

Schooling: Activity 2a - School Treats

TEACHERS' NOTES

Learning Objectives

- Understand that treats were sometimes organised for children by their schools or Sunday schools
- Discuss and write about treats for Victorian children
- Develop children's research skills using historical sources, in particular retrieving information from text extracts supported by audio, to learn about school treats

Cross-curricular Links

- Literacy

Sources



Source 1a. Letter written by a schoolgirl describing a school treat in Petworth, 14th September, 1887



Source 1b. Audio version of Source 1a



Source 2a. Description of a 'Christmas Tree' treat for Billingshurst Sunday School, 2nd January, 1889



Source 2b. Audio version of Source 2a

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Source 1

This letter from a girl to her sister describes the sort of activities children would typically enjoy during a school treat. From the way the letter is written, it was obviously a big occasion for the children.

Points to note:

To get to the event, the children had to walk - they 'marched' to the park and then to the other venues.

Games:

Children played on swings, rocking horse and boats, they also played with skipping ropes, kites, and hoops with sticks.

They also played cricket, competed in races, and danced around the maypole.

'Wheelbarrow fashion' is a Wheelbarrow Race: one child walks on his hands while his partner holds his legs and walks behind.

Food:

The children were given bread with butter and jam, cake and tea to drink Later they were given a bun.

At the end of the day, there was a prize giving. They then listened to the National Anthem - 'God save the Queen' - before cheering 'Hurrah!'.

Source 2

This description of a Christmas tree party illustrates several important points:

- Food was a central part of treats organised for Victorian schoolchildren - they were given a substantial tea, and later a piece of cake and an orange.
- The children received gifts of gloves, mufflers, cardigans, shirts, etc., mostly useful things that their families might not have been able to afford.
- The party was organised by the 'Ladies of' the town who also provided the gifts and food, just as in Source 1 Lady Leconfield distributed (and probably contributed to) the prizes. In Victorian times, people who were well-off often felt it was their duty to help those who were poorer.