

PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION C

C. Making ends meet – Family homes in the East End of London

TEACHERS' NOTES – BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The following information gives the teacher an insight into the homes and towns of Victorian working class people in the East End of London with particular reference to health and hygiene and the effects this had on local people.

A Church of England clergyman wrote of the East of London that it was a locality, 'where men and women live in such a state that they seem to have lost everything but the mere outside appearance of humanity. The whole moral being is laid truly waste and the degradation is something unspeakable.'

In the 1860s the East End of London was **squalid** and filthy. Some parts of East London were wealthier areas with shops and houses occupied by tradesmen and people in good employment but this was not common. Here is how one visitor described London in the 1840s: 'The walls (of the houses) are crumbling, door posts and window-frames loose and broken. . . . Heaps of garbage and ashes lie in all directions, and the foul liquids emptied before the doors gather in stinking pools. . . .'

As more and more people moved into the towns to work in factories, they soon became **overcrowded**. Many houses were built, but they were often too close together, so there was not enough fresh air and light. Houses were built in long **terraces** or around square courtyards. Some builders built 'back-to-back' houses. These were cheap houses built in a block. Not only did houses share side walls, but they shared a back wall as well.

The sort of house a working-class family lived in depended on how much **rent** they could afford to pay. Skilled workers could usually afford to live in a four-roomed house (two rooms upstairs and two rooms downstairs). Many unskilled workers could only afford a 'one-up-and-one-down' house.

The poorest families could not afford to rent even the smallest house. They had to live, crammed together, in single rooms wherever they could find them. There were large, old houses in the middle of most towns and cities. These were bought by **landlords** and the large rooms were divided up into much smaller ones for really poor families to rent. Landlords even let out the cellars. Most of these landlords neither knew or cared how their **tenants** lived. There was perhaps one water tap and one **privy** for as many as a hundred people. It did not take long for whole courtyards and streets to become squalid and filthy slums.

The photographs in this part of the collection show a variety of scenes in the home of a typical family living in the East End of London. The pupils will be able to see first hand how health and hygiene were difficult to maintain in such homes with little money coming in.

Due to overcrowding, disease was imminent. Men, women and children usually had body **lice**. These lice spread **typhus fever**. **Measles**, 'flu and **scarlet fever** were often killers. People often had **diarrhoea**. However, the disease which terrified most people was

cholera. In Victorian times Britain was hit by three massive cholera epidemics: in 1848-9, 1853-4 and 1866. Cholera could kill a healthy person in 36 hours, and until the 1860s no one knew how or why. Up to 1865 sewage was emptied directly into the Thames. The 1866 cholera epidemic was caused by contaminated water having been turned into the mains from reservoirs at Old Ford. In one week 573 children under five died; during the summer there were more than 8,000 deaths in East London from cholera and similar complaints. In 1864 Louis Pasteur discovered that **germs** caused disease and that it was not disease that caused germs.

In 1865 The East London Christian Mission, later to become The Salvation Army, was established on a permanent basis. The cholera epidemic of 1866, along with continued unemployment, intensified the distress that families felt. Newspapers were full of appeals for help which William Booth, the founder of The Salvation Army, joined in with. The Mission distributed food and clothing, opened soup kitchens and provided free teas. Maternal societies, which found poor mothers with scarcely a rag of clothing for either themselves or their babies were put into operation.

Booth was eager not to lose sight of his main aim which was to spread the news to people that Jesus cared for them and without loving Him their lives had no purpose. And so a 'Bible woman' would visit the poor and distressed by day and assist in religious meetings in the evening. Early in the year of 1866 William Booth reported:

'We have not passed a week, nay scarcely a day, without marked tokens of the Lord's blessing. Twelve months ago we had only one preaching place and that was unavailable for Sabbath only. Now we have six, and are conducting fifty services indoors and out regularly each week.'

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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 and RE Skills 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 1C** 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 Victorian times and the work of 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:

- What toys do the children play with?
- What do they use to keep the floors clean?
- What is the boy by the fire fiddling with?
- What have they used at the windows, instead of curtains?

ACTIVITY 2

As in activity 1 it is helpful if the children have no background 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 2C**. 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

This activity requires the children to carefully read a variety of documents that reveal information about different classes in Victorian society. These documents can be found on **Resource Sheet 3C**. It helps children understand a little more about the social diversity in

British society in the Victorian period. Having read the documents the children need to match them to the appropriate children they see in the photographs on **Resource Sheet 4C**, recording the corresponding letters in the boxes provided.

The children will then use this information, as well as the evidence they see in the photographs, to write about how the children in the pictures might feel about life in Victorian times, relating particularly to home life, health and hygiene. A discussion following this activity would be to ask the children which homes they would have preferred to live in and why.

ACTIVITY 4

This activity will help children with writing activities based on Victorian health and hygiene. It introduces them to technical vocabulary linked with Victorian sanitation and is designed for them to become familiar with these words that they may later read or use in their own writing.

The word game can be used as a simple matching activity and the definitions of the Victorian words kept in a personal glossary. Alternatively, the cards can be cut out and used as a matching game where the word cards are placed downwards, spread out, on the table and definition cards are placed downwards on the table. The children take it in turns to pick a word and definition card. If they match they can keep them and if they don't they place them back on the table. **Resource Sheet 5C** gives the word and definition cards.

ACTIVITY 5

Resource Sheet 6C gives the children the opportunity to identify for themselves where there were sanitary problems in Victorian times. This activity is useful when completed in pairs to find as many health hazards as possible.

Following the close observation of this drawing the children will be able to show their understanding of the differences you would see in a Victorian street compared to a street nowadays by drawing their own street scenes. **Resource Sheet 7C** is helpful for the children to complete their street scenes.

ACTIVITY 6

The activity on **Resource Sheet 8C** enables the children to make comparisons between health and hygiene in Victorian times compared to now. Prior to any written recording of ideas it would be helpful for the children to brainstorm in small groups how they think the health and hygiene in Britain's streets and homes have changed. This activity builds upon the documents the children have read, the pictures they've observed as well as any of their own research they have completed.

RESOURCE SHEET 1C

? ? ?
? QUESTIONS, QUESTIONS ?
? ? ?

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



TITLE: _____

Large empty rectangular area for writing questions, divided into several sections by lines radiating from the central photograph.

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?



REVEALING DOCUMENTS

Read these documents. Think very carefully about the different conditions that are described in each excerpt.

A

The foul, stinking ditch water is often used by women who collect it with buckets, attached by ropes to the backs of their houses. On the banks of the ditches you can see (and smell!) a mixture of mud and filth, together with offal (parts of animals that are not used) and carrion (the dead flesh from animals). This water is then used for any number of reasons including

C
The carpets in the entrance hall are of utmost importance to the appearance of a house as they will give the impression of the house to visitors entering it. They, indeed, are the background of the picture.

ADVICE ON HOW TO FURNISH A HOME, 1860

E

In wealthy homes:

- The servants and children had bedrooms at the top of the house. A nanny looked after the children.
- The parents had a bedroom on the first floor. Sometimes there was also a sitting room on the first floor that was used when visitors came to call. The ladies all dressed up to visit each other. They came to have tea and talk.
- The dining room and study were on the ground floor.
- The kitchen was at the back of the house. Often it was small and dark. The servants worked there.

G

One house 'was split into six sections where 26 people lived in cramped conditions. Each room contained only three small beds with two people sharing each one. Light from a small window gave the room a dim glow and barely filled the miserable place. The broken panes of glass at the window gave little ventilation for the many that shared the room.'

Report based on Victorian homes, 1842

B

Their house was built in the 'suburbs' - a cleaner district further out from the grimy city centres. Such a large house would be built where there was space and clean air. As well as the family there would be at least six servants living there too.

D

FOR SALE

This house is to be sold as a 16-roomed property at the cost of £1200 – £1800. On surveying the large property, one can witness the benefits of good-sized dining and drawing rooms, with eight bedrooms as well as two servants' rooms in the roof... The kitchens are underground. This is a quite sufficient property for an ordinary family.

A typical advertisement for the sale of a suburban house, 1857

F

Small children could be seen playing with the mud in the dirty low passage that looked like a house door. This led from the street through the first house to a square court where women were collecting water from the stand pipes.

A visit to one of the poorer districts in the East of London, 1840

H

In 1864, a local newspaper, the Eastern Post, recorded:

"Five structures in Edward Street, Mile End Old Town, were homes of pestilence. In one of these in one room a man, his wife, and five children slept. The water supply came from a rotten butt with filth at the bottom. Other abominations were an untrapped and filthy closet, a broken pavement with pools of stagnant water and soapsuds, and an untrapped gully down which night-soil and the refuse from a nearby gipsy encampment were thrown and from which sewer gas escaped unchecked."

WORLDS APART

Now you know more about living conditions for the rich and the poor. You may also have some idea about how the children in the pictures you can see on this page felt about the conditions they lived in.

- 1) Fill in the boxes next to each picture to match the letter of the document with the type of conditions each child would be used to.
- 2) Now imagine you are the children in the pictures and write about your feelings about where you live. You have been given a sentence to start you off.

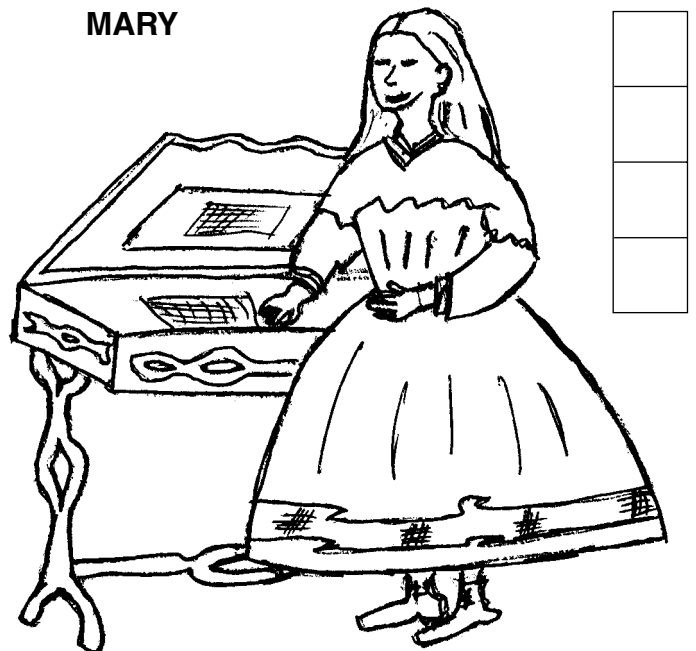
HARRY



My name's Harry and I live in Hackney. Let me tell you about where I live. I share my house with my Mum, Dad, 4 brothers and 5 sisters. They're all younger than me so I have to look after them a lot of the time.

Hello, I'm Mary and I'm going to tell you a little something about my home. I live in the suburbs of London in Kent. I have a large semi-detached house

MARY



Victorian Word Game

courts	space enclosed by walls or buildings, number of houses enclosing a yard
privy	outside lavatory, often serving several households
slum	overcrowded, squalid and poor district or house in city
tenant	person who rents land or house from landlord
rent	payment to owner or landlord for use of their land or premises
terraced house	row of houses of uniform style built in one block
cholera	infectious bacterial disease often leading to death
sewage pipes	pipe to take human waste away from houses

A COURT FOR KING CHOLERA

Look carefully at this drawing of a street scene in Victorian Times. Why do you think the drawing is entitled 'A court for King Cholera'?



Now list all the health hazards you can spot in this street scene.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____
- 6) _____
- 7) _____
- 8) _____
- 9) _____
- 10) _____
- 11) _____
- 12) _____

RESOURCE SHEET 7C

STREET SCENES – NOW AND THEN

VICTORIAN TIMES

NOW

HEALTH AND HYGIENE IN VICTORIAN TIMES

Use the documents from Resource Sheet 3C, the picture from Resource Sheet 5C as well as your own research to complete this chart about the differences and similarities between the health and hygiene we have now compared to Victorian times.

VICTORIAN STREETS AND HOMES	MODERN STREETS AND HOMES
<p>Similarities</p> <p>In Victorian times there were courts and alleys and terraced houses were built.</p> <p>Differences</p> <p>One home was often occupied by many different families so many people were squashed into one home.</p>	<p>We still have alleys and terraced houses remaining from the Victorian period.</p> <p>Now we usually have homes where only one family live in their own home.</p>



