

Oasis Academy English Department

KS3 Victorian London and Research Project

Year 8

With this booklet we aim to:

- ✓ Broaden your knowledge of and interest with Victorian England and Charles Dickens.
- ✓ Give you a research project that you will be interested in and that will further your contextual knowledge that is useful for English.

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The Upper Class could get away with anything (it seemed).

Now I'm not telling you that all of the upper class were criminals; I'm just saying, they could easily get away with it AND some did!

The Victorians were overwhelmingly Christian, and the Church governed and was in control of many aspects of their lives. Victorians were expected to follow the rules laid out in the Bible, and if they didn't they would be judged accordingly. **Many held the belief that sins like sex before marriage, murder, and even theft would send you to hell.** Despite the appearance of a society that followed the rules and was 'good' and 'proper,' **under the surface many were living double lives. Under the surface, it was a corrupt and dishonest society. Drug taking, violent crime, prostitution, adultery (cheating on your wife/partner) all went on but were hidden, making the rich who made claimed to be living Christian lives, hypocrites (doing the opposite of what you claim to be doing).** Many married men had mistresses (other women) and some paid for prostitutes despite this being against the teachings of the Bible.

The Victorian era was described by the British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli as 'two nations' – because **the divide between rich and poor was so large.** Although there were increasingly rich and prosperous members of society life for the poor was difficult.

The poor suffered living with brutal factory conditions, low wages, and crowded cities rife with crime. During this time was the Jack the Ripper murders which is an example of some of the crime occurring on the streets of Victorian London.



A composite graphic featuring a central portrait of a man with a bruise on his face. Surrounding the portrait are several empty thought bubbles and one speech bubble containing text. The speech bubble text reads: "I'm a corrupt Victorian 'gentlemen'. In my speech bubbles, using the information from above, list things we know about the corrupt gentlemen of Victorian London." The thought bubbles are intended for students to write their responses to the prompt.

Dickens - A Theatrical Performer

Dickens was extraordinary in many ways: in the richness of his imagination, in his passionate and practical commitment to social justice, and in his vast popularity – but he is quite unique among novelists in his career as a public performer of his own works. There had been novelists who had read their works publicly, but none who had performed them as Dickens did, with full theatrical brilliance. It is also true that Dickens' novels, more than any that had preceded them, were uniquely suited to being performed out loud: they were almost like scripts with witty dialogue and vivid narrative voices. It is almost as if they had been written with performance in mind. In fact, we know from his daughter that when he was at his desk writing, he would often speak the characters' words out loud, and run to the mirror to check the expressions on his face. Dickens was, in fact, the writer as actor. He was a performer from the very beginning. As a very little boy, in Chatham, where he lived till he was 11 years old, he was renowned for his recitations, much encouraged his father, who would set him up on a table so his little audience could get the full benefit.

The public readings of his novels commenced in 1853 when, in Birmingham, he read the whole of A Christmas Carol to a large crowd of people. It was an incredible success and Dickens was immediately excited by the idea of doing other readings. Primarily, Dickens performed these readings for charity; however, he soon started to do them for money and completed huge tours of the British Isles and America. These readings were like rock concerts. People would, quite literally in one case, kill for a ticket...

The readings were the great theatrical sensation of the day, both in Britain and in the United States of America. He staged them very carefully, building up the audience's anticipation until he finally made his entrance, to ecstatic acclaim he was not only the most famous author of his day, he was the most famous man in the world during his lifetime, and his readers loved him deeply. When he took his place at the reading desk he had designed, his face framed by gaslight, the audience fell silent; his command was absolute. Not only was he a superb performer, in both tragic and comic sequences, moving the audience alternately to screams of laughter and deep sobs, but his connection with his listeners – who adored him, feeling, as they had always done, that he spoke for them – was deeply intense, the applause at the end thunderous and never-ending. Dickens became addicted to the experience, pushing himself on to give more and more readings despite ill health and flagging energy; he toured Britain incessantly, and eventually, though he could scarcely walk, the United States of America. When he was at his lowest ebb, physically and mentally, he added a new sequence, the character of Nancy from the last chapter of *Oliver Twist*, which he rendered with such brutal realism that people fainted; he seemed possessed by the characters and the story, now thuggish as Bill Sikes, now helplessly vulnerable as Nancy, pleading with God for forgiveness. It is no exaggeration to say that in the end the readings killed Dickens. However, the personal contact he had by performing directly to his readers was a unique phenomenon - Never had there been anything like it before in actor or novelist - and it bound him closer to his readers. To Dickens, his relationships with his readers was profound; he always declared that it was the most important love affair of his life: he said it was "personally affectionate like no other".



Admission ticket for a reading by Charles Dickens, no date.



An illustration of Dickens reading in 1870

SUMMARISE:

In the space below, summarise what you have read. Ensure you have considered the relationship between Dickens and his readers:

IDENTIFY

Identify (by highlighting or ticking) the four **true** statements below:

- A) Dickens felt that the relationship he had with his reader was the most important in his life.
- B) Dickens' first public reading was not as successful as he had hoped.
- C) Dickens had a writing desk made for him.
- D) Through his readings, Dickens was able to provoke emotional responses from his readers.
- E) Dickens was the first writer to perform public readings of written novels.
- F) Dickens immediately postponed his theatrical readings after he fell ill.
- G) Dickens was a renowned writer, and performer, during his lifetime.
- H) Dickens refused to perform any *Oliver Twist* as he felt no emotional connection to the book.

DEFINE & TRANSFORM:

Define the highlighted words in the extract:

- 1) _____ definition: _____
- 2) _____ definition: _____
- 3) _____ definition: _____
- 4) _____ definition: _____

Now write a few sentences containing **all four** of these words. Try to write something about *Oliver Twist* if you can:

The Industrial Revolution

OVERVIEW OF THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

HISTORY CRUNCH www.historycrunch.com/industrial-revolution/

GROWTH of CAPITALISM
Introduced by Adam Smith, it allowed entrepreneurs to establish businesses.

AGRICULTURAL REVOLUTION
Led to increased food production which caused populations (and workforces) to grow.

CAUSES

COAL MINING
Necessary to power the new machinery of industrialization.

EUROPEAN IMPERIALISM
Helped countries (such as England) to bring in raw materials for the industrial process.

APPROXIMATELY 1750 to 1850

ENGLAND FIRST SPREAD to USA

BEFORE the INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

COTTAGE INDUSTRY
Production was done on a small scale in people's homes. Slow and inefficient but goods were unique and hand-crafted.

DURING the INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

FACTORY SYSTEM
Production was done on a large scale in centralized factories. Fast and led to mass-produced goods.

1. What is Capitalism?

2. What 4 things caused the industrial revolution?

3. When was the industrial revolution?

4. Where did the Industrial Revolution begin?

5. What did we do before the Industrial revolution?

6. What did we do during the industrial revolution?

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EDMUND CARTWRIGHT
Built the first power loom in 1785, which mechanized the weaving process of the textile industry.

TEXTILE INDUSTRY
Involved the creation of cloth and clothing in large factories. New inventions in the textile industry sped up production.

CONDITIONS of the WORKING-CLASS

- DANGEROUS WORK CONDITIONS**
- LONG HOURS OF WORK**
- POOR LIVING CONDITIONS**
- LOW-PAYING JOBS**

AVERAGE WEEKLY PAY IN ENGLAND

MEN	10 Shillings
WOMEN	5 Shillings
CHILDREN	1 Shilling

CHILD LABOR
Boys and girls as young as 5 years old worked in factories and mines.
Pay for the working class was so low, that most families needed their children to work and contribute to the costs of daily life.

IMPACTS

- RIGHTS FOR WORKERS
- CHILD LABOR LAWS
- URBANIZATION
- BIRTH OF SOCIALISM
- NEW INVENTIONS
- LABOR UNIONS

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7. Who built the first power loom?

8. When was this built?

9. What was the textile industry?

10. Tell me 4 conditions for the working class.

1.

2.

3.

4.

Create your Poster

