

LIVING IN THE PAST

VICTORIAN CHILDREN AT WORK

Learning outcome: We are learning to understand what life was like for children working during the Victorian era.

Assessment criteria:

As an outcome produce a short piece of writing that describes at least four key points relating to a child's experiences of working life during Victorian times.

National Curriculum links: History:

Key stage 1

The National Curriculum for history aims to ensure that all pupils:

- know and understand the history of these islands as a coherent, chronological narrative, from the earliest times to the present day: how people's lives have shaped this nation and how Britain has influenced and been influenced by the wider world.

Pupils should be taught about:

- events beyond living memory that are significant nationally or globally [for example, the Great Fire Of London, the first aeroplane flight or events commemorated through festivals or anniversaries].
- the lives of significant individuals in the past who have contributed to national and international achievements. Some should be used to compare aspects of life in different periods [for example, Elizabeth I and Queen Victoria, Christopher Columbus and Neil Armstrong, William Caxton and Tim Berners-Lee, Pieter Bruegel the Elder and LS Lowry, Rosa Parks and Emily Davison, Mary Seacole and/or Florence Nightingale and Edith Cavell].
- significant historical events, people and places in their own locality.

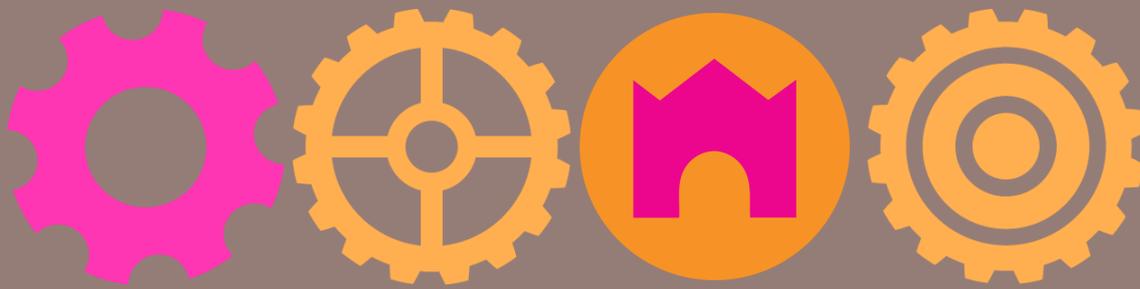
Key stage 2

A study of an aspect or theme in British history that extends pupils' chronological knowledge beyond 1066.

Examples (non-statutory)

- the changing power of monarchs using case studies such as John, Anne and Victoria.
- A significant turning point in British history, for example, the first railways or the Battle of Britain.





LIVING IN THE PAST

VICTORIAN CHILDREN AT WORK

Film synopsis:

This film focuses on what it was like for children working during Queen Victoria's reign. First you are introduced to a young boy called Charlie who works in a local coal mine but dreams of being like his cousin William working on a farm one day. Then you will meet Florence who has worked all her life! First working from home alongside her mother, then at the local cotton mill, before having the chance to work for Mr and Mrs Walker at their beautiful posh house in the countryside.

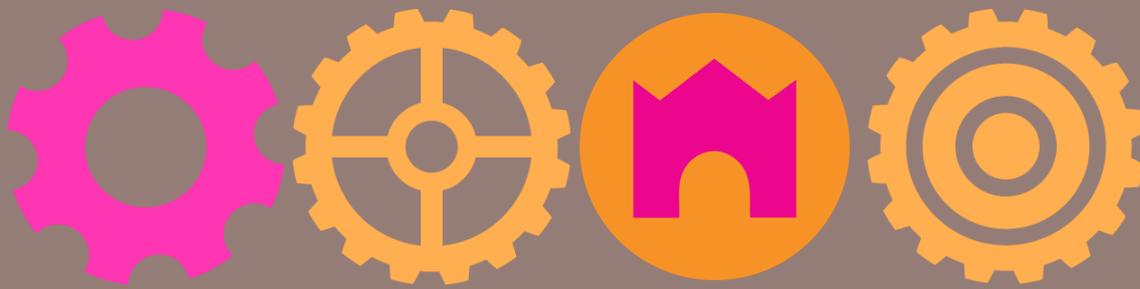
You can watch the film in full or break into two, focusing on Charlie first and then Florence. Discuss and ask questions.

Resources needed: [Living in the Past. Victorian Children at Work. Film, overview.pdf.](#) and accompanying [Q&A.](#) Paper and pencil.

Suggested discussion questions: 'Why did Charlie want to work on a farm?' 'Do you think it is fair that children had to work?' 'What was it like for working children living in Victorian Britain?' 'What would it be like to be underground with no electric light?' 'How does Charlie feel about working in a coal mine?' 'How do you think you would feel working in a coal mine?'

- **Activity:** Write a 'day in a life' diary entry as if you are a child working in a Victorian coal mine. Or maybe in a cotton mill. Describe how long your working day was? What is your job? What about working conditions? Was it dark, cold? Were there any dangers? Try and give as much detail as possible. Can you plan what you are going to write about and then evaluate after.
- **Alternative activity:** Write a letter to a family member or friend and tell them what your day at work has been like? Try and use as much detail as possible.
- **Proof read and read aloud with appropriate intonation to make the meaning clear.**





LIVING IN THE PAST

VICTORIAN CHILDREN AT WORK

Additional resource: Charlie's script:

Me name's Charlie and I'm 6 years old. Me and my friends all go to work. I started when I was 4. Mum and Dad are poor so I can't afford go to school. You have to pay for that. We have to wake up dead early in't morning when it's still dark. Even t'birds haven't woke up yet. I walk to work on me own. I work down t'pit, me. I go down, down, down in the lift with the other miners, and sometimes with one of the pit ponies. My job is to hold up the lamp so the getters can see what they're doing. The getters are big strong men. They smash their pick axes against the coal to break it off the coal face. Then little 'uns like me have to quickly shovel it up and into the trucks. Y'have to be careful though. You don't want to get too close and get a pick axe through yer ear 'ole. I take me lunch with me. Me Mum makes me a pack up. I have to leave me crusts though...that's where I hold me butty and there's coal dust all over my hands. Coal dust gets everywhere. It makes us cough and cough. It's dark and scary in the mines. And you have to listen for the shout 'gas'! We keep a little yellow canary in a cage. If it dies it means there's gas in the mine. That could explode. BANG! If that happens we RUN and get out quick. When I get bigger I want to be a hurrier or a thruster. They push and pull the trucks of coal along the mines. And they get paid more than me. At night I come back up in the lift and walk home on my own in the dark.

Sometimes I dream of working on a farm like my cousin William. He moans and says it's hard work but at least he gets fresh air and sunshine. He has to feed and muck out the pigs which is a smelly job. Sometimes he has to search the fields for big rocks and move them out of the way of the plough. He collects the vegetables in when it's time for the harvest. His favourite job is using the bird scaring rattle. This scares the birds off the land and stops them from eating the seeds that the farmer has planted.

