

School and education in the Victorian era

The school in the Victorian era is completely different from today's school. Not only there is a difference between the eras there were also big differences among the Victorian schools: The education of rich and poor children was very different. Rich people could afford a lot of treats like holidays, fancy clothes, telephones after they had been invented and comfortable, safe houses. Often they owned a company for good income. Poor families had to work a lot. They didn't get paid fair or very much even if they worked hard. Even the professions were different from today.

At the beginning of the era only children from the middle class and children from the upper class could go to school. When time passed (in 1880) queen Victoria decided to change things so she took the decision that school should become mandatory and all children should attend school until they became 10 years old. In 1889 they had to go to school until they turned 12 and later (in 1911) the school pence fee was abolished and school was free.

What did the poor children do before they were allowed to go to school. They went to work in factories, workhouses and mines to earn money for their family so they could afford food. Before the school became free poor children went to free schools which were run by dames. At school reading, writing, arithmetic, religion and dictation were taught. In addition once a week they learned geography, history and singing. They also had PE classes. Something different to now is that only girls learned sewing.

The school time in the Victorian era is quite similar to now. It's from 9am-5pm including 2 hours lunch break. The school does look different including the equipment. In the Victorian era they used slate and chalks to write down things. A piece of sponge or a rag from home was used to clean the slate. Even a sleeve could act as a cleaner. The teachers had a blackboard and an easel that took the top spot. There were 70 pupils in a classroom at least, especially in cities. The school desks were bolted to the floor in rows facing front, there were high windows and no electricity. The teachers were very strict and the children were often taught by reading, copying things down or chatting things until they were perfect. They got punished very often even for small mistakes like shouting, complaining, interrupting or disagreeing. They got sent to a corner to sit there for the entire lesson or they had to wear a dunce hat. Sometimes they had to wear a back straightener.

