help with?

Make a 'Help Wanted' poster to advertise for a servant to come and live with you and do these jobs.



There were lots of different types of servants. Let's look at three servants jobs in more detail.



A Laundry Maid had a tough job. This job paid very little and was seen as one of the least important jobs in the house. Nowadays we have things like washing machines, tumble driers and electric irons to help us wash our clothes and make them look presentable.

But in the Victorian era a laundry maid would have been doing all of these jobs by hand. Without hot taps or electric kettles to help her, even heating up the water to start washing would have been a tough job. She would have had to fill large buckets of water from an outdoor pump or river and heat it over a fire. Clothes were washed using bars of carbolic soap.

Activity

Why not see how tough it could be to wash clothes by hand?

You will need:

- Bowl
- Warm water
- Bar of soap
- Dirty sock
- Cheese grater

Step One

Grate a little soap into your bowl.

Step Two

Add some warm water, and mix with your hand.

Step Three

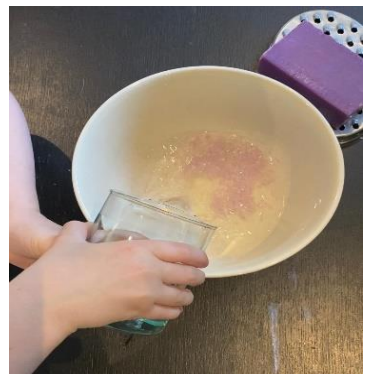
Put your sock in the soapy water, and scrub it and wring it until it looks and feels clean! This may take a while.

Things to think about

How long did it take you to wash one sock until it was properly clean? Now imagine having to do all of your washing this way!

Imagine you are washing all day in the middle of winter, and you have to do the washing outside. How would it feel? How would your hands feel?

How long does it take for your sock to dry?





Being a Butler was a very important job. He would be in charge of all of the male servants, and would be given some of the most important jobs, such as locking up the house at night and looking after valuable silver items. He was in direct contact with the family, and would talk to the head of the household more than any of the other servants. He was responsible for answering the main door, and looking after guests and making sure they had everything they needed. He was also in charge of the wine, and waiting on the table at mealtimes.

Being responsible for large dinner parties could be a tricky job. Even setting the table properly would be difficult- all of the silver would have to be cleaned and polished properly and back then there were lots more different types of cutlery to be used than nowadays! The Butler had to make sure the other servants had set the table properly with the correct cutlery for the food being served. To see just how tricky that could be, can you match the pictures below to the correct description using arrows?



Shellfish Picker

Used to pick the soft insides out of shellfish to be eaten.

Fish Fork

A special fork used only for fish.

Asparagus Tongs

Used for picking up asparagus from a bowl in the middle of the table, so you could place them on your plate

Marrow Scoop

Used to scoop out the softer bits in the middle of a bone so they could be eaten.

Challenge: Can you invent your own special piece of cutlery to help you eat your favorite food?

Draw and label your invention.

If you can't think of your own invention, why not invent a special spoon to help you scoop out the inside of a cream egg before eating the chocolate around the outside?

Or a special peeler to help you remove chicken skin from a drumstick?

Or a vegetable crusher to squish your Brussel sprouts so that they are so small you can them all in one mouthful to get rid of them quicker?



Being a cook in a large household would have been an important job. A cook was one of the most respected servants, was well paid, and in charge of the other kitchen servants.

The cook was responsible for all of the meals being cooked through the day- and the evening meals alone would often have ten different courses! It would have been tiring work, and she would have to be very talented. It would have taken her a long time to get the job- the cook would have spent years being promoted from the least important jobs all the way up to the top.



An example of a typical Victorian kitchen

Queen Victoria herself helped make large, complicated evening meals popular among the rich. She was a great lover of food, and enjoyed trying new recipes. She could eat an entire eight or nine course meal in half an hour, and she especially loved deserts and sweets.

Without electricity to help cook food, even the things we think are very simple now would have been tough in the Victorian era. Most things couldn't be bought ready made from the shops like nowadays. If you want to, with a grown-up to help you have a go of the activity on the next page to see how tricky making butter was, never mind a more complicated meal!

You will need:

Double cream/whipping cream which has been left until it is room temperature (½ pint of double cream makes approx. 200g of butter.)

Butter churn (if you have one) or a watertight sealable jar/container (around the size of a jam jar)

Muslin cloth or clean cotton cloth to drain the buttermilk

Big bowl

Container for your finished butter

Pinch of salt (to use at the end if you would like to)



How to Make Butter

1. Pour the room temperature cream into jar container or churn and make sure that the lid is tight so no liquid leaks out.
2. Shake or churn the cream quite fast (you might need to take it in turns if your arms get tired). This can take 10mins-30mins so make sure you take little breaks if needed.
3. At first the cream will start to look like whipped cream, then it will separate and look a bit like cottage cheese – keep going you're nearly there!
4. You'll then notice half will be turning more solid and yellow like butter and that there will be a very watery looking milk liquid which is buttermilk. Once you've got to this stage you're ready to stop.
5. Set up the muslin/cotton cloth inside a bowl with the edges hanging over the side.
6. Pour the butter/buttercream out of the jar into the bowl using the cloth as a filter. Lift and squeeze/press the butter gently using the cloth to get any excess buttermilk out and into the bowl.
7. Wash your butter – sounds weird but it works! Wash with cold tap water to get rid of any excess buttermilk and then make sure all the bits of butter are in one big lump.
8. Remove from the cloth and put your butter on clean non-stick surface ready to shape.
9. Mix in the pinch of salt if you want to at this stage. Use the pats to blend it in and shape your butter into a block and place on the butter plate/dish ready to eat!
10. If you have any left-over butter, put it in a covered container, pop it in the fridge and use within a day or two.

Victorian cooks would have added in their own special twists depending on what herbs were available – the kitchen garden would have been great. They could have used fresh rosemary, thyme or any other herbs they could find that they liked the taste of!

