

Learning from the Victorians KS2



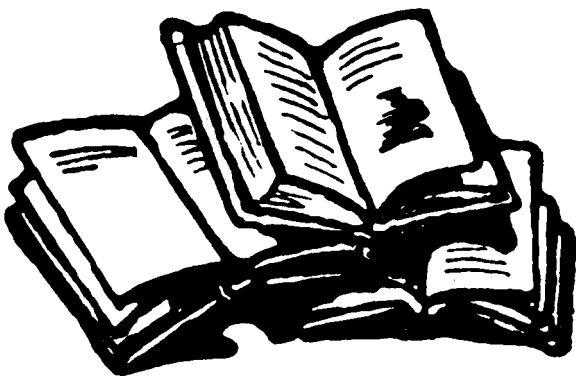
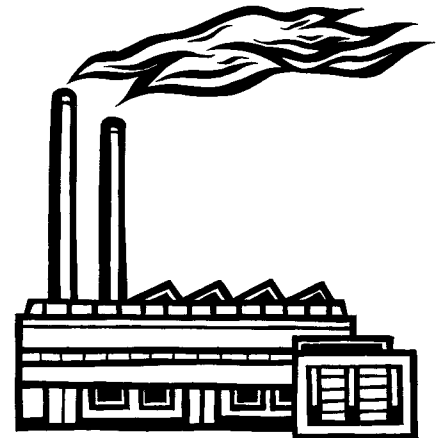
Schools for the rich

Before Victorian times very few children in England and Wales went to school. Rich children might have a private tutor at home, or be sent to boarding school, but poor children often had to work to help feed the family. The only schools for poor children were charity and church schools or 'dame' schools set up by unqualified teachers in their own homes.

In 1807 Samuel Whitbread said that parishes should provide two years of schooling for every child. He thought that this would reduce crime. His idea was not accepted, but in 1833 the government gave the first small grant to help build local church schools. This was just four years before Victoria became queen.

Factories

Steam power soon led to the building of huge factories. Towns and cities became crowded with families from the countryside seeking work. Wages were very low and workers had to live in crumbling houses in narrow, dirty streets. Children were often left to look after themselves while parents worked long hours.



Ragged Schools

Some rich Victorians set up "Ragged Schools" for the very poorest children, especially those living on the streets. Ragged Schools relied on donations and volunteer teachers. They held daytime and evening classes. The schools were often run by Christians, like the famous Dr. Thomas Barnardo. He wanted to rescue children from the terrible conditions they lived in. More than 200 Ragged Schools were set up in Britain.

“Education”

As educated people began to change society and improve it, the Victorians grew more aware of the importance of schools. Schools did not only help people to get jobs, but also to develop and grow. The artist John Ruskin said, “Education... is the leading of human souls to what is best, and making what is best out of them.” He meant that education (going to school) helps us to become the best people we could possibly be. John Ruskin and others said school should be made compulsory.

Changes in the law

In 1870 the government passed the Education Act. This Act said that primary schools must be set up wherever there were no schools already. A group of people were elected to be the “School Board” and to look after each new school. These schools were often called “board schools” and could charge a weekly fee of up to 9 pence.



In 1880 it became law that all primary age children in Britain must go to school. In 1891 the government agreed that there must be enough free schools for everyone. The school-leaving age was raised to twelve in 1899.

- Why did Victorians think education was important? Find at least 3 reasons.
- Why do you think that poor children find it difficult to get an education?
- Do you think education is important in today's world? Give your reasons.
- Many children in other countries today do not get an education. How will this affect their own future and the future of their countries?

Extension activity: On the internet, find out about Lord Shaftesbury or Thomas Barnado and how they helped the Ragged schools. Write a report for your class.