

Victorian Britain

Queen Victoria ruled the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland for more than 63 years. The period of her reign was from 1837 to 1901 and is known as the Victorian Age. During this time the United Kingdom became the largest empire ever! Our Queen ruled a quarter of the World's population and a fifth of earth's land. At this time there were huge developments in science and technology as well as daily life. With this came the demand for work.

Children at Work

For hundreds of years children had worked. But with the increased demand for work during the Victorian era and industrial revolution came more and more demanding roles for children to do. Many were used as cheap labour. Working long hours, children were often treated badly. Children started work as young as four or five years old. A young child could not earn much, but even a few pence would be enough to buy food.

Why did children go to work?

Many Victorian children were poor and worked to help their families. This was not unusual during these times and not seen at all as cruel. You had to work to receive money and people thought work was good for children. The industrial revolution created new jobs, in factories and mines. Many of these jobs were at first done by children, as it was cheaper to pay a child than an adult.

What jobs did children do?

Children worked on farms, in homes as servants, and in factories. Children provided a variety of skills and would do jobs that were as varied as needing to be small and work as a scavenger in a cotton mill to having to push heavy coal trucks along tunnels in coal mines. There were so many different jobs! Boys went to sea, as boy-sailors, and girls went 'into service' as housemaids. In towns and cities, you might have been a chimney sweep or a crossing boy, sweeping the roads clean of horse dung from the horse and carriage. Others worked on the streets, selling things such as flowers, matches and ribbons. Children considered themselves to be lucky if they received an apprenticeship in a trade, the not so lucky ones worked on farms or helped with the spinning. With the development of industry came new jobs, and it was normal to use children for work that adults couldn't do, crawling underneath machinery or sitting in coal mines to open and close the ventilation doors.



Questions

Retrieval:

- a. How long was Queen Victoria's reign? **Circle one:** 78 years 45 years 64 years
- b. Find and copy an organisational feature of an information text.

Vocabulary:

- c. Write a sentence for each of these homophones: rein rain reign

Inference:

- d. Children considered themselves to be lucky if they received an apprenticeship in a trade. Why?