

Schooling: Activity 2 - Classroom and Lessons

TEACHERS' NOTES

Learning Objectives

- Understand that lessons and the equipment used in Victorian schools were different from today.
- Understand that lessons in National and Board schools generally covered a limited number of basic subjects, while children attending more expensive private schools had access to a wider range of subjects.
- Develop children's research skills, using historical sources, in particular advertisements for classroom equipment, a school timetable, and prospectuses for private schools, to learn about Victorian schools.

Cross-curricular links

- Art
- ICT
- Literacy
- Numeracy
- R.E.

Sources



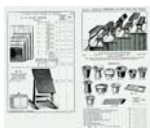
Source 1. West Wittering School Exterior, Weald and Downland Open Air Museum, Singleton



Source 2. West Wittering School Interior, Weald and Downland Open Air Museum, Singleton



Source 3. Abaci, from 'Scholars and Slates' by S. Johnson and K. Leslie



Source 4. Black Boards, School Seating, Inkwells, from 'Scholars and Slates' by S. Johnson and K. Leslie,



Source 5. Lyminster Board School Timetable, 1883



Source 6a. Extract from Kirshaw's *Guide to Worthing*, 1889



Source 6b. Audio version of 6a.



Source 7. Engraved Advertisement for Worthing College for Boys, c1870



Source 8. Engraved Advertisement for Seldenville Boarding and Day School for Young Ladies, East Worthing, c1895



Source 8b. Transcript of Source 8a



Source 8c. Audio version of Source 8a



Source 9. Picture of Queen Victoria, West Wittering School, Weald and Downland Open Air Museum, Singleton



Source 10. Picture of Christ, West Wittering School, Weald and Downland Open Air Museum, Singleton

Schooling: Activity 2 - Classroom and Lessons

TEACHERS' NOTES

Sources 1 and 2

These are modern colour photographs of the classroom at West Wittering School which has been rebuilt in the Weald and Downland Open Air Museum near Chichester.

There is one small schoolroom in West Wittering. The village, therefore, would only have had a small number of children to teach. Village schools would often only have one class and the same teacher would teach children of different ages in the same classroom.

Children sat in rows usually at long desks, and the boys were separated from the girls. Children would use slates, chalk, pens with nibs, pencils, ink and inkwells to write. The teacher would use white chalk to write information on the blackboard. This blackboard swings over so that it can be used on the other side.

Note the single window, and the stone-tiled floor.

Sources 1- 4

SCHOOL EQUIPMENT:

Abacus - helped children to count by sliding coloured discs along a column.

Globe - a sphere on which a map of the earth is shown. Used for lessons in Geography.

Furniture - wooden and iron materials used for desks and chairs. Class seating and furniture arrangements are different today.

Long wooden desks - a number of children are able to sit along one large desk.

Inkwells - the holes at the front of the desks are wells used to hold black ink. The children in the Victorian classroom would practise writing letters into a 'copybook' with a pen that was dipped in ink from the inkwell. Pens were fitted with scratchy, leaking nibs and children were punished for spilling ink which blotted their copybooks.

Slates - Children also learned to write on slates, they wrote on them with sharpened pieces of chalk. Paper was expensive, but slates could be used again and again. Children were supposed to bring sponges to clean them.

Teacher's Desk - placed at the front of the class.

Bell - to call children into the classroom in the morning or after playtime.

Ink Can - Each morning the ink monitor filled up the little clay inkwells and handed them round to the class from a tray.

Inkwell Tray - a tray containing a number of wells ready to be filled with ink.

Sources 5 and 6

Lyminster school timetable - Lessons taught: Religious instruction, Reading, Dictation, Writing, Grammar, Composition, Transcription (copying), Arithmetic, Geography, Singing, Object Lesson. Needlework for girls.

Guide to Worthing - mentions also "outlines of history and a few more popular sciences."

Victorian lessons concentrated on the '**Three Rs**' - **R**eading, **wR**iting and **aR**ithmetic.

Children learnt by reciting rules and poems aloud until they were word perfect.

They then had to pass inspections in maths, reading and writing before they could move up to the next class or 'standard'.

Science was sometimes taught as an object lesson. An object such as a snail, model of a tree, sunflower, stuffed dog, crystal, wheat or pictures of elephants and camels were placed on a child's desk. The object lesson was supposed to make children look at the item and then talk about what they saw in front of them. Sometimes, teachers, wrote lists describing the objects on the blackboard for the class to copy.

Sources 7 and 8

Worthing College for Boys and Seldenville Boarding and Day School for Young Ladies were private fee-paying school for middle class children. (Note: Worthing College was situated on the south side of Brighton Road, opposite Selden Lane; Seldenville Boarding School was at number 1 The Esplanade.)

Schools such as these generally taught a wider range of subjects than in National and Board Schols.

Worthing College for Boys: Mathematics, Greek, Latin, French, French Conversation, German, and Sports (rifle training, swimming), as well as 'General Education.'

Seldenville School for Girls: French, German, Music (Piano, Violin), and Art (drawing), as well as "Religious Training".

Main differences between schooling for the poor and for the rich

- Private school fees were much more expensive then the few pence a week every family paid to National Schools (until 1891 when schooling became free for the poor). Worthing College fees were between 60-80 Guineas a year; Seldenville School cost 30 Guineas a year.
- More subjects were taught in private fee-paying schools: foreign languages, arts, science and sport, over and above the 3 R's.
- Accommodation was usually very good in private boarding schools. Food, heating and cleaning costs were usually included in the fee.

Source 9

Queen Victoria in old age. Many classrooms displayed a picture of the monarch.

Source 10

Jesus Christ in a white robe. Christ, in traditional religious paintings, would usually be represented as dressed in white. The print of a painting by R. Hillingford is titled 'Christ Rebuked' (Mark Chapter 2 Verses 23-28, Question about the Sabbath). As many Victorians were practising Christians, most classrooms would display images of Christ or pictures from the Bible on their wall.

Comparisons with today

- Schools are larger today, with a wider age range of children, and more subjects taught.
- Modern schools have facilities such as a library, computer rooms, sports hall, dining hall, etc.
- Teaching materials and equipment are more technologically advanced today (computers, electronic whiteboards, access to the internet, DVDs, calculators, etc).
- Slates are no longer used although small whiteboards and marker pens are a modern equivalent.
- Children now usually have individual chairs rather than sharing a bench.
- There is now a better ratio of teaching staff to pupils.
- There is a greater multi-cultural environment in UK schools today.
- Classrooms today tend to have a selection of children's art work, photographs, posters, charts etc. on the walls.
- Lighting and heating were often poor in Victorian schools.

NOTE: This activity includes an additional theme that could be used as homework or a short classroom task:

2a School Treats

Children look at the sources and answer the questions on the Extension: School Treats Children's Activity Sheet.