





Childhood

Key Stage 2: History - What was it like for children living in Victorian Britain?

Read the table below to find out about the lives of Victorian Children. Fill in the left hand column to compare your life with theirs.

Rich Boy	Poor Boy	Me
<p>I live in a tall terraced house in a quiet part of town. I have three brothers and three sister. I am the oldest and have my own bedroom. In the morning, the maid lays out my clothes and brings warm water for me to wash. Breakfast is served in the dining room.</p> <p>I go to the local Grammar School where I learn the three Rs- reading, writing, arithmetic. I also study Latin and some history and geography. I have many friends and we walk home together at lunch time.</p>  <p>In the evening, after dinner, I have homework to do and then my toys to play with. I have a whole army of toy soldiers and I picture myself as their general. I hope to be a soldier when I grow up.</p>	<p>I live on the streets sheltering in a doorway overnight. I wake to the sound of passers-by and hope that someone will throw me a coin so that I can buy breakfast.</p> <p>I spend my day looking for work. Sometimes I push barrows for traders, other times I run errands and if I'm lucky I might earn a little for polishing shoes. I'm always on the lookout for scraps of food or things I could sell.</p>  <p>By evening I may have enough money to buy a pie, if not it will have to be some bread. If I have the energy, I play chase with other street children, but often as not I prefer to look for a sheltered place to lie down and sleep. I have no time to think of my future, I just worry about getting through each day.</p>	<p>Where I live. What I do during a typical day. What I eat. What toys I have. How I spend the evening.</p>
<p>I live in a large detached villa at the edge of town. There are five children in my family. My bedroom is beautifully decorated and I have many toys to play with.</p> <p>My governess teaches me how to read and write and do simple sums. I can also play the piano and speak a little French. She says that my art work is excellent.</p>  <p>After dinner, in the evenings I sit in the parlour where Mamma sometimes plays the piano or Papa reads to us. I like to sew and sit very quietly thinking of when I am older and will share a house like this with a rich and handsome husband.</p>	<p>I live in two rooms in a building in the dirtiest part of the town. There are 8 of us, so it is very crowded. Having a bath in our tin tub in the middle of the floor is a real family event. The water can be quite dirty by the time it's my turn.</p>  <p>I spend my day at the mill collecting fluff and things that fall below the machinery. It's very tiring and there are few breaks.</p> <p>In the evening I am glad to eat my broth and sit quietly by the fire playing with the peg doll that mother made me. When I am older Mother says I will get a better job at the mill, perhaps threading shuttles as she does.</p>	

Childhood continued

Set up a debate “in parliament” to argue the case for and against child labour.

Arguments to consider

FOR

Children were essential in the mills because of their size.

Only they could get under the machinery.

Young children cost less to employ

Parents were glad of the money that a child's wage brought.

Managers were expected to bring in the biggest profits that they could.

AGAINST

The hardship for the children was appalling.

There were enough adults to do the work- fathers were often unemployed whilst their children worked

Children need to go to school in order to be able to get better jobs.

Children were often injured at work.



Finish with information about the laws that were passed to help children:

1842 Mines Act

1870 Education Act

1876 Factory Act

1881 Education Act

Children could no longer work underground

Universal system of education for 5-10 year olds.

Children under 10 banned from any work

Compulsory elementary education.