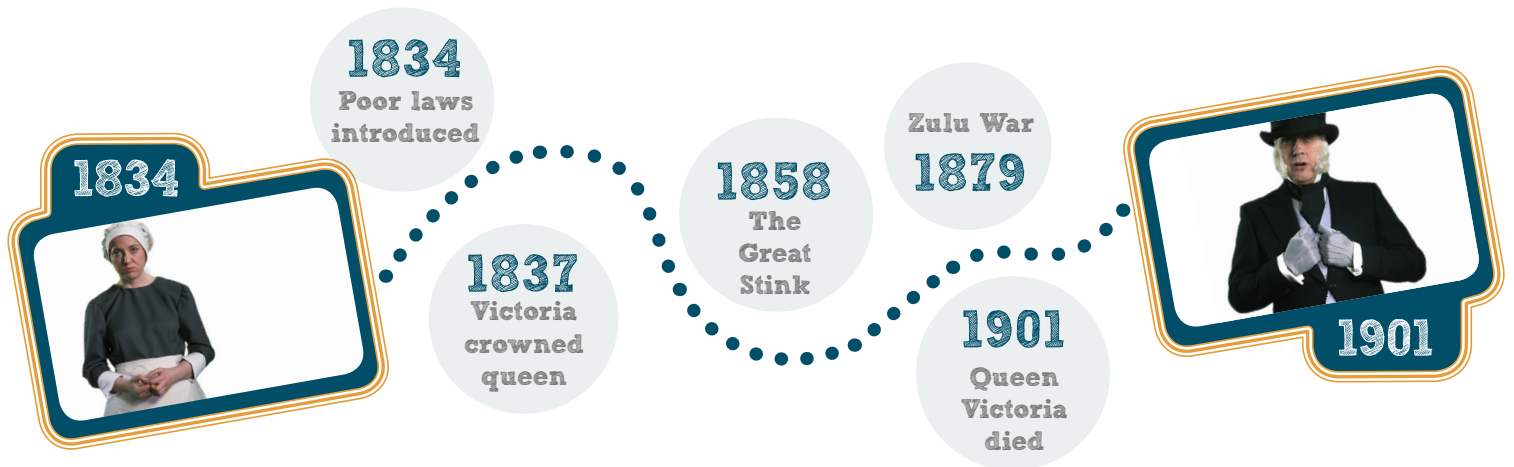


Victorians

Aimed at Key Stage 3, around year 8



National Curriculum subject links

Ideas, political power, industry and empire: Britain, 1745-1901

- Britain as the first Industrial nation – the impact on society

Coverage and links

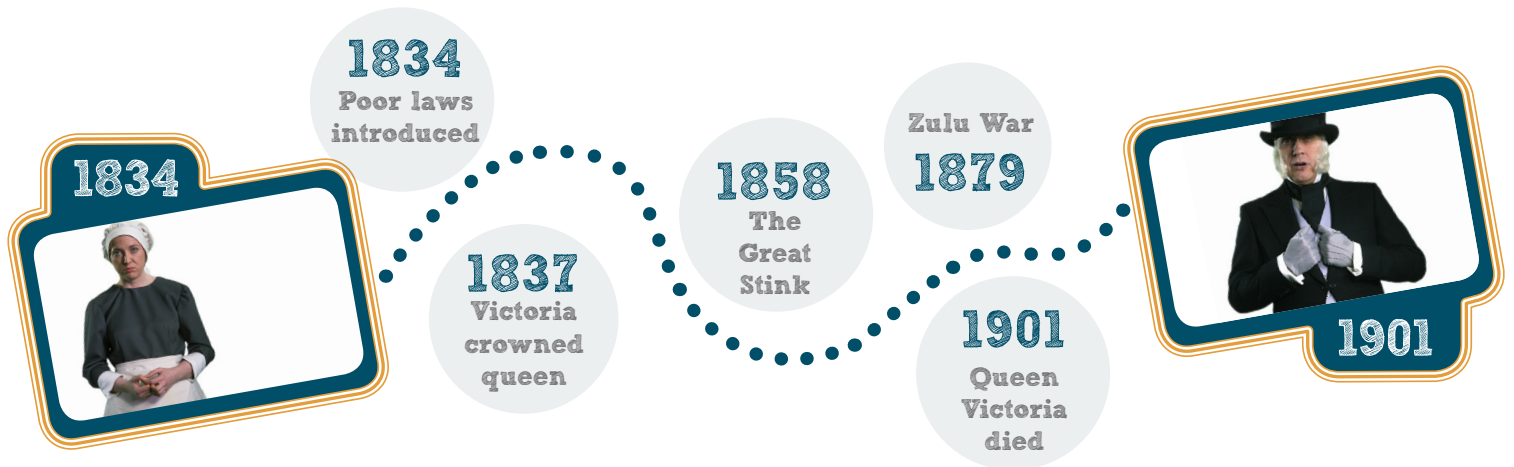
This unit of work allows students to judge the impact of the Industrial Revolution through an investigation of some of the ways society changed in its wake. Thus these lessons might well follow a short sequence of lessons on the Industrial Revolution itself, though of course they could stand alone as well.

The sequence of lessons takes students through several areas in which Britain changed as a result of Victorian business, government action or social thinking. Through the lessons students will learn details about these changes and also consider the nature and extent of change in Victorian Britain; how much did Britain get better? The lessons use the films as the starting point for independent research on each of the big topics, so it will be important for them to have access to research materials. Useful primary sources on a huge range of Victorian themes can be found at nationalarchives.gov.uk

To fully explore the concept of change and continuity, students will obviously need a starting point, so it will be important during all these lessons to keep going back to earlier work so that students can start to make valid claims about the extent of change.

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Suggested learning outcomes

By the end of these lessons, pupils will be able to...

- Give examples of the ways in which Britain changed during the Victorian period
- Make tentative judgements about the nature of change

Pre-lesson homework

- If the sequence is going to stand alone as the only work on the Victorians, it would be useful for students to do some work on the Industrial Revolution, even if just to define the term.
- During the sequence, students could continue to research their topics and questions.

Lesson 1 – How did Victorians make Britain safer?

Films to use

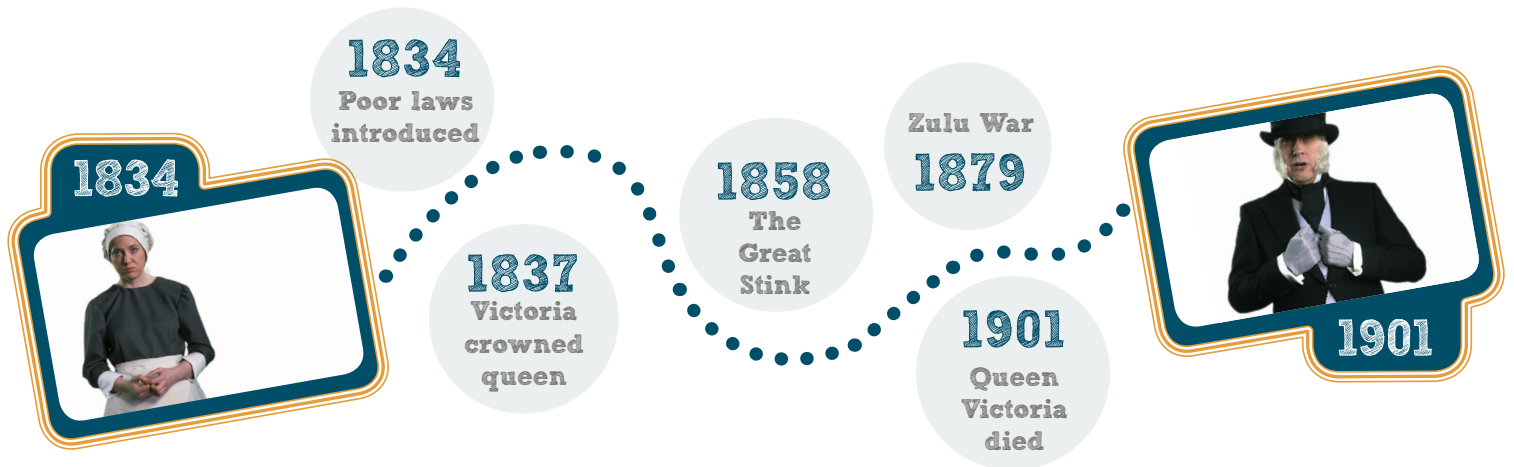
- **The great stink of 1858**
- **Disease and epidemic**
- **Crime & punishment - Metropolitan Police Force**
- **Crime & punishment in Victorian times**

This lesson is focussed on two areas; improvements in health, and improvements in fighting crime. As the lesson progresses, students will need to keep a record of the people and events that they are going to research further. This could be in books, or a collective list made at the front of the class.

Start by looking at a series of pictures of Victorian achievements – railways, bridges, factories. Use these as a stimulus for a discussion about what students know about the Victorians and the Industrial Revolution. Then pick up on the word 'Revolution'. What does it mean? What kind of change does it describe? Go on to explain that this enquiry builds on this and investigates Victorian society and explores the ways in which it changed in the wake of the Industrial Revolution.

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Lesson 1 – How did Victorians make Britain safer? ...continued

Now show **The great stink of 1858**, but be ready to stop it at 1.02. The MP in the film talks about the terrible pollution in the River Thames and stopping it there will allow you to lead a quick question session. Ask what problems, apart from the smell, would come from a polluted river? After getting responses, play the rest, where we hear what Parliament decided to do. At the end, tell the class that the man employed to build the sewers that Parliament ordered was called Joseph Bazalgette (portrait included below) and that the sewage system that he designed is still the one that London uses today. Add Joseph Bazalgette to the list as he and his work should be the first thing to research in more detail.

The next film to play follows the theme of public health. **Disease and epidemic** tells the story of John Snow and his work on cholera in London. The story is told from the point of view of someone who had to drink the foul water, and thus links to the last film. Add John Snow and Public Health to the big list. Ask the class at this point about whether they have any tentative thoughts about the sort of change we're seeing here?

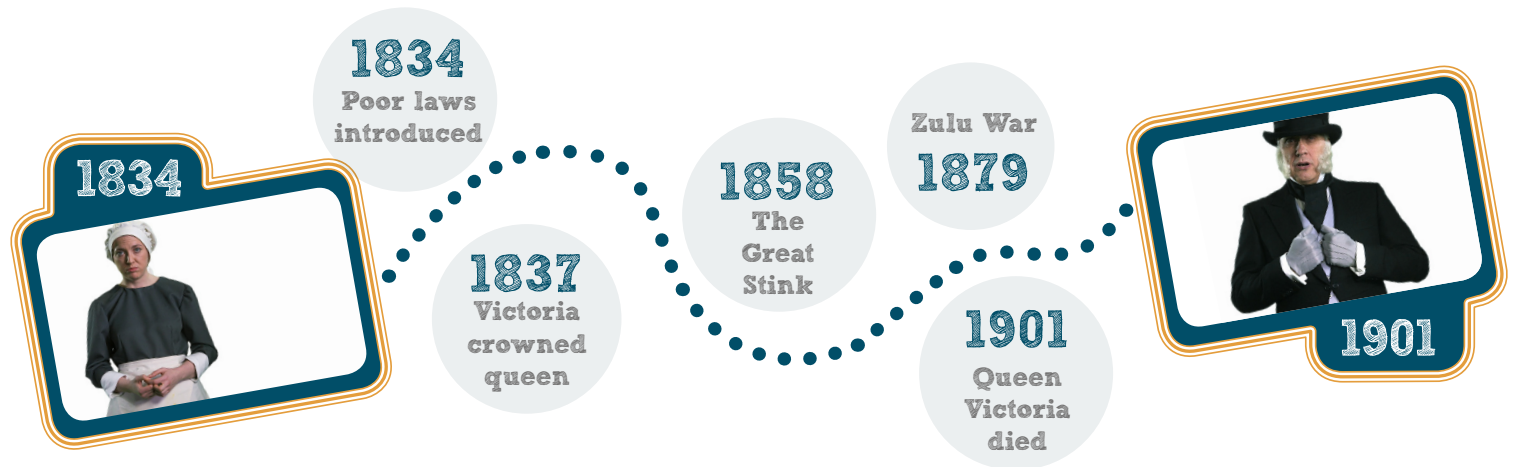
The lesson moves on to crime and punishment. Show **Crime and Punishment in Victorian times**. This film outlines the changes to punishments, from public execution for a wide range of crimes to a better prison system where prisoners might even get an education. After a brief discussion about this change – how big? Change for the better? Etc. – play **Crime and Punishment – Metropolitan Police Force**. At the end of this, add the Metropolitan Police Force and Victorian prisons to the big list.

Now turn the list into a set of questions – What were the results of the new sewers? How did John Snow make his discovery? Why did people not like the Metropolitan Police? Ask as many as you like. Students use their research materials to begin finding answers to them. This could be done in the lesson or for homework. You might also divide the questions up, so that groups of students tackle one area.

To end the lesson, go back to the lesson enquiry question: How did Victorians make Britain safer? Students could write a short answer that focuses on the extent of change in this area.

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Lesson 2 – How did Victorians make Britain happier?

Films to use

- **A visit to the music hall**
- **A day at the seaside**
- **Victorian sport - football**

The Victorians were, arguably, responsible for our modern idea of leisure time. Because of a population explosion and that population increasingly living in urban areas, leisure activities, even holidays, became more common. In this lesson, students will investigate some of these new leisure activities and begin to question the language of the question - is happiness the right end point for leisure?

Start the lesson with a selection of Victorian adverts – holidays, circuses etc. Ask students to make inferences about what these new leisure activities suggested about life in Victorian Britain. Push for responses about people having more money available, more free time, etc.

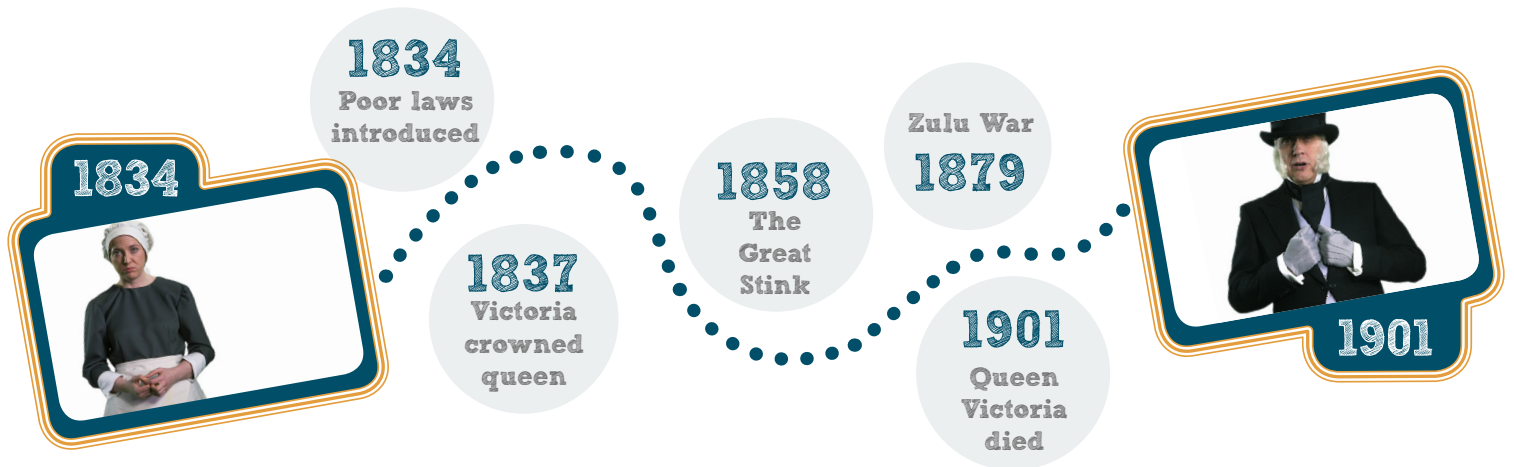
Then show, A visit to the music hall. The film features a Victorian woman from London talking about some of the museums they like to visit, followed by a description of a night at the music hall. As in the previous lesson, students will use the films in this lesson as a stimulus for independent or small group research. At the end of the film, ask students about the leisure activities mentioned in the film. How is this lady unusual? What evidence is there that music halls were available to everybody? What has changed here from, say, the experiences of people before the Industrial Revolution? Make a record of the music hall on the list of topics for further research.

Now play A day at the seaside. There is a wealth of detail here, about railways, travel companies, hotels and the growth of the seaside as a holiday destination. Again, note these things on the list of topics. Students might look in detail at the story of Southend-on-Sea in Essex, a town that was originally just the 'South end' of the village of Prittlewell, becoming a holiday destination in the 19th Century.

The last film to show, is Victorian sport – football. Though the film concentrates on football, it mentions other new sporting activities like tennis and one of the summary notes at the end links all this to the increase in leisure time. So now add football to the list of things for further research.

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Lesson 2 – How did Victorians make Britain happier? ...continued

Students will spend the next part of the lesson researching these leisure activities. As in the first lesson, ask students to turn the topics into questions that they will answer. The National Archives section mentioned above has a wealth of primary sources on these leisure activities.

End the lesson with a discussion of the lesson question: How did the Victorians make people happier? Is happier the right word? Could we come up with a better description of what changed in the 19th century in terms of leisure? You might link back to the first lesson about health and law enforcement as well here.

Lesson 3 – How did Victorians deal with the poor?

Films to use

- **Workhouse - part 1**
- **Workhouse - part 2; scandal**
- **Workhouse - part 3**

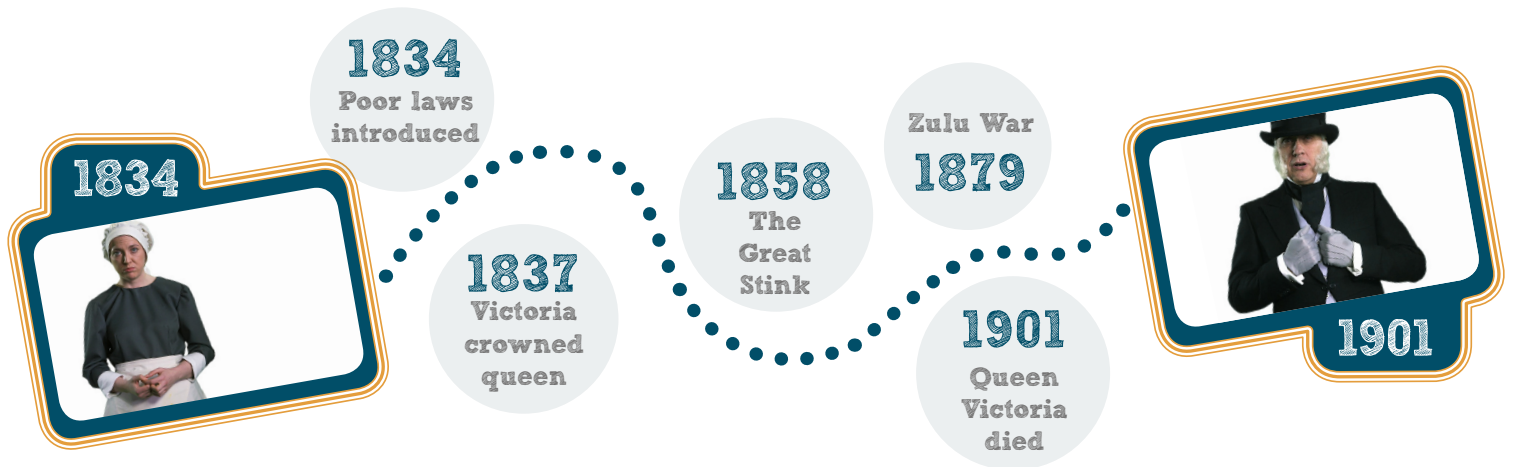
The workhouses are perhaps the trickiest section of this enquiry for students to make any kind of judgement on. Whilst clearly better health was a good thing and we can see the appeal of growing leisure time, the workhouse is not so clear cut. They were a harsh way to deal with individuals and families in dire need, yet they offered a bed and enough food. Though there were examples of terrible conditions, as in the Andover Workhouse scandal, the fact that it was a national scandal suggests that people cared that the poor were treated with some decency. In this lesson students will find out about the workhouses in more detail and begin to consider whether, in Victorian Britain at least, the Poor Law was a force for good.

You could start the lesson with the famous description of the workhouse from chapter two of Dickens' 'Oliver Twist'. Students might well be familiar with the musical version, so some discussion around that could also be fruitful. An alternative would be to begin by talking about what happens to people now if they lose their jobs and then going on to Dickens.

The first film here, Workhouse – part 1, offers the reasons why workhouses were established under the 1834 Poor Law, and an insight into conditions within.

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Lesson 3 – How did Victorians deal with the poor? ...continued

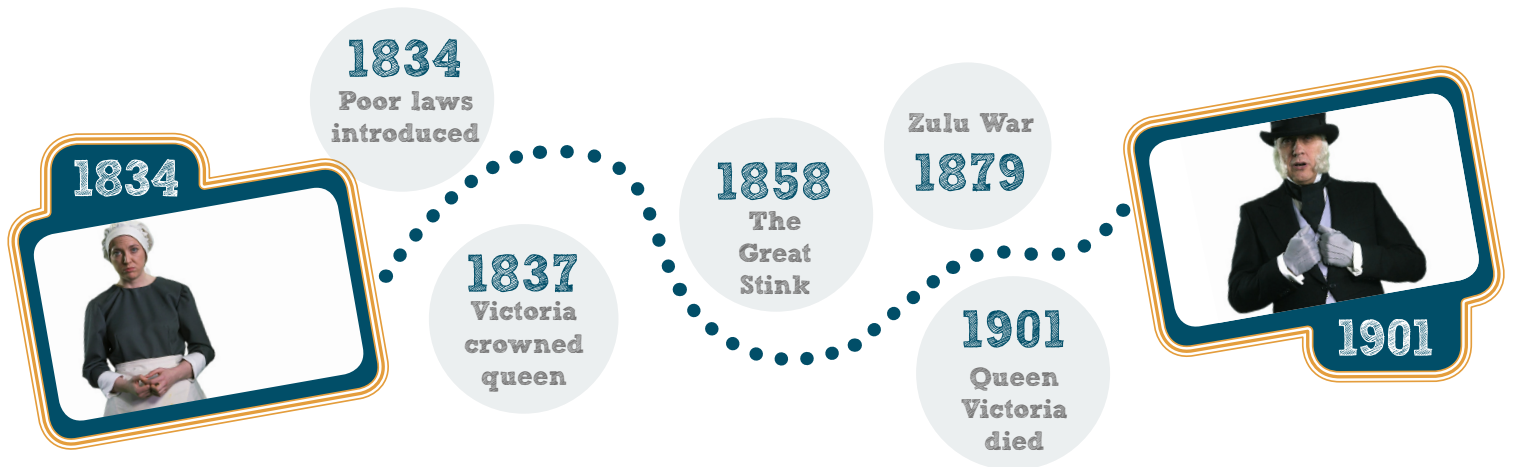
Show the film to the class and ask students to consider the positive and negative effects of the opening of a parish workhouse. Then go straight on to **Workhouse – part 3**, showing the view of someone living there. Now continue that same discussion. Has anything changed? Are the positives still there? Are the negatives worse? Finally, show **Workhouse – part 2; scandal**, which gives details about the Andover Workhouse Scandal of 1845. At the end, continue the same discussion as before and try to draw out the points noted above.

The independent research element here thus has a narrower focus on workhouses and the Andover Workhouse Scandal. However, students could also look at John Walter, the Times editor who campaigned against the Poor Law and reported on the Andover Workhouse. Indeed, he is the character in those two films.

At the end of this lesson the class should try to decide whether on balance the 1834 Poor Law was a force for good or not. They might think about who helped the poor in earlier periods and consider the extent to which this was better.

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Differentiation, assessment and reflection

Extension

There are a wealth of more challenging texts that could be offered to extend the work of higher achieving students. For example, they could be given extracts from, say, 'The Victorians' by Jeremy Paxman, a book that looks primarily at Victorian art, but offers fascinating insights into the way that Victorians saw their world.

The questions asked could also offer greater challenge. Students needing greater challenge might be asked about the degree to which things improved or to comment on the relative usefulness of the source material they used.

Scaffolding

Students needing support could be given more direct, factual questions to find answers to. They might also do this with a more limited range of material. Wikipedia articles are sometimes put into Simple English and thus present a shorter, more straightforward version of longer articles. Look at the difference between the following two Wikipedia examples:

1. **Wikipedia Workhouse** <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Workhouse> and
2. **Wikipedia Simple** <https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Workhouse>

Formative assessment opportunities

- Students could share their research and talk about the process of finding detail to answer their questions.
- Students might ask each other questions about their work, with the teacher noting from both questions and answers how far students' thinking has developed.

Reflection

At the end of the sequence of lessons, students will need to address the enquiry question: What did the Victorians do for us? One possibility is that small groups prepare a short presentation on the question. What will be important is for them to focus on the nature and extent of change in Victorian Britain, so they should be challenged to use precise language in their presentations. For example, they might suggest that 'Victorians transformed Britain', with the presentation showing how that was the case.

For a portrait of Sir Joseph Bazelgette, held in the National Portrait Gallery, [click here](#)