

KS 1—Victorian Wash Day Jigsaw (60 minute Workshop)



Meet laundry maid Agatha as you help with her weekly wash day chores – from washing clothes in the dolly tub to hanging them out to dry. Through object handling, children will begin to understand how people washed, ironed, cooked and cleaned without all of the labour saving machines we have today.

This workshop can be booked from the museum or downloaded from Surrey Heath Museum website as a Jigsaw Workshop where children learn independently (themed discovery boxes can be ordered from the museum).

Jigsaws' are an easy way for children to learn in the classroom. The jigsaw effect allows smaller groups to focus on one part of a topic and translate what they have learnt, back to their peers. It is a fun and informative way of learning and is a good tool for children with mixed abilities and skills.

The children need to be organised into small groups of mixed ability. Once in their small groups, the group will be given a topic and the children will become 'experts' on these topics. The children will need to investigate the topic using the materials given and where possible, additional information (Laptop/iPad). After researching the children will need to present back to the whole class (as an 'expert' group) on what they have learnt. They can use a variety of presentation techniques (posters, drama, singing etc) to get the information they have learnt across.

Topics of expertise:

1. Who are the Victorians
2. What is electricity?
3. Victorian Clothing
4. Wash Day Part 1
5. Wash Day Part 2

For example:

The group learning about *who are the Victorians* may role play the 'class' structure of the Victorian era—Queen Victoria herself, an upper class family and all the expensive things they would have, and the poor folk who had very little and even the children had to work.

The group learning about the processes of wash day may create a presentation or 'chain of events' on how washing was done in the past.

Session plan

10 minutes to get children into topic groups and give them the relevant information sheets.

50 minutes for the children to brainstorm, devise their 'lesson' and create, produce artwork and dramatise the topic using the information packs available.

25 minutes presentations—5 minutes per group

5 minute summary

PLEASE NOTE: Groups 4 and 5 need to work together to brainstorm and learn about their areas, but need to PRESENT separately.

Information packs are attached.

Theme boxes with real artefacts and replicas objects are available to hire from the museum. All packs have disposable gloves, antibacterial wipes and a 'non-ordering' policy of two weeks between usage.

1. Who are the Victorians?

The Victorian Age

Victorian times are when Queen Victoria was our Queen. She reigned from 20 June 1837 until her death on 22 January 1901.

Timeline from Victorian times to present day -



During her reign as Queen, the British Empire grew very large and powerful.

There were many inventions made in Victorian times - electric light bulb, public 'flushing' toilet and the phonograph (which recorded the human voice for the first time). Many of these inventions are still used today.

Many medical discoveries happened during the Victorian times - discovery of germs and disease.

There were important advancements in technology like the development of the steam engine and electricity.

There were many social changes that took place during Victoria's reign:

1. Child labour law - Poor children have always started work because the family needed money. In Victorian times when new factories and mines were built there was a greater need for work that could be performed by children. Most poor children started working at 10 years old, but some children as young as 8 were employed. The children worked for very low pay, performed work that was dirty and dangerous and worked very long hours.

Some people were upset that young children were working and wrote to the Government to complain. Two new laws were set up: the Factory Act (1833) and the Mines Act (1842). These laws made sure that children were looked after when working.

2. Education— In early Victorian Britain, many children did not go to school as they do today. School had not yet become compulsory. Children from poorer families had to work in order to help their families who did not have much money. Girls, whether rich or poor, tended not to go to school in. Some very wealthy girls attended boarding school or had a governess at home. Most poor girls either worked. (*Extended learning: Ragged Schools*)

In 1870, the government passed an Education Act so education was provided for every child, school buildings had to be built and head teachers now had to have training. Schools were inspected and checked to make sure education was meeting the new standards. School was now compulsory for children between five and ten years old (and later thirteen).

3. Healthcare—In early Victorian Britain, people didn't live that long. Wealthy people might live to around 45 years, but the lower classes, workmen and labourers died around 25 years old. Children were lucky to survive their fifth birth days. (Today we live to around 80 years old). But the Victorian era was a period where medicines were improved. People's understanding was better and ideas were changing. Scientists and doctors were all making new discoveries, which would help to change the world of medicine! (*Extended learning: What Victorian diseases were stopped because doctors had better understanding?*).

2. What is electricity?

A definition of electricity is:

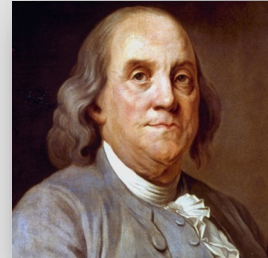
'Electricity is the presence and flow of electric charge. Using electricity we can transfer energy in ways that allow us to do simple chores. Its best-known form is the flow of electrons through conductors such as copper wires.

The word "electricity" is sometimes used to mean "electrical energy".

Electricity can be made in different ways:

- burning fossil fuels (oil, gas, coal) at power stations,
- wind power generated by wind turbines,
- solar power generated by the sun,
- water power (*hydropower*) generated by running or falling water.

Wires and cables bring electricity in to our homes and schools, but can also be stored in batteries.



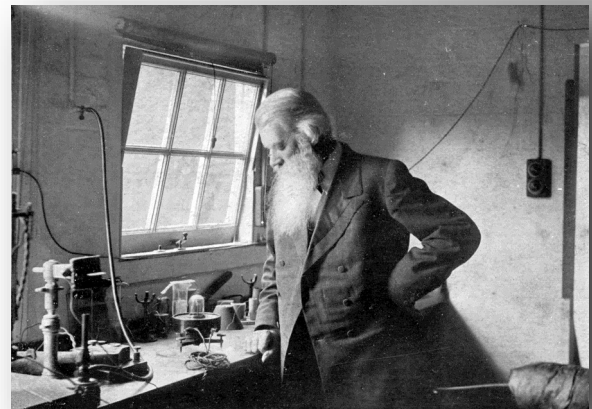
Benjamin Franklin

How electricity was invented

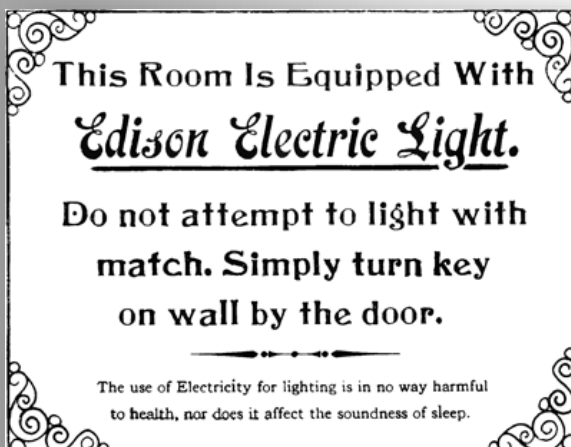
It is not exactly right to say that electricity was invented. We should really say it was discovered!

In 1752 American inventor Benjamin Franklin proved that lightning was electrical when he flew a kite during a thunderstorm. He tied a metal key onto the string and electricity from the storm went down the string, which was wet, and he received an electrical shock. Franklin was extremely lucky not to have been seriously hurt during this experiment!

Throughout the next hundred years, many inventors and scientists tried to find a way to use electrical power to make light, just like in a lightning bolt! In 1879, Joseph Swan an inventor from Sunderland, developed the first proper lamp and led the way in early electrical lighting. (*Extended learning: Thomas Edison*)



Joseph Swann—Inventor



Electricity in Victorian Britain

Throughout the Victorian era electricity was very expensive so gas lighting and heating was the popular choice for most middle-class households.

It was not until after the First World War that electricity was put in to lots more homes. The Electricity (Supply) Act was passed in 1926 which started the national grid (the system operator of the UK's electricity and gas supply) . Finally, the people had clean, safe lighting at the flick of a switch; no more fumes or bad smells from gas lamps and fires!

3. Victorian Clothing

This is a typical Victorian family.

Victorian families were quite big. This family has four children, a mum and dad so there is going to be a lot of dirty clothes every week. Let's have a look at what clothes they might need washing.

- Mum – She would be wearing a dress or skirt and blouse, but these clothes didn't go in the wash often. Instead she would wash the clothes she wore underneath – petticoats, chemise (vest), draws (knickers).

She would also wear an apron over the top of her dress to keep clean whilst she was working, cooking and cleaning. At night mum would wear a night gown.

Many people slept in their undergarments. Sleepwear during the Victorian age was usually called 'night clothes'; ankle-length nightshirts or nightgowns and floor-length robes.

- Boys and men – boys would usually wear the same kind of clothes as their fathers—shirt, trousers and a jacket. But underneath they would be wearing an undershirt and draws or an all in one undersuit.

Collars were often detachable as these were the bit that got the dirtiest. This meant you only had to wash the collar each time it was dirty and not the whole shirt.

- Girls – girls were most likely to be dressed in pretty dresses and bonnets. They would wear a pinafore (a bit like an apron) over the top of their dresses to keep them clean when they were helping with the housework.

- Baby – babies would be dressed in lots of layers to keep them warm. Baby boys were dressed in dresses until the age of 5 years as this helped with nappy changing – you wouldn't want to have to get all those layers off each time your baby needed his nappy changing!

The nappies used were not the throw away kind of nappies we use today – Victorian nappies were made out of cloth and so had to be washed each time they were used!

With no electricity and washing machine available, that's a lot of clothes to wash in a week!



4. Wash Day Part 1

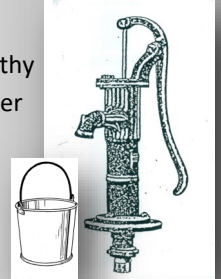
Monday Morning (stages 1-5)

It's Monday morning and Monday is always wash day. There is a pile of washing to be done. In the Victorian era there wasn't electricity in the home and there wasn't any washing machines that we would use today. So how did people clean their clothes?

It was an extremely long process and it was only women and girls that would wash clothes. There were 10 stages to washing your clothes in Victorian times. *This group will investigate the first 5 stages.*

1. Get the Water

Today, fresh water and getting rid of waste (sewage) are things we take for granted. Only if you were wealthy did you have clean running water in your house. If you were a poor family you wouldn't have running water in your house, you would have to get your water from the village pump or well. You would need to take a bucket to collect the water. The water would be cold and not ideal to get dirt and stains out of clothing.



2. Heat the Water

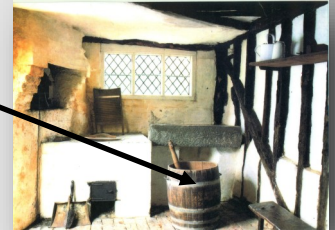
The Victorian house would have a washing room and would have one of these



– a copper

It was called this because the big metal bowl at the top was made out of copper metal. Copper was used because it heats up quickly and stays hot. Women would have made a fire in the middle part and put the water in the bowl at the top to heat up. You would have to remember to put the lid on to keep in the heat and make the water heat up quicker!

Once the water is hot enough we need to scoop it into our dolly tub



3. Add Soap

To make sure that clothes were as clean as possible the Victorians cleaned with soap, like we do today. They would only use a little soap dissolved in to the water. Soap was expensive and women didn't want to use the bar of soap up in one go so they would shave a little off with a sharp knife. To mix the soap in and get the water soapy, a soap paddle was used. The soap paddle has holes in it so the water can pass through when stirred.



Soap came in blocks like this

4. Put in the Clothes to the Dolly tub

5. Wash the Clothes

To wash the clothes you needed to move them around in the water. The water would be too hot to move with bare hands so a special tool called a dolly was used. It was a strange looking object with handles at the top of a waist height pole that had three legs at the bottom.

It was placed in to the Dolly tub with the washing, soap and water. By moving the handles, it turned the bottom of the Dolly which moved the clothes around.

For larger items such as sheets and towels you would use one of these – It had holes in it to let the water through otherwise you would get wet. to wash things properly. If things were really dirty you could use a wash



a posser. A posser goes up and down. You would need to do it 100-200 times a board or a scrubbing brush to rub at



5. Wash Day Part 2

Monday Morning (stages 6-10)

This group will investigate the last 5 stages.

The clothes have already been washed in a 'tub'.

6. Remove the Dirty Water



The Dolly tub would be full of hot water and the clothes would be heavy. The clothes would need to be removed before emptying the tub of the soapy water. The Victorians would use tongs to 'pick' the clothes out.

When all of the clothes are out, the scoop is used to get rid of most of the dirty water. When most of the water had been removed, the tub will be not so heavy so the last bit of water can be tipped out.



7. Rinse the Clothes and add Dolly Blue

Victorian England wasn't so clean as it is today. It had choking, sooty fogs because of coal fires to keep houses warm and meals cooked and if you lived in London, the Thames River was full of human poo (there were no sewers and only wealth people had toilets) and the streets were covered with horse poo—*yuck!*



But back to wash day— after taking out the clothes from the Dolly tub, they would still be soapy, they would need to be rinsed out before drying. The Victorians wore lots of white, frilly clothes and bonnets, but these got very dirty. A special blue rinse was added to the wash to make the clothes whiter, a little blue bag which was stirred around in the last rinse water. This helped clothes look whiter than white.

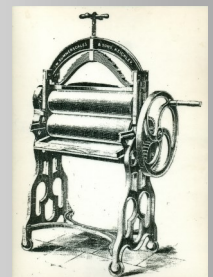
Modern washing powder still has blue bits in it to keep washing bright. The clothes were now, clean, bright and rinsed but very wet.

8. Mangle the Clothes

The Victorians used a mangle to squeeze out the water. (Extended learning; investigate the Mangle)

Mangles came in all different sizes—there were have big ones like in this picture, or small ones. The rollers go around very close together and so the water gets squeezed out of the clothes. Ladies had to be very careful when using a mangle as they could easily squash their fingers – ouch!

If the garment was big you might have had to send it through the mangle 3 or 4 times and even then, the clothes wouldn't be completely dry.



Mangle

9. Dry the Clothes



Like the Victorians, we still dry our clothes on a washing line. They washing would be attached to the line with clothes pegs. These were called dolly pegs because they had a little head on top that look a bit like a dolly.

These were bought from the shop. Some people couldn't afford shop brought pegs and make their own from two bits of wood, tied together with string. This was the final stage of wash day....for now.

When the washing was dry - 10. Starch, Iron and Fold

Victorians loved things frilly, but to keep them from flopping down they needed to use starch because it makes material stiff like cardboard. Starch comes from things like rice or potatoes and the Victorians could buy it in powder form. It was mixed with water to make a kind of glue which as spread on to clothes that needed to be stiff before ironing. Then the clothes needed to be ironed.

Material used for clothing in Victorian times creased very easily, so everything that was washed had to be ironed. Victorian irons used the fire or the 'range' to get hot. The irons would be left on the heat as there wasn't an electric point/ or plug in irons. Victorian women knew when they were hot enough as they spat on them and if the spit bubbled away they were hot enough. Because the whole of the iron was made of metal, the whole iron would heat up, so a cloth was needed to wrap around the handle so it didn't burn the skin. Victorian women always had two irons, she would use one whilst the other one heats up, making work quicker as she didn't need to stop every time the iron cooled down. The clothes were then folded.