

History: How cruel was the Victorian justice system? (Theme: crime and punishment in the Victorian era)

Y6 spring term

National Curriculum subject content:

- ✓ Understand how our historical knowledge is created from a range of sources.
- ✓ Note connections, contrasts and trends over time.
- ✓ Combine overview and depth studies.
- ✓ Devise historically valid questions about change, cause, similarity, difference, and significance.
- ✓ Construct informed responses involving selection and organisation of historical information.

National Curriculum theme:

- ✓ Continue to develop chronology to secure knowledge of history.
- ✓ Note connections, contrasts and trends over time.
- ✓ Develop the appropriate use of historical terms.
- ✓ Develop the appropriate use of historical terms.
- ✓ Understand how knowledge of the past is constructed.



Prisoners in the exercise yard in a Victorian prison

Key Vocabulary:

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|----------------------|---|
| capital punishment | Punishment by death, as ordered by the legal system. |
| compulsory | Having to do something. |
| conviction | A declaration in a court of law that someone is guilty of a criminal offence. |
| corporal punishment | Physical punishment, such as caning or flogging. |
| crime | Actions which break the law. |
| deportation | Being sent to live (and often do hard labour) abroad. Thousands of people were deported to Australia during the Victorian era. |
| deter | To stop someone from doing something. |
| deterrent | Something that stops people doing something. |
| jury | A group of people who have been chosen to listen to all the facts in a trial in a law court to decide if a person is innocent or guilty of a crime. |
| justice | Fairness in the way people are dealt with. |
| juvenile crime | Crimes committed by children. |
| offender | Someone who is guilty of committing a crime. |
| penal colony | A settlement used to exile prisoners and separate them from the general population by placing them in a remote location. |
| pickpocket | Pickpockets took the opportunity to steal money and small goods from people's pockets or bags. Many of these pickpockets were children. |
| policeman's beat | Area a policeman would patrol. |
| prison sentence | The length of time someone is sent to prison for. |
| punish | Inflict a penalty or sanction on someone for committing an offence. |
| reform | Make changes in order to improve something or someone. |
| reformatory school | Youth prisons, introduced in 1854 to deal with child offenders. |
| transportation | Relocation of convicted criminals to a distant place. |
| trial | A trial is a formal meeting in a law court, at which a judge and jury listen to evidence and decide whether a person is guilty of a crime. |
| truncheon | A short, thick stick carried as a weapon by a police officer. |
| rural | Related to the countryside. |
| urban | Related to the city or town. |
| Victorian period/era | 1837 – 1901. The time period when Queen Victoria was on the throne. |
| workhouses | Places set up by the government where poor people with no money could go and be given a bed, food and work. Many had very harsh rules. |

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| Sequence of Learning: | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| Objectives (key knowledge): | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Lesson 1 To place the Victorian era on a timeline. To know how the lives of rich and poor Victorians differed. | Lesson 2 To learn that the British police force was introduced in the Victorian era. | Lesson 3 To learn about the conditions in Victorian prisons. | Lesson 4 To know some of the punishments in the Victorian era including: deportation and hard labour. | Lesson 5 To learn about the conditions in Victorian workhouses. | Lesson 6 To learn about Victorian school punishments. | | | | | | |
| Key events timeline | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1834 Workhouses opened to try to help the poorest people who had no money | 20 th June 1837 Queen Victoria ascended to the throne. She was crowned Queen aged 18 in 1838. Houses of Parliament built. | 1838 Slavery abolished in the British Empire. | 1840 Queen Victoria married Prince Albert | 1842 Children were no longer allowed to work in underground mines. | 1844 The Factory Act stops children working more than 6.5 hours per day. | 1856 Each county got its own police force. | 1861 Prince Albert died of Typhoid. | 1864 Children were no longer allowed to work as chimney sweeps. | 1868 The last public hanging in Britain. The last | 1880 The Education Act made school compulsory for children aged 5-10. | 1901 Queen Victoria died and Edward VII became King. |
| Victorian crime and punishment | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crimes: Theft was very common. In busy towns where there were overcrowded streets, pickpockets took the opportunity to steal money and small goods from people's pockets or bags. Many of these pickpockets were children. After lots of factories had been built in cities, groups of criminals would sometimes steal factory goods that were being stored in warehouses. Criminals would also break into houses to steal valuable items. The most serious crimes usually involved violence, poisoning or murder. Police Force: In 1829, a politician called Sir Robert Peel introduced the first English police force in order to improve public order in London. Over the next ten years, many other areas of the country formed their own police force. Punishment: For the first time in history, prisons became the main form of punishment in this period. They were awful places. Transportation: Many criminals were sent to Australia for hard labour. The law allowing this was eventually changed in 1857. Hard labour was a common punishment. Many Victorians believed that having to work very hard would prevent criminals committing crime in the future. The crank and the treadmill: Prisons often made prisoners do pointless tasks such as turn a crank up to 10,000 times a day. Or walk for hours on giant circular tread mills. In 1854, special youth prisons were introduced to deal with child offenders. These were called 'Reformatory Schools'. Other forms of punishment included fines, hanging or being sent to join the army. | | | | | | | | | | | |