

## Leisure: Activity 8 - The Great Exhibition **TEACHERS' NOTES**

See also Leisure Activity 6 - Outings

### Learning Objectives

- Discover what it would have been like for a child visiting the Great Exhibition on a school outing
- Appreciate the enormous public interest generated by such a massive and technologically advanced structure as the Crystal Palace, and by the wide range of multi-cultural exhibits from around the world
- Develop children's research skills in using historical sources, in particular engravings, advertisements, and text supported by audio

### Cross-curricular Links

- Art
- ICT
- English

### Sources



Source 1a. Summary of the *'Report of a Visit to the Great Exhibition by Children of Worthing and Broadwater National Schools on .. July 8, 1851'*.



Source 1b. Audio version of Source 1a



Source 2. Advertisement for W. Hardham, Pastry Cook and Confectioner, from *Phillipps's Hand-Book and Directory of Worthing, 1849*



Source 3. Southern entrance to the Crystal Palace, 1851



Source 4. South side exterior of the Crystal Palace, 1851



Source 5. Interior of the transept of the Crystal Palace, 1851



Source 6. Engravings from the *Great Exhibition*. Top left to right - Table cloth (Scotland); fork and spoon (England); statue of Victory (Germany). Middle left to right - table cloth (Scotland); set of vases (Scotland); cimitar and scabbard (England). Bottom - Grand piano (England).



Source 7. Engravings from the *Great Exhibition*. Top left to right - clock (England); chair (Austria); drinking jug (Germany). Middle left to right - set of vases (England); Osler's glass fountain (England). Bottom left - table (England).



Source 8. Engravings from the *Great Exhibition*. Top left to right - carpets (France); musical instruments (Germany). Middle left to right - candelabrum (Russia); iron bedstead (Spain). Bottom left to right - sleigh (USA); table (Italy).

Sources 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 are engravings from 'The Illustrated Catalogue of The Industry of All Nations 1851', published by George Virtue.

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The Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations, which opened on May 1<sup>st</sup> 1851, was organised by a Royal Commission, presided over by Prince Albert. Designed to showcase British manufacturing technology and skills, it also featured exhibits from many countries around the world. Almost 14,000 exhibitors displayed over 100,000 exhibits, covering a wide range of items including works of art, textiles and clothing, furniture, ornaments, machinery, and many other kinds of manufactured goods.

A competition was set up to design the building that would house the exhibition in Hyde Park. The winning design was by Joseph Paxton, inspired by a large conservatory he had built for the Duke of Devonshire. The Crystal Palace, as it came to be known, was impressive in size as well as design, being about 600 yards/560 metres long, 135 yards/124 metres wide, and 180 feet/32.9 metres tall at its highest point which was built around some 90-foot/27.4 metre tall elm trees. It was constructed almost entirely of iron and glass, with wood used only in the fittings and floorboards. A large part of the building was made of prefabricated units, and from design to completion took only nine months.

At the end of the exhibition, the building was dismantled and re-erected in Sydenham Hill, South London, where it continued to be used until it was destroyed by a fire in 1936. The area came to be known as Crystal Palace.

The exhibition was a huge success, with over six million visitors during the five and a half months it was open. Receipts were over £500,000, which more than covered the costs. The profits from the exhibition went towards the purchase of land in South Kensington and the founding of cultural institutions such as the Albert Hall, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Science Museum and the National History Museum.

### Sources 1 and 2

Items to note from the report:

-Like many of the more than 6 million people who visited the Great Exhibition, the Worthing schoolchildren travelled by train. Cheap day tickets could be bought, sometimes combined with an entrance ticket to the Exhibition.

-The journey took approximately two hours each way. It was a very long day out, leaving at six o'clock in the morning and returning home around 9.30pm, having spent about 11 hours in London.

-Many of the landmarks seen by the children on their steamboat journey on the River Thames would be enjoyed by visitors to London today: the Monument, St Paul's Cathedral, Somerset House, Houses of Parliament, St James' Park, Westminster Abbey, Buckingham Palace, Marble Arch, Apsley House (former residence of the Duke of Wellington), Hyde Park.

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### Sources 1 and 2 cont.

- The children were provided with a packed lunch by Worthing baker W. Hardham (see advertisement Source 2).
- The children were required to wear a label saying 'Worthing and Broadwater National Schools' in case they got lost. They were also counted on arrival at Worthing station to make sure all had arrived home safely.

### Sources 3, 4 and 5

These engravings give a good idea of the scale of the Crystal Palace. Designed by Sir Joseph Paxton, the building was a huge glasshouse (just over 600 yards/560 metres long), with cast-iron girders supporting around 400 tons/406 tonnes of glass. Parts of it were high enough to enclose a 90 foot/27.4 metre tall elm tree that was growing on the site (visible in Source 5).

During the time the exhibition was open - from May 1<sup>st</sup> to October 15<sup>th</sup> 1851 - over six million people visited the Crystal Palace.

### Sources 6, 7, and 8

These engravings show some of the exotic articles that were on display at the exhibition.

Almost 14,000 exhibitors from around the world displayed over 100,000 items, some of the main attractions being the Koh-i-Noor diamond (which came from India and was given to Queen Victoria in 1849), the Crystal Fountain (27 feet high and made from 4 tons of pure glass, see Source 7), and industrial machinery from Manchester (all mentioned in Source 1).