

The Victorians and their confusing clothes!

The Victorian period is named after Queen Victoria. Victoria was queen from 1837 until 1901, that means she was on the throne for almost 70 years!

In the Victorian period the clothes people wore were **revolutionised**.



A **revolution** is when there is a big change.



Take a look at the two pictures below. One is from before Queen Victoria came to the throne, the other is from after. What has changed? Which one outfit would you rather wear?

Before



After



Why did fashion change so much?

When Queen Victoria became queen most people were farmers. They spun wool and cotton by hand before making it into cloth. This took a long time!



During the Industrial Revolution people started inventing machines to do jobs faster, including making cloth. Huge amounts of material could now be made very quickly and it was a lot cheaper to buy!



The Industrial Revolution meant that there were suddenly lots more jobs available. People from the country started moving to the cities and some of them became very rich. These people were called the middle classes.



As the middle classes grew there were lots more people who could afford nice clothes. With so many people buying new clothes, designers started experimenting with style and material and fashions changed fast!



Not everyone was so lucky... Lots of men, women and children worked in terrible conditions to make material for these outfits.



Fashion Detectives

Nowadays we have clothes that are easy put to on and comfortable to wear. The clothes the Victorians wore were incredibly complicated, with lots of different layers, buttons and accessories.



You might be wondering why the Victorians chose to wear such uncomfortable clothes. They did it to show that they were rich and didn't have to go to work!

Have you ever noticed how Victorian dresses poof out at the bottom? This is because they had a metal cage under their skirt!

Their skirts were so long and heavy that they had to have a special device, called a porte-jupe, to lift their skirt off the floor when it was muddy!



Here are some more more weird and wonderful items from the Victorian wardrobe. Can you guess what they are?



This is what the items were actually used for. How close were your guesses?



This is a button hook. It was used to fasten long rows of tiny buttons. Women used long ones for their boots because they couldn't bend over in their corsets to reach their shoes!



These are curling tongs. They were heated in the fire and used to wave hair – just like today. In the 1880's the fashion was for a crimped fringe. From 1896 waved hair was brushed back high from the forehead with a bun.



This is a picture of spats. Men wore these over their shoes to protect the bottom of their trousers.

Victorian must-haves

There were some items that a Victorian man or woman could not be without.



Look at the picture and read the description to see if you can work out what each of these items was.



G _ _ _ _ _

Women were expected to wear these all the time, even when they were inside! There was no central heating in Victorian houses, so at least it kept their hands warm!



F _ _

This was used by women to keep cool during balls and gatherings. It could also be used to send secret messages!



H _ _ _ _ _

People would carry two of these, one to blow their nose on (a blow-er), and one to show off to their friends (a show-er).

Historic Hats!

The most important piece of clothing was a hat. Both men and women would not be seen outside without one. Men wore top hats, which were tall and black.



Women had wide brimmed hats with lots of decoration. Some of them were so heavy they had to be held on with pins!



See how many different decorations you can draw on this hat. I have given you some examples of what people used to wear, but you can choose whatever you like. Once you've finished, colour it in!



Design your own!

Just like us, the Victorians liked to have fun with their fashion!



Use these pictures to design your very own Victorian outfits. Use whatever colours you like, and maybe add a few of the accessories you saw in the worksheet!

