

Welcome, one and all to 4B's class assembly.
Today, we are going to transport you back to the Victorian era, a time of incredible change and invention.

Queen Victoria: It was, of course, named after me, Queen Victoria, the longest serving monarch (until recently) from 1837 to 1901. But what was so special about my reign? Who better to tell you than my people, the Victorians themselves.

Song: The Victorians

Queen Victoria: So Britain has been transformed under my rule, from the expansion of the British Empire to advancements in technology and industry. We've built railways, factories and schools. We've seen the birth of new ideas and inventions. So - all my subjects must be happy, mustn't they?

FW 1: Day in, day out, we toil away in this factory. The air is thick with dust and the noise of

machines is deafening. Our hands are calloused and our backs ache.

FW2: But we have to keep going. We've got mouths to feed at home. Little ones who depend on us.

FW3: But what's worse is that children as young as 5 or 6 work alongside us. They should be playing and laughing, not stuck in this place with us!

FW4: When we came to the city to get work, we thought we'd find a better life. Little did we know it would be like this.

CL1: We're just children but we work as hard as the adults, operating machines, sewing clothes or packing goods.

CL2: I remember stories my grandmother used to tell me about open fields and clear skies. I wish I could see those one day. All I see now are these factory walls and smoke-filled skies.

Narrator 1: At the beginning of Queen Victoria's reign, only rich children went to school. But in 1870, a new law was passed that all children between the ages of 5 and 10 **had** to attend school.

Narrator 2: So that was definitely progress. Education for the poor. It must have been better than working in a factory or being sent to sweep a chimney, mustn't it?

Teacher: Welcome children to my Victorian classroom. Some of you are new pupils so I will explain to you the simple rules you need to follow. You stand when told to stand. You sit when told to sit. No talking. No fidgeting. In fact, no speaking of any kind unless you are specifically addressed first, by me. Children should be seen and not heard. To be on the safe side, you may want to avoid making any noise, moving any part of your body or annoying me in any way. In fact, it's probably safest if you don't breathe at all while you're at school.

School Song

Teacher: Now we've cleared that up, lessons can begin. Geography. Can you please tell me the name of the largest and most wonderful empire that the civilised world has ever known? Molly?

C1: It's the British Empire, Miss, ruled over by her most benevolent Majesty, Queen Victoria.

Teacher: Her full title, if you please.

C1: Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and Empress of India. Crowned June 20th 1837.

Teacher: Good. Now, why is the British Empire so large and so great?

C2: Because we are the first nation on Earth to have embraced and harnessed the industrial age.

C3: And because we have endless supplies of coal and iron under our soil.

C2: And because our workers are skilled and educated and work hard for the Queen.

C4: And because our navy is strong and powerful.

Narrator 3: Although life was hard for many Victorians, they were a patriotic lot. The British Empire spread from North America to India and Australia. We view this differently today but at the time, Britain seemed to be all powerful. However, Victorian Britain wasn't always a nice place to live.

C3: She's coughing, miss. We'll all catch a death!

Teacher: Quite possibly. Stop coughing at once, or you might give us all some terrible disease. Now, time for Science. Who can name some of the ailments with which we Victorians have to contend?

C5: Typhoid.

C3: Consumption.

C5: Smallpox.

C3: Scarlet fever.

C5: Cholera.

C3: Measles.

C5: Whooping cough.

C6: *coughs some more.*

Children: Stop coughing!

Narrator 4: The new Victorian Industrial Age saw huge numbers of people leave the cities and head to towns for work in factories.

Narrator 5: Life was hard and disease was everywhere. Wealthy Victorians were really rich. Middle class Victorians led a comfortable life. But there were millions and millions of poor, miserable working Victorians for whom life was very hard indeed.

C7: We're poor. We're orphans.

C8: We have nobody to look after us.

Constable: Stop! Police! You horrible children. Why aren't you working?

C7: I'm too young.

Constable: Nonsense. Get yourself into a factory! Where are your parents?

C8: They died of cholera.

Constable: That's no excuse. You need to take responsibility and earn some money. Nobody else is going to look after you.

C8: But I have a broken leg. It was injured in an accident when I worked down a coal mine.

Constable: Serves you right. Probably your own fault. Lazy child. Many of us Victorians believe that people who are poor, or sick, have only themselves to blame.

C7: I'm eight years old and I'm starving.

C8: Let's just steal this apple. Surely nobody will mind.

C7: It's just one apple, and we haven't eaten in three whole days.

Teacher: Thieves! Stop! Apple thieves!

Constable: Come here, you terrible wretches. You know what happens to Victorians who steal?

C8: It was only an apple.

Constable: Doesn't matter. It was an apple that didn't belong to you.

C7: But we're starving!

Constable: A poor excuse. For this crime you could be hanged.

C7: Hanged?

Constable: Of course. For theft, the punishment in Victorian Britain could be execution by hanging.

C7: Just for taking an apple?

Constable: Fortunately, you're both too young to hang.

C8: Phew.

C7: Phew.

C9: So instead we're going to send you to Australia.

ALL: Australia? Result!

C10: Not so fast. Victorian Australia is an empty, dry, desolate place. There are no skyscrapers or surf boards or soap operas. It's just a great big desert. A giant prison the size of a continent.

C8: Not so good!

C3: And it could take six whole months just to get there, by sail boat. And once in Australia, you'll have to work hard like a slave for years, and there is no guarantee you will ever be allowed back home again.

C7: All that, just for taking an apple?

Narrator 6: Although the camera had just been invented, there was no TV or cinema yet, so Music Halls became popular. New theatres sprang up in cities and the singers and actors were the big stars of the day! Many famous songs came from these music halls.

Song - Daisy Bell

Teacher: Children: time for the plenary.

C11: Victorian Britain was an amazing place.

C12: The centre of one of the largest and most successful empires the world has ever known.

C6: A powerhouse of industry.

C4: A centre of commerce, science, literature and discovery.

C5: But it could also be dirty, diseased and dangerous.

C11: And I for one am glad that we studied it in History, rather than in reality.

ALL: Hear, hear!

Cast List

Welcome and Prayer - Alina

Queen Victoria - Anita

Factory Workers and children scene

FW1 - Finlay

FW2 - Tessa

FW3 - Matvii

FW4 - Dhanishka

C1 - Kyan

C2 - Isla

School

Teacher - Lexi

C1 - Millie

C2 - Dean

C3 - Olivia

C4 - Rex

C5 - Lucas

C6 - Harrison

C7 - Theo

C8 - Sam

C9 - Samrag

C10 - Ziena

C11 - Joshua

C12 - Ali

Constable - Teddy

Narrators

1 - Tyler

2 - David

3 - Alex

4 - Samantha

5 - Ayah

6- Alex

No speaking (requested) - Elliott, Ahnesa,
Khrystyna