



Victorian Britain

Background Information

The Victorian period is named after Queen Victoria who **reigned** over Britain and a world **Empire** from her **coronation** in 1837 to her death in 1901 – 64 years. She is the second longest serving monarch, after our current Queen – Queen Elizabeth II. Life in Victorian England was very different to today. It was a time of great wealth and poverty, as well as invention and scientific discovery. During this time, Britain was a powerful nation – due to the British Empire. In 1850, Britain was the richest country in the world.

In this unit the children will learn:

- About the British Monarchy
- Who Queen Victoria was
- What life was like for a child during the Victorian times.
- The class division
- Workhouses
- Famous people from the Victorian era and what impact the Victorians have made on our lives today.



Timeline of Key Events:

1837 – Queen Victoria crowned (aged 18 years).
1840 – Queen marries her cousin, Prince Albert.
1840 – first Ragged Schools set up.
1844 – Factory Act states children could start work from age 8, but had to have 2 hours schooling daily.
1847 – Factory Act states women and children under 18 could only work 10 hours or less daily.
1851 – Great Exhibition.
1861 – Prince Albert dies.
1863 – first underground railway opens in London.
1867 – all factory workers limited to 10 hours work daily.
1870 – Dr Barnardo opens first home for boys.
1871 – first FA cup for football.
1877 – Queen declared 'Empress of India'.
1880 – Children 5-13 required to attend school (but had to pay).
1882 – first electric power station in London.
1891 – education made free and compulsory for children 5-13.
1897 – Queen Victoria Diamond Jubilee (60 years on the throne).
1901 – Queen Victoria dies.

Historical Skills and Concepts:

- **Chronology** – key events in world history.
- **Questioning** – develop historical questioning skills.
- **Sources** – use a range of sources to explore our knowledge of the past.
- **Cause & Effect** – the impact of Historical events or developments.

Key People:

Queen Victoria – Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.

Prince Albert – Queen Victoria's husband.

Louis Pasteur - a scientist who discovered that wounds become infected because of invisible germs

Dr Barnardo - a missionary who set up homes for poor, homeless children with food, shelter and training. Rescued around 60,000 children

Florence Nightingale - Responsible for the birth of the nursing profession.



Key facts:

Queen Victoria:

Queen Victoria was born in 1819 at Kensington Palace in London. Her uncle was King William IV, who had no children of his own, so the crown passed on to Victoria when he died. She was 18 years old when she inherited the throne in 1837. Victoria is described as strong, honest and stubborn. She was the first monarch to live in Buckingham Palace, but she also spent time at Balmoral Castle in Scotland. Queen Victoria was on the throne for nearly 64 years until she died in 1901.

Schools:

At the start of Victoria's reign, only wealthy children went to school or had tutors, because education was not free. Girls were taught skills such as sewing or cooking, while boys were taught subjects such as reading and arithmetic (maths). Poorer children were sent out to work and never learnt how to read or write. This changed during Queen Victoria's reign.

Industrial Revolution:

The Victorians changed the way Britain's towns and cities looked. With more people moving to the cities in search of work, it wasn't only houses that needed to be built. The Victorians built schools, libraries, bridges, theatres, stations, shops and hospitals. Tower Bridge is a stunning example of Victorian engineering and is now a symbol of London. It was built between 1886 and 1894 close to the Tower of London. The lower platform, across which cars now drive, can be raised to allow tall boats and ships to pass below.

Key Vocabulary:

British Empire - lands that Britain controlled all over the world (for example, India).

Compulsory - having to do something (for example, going to school).

Coronation - the formal service of making a person king or queen of a country.

Disease - illnesses, many of which were very dangerous (for example, cholera, smallpox and typhoid).

Factory Acts - laws passed by government to protect people working in dangerous factories (particularly women and children).

Hygiene - cleanliness needed to keep healthy.

Middle Class - the middle of the Victorian class system, including lawyers earning £500 per year to a small shopkeeper earning £100 per year.

Mines - underground areas where people worked digging out coal and other minerals.

Paupers - very poor people who have no way of feeding or supporting themselves.

Poverty - people living in poverty do not have enough money to feed or clothe themselves.

Ragged School - a school set up to teach poor children.

Upper Class - wealthy people, often estate owners, who had a lot of money and servants.

Workhouse - places set up by the government where poor people with no money could go and be given a bed, food and work. Many had very harsh rules.

Working Class - the bottom of the Victorian class system. A working class man could be anyone from a skilled mechanic earning £90 a year to a servant earning £10 per year.

Transferable vocabulary and concepts:

- **laws** - rules passed by government which people living in a country have to follow.
- **government** - people chosen by the country to pass laws and run the country.
- **population** - people who live in a particular place.
- **reformer** - a person who makes changes in order to improve things.
- **reign** - the length of time a king or queen rules a country.
- **slum** - poorest, most overcrowded and uncared for part of a town or city.
- **Monarch** - King or Queen