







# Victorian Box

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Object 7



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teacup and saucer

Picture A



Sevenoaks railway tunnel

Picture A1 Team of Navvies



Picture B



women drinking tea

Picture D



Sevenoaks Union workhouse



Picture E illustration of workhouse scene in Charles Dickens' novel Oliver Twist



Picture F Cobden Road School



Picture G



ink pots (x2) and dip pens (x12)



handwriting practice sheets (x35)



marbles and instruction sheet



lyrics sheet for Navy folk song



drum and beater (x2)

## Middle class heroes 'Top Trumps' cards x5



## Discussion topics/ activities

### Childhood



#### Picture F

This photograph shows pupils and teachers at Cobden Road School, around 1890.

The school was one of many built after 1870, when the Government decided all children should get an education, not just children from wealthy families.



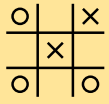
#### Object 3, Object 8

In the 1800s, young children practised handwriting and maths on slates like this.

**Q: Can you think of an advantage of using slates instead of paper?**

**A: Re-using a slate was less costly.**

You might have heard the phrase 'to wipe the slate clean'. This is where it comes from. It means to make a new start.



You can take it in turns to try writing on the slate, using the special slate pencil. Wipe it after use with a wet paper towel.

Older children worked on paper, using pen and ink.



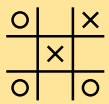
### Object 7

**Q: Can you guess what this object is?**

**A: Inkwell.**

Each school desk had a hole in the top right corner which the inkwell could slot into, so it would not get spilt. To write, children would dip their pens in the ink.

This design would not be helpful for any left-handed children today. Victorian schools did not allow children to write with their left hand.



Have a go at writing in the Victorian style, using the inks, pens and activity sheets provided.



### Object 3

Discipline was very strict in Victorian schools and children were supposed to keep quiet and still.

**Q: What do you think this was used for?**

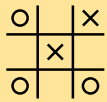
**A: These are finger stocks. Finger stocks like this were placed on a child's fingers and then tied tightly behind the back. They were used to stop fidgeting.**



You can try them on.

These days we know that for many children, fidgeting helps them concentrate, but the Victorians were not tolerant or understanding of neurodiversity.

**Q: What habits do you have that Victorian school teachers would not tolerate? Do you think it is right to use such devices?**



### Play Victorian marbles game

Divide into 3 groups and following the instructions on how to play 'ring taw'.



### Picture D, Picture E

Victorian Workhouses were intended to provide work and shelter for people in poverty who had no means to support themselves. The harsh reality was they were more like prisons, forcing child labour and long hours, where occupants suffered from beatings and malnutrition.

Charles Dickens spoke up against the conditions in workhouses in Kent. His novel *Oliver Twist* depicted the experience of boys living in a workhouse. The illustration is of a famous scene from the story.

Sevenoaks Union workhouse was built in Sundridge 1843. This picture of the building was taken in 2007.

## The Home

Servants were employed in wealthy and some middle-class Victorian households. They often lived in the home of their employer.

Girls were recruited to domestic work as young as 11 years old. There was no legal minimum wage, and before a law passed in 1860, an employer was allowed to beat their servants as punishment!

Domestic chores were no simple task without today's technology, and big houses needed many hands to run them.



### Object 1, Object 9

These objects are related to doing laundry.

Unlike today, when we take washing out of the machine after a rinse and spin cycle, Victorians had to pull bed linens and clothing straight out of boiling hot tubs of water. Object 9 is a pair of laundry tongs which were used so they did not burn their hands.

Object 1 is an iron used for pressing clothes. It was heated up on the stove. Two flat irons would be used on rotation as they lost their heat quickly. As one was being used, the other was on the stove.



## Object 2

**Q:** What do you think this object was used for?

**A:** Carpet beater. The rug would be hung outside and the dust beaten out of it.



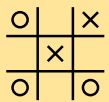
## Picture B, Object 6, Object 10

Victorian industrialisation led to a rise in the number of married women who did not need to work, because their husbands were earning more money. Married women who worked were seen as less high status.

Whilst poor women were busy working, and rich women enjoyed extravagant leisure activities, middle class women were stuck at rather a loose end.

Their role at home became focused on organising social events.

The Victorians were obsessed with the etiquette of entertaining guests at home, and tea parties became common practice.



Carefully, take turns holding the teacup and saucer the way you think a polite Victorian lady would have done.

The baking tin would have been used to make cakes for such parties.



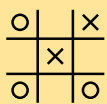
These events allowed women to have some societal influence, though some might argue that keeping women busy with these kinds of affairs was holding them back from other opportunities.

Tea parties would range from large gatherings to a few female friends during the day, as captured in this photograph.

## Building the railway

The men who dug the Sevenoaks and Polhill railway tunnels were called navvies. Sevenoaks railway tunnel was built between 1864 and 1868. It is the longest mainline railway tunnel in the south of England.

The navvies lived with their families in unsanitary huts provided by their employer. In 1865 smallpox was rife, seriously affecting the tunnel workers and their families.



### Learn a Navy folk song

Read the lyric sheet. These are lyrics of a real folk song, describing the life of a navvy at work.

Can you come up with tune for the Navy Song, and perform it using the drums to keep the beat?

Folk songs are historical evidence, songs about everyday life that have been passed down through generations.

Glossary of terms used in the song:

**Banker**

Labourer who makes banks of earth, ditches, etc.

**Dumpling**

Heap of material flung down. In this context it could mean a length of embankment.

**Ganger**

Leader of a gang of navvies who was often a sub-contractor for their labour.

**Mess**

Shared accommodation usually an eating place.



**Object 4**

Q: What do you think this object is?

It relates to a rapidly growing industry in Sevenoaks during the time that the railways were built.

A: Brick mould.

Brick making was one of the biggest industries in Sevenoaks from the Victorian times until the 1920s. This was initially to support the building of the

railways, and then to provide houses for a growing population of commuters.

Brick workers would roll loosely shaped wet clay (which had been locally dug) in sand before pressing it into moulds. The bricks would then be dried for several days, removed from the mould, and put into a kiln, a big oven which hardened and finished off the bricks.

## Hop farming



### Object 5, Picture G

This is a replica of a hop plant. In the 1870s, there were hop farms all over Kent. Hops is a plant used in brewing beer. There were several breweries in the Sevenoaks area in Victorian times.

Hop harvesting in Kent was done by working class Londoners and Gypsy travellers who would come here during hop season. It was a holiday for those used to city life. The picture depicts a typical scene, where whole families would work together. In the background are oast houses, buildings used for drying out the hops. The tradition of 'hopping down to Kent' lasted into the 1960s.

## Middle class heroes

o		x
	x	
o		o

### Top Trumps

Divide into five groups. Each group take a card and learn about the person on your card.

Come back together and take turns to teach the rest of the class about the person on your card, and what they did for the Sevenoaks district.

Each group should try to convince the others why their local Victorian hero is the best.