



Year 5  
Life in Victorian times

### Builds on Knowledge and Skills

The time when Queen Victoria reigned is called the Victoria era or the Victorian age. She was queen from 1837 to 1901 and a lot of things happened in Britain during that time. During the 64 years that Queen Victoria was on the throne, Britain was also going through the Industrial Revolution. Machines for factories were invented that could make things quickly, like textiles— so, there were more textiles to sell, and more people who wanted to buy them. With the

### Books, texts, primary and secondary sources you may use:

100 Facts on Victorian Britain— Jeremy Smith  
Victorians DK Eyewitness— Ann Kramer  
The Victorians (Usborne British History)— O Ruth Brocklehurst  
Horrible Histories: The Vile Victorians— Terry Deary

### Suggested family experience

Visit Jersey Museum— The Victorian House

### National Curriculum

A depth study linked to one of the British areas of study.  
A study over time tracing how several aspects of national history are reflected in the locality.  
A study of an aspect of history dating from a period beyond 1066.

### Vocabulary you will use:

Word	Definition
achievements	Things done successfully after lots of effort
economy	The wealth a country gets from business and industry.
empire	A number of nations controlled by one country.
exploration	The process of exploring
innovation	New ways of doing something
missionaries	People sent to a foreign country to teach about their religion.
parliament	A group of people who make or change the laws.
poverty	Being extremely poor.
philosophy	A study of how people think and live.
Raj	British rule in India
revolution	Important change
unchartered	Not yet mapped or unfamiliar.
workforce	People available to do a job.

### Local History Links

In the 1840s, Pierre Le Sueur was elected as Connétable of St Helier. From 1845, he organised the construction of a complete sewer system for the town.

In 1852, the French author and poet Victor Hugo arrived to seek refuge in Jersey

The Theatre Royal was built, as was Victoria College in 1852. The world's first ever Pillar box was installed in 1852 and a paid police force was created in 1854.

Two railways, the Jersey Western Railway in 1870, and the Jersey Eastern Railway in 1874, were opened. The western railway from St Helier (Weighbridge) to La Corbière and the eastern railway from St Helier (Snow Hill) to Gorey Pier.

Elementary education became obligatory in 1899, and free in 1907. Queen Victoria died in 1901, and Edward VII was proclaimed as King in the Royal Square. His coronation a year later was marked by the first Battle of Flowers.

### Quick Summary

The Victorian era is the name given to the period of Queen Victoria's reign. It was a time of significant technological, scientific, economic and social change. New inventions and discoveries were made that changed where people lived, how they worked and how they spent their leisure time. The British Empire grew, and Britain came to rule over a quarter of the world's population. These changes brought immense wealth for many, but lots of people, including many children, still lived in terrible poverty. Many children worked in mines and factories. However, the Victorian era also saw lots more children attending school and significant progress in medicine and health care.

### Main Events

**1837:** Victoria became Queen.

**1838:** Slavery abolished in the British Empire

**1845-9:** Irish potato famine

**1854:** Britain went to war with Crimea.

**1859:** Charles Darwin published 'On the Origin of Species'.

**1861:** Victoria's husband, Prince Albert, died.

**1867:** Antiseptic first used.

**1880:** Education became compulsory until the age of ten.

**1897:** Women's suffrage movement grew.

**1901:** Queen Victoria died.

Questions we'll ask you throughout the unit to check your knowledge and understanding

Can you suggest reasons why the Victorian era was a time of rapid scientific development?

Without the Industrial Revolution, there would not have been any middle classes. DO you agree?

Can you summarise a story by Charles Dickens or one of the Bronte sisters?

Investigate the significant achievements of Mary Kingsley

## Who were the Victorians?

The Victorians were the people who lived during the Victorian era. They are called Victorians because they lived during the reign of Queen Victoria.

Queen Victoria was the longest ruling monarch of Great Britain and the kingdoms of the British Isles. She was in power as Queen from June 20th 1837 to January 22nd 1901 when she passed away. This length of reign totals an impressive 63 years, 7 months and 2 days. Queen Victoria lived an eventful life. She married Prince Albert in February 1840 and together they had 9 children and 42 grandchildren. Despite her small size (she was barely five feet tall), she was known as being fierce, candid, determined, outspoken and stubborn. She had a very imposing reputation.



The Victorian era began in 1837, when Queen Victoria became the Queen of England, and ended in 1901 when she died. During her reign as Queen, the British Empire grew very large and powerful. Also during Victorian times, there were many new inventions and discoveries which meant that the lives of ordinary people

There was no electricity; instead gas lamps or candles were used for light. There were also no cars. People either walked, travelled by boat or train or used coach horses to move from place to place.

## What did Victorian society look like?

The Industrial Revolution, which started in the late 1700s, saw significant growth in steam-powered machinery. The number of large factories making products to trade across the world also grew rapidly. Cities increased in size as people came to work in these factories, leaving the small villages they had lived in behind. The increase in population meant there was a need for more food, goods and housing. As a consequence, urban centres became overcrowded with factories and houses. Very young children had to work too, and it was only towards the end of the Victorian era that the law was changed to stop young children working in terrible



The lives of the rich and the poor were very different in Victorian times. Wealthy landowners of earlier years became wealthy factory owners and continued to control political life and the economy. Newly educated experts like engineers, lawyers, teachers and doctors became part of the middle classes who went on to change the way that politics worked, wanting more representation in parliament. However, despite improvements in the lives of many people, the poor and very poor continued to live and work in terrible conditions.

## Culture and Pastimes



People in the Victorian era wanted to learn more about the world around them. New learning in science was of particular interest and often challenged religious beliefs and ideas. Art galleries, libraries and museums were built in every large city.

Some of Britain's most famous authors, such as Charles Dickens and the Bronte sisters, were writing during this time.

The Victorians were obsessed with death. They had elaborate mourning rituals, including wearing black and not engaging in any social activities for up to two years after someone's death. They even took photos of dead relatives propped up to look as though they were still alive.

Apart from the poorest people, all families had servants to help with the running of the house. Many people had at least one servant and a cook, and richer people would have many staff to take care of the family, including a nanny to take care of the children. It was during the Victorian era that seaside holidays became popular in Britain. This was because people had more free time than ever before and could travel quickly and cheaply on steam trains.

## Victorian Education

Although schools have always been around, it wasn't until the Victorian era that these were improved considerably and available for all children - rich and poor. In 1870, a law was passed which made it mandatory for all children aged between 5-10 in Britain to attend school. This was similar to the system we use today of Monday-Friday; however, the leaving age was far



When Queen Victoria initially came to the throne, schools were for the rich. Most children never went to school and struggled to read or write. Children from rich families were typically taught at home by the governess until the age of 10 years old. Wealthy boys from the age of 10 would then go to public schools. Girls, on the other hand, continued to be educated at home.

Schools were certainly different to the schools we have today. Within poor inner-city areas there could be anywhere between 70 and 80 pupils in one class. In Victorian schools, there were more female teachers than male ones with women occupying the majority of teaching roles. These women were often very strict.

## Innovation and Industry

The Victorian era was a time of significant change in technology and trade. The Industrial Revolution saw new inventions, like the steam engine, completely change the way people lived, and how they worked. Agriculture was no longer the primary source of work, and people flocked to growing urban areas and cities to find jobs.

The shift from agriculture to industry was made possible by several significant innovations and the development of a skilled workforce. These skilled workers became part of middle classes (people who were neither very wealthy nor very poor) who played an essential role in political and social developments of the time.



The enormous changes in industry seen in the Victorian era brought people from the rural parts of the country into urban centres like Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds and Bradford. Without access to education, this new working class had to work very long hours in difficult conditions. Children made up a large part of the workforce in factories, mills, mines and workshops. These new towns and cities also became overcrowded, and pollution created significant problems for people's health and wellbeing.

Click [here](#) to find more about the Industrial Revolution.



## Travel and Exploration



The Victorian era was a period of exploration and discovery. Some explorers went in search of lost cities, to map uncharted territories and as missionaries, hoping to spread their faith and establish churches, schools and hospitals. Traders and settlers continued to look for new places to exchange goods, selling factory-made products and buying raw materials like cotton, sugar and tea.



Not all Victorian exploration was about trade and conquest. Much of the world was still 'undiscovered' and a source of great mystery. One famous explorer, Mary Kingsley, travelled over much of West Africa, writing about her experiences and collecting scientific evidence of new animal species that she had discovered. Christian missionaries also travelled far and wide, seeking out people to adopt the Christian faith.

Many Europeans settled in these new places but some countries, like Britain, also sent armies and officials to govern these new territories. During Victoria's reign, Britain went from being a significant global power to the most powerful nation on Earth. Victoria ruled over an enormous empire that controlled almost one quarter of the world's population, with trading centres and colonies across the globe.

