Hall Place Teachers Notes
Home Life in Victorian Britain (washday)

Suitable for ages and abilities from Reception to KS2.

Topics covered What were homes like a long time ago?
What was it like for children living in Victorian Britain?

Life in the Victorian period was very different to modern times. This session aims to help children understand these differences. You will be met by a member of staff dressed as a Victorian maid or we will dress one of the adults in your group.

Hall Place is a large house and would have had many servants. Each servant had a different job, as we discuss these, members of your class will be assigned a servant. Who shares similar characteristics to the servant or can see themselves doing those jobs?

Giving the children in the class a servant's job is a great way to start a discussion about how different lives were in Victorian times. This discussion will also include objects from our handling collection and archive photographs. From the butler and housekeeper to the scullery maid and stable lad, we will look at who gets to empty the smelly chamber pots, who pours the expensive tea, who carries the lady's shopping and who scrubs the dirty washing.

Today we use a washing machine to do all the laundry, but in Victorian times washing was done by hand, taking an entire day and lots of equipment. The whole class will experience just how much hard work it really was by getting their own hands wet and soapy. They will be shown how to use a washboard, tin barrel, washday dolly and mangle.

Children will be sat at four tables, each with a collection of objects. These objects were all used in Victorian times to do the housework.

Whilst small groups of children are tasked with the washing, the rest of the class will need to complete the student's on-site activity sheet which links to the objects. You will find this sheet on the Hall Place education resources webpage, and will need to print off one for each child in your class. https://www.hallplace.org.uk/taught-sessions/

Learning outcomes

- Personal link with the past by exploring objects and archive images associated with Victorian Homes and Hall Place during this time.
- Developing an understanding of key historical concepts like continuity and change connected with technology, people's roles and the similarities and differences between living in the past and today.

- To better understand why things were done differently in the past.
- To explore some the different pieces of equipment common in Victorian Homes and what they were used for and their names.
- To experience role play to discover how hard washing clothes was for the Victorians, completing the washing in a sequence of the key processes.
- To explore the different roles of servants in a large house like Hall Place.
- Using the self-led trail to study how the outside of buildings can give you clues as to their use, place the knowledge gained in the taught session into the physical context of the site at Hall Place.
- Draw conclusions about the Victorian period, or the past.
- How life has changed in the Bexley locality and what it was like to live in Hall Place & Bexley in the past.

Activities

- Discuss the sorts of equipment used to clean a house in Victorian times, how they were used and who used them.
- To look at the roles of servants at a large house such as Hall Place
- To choose a piece of equipment to sketch – using observational skills.
- To id different pieces of equipment and label them.
- Washing a piece of cloth using all the laundry equipment and processes to see how it worked, how laborious the job was, and all the elements required.

Evaluation

- Interaction with objects – using an object to show understanding of what it is made from & what it was made for.
- Discussion and questions between the session leader and members of the group. Students answering questions to check their comprehension.
- Enacting roleplay to show understanding such as completing the washing in sequence of key processes.
- Showing students understanding of roles in the past by assigning those roles to each other or themselves based on key personality characteristics or job description.
- Using and building upon the knowledge obtained in the taught session to help them with the self-led trail. Being able to link specific locations with people from the past showing an understanding of their roles and jobs.

Pre & post visit activities

Have you seen our loans box service? We have a Victorian Homes box, or if you wish to widen your discovery of the Victorian era, there is also a Victorian Schools box and a Toys box. Visit the Loans Box page on our website to find out more.

Post visit activity – can you design your own housework tool for the future? What would it do? How would it do it? What would it look like?

Background History

Hall Place in Victorian Times

During the reign of Queen Victoria (1837-1901) Hall Place was let to tenants as a private home. In the late 17th Century, the house became a boarding school for boys, and it remained so for most of the Victorian era. We know some things about life at Hall Place during its time from surviving historical documents. For example:

In 1839 it was home to 80 boys, the headmaster and his family, 5 teachers and several servants. The headmaster was a gentleman called John James Barton who regularly sent school reports to parents.

The hours were long for the pupils, staff and servants with some seasonal variation. In the summer months the boys were woken at 6.00am. However, by 6.15 everyone would be gathered in the large schoolroom (presumably the Great Hall) ready to listen to scripture followed by prayers.

The Victorians considered cleanliness to be a virtue and so the boys were given ten minutes for washing. Should the boys be found to be unclean they were fined accordingly!

At 11.00am the boys were all given a break outside for a quarter of an hour and whilst they exercised, windows and doors were opened to refresh the classrooms.

The lessons which all pupils received on a weekly basis were - English grammar and composition, Greek or German, Latin, French, mathematics or arithmetic, globes, geography and maps, orthography (grammar and spelling) and writing, readings in history and poetry, lessons on objects and scriptures. Additional studies of music, drawing and singing were also provided.

The boys were given Wednesdays and Saturdays off, however, they were expected to devote time to subjects such as chemistry, dancing, drill (P.E.), elocution (speaking properly) and music.

In October 1849, John Barton decided to relocate the school to Brighton and placed the contents of the house with the auctioneer Mr J. Callow. The auction catalogue lists all the furniture including ‘a grand pianoforte, brewing utensils, a stack of meadow hay, a pony, two fat hogs and a cow!’

After the school moved out, Maitland Dashwood (the owner of Hall Place) set about making alterations and renovations. Once complete it was re-let as a private house to several rich tenants including Emile d’Erlanger who was a founder member of the Channel Tunnel Scheme.