

## The Middle Class

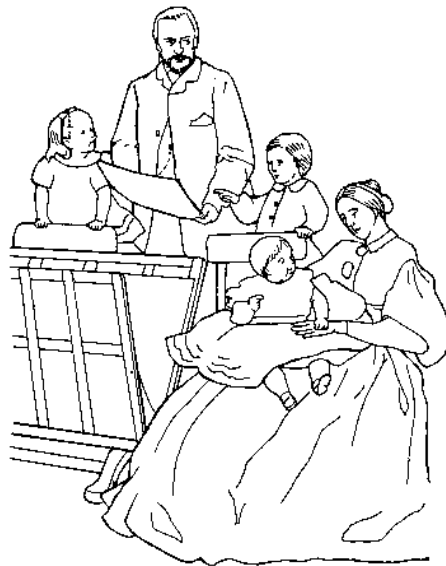
### Change

The Britain of 1900 was very different from the Britain of 1830.

Two of the biggest changes were

- 1 the population (the number of people living in the country) had grown
- 2 the country was wealthier.

Because of these two changes, the middle class was larger and more important at the end of Victoria's reign than it had been at the beginning.



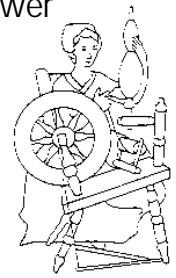
*A middle-class Victorian family*

### Respectable people

By 1900 about one family in five was middle class, and the numbers were growing all the time.

Some earned as much as £1000 a year, others as little as £50. But they did not do manual work (work with their hands), they had one or more servants and, above all, they tried to live respectable lives. They always wanted to behave and speak correctly, so they would not be mistaken for working class people.

The picture on this page shows an ideal (perfect) Victorian middle-class family. They are clean, tidy, and well-dressed; the children are well-behaved; the mother is gentle and loving; the strong, kind father is looking after them all! Do you think many families were really like that?



## Steam

### Measuring time

As you probably know, we measure the time each day in seconds, minutes and hours. 24 hours make a day. 365 days make a year. We call 100 years a century.

The first (1st) century after the birth of Jesus Christ we call the first century AD. It went from the year 1 AD to the year 100 AD. The 2nd century went from 101 AD to 200 AD. Normally we do not write the AD. The Victorian era was in the 19th century (1801–1900).

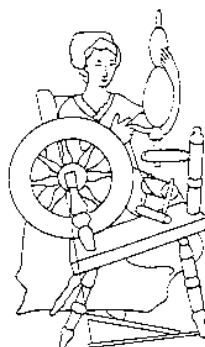
### Something to do

- 1 If there are 365 days in a year, how many days are there in a century?  
\_\_\_\_\_.
- 2 When did the tenth century begin and end? \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.
- 3 What century are we in now? \_\_\_\_\_.

### Horses, wind and water

Until the 18th century (1701–1800) there were no engines. The strongest power came from horses, the wind and water flowing in rivers and streams. The quickest way of travelling was by riding a horse or sailing in a ship. All ships were driven by sails. Heavy loads went in carts or in ships.

Large machines were powered by water or the wind. The most common machines were windmills and water mills. They ground (crushed) corn to make flour for bread. Small machines, like spinning wheels (for twisting wool to make thread) and looms (for weaving thread into cloth) were powered by people.



*A spinning wheel*

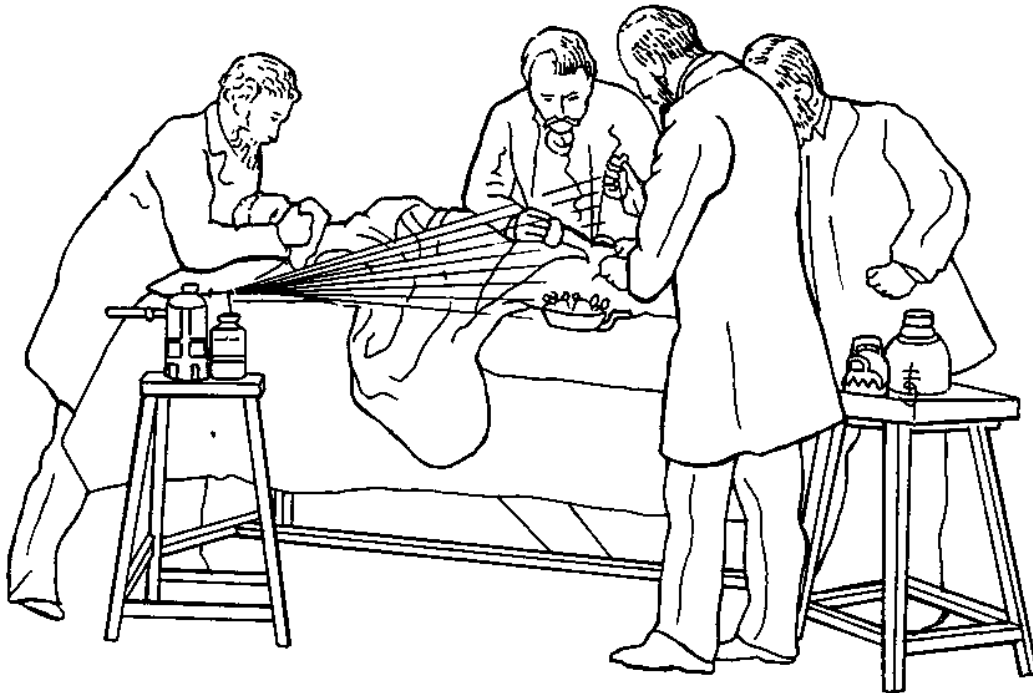
## Disease

### Health

One of the biggest changes between Victorian times and now is in people's health.

When Victoria became queen doctors knew very little about what caused illnesses. They did not know much about making people better, either. They did not know, for example, that there were such things as germs (the tiny, invisible creatures which can carry disease). Operations (making people better by cutting into their bodies) could not be done without pain. There were not enough doctors or hospitals, and treatment was expensive.

It is not surprising that many babies died before they were a year old, and adults often died before they reached the age of fifty.



*An early Victorian operation*

### Operations without pain

Before the 1840s operations had to be done as quickly as possible so that they did not hurt too much.

In 1842 an American doctor discovered that if patients breathed ether they became unconscious (as if they were asleep), and then difficult operations could be done on them without pain.



## Electricity

Could you imagine a world without electric power? No electric lights, heaters, trains, cars, washing machines, etc. That was the world before the Victorians.

One of their greatest inventions was how to generate (make) electricity so that everyone could use it. It was first used in lighthouses.

The first light bulbs were made by Americans, Edison and Swan, in 1880. The first British power station (place where electricity is generated) opened two years later.

## Cars, cameras, chemistry...

The list of Victorian inventions and scientific discoveries goes on and on. They

- learned more about the enormous universe and tiny atoms
- made artificial cloth (rayon) and plastics
- invented petrol and diesel engines
- built steam turbines (a new kind of steam engine) for ships
- discovered photography, made the first cameras and took the first photographs.

## What can you remember?

- 1 What is biology? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 What was the name of the ship in which Darwin sailed? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 What are X-rays used for? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 Why was a wireless telegraph given that name? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 5 Who invented the Morse code? \_\_\_\_\_
- 6 What is S in Morse code? \_\_\_\_\_
- 7 When was the first wireless message sent across the Atlantic? \_\_\_\_\_
- 8 What did the world learn about in 1879? \_\_\_\_\_
- 9 What does generate mean? \_\_\_\_\_