

KS2 History – Victorian Britain
Understanding the differences in boys' and girls' education in Victorian Britain

This lesson will highlight to children the ways life varied for children in Victorian Britain. They will learn that the education of boys and girls was different depending on social class. They will look at historical documents to provide evidence for the differences in the education of wealthy Victorian boys and girls. The children will also use their imaginations to write letters in the style of Victorian children. In addition, they will reflect on what life is like for girls in other parts of the world today, where access to education is limited.

Learning Objectives:

To understand that ways of life differed greatly across Victorian society
To write a fictional letter using historical detail
To know that girls in other parts of the world still don't have the same educational opportunities as boys

Success Criteria:

Children should be able to:
Explain how the education of wealthy Victorians differed for boys and girls
Imagine what it was like for boys and girls at school in Victorian times
Appreciate that lots of girls across the world have limited access to education

KS2 National Curriculum Links:

History – 2a: .about characteristic features of the periods and societies studied, including the ideas, beliefs, attitudes and experiences of men, women and children in the past, **4a:** how to find out about the events, people and changes studied from an appropriate range of sources of information, including ICT-based sources [for example, documents, printed sources, CD-ROMS, databases, pictures and photographs, music, artefacts, historic buildings and visits to museums, galleries and sites], **5c:** to communicate their knowledge and understanding of history in a variety of ways [for example, drawing, writing, by using ICT], **8a:** learn about the Romans, Anglo-Saxons and Vikings; Britain and the wider world in Tudor times; and either Victorian Britain or Britain since 1930.

Citizenship - 4b: *to think about the lives of people living in other places and times, and people with different values and customs*

Resources:

Powerpoint display

Images of 'boys' and 'girls' subjects

Examples of Victorian advertisements aimed at boys' and girls' education

Letter writing frames

Introduction:

Ask the children to look at pictures of poor children during Victorian times on the Powerpoint. Ask the children to suggest reasons why poor Victorian boys and girls were often treated the same.

Then show the children pictures of wealthy Victorian boys and girls. Ask the children what they notice. Can they see obvious differences between the education of the boys and girls?

Describe to the children how, in Victorian times, rich and middle-class boys would be sent off to boarding schools like Harrow and Eton, or into the family business. In comparison, girls were often left to be educated in 'accomplishments' – singing, dancing, sketching, reciting and embroidery.

Teacher led activity:

Ask the children to look at two advertisements from Victorian times; one advertising the services of a woman wanting to be a governess, and one advertising a boys' school. Ask them to read the sources with their partners and report back to the class what they have learned from analysing them.

Development:

Paired Activity:

- 1) Explain to the children that they are going to be given pictures of school topics Victorian boys and girls were expected to study. Ask them to sort them into two groups; typical boy's subjects and typical girl's subjects.
- 2) Ask the children to pick up one subject at a time and discuss with their partners whether they would have enjoyed learning it in Victorian times, or whether they would have felt lucky that they weren't expected to! Ask them to talk about the things they would have missed out on, or not been able to do, had they been denied access to a particular subject.

Independent Activity:

Ask the children to use all the information they have learned in the lesson to write a letter to a 'Victorian brother' at boarding school or a 'Victorian sister' at home, telling them about their day. Ask the children to organise their letters into paragraphs. Explain to the children that, as well as using facts in their letters, they also need to write about their feelings and include questions. [Opportunity for Shared Writing]

Differentiation:

G&T – Ask the children to write two letters; one from a girl and one from a boy.

EAL/SEN – Ask the children to use writing frames to help them with their letters.

Plenary:

Ask the children to 'send' their letters to each other and read them.

Ask the children to reflect on the advantages and disadvantages of being a wealthy Victorian boy or girl. Did boys miss out on interesting subjects too?

Explain to the children that a lot of girls from around the world are still denied access to education. How do they feel about that?

Finish the lesson by revealing to the children the life achievements of two female Victorians - Beatrix Potter and Mary Anning. Explain to the children that the women used their initiatives, with the support of their families, to overcome barriers in Victorian society, and educated themselves in subjects normally reserved for men.

Homework/ Extension:

Ask the children to take their letters home and write replies to them, or watch the BBC web clip entitled: 'Watch what it was like to be a governess', and take notes on what they learn.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/primaryhistory/victorian_britain/victorian_schools/teachers_resources.shtml

Possible Follow-Up Lesson:

Ask the children to research charity websites aimed at girls' education, such as the United Nation Girl's Education Initiative site - www.ungei.org, or Send My Sister to School campaign - <http://vimeo.com/channels/sendmyfriend>.