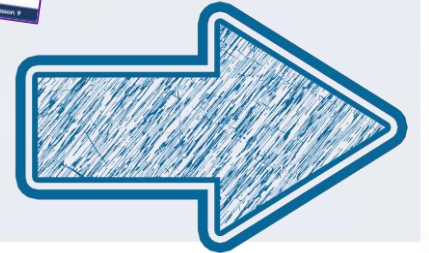


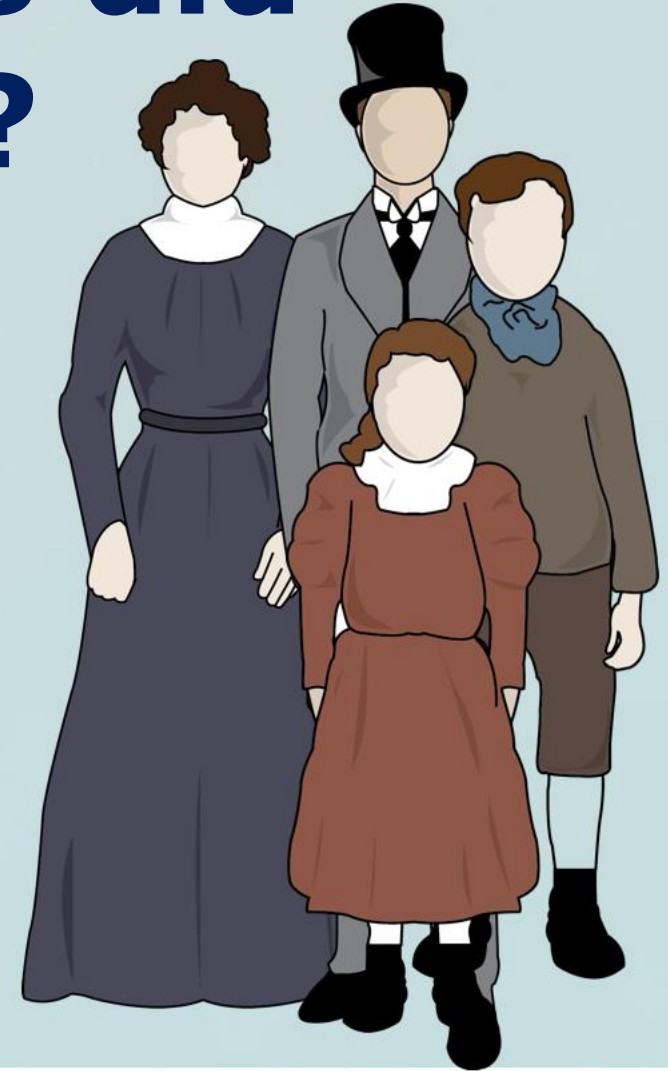
What kind of clothes did the Victorians wear?



What kind of clothes did the Victorians wear?

Objectives

- To use historical sources to make observations about Victorian clothing
- To compare clothes for rich and poor people from Victorian times
- To design a Victorian sewing sampler



History Detectives

Have a look at the lady in the photograph.

Compared to the kind of clothes that many women wear today, what do you notice about her:

- Clothes?
- Accessories?

Does what she is wearing give you any clues about what her lifestyle might have been like?



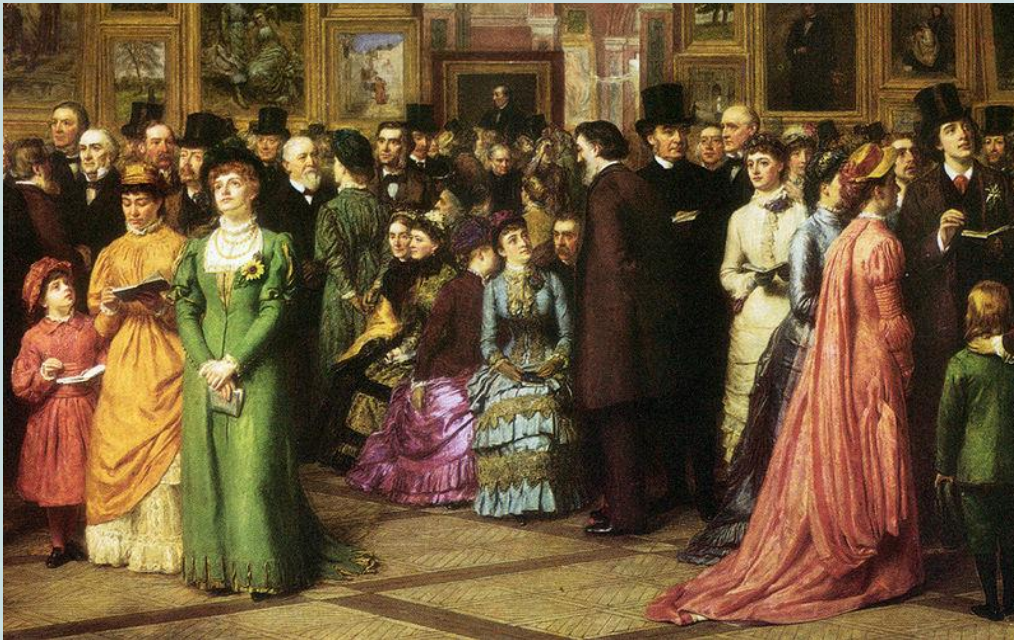
Photograph ©KS2history



Clothes: Rich or Poor

In Victorian times people's attitudes towards clothing were quite different from today. What people wore showed quite a lot about their lifestyle. The photographs you have seen mostly show middle class people, but there were many other people in Victorian times who were much richer or poorer.

As a general rule, **you could tell how rich or poor somebody was from their clothing.** Look at these two paintings and try to summarise the differences between the clothing you can see.



A Private View at the Royal Academy, 1881 (William Powell Frith)

Image source: Wikimedia Commons / Public Domain



The Widower (Sir Luke Fildes)

Image source: Wikimedia Commons / Public Domain



Clothes: Poorer People

People who were poor **did not own many clothes**. Their everyday outfits would have to **last as long as possible** and if they became torn or ripped, the clothes would be patched up and mended. For this reason **girls were taught how to sew from being a young age**. There were no washing machines but women washed the family clothes by hand using a wash tub, washboards and a wooden tool called a dolly.

Many people wore clothes in **dark colours, made from cotton or wool**. Children's clothes were often passed down different family members. Most children had one smarter outfit called their 'Sunday best', which would be saved for wearing to church.

Clothes for the poor **had to be functional** so that the wearers could do their work easily. Poorer **women often wore long-sleeved dresses, a shoulder shawl** made of wool and **bonnets or caps**. Men often wore clothes that suited the kind of work they **did, or they bought clothes from second hand shops**. **People** only wore shoes if they could afford them, and many poor people (especially children) walked around with bare feet, even outside.



Clothes: Richer People

For richer people, **clothes were more about fashion and demonstrating status** than being functional or needing to last a long time.

Middle class women wore dark coloured dresses or blouses and skirts and many middle class men wore suits and hats.

The **wealthiest women had elaborate outfits** consisting of many layers and they sometimes needed a maid to help them dress. Underneath, they would wear a **corset** (a very tight under garment designed to shape the woman's figure at the waist). The skirts on the dresses were made to be very wide and were shaped underneath by **metal hooped petticoats** or linen '**crinolines**'. To finish the outfit, they would sometimes add **bustles or ruffles to the top of the dress**.

Many **rich men wore smart suits**, waistcoats and top hats (even indoors).

Wealthy children very often wore simplified **miniature versions of adult outfits**.



Recap: What might they have worn?

Give examples of the types of clothes the following people might have worn:

A poor 4-year-old boy

A rich gentleman

A wealthy lady

A working man

A poor lady

A rich boy

A middle-class lady

A poor teenage girl

Useful words:

Shawl: a shoulder covering

Bonnet: a type of women's hat

Corset: a tight undergarment that shapes a woman's figure at the waist

Crinoline: a heavy underskirt worn under a dress to shape the skirt

See photographs of these items here:

<https://artsandculture.google.com/favorite/group/oAJyxC2TY79TIA>



- Choose one of the people from the Victorian times and draw and label what they may have worn. You can choose to draw either a rich or a poor person. You can always do some further research if required.

Spot Check



List **3** ways in which Victorian clothing was **different** to the type of clothes you wear today.

List **3** ways in which it is **similar**.

