

Key stage 2

Pupil C – Piece C: a non-chronological report

Context: pupils were asked to research child labour during the Victorian era and to write a non-chronological report on the topic.

Victorian Child Labour

During the Victorian Era, children from poorer households were expected to work long, tireless and sometimes dangerous hours in places such as mines and factories for a pitiful sum of money. Others had to work as chimney sweeps, sellers or mud larks to name but a few. Life was very difficult for these children and many died as a result of the poor conditions children were expected to work in.



FACTORY WORKERS

Factory work for young children was perilous and could result in severe injury or even death. Children had to work for at least 12 hours a day. There were no health and safety regulations and children were expected to clean the machines while they were still running.

CHIMNEY SWEEPS

Chimney sweeping was a common job for boys of about 5 or 6 during the Victorian times. They were forced up chimneys which in some cases were only 30cm wide. When the children came down they were often bleeding so their masters rubbed their wounds with salt water and then booted them back up another. In some cases the children got stuck up inside the chimneys and suffocated from the coal dust and lack of space.

STREET SELLERS

A popular job in the cities was to sell a variety of food and other products. Children sold herbs, shellfish, flowers, matches, buttons and ribbons on the streets to passers by. Some children hunted for 'Pure' (dog poo) to sell to people to clean the leather to make products such as gloves. Life as a seller was tough because people didn't pay a lot and they were usually scared away by the police or gangs.

MINERS

A number of children worked in the coal mines from a very young age. They were either trappers or drawers. The trappers sat for long hours by themselves in the dark opening and closing the traps as the carts travelled along the tracks. The drawers were children who had a cart tied to them with a chain and they had to crawl through the endless tunnels with a cart full of coal. Most of the time the tunnels were damp and when they emerged they were wet and covered in coal dust.