The Victorian age in British history is named after Queen Victoria, who was Britain's queen from 1837 until 1901.
Who were the Victorians?

- Victorian times means during Victoria’s rule. The time was Queen Victoria was on the throne. She ruled for 64 years!

- Britain managed to build a huge empire during the Victorian period. It was also a time of tremendous change in the lives of British people. In 1837 most people lived in villages and worked on the land; by 1901, most lived in towns and worked in offices, shops and factories.

- There was no electricity, instead gas lamps or candles were used for light.

- There were no cars. People either walked, travelled by boat or train or used coach horses to move from place to place.
During Queen Victoria’s reign:

- Britain became the most powerful and richest country in the world, with the largest empire that had ever existed, ruling a quarter of the world’s population.
- Towns and cities got piped water, gas and, by the end of the century, electricity.
- The number of people living in Britain more than doubled from 16 million to 37 million, causing a huge demand for food, clothes and housing.
- Factories and machines were built to meet this demand and new towns grew up, changing the landscape and the ways people lived and worked.

Railways, originally built to transport goods, meant people could travel easily around the country for the first time. Railways brought new foods to towns and cities.
During Queen Victoria's reign:

- Soldiers were at war all over the world especially in 1850 - 1880.
- Many households had a servant or servants - in 1891, 2 million servants were recorded in the census.
- Seaside holidays were 'invented' (became popular).
- Police Force 'invented'.
- At the beginning of the Victorian period crossing the Atlantic took up to eight weeks. By 1901 it took about a week.
- New cookers and gadgets for the home were invented.
Why were they important?

• The Victorian era was a time of tremendous change in the lives of British people.
• In 1837 most people lived in villages and worked on the land; by 1901, most lived in towns and worked in offices, shops and factories.
• Towns and cities got piped water, gas and, by the end of the century, electricity!

• Factories and machines were built to meet this demand and new towns grew up, changing the landscape and the ways people lived and worked.
• Railways, originally built to transport goods, meant people could travel easily around the country for the first time.
What effect did they have on the world?

The Victorian era was a time of great industrial, political, trade, scientific and military progress for Great Britain. Inventions that enabled information to be shared, distances to be shortened and machines to be powered, all of which helped to create a new, modern era sometimes referred to as the Industrial Revolution. Here are just a few of the inventions:

- Photographs
- Telephones
- Cars
- Bicycles
- Stamps
- Steam Trains
The Royal Family
Queen Victoria was only 18 when she came to the throne and she had a lot to learn. Her reign had a rocky start. She thought that, as queen, she could do as she liked, and she quickly had to learn that she couldn't.

Victoria was Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland (1837-1901) and empress of India (1876-1901). Her reign was the longest of any monarch in British history and came to be known as the Victorian era.

Did you know?
Queen Victoria was 5 foot (1.52m) tall
The Royal Family

Queen Victoria was born on the 24 May in 1819 at Kensington Palace. Her father died eight months after she was born.

Victoria was christened 'Alexandrina Victoria'. However, from birth she was formally addressed as Her Royal Highness Princess Victoria of Kent.

Did you know?
Both Queen Elizabeth, The Queen today, and her consort (as her husband is known), the Duke of Edinburgh, are great-great-grandchildren of Queen Victoria.
The Royal Family

• At the age of 21, Victoria married her cousin, Albert of Saxe-Coburg Gotha, a German Prince. They married on the 10th February 1840 at the Chapel Royal in St. James's Palace.
• Victoria had nine children, 40 grand-children and 37 great-grandchildren, scattered all over Europe. Most of Queen Victoria's children married into other royal families of Europe.

Her husband Albert died in 1861 at the young age of 42. She mourned his death for almost 10 years. For the rest of her reign she wore black.

Did you know?
Victoria was known as the "Grandmother of Europe" because many of her children and grandchildren married into the royal families of other European countries. Queen Victoria's family nickname was 'Drina'
The Royal Family

- Queen Victoria died on 22 January, 1901 at Osborne House on the Isle of Wight. She was 81.
- Queen Victoria was survived by 6 children, 40 grandchildren and 37 great-grandchildren, including four future sovereigns of England: Edward VII, George V, Edward VIII and George VI.
- She is buried in a mausoleum at Frogmore, Windsor.

Did you know?
Queen Victoria survived seven assassination attempts.
Rich Vs Poor

- In Victorian times, many families had 10 or more children. Sadly, many children died as babies, or from diseases such as smallpox and diphtheria. Child-death struck rich and poor families.

- In a Victorian town, it was easy to tell who was rich and who was poor. Children from richer homes were well fed, wore warm clothes and had shoes on their feet. They did not work, but went to school or had lessons at home.

- Poor children looked thin and hungry, wore ragged clothes, and some had no shoes. Poor children had to work. They were lucky if they went to school.
Rich Vs Poor

- Many women had lots of babies. Birth control was not widespread, and few couples used any means of contraception. Child-bearing could be dangerous, and many women died in childbirth. Many babies also died, from childhood diseases. Queen Victoria had nine children. Her children were called Edward, Alfred, Arthur, Leopold, Victoria, Alice, Helena, Louise and Beatrice. The royal family became a model for other families.

- Many poor children lived in tiny country cottages or in city slums. There was no money for toys, nowhere to play except alleyways and yards. Many children had to work, while others were too sick and hungry to play. Yet most poor children still managed to make some fun. They played with whatever they could find, perhaps dancing to the music of a hurdy-gurdy man, paddling in a stream, or climbing trees and lamp-posts.
Rich Vs Poor

• Victorians made their own entertainment at home. They had no radio or TV. They enjoyed singing, and a rich family would sing around the piano, while poorer families enjoyed tunes on a pipe or a fiddle. Families played card games and board games, and acted out charades. At birthday parties, a special treat was a magic lantern show. An oil or gas lamp sent a beam of light through a glass lens and onto a screen, to show enlarged images, perhaps of wild animals or a story told in pictures.

A magic lantern slide. The picture was painted on glass. Shown on a screen, 'slipping slides' seemed to move. So the dog would jump through the hoop!
Rich Vs Poor

- Rich families had large houses, with a special room for children called the nursery. This was often at the top of the house. In the nursery younger children ate, played and slept. They were looked after by a woman called a nanny. She took them for walks in the park or to the zoo. Some rich children saw their parents only in the morning and evening, and were looked after mostly by their nanny and by other servants. Most Victorians thought children should be 'seen and not heard'.

- The person who looked after the children was called a nanny.
Why did children go to work?

- Many Victorian children were poor and worked to help their families. Few people thought this strange or cruel. Families got no money unless they worked, and most people thought work was good for children. The Industrial Revolution created new jobs, in factories and mines. Many of these jobs were at first done by children, because children were cheap - a child was paid less than adults (just a few pennies for a week's work).

Did you know?
The average wage in the 1850s was about 15 shillings (75p) a week. Many children got just 5 shillings (25p) a week, or less.
Many children started work at the age of 5, the same age as children start school today. They went to work as soon as they were big enough. Even a tiny child could feed chickens. Older brothers and sisters took small children to work, perhaps to a factory at the end of the street. Other children worked at home, doing jobs such as washing, sewing, sticking labels on bottles or making brushes.

Did you know?
Workers went to 'hiring fairs' to find jobs. A cook might hold a wooden spoon, to show what she did. A maid might hold a broom.
Children worked on farms, in homes as servants, and in factories. Children often did jobs that required small size and nimble fingers. But they also pushed heavy coal trucks along tunnels in coal mines. Boys went to sea, as boy-sailors, and girls went 'into service' as housemaids. Children worked on city streets, selling things such as flowers, matches and ribbons. Crossing boys swept the roads clean of horse-dung and rubbish left by the horses that pulled carts and carriages.
Did you know?

Poor people often ate poor food. They had to buy cheap tea with blackberry leaves added, sugar mixed with sand, and milk thickened with powdered chalk! Meat once a week was a treat.

Boy servants in grand houses wore short jackets with lots of buttons – so the boys were called 'Buttons'.

'Mudlarks' were poor children who waded in the mud beside the river Thames in London, looking for lost rings or bits of scrap metal to sell.

Girl flower-sellers also sold oranges (when the fruit was available, not all year-round like today). Oranges kept fresh longer than flowers.
Children at play

Link to Victorian toyshop sort
Although many children worked in Victorian times, they still had time to play.

- Most Victorian children played in the street or in the fields and woods. Not many families had gardens big enough to play in, and there were no children’s playgrounds.
- Rich families had playrooms or nurseries, but poorer children played wherever they could find space. With ten or more children often crammed into one or two rooms, play-space for poor families was a luxury. Playing outside was the usual escape.

Watch Victorian toys and games video from the BBC.
Children at play: Street fun

• In street games, children shared toys like hoops, marbles and skipping ropes, with friends in the street, or in the school playground.
• They played chasing games such as tag and played catch with balls. If they hadn’t got a proper ball, they made balls from old rags, and bats from pieces of wood.
• They also played hopscotch. Victorian children were able to play out in the street as there was less traffic than today. There were no cars until the 1880s.
• They crowded around street musicians, wheeling a barrel organ, which played tunes when the handle was turned. Sometimes barrel organ players had a monkey with them.
Children at play: Books

- Victorian children were often given books with improving moral lessons, about characters with names like Lazy Lawrence and Simple Susan.

- A favourite story was Charles Kingsley's The Water Babies about a badly treated chimney-boy.

- There were lots of books written specially for children, such as Treasure Island (about pirates) by R L Stevenson and Black Beauty (about a horse) by Anna Sewell.

- Perhaps the most famous Victorian children's book is Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (1865) written by Lewis Carroll.
What was a Victorian classroom like?

• There were maps and perhaps pictures on the wall. There would be a globe for geography lessons, and an abacus to help with sums. Children sat in rows and the teacher sat at a desk facing the class. At the start of the Victorian age, most teachers were men, but later many women trained as teachers.

• Children wrote on slates with chalk. They wiped the slate clean, by spitting on it and rubbing with their coat sleeve or their finger! Slates could be used over and over. For writing on paper, children used a pen with a metal nib, dipped into an ink well.

Did you know?
Victorian children did money sums (in pounds, shillings and pence). They knew about measures we no longer use such as poles, perches, rods, chains and furlongs.
What subjects did children learn?

- Girls and boys learned together in primary schools, but were separated in secondary schools. Both boys and girls learned reading, writing, arithmetic, spelling and drill (PE).

- Boys learned technology: woodwork, maths and technical drawing, to help with work in factories, workshops or the army when they grew up.

- Girls had lessons in cooking and sewing, to prepare them for housework and motherhood.

- Children were often taught by copying and repeating what the teacher told them. Lessons included teaching in right and wrong, and the Christian religion.

Did you know?
On Fridays, the teacher would read out the marks for every child. If you did well, you went to the top of the class.
Discipline in schools was often strict. Children were beaten for even minor wrongdoings, with a cane, on the hand or bottom. A teacher could also punish a child by making them stand in the corner wearing a 'dunce's cap'. Another, very boring, punishment was writing 'lines'. This meant writing out the same sentence (such as 'Schooldays are the happiest days of my life' 100 times or more.

Did you know?
One rather unusual punishment was being sent to sit in the 'coal-hole' - where coal for the school fire was stored!
Rich boys and girls

- Boys from rich families were sent away to boarding school. Some 'public schools', like Eton and Harrow, set high standards.
- Other schools were awful places, run to make profits for the owners. Boys in these bad schools were half-starved, ill-treated, and taught very little.
- Girls sent away to be trained as governesses were not much better off, as you can learn from reading Jane Eyre by Charlotte Bronte.
- Girls and young boys were taught at home by a male tutor or a female governess. The first good girls' schools were started in Victorian times, such as the North London Collegiate School (1850).
Here are some interesting facts about the work of Dr Barnardo, founder of the charity Barnardo's, who provided homes and education for poor children in Victorian Britain.

- Thomas John Barnardo was born on 4th July 1845 and he died on 19th September 1905.
- He was born in Dublin, Ireland.
- When he was sixteen years old, he decided he wanted to become a Protestant medical missionary in China.
- He moved to London in order to train to be a doctor. He studied at the London Hospital, but never actually completed the course to earn a doctorate. Although he is known as ‘Doctor’ Barnardo, he never actually qualified as a doctor.
- During his time in London, Thomas Barnardo became interested in the lives of the Victorian poor. He was appalled by the number of people living on the streets of London and he witnessed the horrific effects of cholera, unemployment and overcrowding.
- Barnardo decided to put aside his plans to visit China. He opened his first ‘ragged school’ in 1867, in the East End of London, to educate and care for poor orphans.
- One of his pupils, a boy called Jim Jarvis, took Barnardo on a walk of the the East End, showing him the sheer number of poor children sleeping rough. Barnardo was so moved by the sight that he decided to do something about it.
- In 1870, Thomas Barnardo opened a home for boys in Stepney Causeway, providing shelter for orphans and destitute children. A sign hang on the building which said: ‘No Destitute Child Ever Refused Admission’.
- Barnardo founded the Girls’ Village Home. Located in Barkingside, the ‘village’ consisted of a collection of cottages and was home to 1500 poor girls.
- During his life Barnardo continued to open institutions that helped to care for poor children. By his death in 1905 it is estimated that his homes and schools cared for over 8000 children in more than 90 different locations.
Lord Shaftesbury (1801-1885)

- Anthony Ashley Cooper, the eldest son of the 6th Earl of Shaftesbury, was born on 28th April, 1801. He became the Earl of Shaftesbury in 1851.

- Lord Shaftesbury was a politician who attempted to improve children's lives during the Victorian times.

- At the age of 25, he became a member of Parliament. He began to take an interest in the plight of poor children after reading newspaper reports about labour in industry.

- 1833 He proposed that children should work for a maximum of 10 hours a day.

- 1834 the Factory Act was made law. It was now illegal for children under 9 to be employed in textile factories.

- 1842 Coal Mines Act
  No child or woman should work underground.

- He was also interested in education for working children. He was chairman of the Ragged Schools Union - an organisation that set up over a hundred schools for poor children.
The Great Exhibition

• The Crystal Palace was a huge glass and iron structure originally built in 1851 for the Great Exhibition held in London's Hyde Park.

• Countries including France, the United States, Russia, Turkey and Egypt all attended with exhibits falling into four main categories - Raw Materials, Machinery, Manufacturers and Fine Arts.

• Prince Albert, head of the Society of Arts, had the idea of an exhibition to impress the world with Britain's industrial achievements.
The Crystal Palace

- The Palace was designed by Sir Joseph Paxton and was enormous – 1,848 feet long and 408 feet wide including two huge towers and many fountains with over 11,000 jets rising into the air.

Did you know?
Over 13,000 exhibits were displayed and viewed by over 6,200,000 people.

People bought expensive tickets to see the opening ceremony in the same way that people buy tickets for the Olympic opening ceremony today and the reaction was remarkable, with many visitors and newspapers proclaiming it as one of the most amazing wonders they had ever seen.
The British Empire

- Britain managed to build a huge empire during the Victorian period and became the most powerful and richest country in the world, with the largest empire that had ever existed, ruling a quarter of the world’s population (bits in red).
The British Empire: Trade

• Due to its military and industrial dominance Britain emerged as the most powerful trading nation in the world.

• With the introduction of steam power Britain's core industries, such as the mining of coal, minerals and other raw materials and the production of iron, textiles and manufactured goods, were increased.

• Trade was also greatly improved by the arrival of railways and steamships, which enabled goods to be easily transported around the world...

• ...Although it wasn’t just materials and equipment that were sold. One of Britain’s main exports at the time were people, who were taken or purchased from Africa and sold as slaves.
Merchants sent out ships to trade with North America and the West Indies, where England had established a network of colonies, bringing back delicacies such as tea, coffee, sugar, tobacco, cotton, silk and wine to feed an increasingly rich and growing population.
Victorian clothes

- Victorian people dressed appropriately to their age, and position in society.
- In 1900, a middle-class family could only afford three full sets of outerwear, and because laundering by hand was a universally dreaded chore, they rarely washed their clothes. To endure heavy use, outfits were typically made of durable fabrics, such as wool, and came in dull colours that concealed dirt.
- Clothing featured buttons made of pearl, horn, wood, bone, or Casein, made from milk curds.
Victorian Art

• Lots of Victorians used their talents to design and create art work for people to admire:

• William Morris was famous for designing repeating patterns to use for wallpapers or textiles. Many of these were based on a close observation of nature.
• Silhouette portrait pictures cut from thin black card became a cheap and novelty way of sharing a picture of yourself with others.

In 1843 the first Christmas card was created and sent, designed by John Calcott Horsley. A thousand copies of the card were printed and sold for one shilling, starting an annual tradition.