



The Victorian Poor

Lesson plan prepared by Seb Phillips, Cardinal Newman School

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| <i>Subject</i> | Victorian Poverty |
| <i>Year group</i> | 8 |
| <i>Learning intention</i> | To use and investigate a series of primary sources To ask and answer questions, using evidence from a range of sources |
| <i>Organisation</i> | Introduction/Plenary: whole class Main activity: small groups (mixed ability) Plenary: whole class |
| <i>Differentiation</i> | Sources available in a variety of difficulties |
| <i>Resources available</i> | The following resources for this lesson are available from www.letterintheattic.org (follow link to education pack): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Seven case-notes from the Mendicity Society, describing applications for poor relief in Brighton in the 1870s</i> • <i>Transcripts of the case-notes</i> • <i>Background notes for teachers: Victorian Poor Relief in Brighton</i> The letters are displayed on the interactive white board. Copies of the letter are also printed and distributed to the students. |
| <i>Preparation</i> | You may wish to read the background information about the Mendicity Society which is available at: www.mybrightonandhove.org.uk/mendicity |
| <i>Introduction</i> | <i>Tell the students that a series of documents concerning the Brighton Mendicity Society have been added to the Letter in the Attic website. The documents have been 'transcribed', but they are not one hundred per cent clear and are open to interpretation. Today, the students will be having a look at these documents and forming their own opinions.</i> You may want to show the Letter in the Attic website at www.letterintheattic.org (follow the links to the catalogue and online exhibition) and explain about the project. |
| <i>Main teaching</i> | Skill 1: Data extraction Once the background information has been discussed, students are then given ten minutes (roughly) to see what |

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| | <p>information they can extract from the sources. Teachers can make suggestions such as "name, date, residence, occupation". The aim is that they get familiar with the documents.</p> <p>Any words that the group do not understand should be written on the whiteboard. At the end of this first section, the teacher then explains/discusses what these words mean.</p> <p>Students should also feed back their initial impressions - do they know the streets mentioned in these documents?</p> |
| <i>Group work</i> | <p>Skill 2: Investigation and inference</p> <p>Working more closely with these sources, the students have to extract further information, but also draw conclusions about other aspects of poor law in Brighton. This should be drawn on suggestions coming from the students, but can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What common factors can be seen among the Brighton poor (family size, low wages, etc)?</i> • <i>Are there any events which seem to drive people into poverty (sickness, accident and redundancy)?</i> • <i>How does the society judge who gets relief?</i> <p>Teachers can support this by creating a list of details they wish to see extracted. This should be done to support the work that the group is undertaking in the wider scheme of work (for example, if they are studying the role of women, the teacher can direct them to look at things like family size, the role of women, the ages of the children when they start working.)</p> <p>At the end of this section, students need to feed back what they have found out, comparing cases with each other. The teacher leads towards the two big questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What does this tell us about Victorian poverty in Brighton?</i> • <i>How useful are these sources? How have the students found working with them?</i> |
| <i>Plenary</i> | <p>Discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would these individuals be dealt with today? • What has changed in the past 100 years? |
| <i>Application</i> | <p>Either in a follow up lesson, or for homework, students should be encouraged to transform the information they have discovered into a different format. For example:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students could create a poster advertising the work of the Mendicity Society, stating clearly who should apply, and what help might be available. 2. Students could work in groups to create an interview with the Board of the Mendicity Society, asking their opinions about the poor. Although the Society is charitable, students should be able to demonstrate |

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| | <p>that even these people were very hard on the poor. Only industrious paupers need apply, and even then they might have to spend three years campaigning for a new pair of shoes.</p> <p>3. Using the information they have learned about sources of poor relief in Brighton, students might look at other groups which do similar work today - for example, St Josephs night shelter, the DHSS, or the organisation which evolved from the Mendicity Society, the Brighton Money Advice and Community Support Service (MACS). How have things changed?</p> <p>4. If students are preparing for an assessment on a theme such as 'How poor were the Victorian poor?' the examples they have gathered here would count as 'own research'. As levels 7/8 of the National Curriculum demand examples of independent work, this could be really helpful.</p> |
| <i>Assessment opportunities/evidence</i> | <p>Discussion with children during focussed teaching.</p> <p>Questions created by students for use in further local history lessons</p> |

QueenSpark Books

Contact the project via www.letterintheattic.org or www.queensparkbooks.org.uk

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