

Victorian School Days

What was it like to go to school
in the Victorian times?

Who were the Victorians?

The Victorians lived over one hundred and fifty years ago. They were called Victorians because they lived during the reign of Queen Victoria (1837 to 1901).

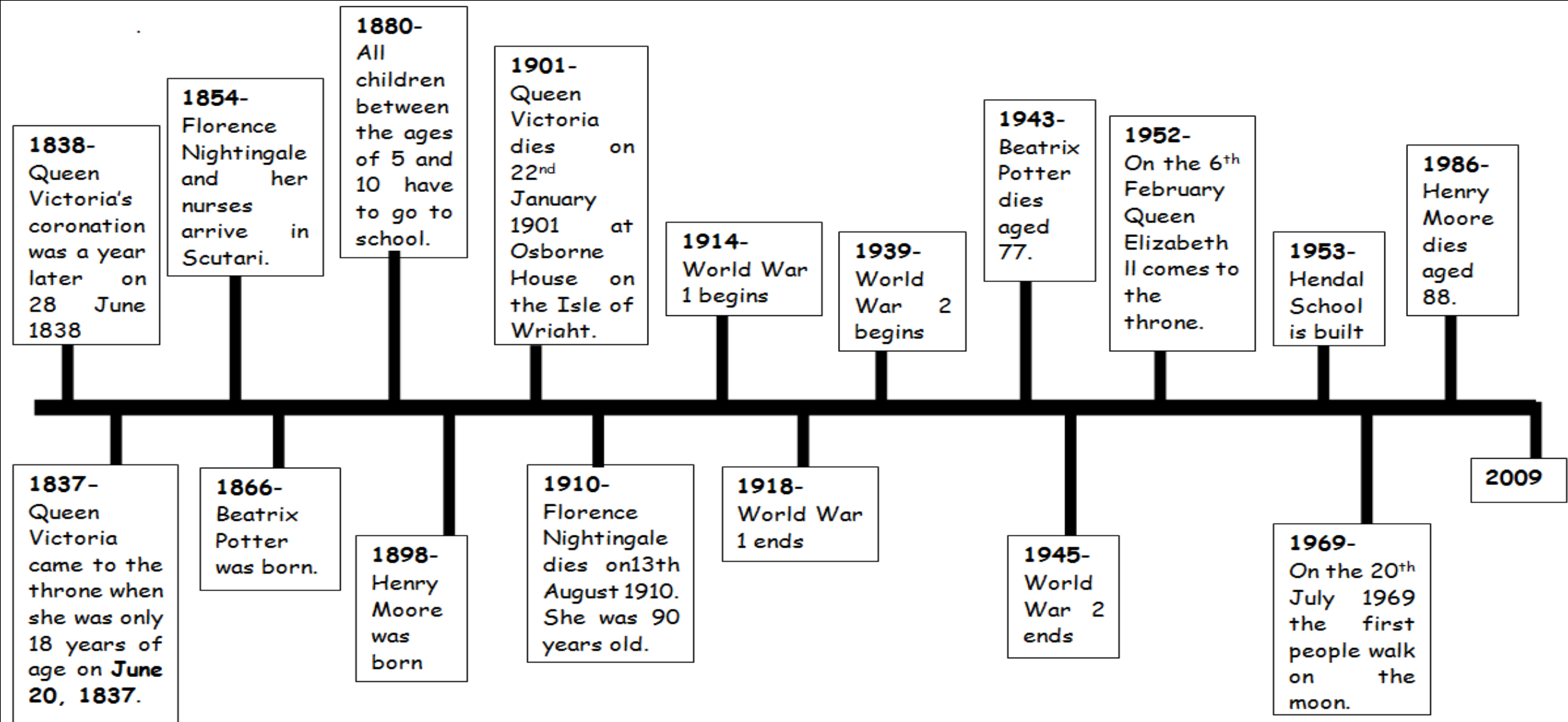


Victorian People



Queen Victoria

Timeline



Victorian school children

Look at what the children are wearing is it similar or different to what you wear to school?



© Norfolk Record Office



Victorian School Children
How are they different to us?



A Victorian School



Children had to pay to go to school. If they didn't bring the money they were turned away.

Who went to school in Victorian times?

In early Victorian England, most children never went to school at all and grew up unable to read or write. Instead they were sent out to work to earn money for their families. Only children whose families had lots of money went to school.

Rich Children

Children from rich families were taught at home by a governess until they were 10 years old. Once a boy turned ten, he went away to Public schools like Eton or Harrow. There were very few schools available for girls, however, until near the end of the Victorian time. Wealthy girls were mostly educated at home.

Where did poor children go to school?

Poor children went to free charity schools or 'Dame' schools (so called because they were run by women) for young children. They also went to **Sunday Schools** which were run by churches. There they learnt bible stories and were taught to read a little.

What did the children learn?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FOmrCi-mh_k

Typical lessons at school included the three Rs - Reading, Writing and, Arithmetic and Dictation.

In addition the children were taught once a week geography, history and singing. Girls were be taught how to sew.

Schools did not teach music or PE in the way that schools do now. Children sometimes did 'drill' in the classroom. Drill was a series of exercises that were done by the side of a desk.

What was it like to go to school in Victorian times?

The day usually began with prayers and religious instruction. Morning lessons ran from 9a.m. to 12p.m. Children often went home for a meal, then returned for afternoon classes from 2p.m. to 5p.m.

What was a Victorian School day like?

- ❖ There could be as many as 70 or 80 pupils in one class, especially in cities.
- ❖ The teachers were very strict.
- ❖ Children were often taught by reading and copying things down, or chanting things till they were perfect.

School Teacher

Children were often scared of their teachers because they were very strict. Children as young as thirteen helped the teacher to control the class. These "pupil teachers" scribbled notes for their lessons in books. They received certificates which helped them qualify as teachers when they were older. In schools before 1850 you might see a single teacher instructing a class of over 100 children with help of pupils called "monitors". The head teacher quickly taught these monitors, some of them as young as nine, who then tried to teach their schoolmates. Salaries were low, and there were more women teaching than men. The pale, lined faces of older teachers told a story. Some taught only because they were too ill to do other jobs. The poor conditions in schools simply made their health even worse. Sometimes, teachers were attacked by angry parents. They shouted that their children should be at work earning money, not wasting time at school. Teachers in rough areas had to learn to box!



School Pupils

After 1870, all children from five to thirteen had to attend school by law. In winter in the countryside, many children faced a teeth chattering walk to school of several miles. A large number didn't turn up. Lessons lasted from 9am to 5pm, with a two hour lunch break. Because classes were so large, pupils all had to do the same thing at the same time. The teacher barked a command, and the children all opened their books. At the second command they began copying sentences from the blackboard. When pupils found their work boring, teachers found their pupils difficult to control.



Punishment

Cane

Teachers handed out regular canings. Schools kept "punishment book" that every teacher would have to write in, and the reasons for the use of the cane would be:

- rude conduct,
- leaving the playground without permission,
 - sulkiness,
 - answering back,
 - missing Sunday prayers,
 - throwing ink pellets
 - being late

Boys were caned across their bottoms, and girls across their hands or bare legs.

Dunce's Cap

Punishment did not end with caning. Students had to stand on a stool at the back of the class, wearing an arm band with DUNCE written on it. The teacher then took a tall, cone-shaped hat decorated with a large "D", and placed it on the boys head. Victorian teachers believed that all children could learn at the same speed, and if some fell behind then they should be punished for not trying hard enough.



Drill

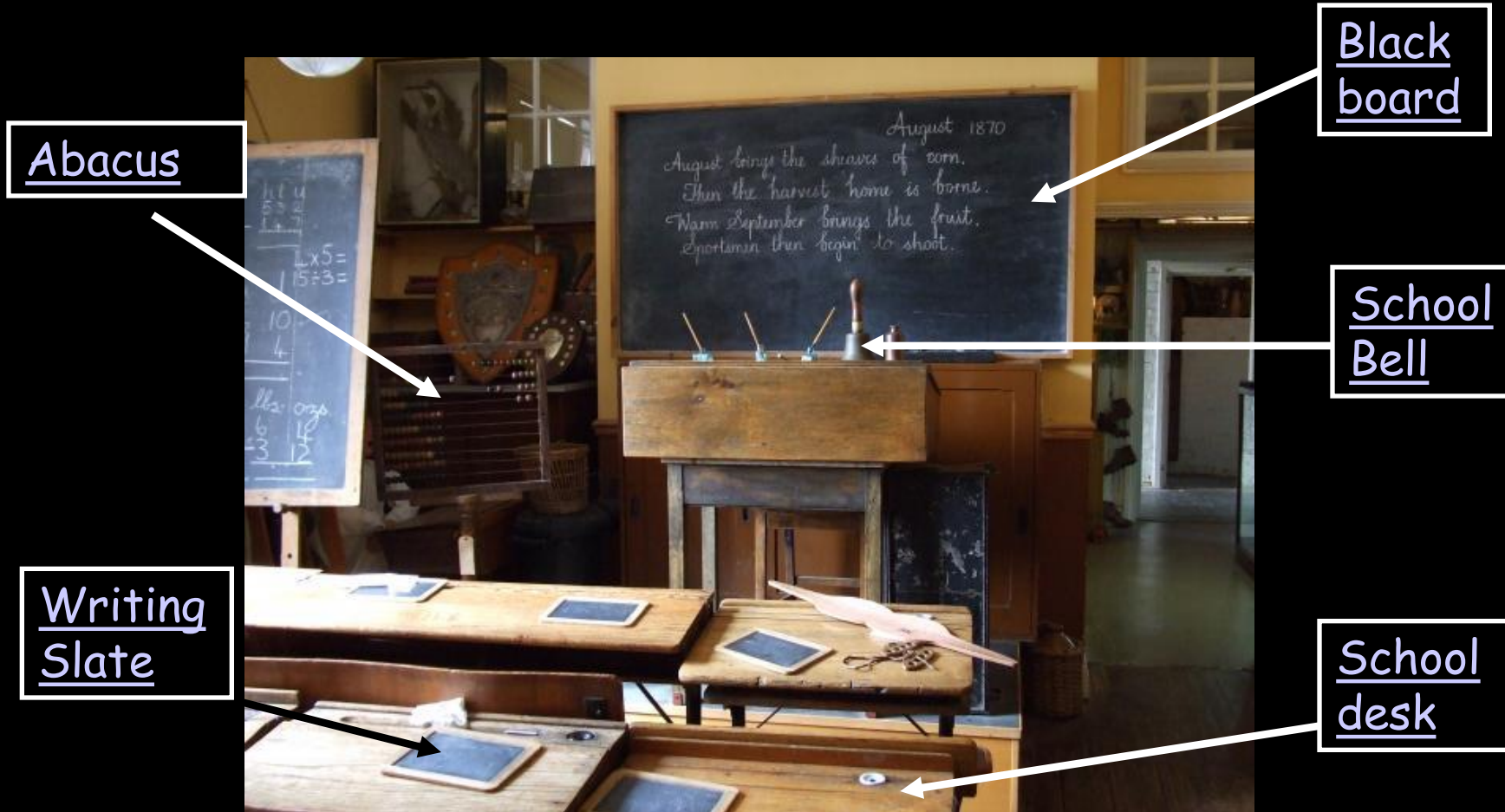
When its time for PE or "drill", a pupil teacher starts playing an out-of-tune piano . The children would jog, stretch and lift weights in time to the awful music. The teacher would ring a heavy , brass bell to announce the end of school and the pupils march out to the playground in perfect time

Playtime

Outside the classroom there would be small yard. Games of blind mans buff, snakes and ladders, hide-and-seek and hopscotch are in full swing.



What was a Victorian Classroom like?



Look at the photo of the Victorian classroom what can you see?
How is it different to our classroom?

What is a writing slate?

Victorian children were taught to write at first with a tray filled with sand. They would copy a letter from the blackboard in to the sand with their finger. All children had to write with their right hand. When they could form the letters the children would write on a slate board. The teacher would check the children's work and the children would wipe the slate clean. This is where we get the saying, 'to wipe the slate clean' from.

As children became older they were taught to write in copperplate handwriting. The children had to copy words and sentences from a copy book. As they used pens which had to be dipped in to ink, it was easy for the ink to splatter on the page. You would be punished if you did this!



What is an abacus?

For maths lessons, children used frames with coloured wooden beads, called an abacus. Children learned how to multiply and divide using this apparatus.



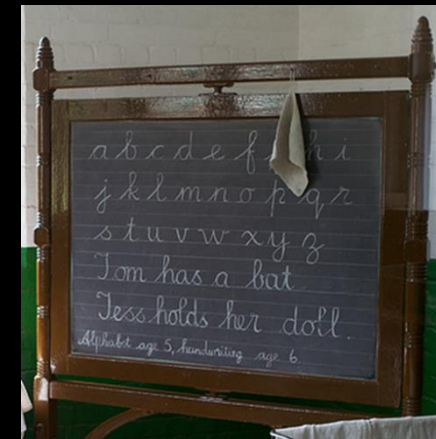
School Bell

A bell would ring at the beginning and end of lessons. The bell would also ring at playtimes.



Black board

The teacher would write the work for each lesson on the board for the children to copy down onto their slate boards or writing books.



School Desk

The children's desks had a seat attached to the desk. Two children would sit together side by side. (Other desks might have three or four children all sitting together.) There are slots on the top of the desk where the children can put their slates. There would also be holes for holding the inkwells. These would be filled in the morning by the ink monitor. There was also a ridge along the top to keep pens and pencils from rolling off the desk. Books were placed on a little shelf under the desk. The teacher's desk was much higher and so was the chair they sat on. This means that they would have a good view of all the children all the time. Sometimes the teacher's desk would have a cupboard at the front for the storage of books.



A Victorian Classroom



Activity 1

Make one list of all the things you can see in the photograph.
Then split your list of things into the two columns : Same as today
Different from today
Top Tip: Use the layout as in activity sheet 'History Similarities
and Differences.....

Look at how the desks are laid out.

Several different lessons could be taught
at the same time in the same room!

Imagine how noisy it must have been!

Look at how high the windows are.

This was so pupils wouldn't be distracted by
looking out of them!

Do you think this was a good way to learn?

Activity 2

How would you design a classroom?

Where would the desks go?

Would you have desks?

Would you have pictures on the walls?

Would you put other things on the
walls?

Where would the teacher sit/stand?

Draw and label a design for a classroom - remember you to
have to give reasons for what you choose to do!

THINK...

In Victorian times, were children told that they could achieve whatever they put their minds to, like we are today?



The current national curriculum:

The school curriculum should develop enjoyment of, and commitment to, learning as a means of encouraging and stimulating the best possible progress and the highest attainment for all pupils. It should build on pupils' strengths, interests and experiences and develop their confidence ...

Questions to help you with the main activity...

Why did children
write on slates?

What subjects
do you learn
today that
Victorian
children did
not?

What kind of
punishment
did children
have?

What were
Victorian
teachers like?

Why do you
think Victorian
children had 2
hours for lunch?

What did children
learn from drill
lessons?

Were girls
treated
differently to
boys? Why?

Activity 3

Research different types of Victorian schools

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=erYwMz5rdW0>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5BvMWUc0yiA>

[HTTPS://VICTORIANCHILDREN.ORG/VICTORIAN-SCHOOLS/](https://victorianchildren.org/victorian-schools/)

**COMPARE THE VICTORIAN SCHOOLS TO
MODERN SCHOOLS**

**TOP TIP: LOOK FOR SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES;
USE PICTURES AND ANNOTATIONS**