

PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION B

B. Sweated match box labour in Bethnal Green

TEACHERS' NOTES – BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The following information gives the teacher an insight into the working conditions men, women and children dealt with on a daily basis. It focuses on the plight of **Britain's match-girls** which was first brought to the public's attention in **1888**.

Following the strike of Bryant and May's match-girls in East London, **General William Booth**, the founder of **The Salvation Army**, decided to carry out his own investigations into the British match industry. Booth's chief investigator was **Colonel James Barker**, who soon discovered the appalling proof of the General's fears. Barker had seen many match-girls suffering from the effects of severe pain in the jaw, which was a direct result of the use of yellow phosphorus in the manufacture of the match heads. So toxic were the fumes from this chemical that, unknown to the match-girls, the phosphorus was attacking their jaws. Soon the whole side of the face turned green, then black, discharging a foul pus. This painful disease – necrosis of the bone – became known as '**phossy jaw**'. Its only outcome was death.

The factory owners were fully aware of the dangers of using yellow phosphorus but most manufacturers took very little action to remedy complaints. This was due to a fear of a cut in profits and foreign competition.

Additional problems for match-girls:

- In addition to this awful disease which was common in factories, match-girls were subjected to very long hours of labour with little or no breaks. Not only did this cause the girls to be exhausted but also meant that they frequently ate while they were working and so the phosphorus spread from their hands to their teeth.
- As matchbox making required no previous training it figured at the bottom of the pay scale of the industry.
- Factory workers were also expected to handle heavy machinery.
- Poor lighting.

In December 1892, another investigator reported that he had found a home where the husband could only get work at starvation wages. His wife, to earn enough to keep themselves and their two children, worked at match-box making. This method of working at home became known as '**the sweating system**' where unfinished work from factories was handed out to individual workers, or families, to finish. The '**sweater**' who found the unfinished work paid the families a poor wage and was then paid by the manufacturer when they received the finished work. Therefore, the sweater made his profit out of the worker, and not the manufacturer. In the photograph you can see the exhaustion workers would have felt where the whole family was involved in such hard labour. Working with the children's help from six in the morning till ten o'clock at night from Monday morning till Friday night, could earn only 4s 6d.

In 1891, The Salvation Army opened a clean, airy, well-lit factory where harmless red phosphorus was used in the match-making process. Booth called the matches '**Lights in Darkest England**'. Tea making facilities were made available and the 100 workers received decent wages – more than one third above the rate in other factories.

Ten years after the opening of his match factory, Booth closed it, having achieved his original purpose 'to raise the wages of the matchbox makers, to fight against sweating, and to help the poor to help themselves by labour'.

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CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

The following ideas are suggestions on how to use the photographs in the classroom to generate discussion and allow the children to observe, first-hand, a snap shot of the lives of the people they see. At the end of the Activity Resource Sheets you will see a **History Skills Grid and an RE Curriculum Grid** that outlines all the National Curriculum skills that will be covered for each activity.

ACTIVITY 1

Prior to giving the children any background information about these photographs, allow them to work in pairs to generate questions they would ask about what they can see. Use **Resource Sheet 1B** to record their questions. Recording these questions is useful for the children to refer back to when they have gained a better knowledge and understanding of the work of William Booth and The Salvation Army.

Encourage the children to be as specific as they can in their questioning. Guide them to spot details in their observations of the photographs.

For example:

- Does the Father help the rest of the family with this task or is he at work?
- What do the boxes they are making have written on them?
- Do the family eat their meals on this table as well?
- Do the children go to school or is this their full-time job?
- Where will the boxes be taken to once they have finished putting them together?
- Why has the mother got dirty fingernails?

ACTIVITY 2

As in Activity 1 it is helpful if the children have no background knowledge about the photograph yet. There are many questions that the children will ask about the photographs but there may be some questions that you may want to use to guide the children and broaden their thinking. Allow the children to work in pairs or small groups to answer the questions on **Resource Sheet 2B**. Once they have discussed their ideas in these small group settings feed back as a class. It is at this point that you may wish to use the **Teachers' Notes** to answer some of your pupils' questions and to explain to them what the family in the photograph were actually doing.

ACTIVITY 3

Prior to any written work for Activity 3 it would be helpful to allow the children time to read through the '**Phossy Phacts**' booklet either individually or as a class. This will give them further background knowledge about the life of a match-girl called Bessie who was fortunate enough to find employment in William Booth's factory.

Having read the Fact Sheet explain to the children that they will be involved in a debate and each pupil will be given a Debating Card. Each pupil will take part in the debate in the role of the person's name they have on their card. Therefore, if they are given a card with 'Factory Owner' written on it

the child will have to argue the debate from that persons' point of view. Some of the labels may need to be explained, such as the 'sweater'. (see Teachers' Notes) Use **Resource Sheet 3B** to make the cards for your class debate.

Here are some ideas of issues that could be raised during your debate:

- Should factory workers' wages be raised?
- Could less poisonous substances be used to make the match heads? (Remind the children that the harmless red phosphorus that Booth used in his factories meant that matches were more expensive to manufacture.)
- Giving factory workers a set break each day will raise morale and increase productivity. Discuss. (Ensure the children are familiar with the vocabulary 'morale' and 'productivity' prior to the debate.)
- A lighter, more airy and spacious environment would lead to greater productivity. Discuss.

In each of these debate titles many different issues will be raised. Encourage the children to deal with as many different aspects of factory life as possible to give them a broader understanding.

Following this debate, possibly as a different lesson, explain to the children that they are going to all imagine that they are match-girls and that they haven't heard about the new factory that Booth has opened. They decide to write a letter to Booth to ask for his help, explaining the hardships that they face and suggesting possible solutions that Booth could put in place.

Use **Resource Sheet 4B** as a way of introducing this activity to the class. Less able children may find **Resource Sheet 5B** helpful as this gives them a writing template to structure and organise their writing. It would also be helpful to read this template to others in the class as it would give them an idea of the style of writing they may want to adopt. A 'Final Draft' photocopiable, on **Resource Sheet 6B**, is given for children who may need help presenting their neat copy. The 'Technical Vocabulary', found on **Resource Sheet 7B**, is helpful to give the more able as it will keep their writing focussed and lead to a more authentic letter.

ACTIVITY 4

The 'Lights in Darkest England' questions are designed for the children to look closely at the type of advertising that was typical in Booth's day, the language used and the different kinds of lay-out. **Resource Sheet 8B** is a set of questions that will help the children to do this.

ACTIVITY 5

This activity will enable the children to design their own advertisement in the Victorian style alongside a modern advertisement. The children can use **Resource Sheet 9B**.

RESOURCE SHEET 1B

? ? ? ?
? QUESTIONS, QUESTIONS ?
? ? ? ?

- 1 Give the photograph a title.
- 2 Now fill each section with a question about this photograph.



TITLE: _____

LEARNING FROM PHOTOGRAPHS

What do you think the photograph is about?

Why was the photograph taken?

Where do you think the photograph was taken?

When do you think the photograph was taken?

List everything you can see in the photograph.

What can the photograph tell us about life at the time?

What doesn't the photograph tell us about life at the time?

What is similar or different to life today?

Is there anything odd or unusual that stands out?



RESOURCE SHEET 3B

FACTORY OWNER	FACTORY WORKER	FAMILY MEMBER OF A FACTORY WORKER	WORKER FOR BOOTH	MATCH PURCHASER
FACTORY OWNER	FACTORY WORKER	FAMILY MEMBER OF A FACTORY WORKER	WORKER FOR BOOTH	MATCH PURCHASER
FACTORY OWNER	FACTORY WORKER	FAMILY MEMBER OF A FACTORY WORKER	WORKER FOR BOOTH	'SWEATER'
FACTORY OWNER	FACTORY WORKER	FAMILY MEMBER OF A FACTORY WORKER	WORKER FOR BOOTH	'SWEATER'
FACTORY OWNER	FACTORY WORKER	GENERAL BOOTH	WORKER FOR BOOTH	'SWEATER'
FACTORY OWNER	FACTORY WORKER	COLONEL JAMES BARKER	WORKER FOR BOOTH	'SWEATER'

LETTER FROM A MATCH-GIRL

Imagine you are a match-girl employed in a tough factory where you have seen many of your friends die from 'phossy jaw'. The conditions you face each day are abysmal. You hear about a man called William Booth who has helped many other poor and needy people. You don't yet know anything about his plans to open safe, healthy factories and so you decide to write him a letter to tell him how you feel about your workplace and ask him for his help.

In your letter you will need to:

- start with your address and date
- introduce yourself
- explain the problems you have
- suggest solutions that Booth could put into place
- thank him for all the hard work he is doing in the East End
- sign off and don't forget that you have a Victorian girls' name

You have many things to help you write your letter:

Don't forget to read the 'Phossy Phacts' leaflet to give you a background knowledge about working in a match factory.

The writing template may help you structure your letter.

Technical vocabulary is helpful to make your writing sound more authentic.

Once you have decided what to write in your letter to General Booth write up a neat copy on the 'Final Draft' outline provided.

WRITING TEMPLATE

Old Gravel Lane,
Wapping Docks,
London.

Wednesday 13th November 1891

Dear General Booth,

I am writing this letter to you as I know you are a man that listens to what we 'umble folks has to say. I 'eard you preaching outside the 'Blind Beggar' on Friday night and I thought you was absolutely marvellous. (You managed to dodge the rotten tomatoes that were thrown at ya' well enough!)

Anyways, on to matters more serious, General. As you may (or may not) know, I am a match girl at the Bryant and May factory. Well, have I got some shocking stories for you. Us match girls are not having a pleasant time.

(NOW WRITE ABOUT ALL THE PROBLEMS YOU HAVE WITH THE CONDITIONS OF THE WORK PLACE.)

Well, enoughs of me moaning. Is there anyfing you can do to help? Here are a few suggestions of me own.

(NOW EXPLAIN THE WAYS YOU WOULD LIKE WILLIAM BOOTH TO HELP YOU SOLVE YOUR PROBLEMS AT THE FACTORY)

I do hope you can help us out. Thanks for all you do and see you outside the pub on Friday.

Yours sincerely,

Rebecca Agar

FINAL DRAFT

A large sheet of lined paper with a torn, hand-drawn border. The paper is filled with horizontal lines for writing. There are small, hand-drawn sketches of a paperclip on the right side and a piece of tape on the bottom left corner.

TECHNICAL VOCABULARY

phosphorus

phossy jaw

disease

discharge

industry

Bryant & May

health

conditions

match-girls

wages

manufacturers

employees

labour

profit

morale

productivity

LIGHTS IN DARKEST ENGLAND QUESTIONS

Look closely at Poster A to answer these questions.

1. Why do you think William Booth has used so many words and few pictures in these advertisements?

2. Booth named his matches 'Lights in Darkest England'. Give a reason for this.

3. By buying 'Lights in Darkest England' matches, what are you helping to achieve? List 5 areas that will be improved due to you purchasing these matches. For example, it helps to maintain 'healthy factories'.

4. Read this small-print from the advertisement. Explain in your own words what these sentences mean. Write a catchy slogan for each sentence.

- a) "If I don't get it for so much here, I can get it much cheaper there". That is their language inside the shop. Outside they fall into lamentations over the "Sweating System".

MEANING: _____

SLOGAN: _____

- b) If you continue and persist in asking your grocer for them he will be compelled to stock them.

MEANING: _____

SLOGAN: _____

Look closely at Poster B to answer these questions.

1. Copy out all the enlarged words that you see.

2. What main theme do these words and phrases have in common?

3. How would you improve this advert?

Look closely at Poster C to answer these questions.

1. Name all the cities that have been mentioned in this poster.

2. What do you notice about the lay-out?

3. Why has this advert been set out in this way?

4. What do the initials S.A. stand for?

COME AND GET YA' MATCHES

In the Victorian times products would have been advertised just like today. Your task is to design two very different advertisements for your own brand of matches.

1. VICTORIAN DESIGN

First, you need to think about Booth's adverts and the style in which they were written.

REMEMBER: – lots of words
 few pictures
 simple design

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for students to design their own Victorian match advertisements. The box occupies the lower two-thirds of the page.

RESOURCE SHEET 9B

2. MODERN DESIGN

Now think about advertisements you see today and about all the different ways advertising is different to Victorian times.

REMEMBER: – catchy slogans
use of pictures
use of colour





