

Victorian School Life

Life in a Victorian school was very different from today. There were no laptops, tablets or films to watch and teachers were much stricter.

School

To be begin with, only some children went to school in Victorian times. Boys from rich families went to private schools, while girls were often taught at home. Some charities and churches provided free schools for poor children but the classrooms were often really big – sometimes with more than 100 pupils per class.

In 1880, a law was passed saying that every child between the ages of five and ten had to go to school.

Lessons

Pupils called male teachers, 'Sir' and female teachers, 'Madam' or 'Miss'. A lot of the lessons involved listening to the teacher and copying things down from the blackboard.

Like today, reading, writing and maths were very important. Instead of learning in a fun way, children often had to memorise things. They would chant the times tables, for example, until they knew them off by heart.

Days were long and usually lasted until 5:00 pm. Here is an example of a Victorian school day:

Time	Lesson
9:00 - 9:10	prayers
9:10 - 10:10	scripture (Bible work)
10:10 - 11:10	arithmetic (maths)
11:10 - 11:30	recreation (play time)
11:30 - 12:00	writing
12:00 - 2:00	lunch (pupils usually went home)
2:00 - 2:45	drill (PE)
2:45 - 3:30	woodwork (boys) cooking (girls)
3:30 - 4:30	science
4:30 - 5:00	reading

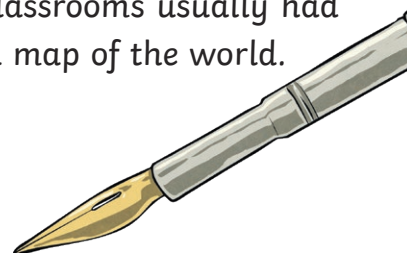
Equipment

When writing, pupils often used something sharp to scratch letters onto a flat piece of rock, called slate. It was a bit like a whiteboard as the slate could be wiped clean and used again. Older children may have been given paper and a special pen that was dipped into ink. The ink was held in little pots in the desk called inkwells. They were refilled each morning.

Victorian classrooms had windows high up so children couldn't look outside. This was so they could concentrate on their work. The classrooms usually had an abacus (beads on a wire to help with counting) and a map of the world.

Punishment

Here's what might happen if you did something wrong in a Victorian school:



Action	Possible Punishment
telling lies, skipping school, being rude or being lazy	the cane (This is a stick that the teacher would hit the pupil with.)
not understanding	dunce's hat (The teacher made the pupil wear a hat with the word 'dunce', meaning stupid, on it. The dunce had to stand in the corner of the room.)



Other Punishments

Children might have to do 'lines' where they copied the same sentence over and over again (perhaps 100 times). In some schools, pupils who were really naughty were beaten with a leather strap, or hung from the ceiling in a basket.

Would you like to have gone to school in Victorian times?