

## Mitchell and Kenyon DVD Collection teacher notes

### Victorian middle class life c1900

#### Who were the middle classes?

##### Objective

To gain an understanding of what made the middle classes the middle classes and how they were different from the working classes.

##### Suggested films

###### **606: *Sheffield United v Bury (1902)***

This film shows a football match and contains detailed shots of the crowd. This provides a very clear view of a working class gathering which helps to differentiate between the different social groups.

###### **246: *Panoramic View of the Morecambe Sea Front (1901)***

This film was shot from a tram travelling along the Morecambe seafront. Morecambe was a respectable holiday resort favoured by the middle classes.

###### **525: *University Procession on Degree Day, Birmingham (1901)***

The film shows students from Birmingham University on their graduation day. There are male and female students. By 1901 the better-off middle class families could send their children to university. A relatively small number of working class students might be able to afford it through special scholarships for bright students.

##### Lesson ideas

##### [Worksheet](#)

- Start by asking students to watch film 606. Ask them to say whether they think this is a working class or middle class crowd. Get them to identify their reasons. These might include observations about dress, general behaviour, and the nature of the event.
- Now watch film 246. Tell students this is a middle class holiday resort and ask them to identify as many features as possible which give this away.
- Consolidate what has been learnt by making a list of differences between the middle class and working class gatherings shown in these films.
- Now show film 525. Ask students again to explain why this group is likely to be mainly middle class people. Discuss what advantages a university education will bring these

graduates, covering areas such as future job prospects and earnings (which will directly affect future health and probably longevity).

- Conclude the exercise by asking students either to write a paragraph or draw a cloud diagram which sets out clearly how and why they would be able to tell middle class and working class Victorians apart if they suddenly found themselves in a Victorian street.

## How well did the middle classes live?

### Objective

To consider the nature and intent of various representations of Victorian middle class life.

### Suggested films

#### **246: *Panoramic View of the Morecambe Sea Front (1901)***

This film was shot from a tram travelling along the Morecambe seafront. Morecambe was a respectable holiday resort favoured by the middle classes, and this film demonstrates that they had the leisure time and spending power to enjoy the seaside.

#### **746: *Race for the Muriatti Cup, Manchester (1901)***

This film gives an example of the new and exciting leisure pursuit of motoring. Motor vehicles were very rare and very expensive. Even here the main featured vehicles are motorised tricycles! Only the more wealthy members of the middle class would have been able to afford this hobby.

### Lesson ideas

#### [Worksheet](#)

Start by showing students some representations of middle class Victorian life in art or literature. A good starting point for Victorian paintings can be found at the Victorian Web (<http://www.victorianweb.org/painting/paintingov.html>). The novels of Dickens or the writings of Thomas Carlyle make good literary starting points.

- From these sources ask students to extract a list of key features of Victorian middle class life. You might devise categories such as property, work, family relationships, relations with servants and so on.
- Now play a selection of films (perhaps even a random selection) and see how far the films provide similar or contrasting views of the middle classes.
- Finally, ask students to consider the issues of film sources as evidence, and discuss how these considerations do or do not apply to the other sources explored as representations of Victorian middle class life.

## What did the middle classes do for fun?

### Objectives

Students often tend to have a view of the Victorian period as stuffy or even grim and depressed. The main aims of this lesson are to present the lighter side of Victorian life and some comparisons between life in 1900 and today.

### Suggested films

#### **527: *Comic Pictures in High Street, West Bromwich (1902)***

One event which both working class and middle class audiences enjoyed was a film show! The latter part of this film shows an advertisement to encourage people to come and see films being shot in their area.

#### **291: *Whitsuntide Fair at Preston (1906)***

People from all social groups loved fairs. There was no home entertainment like TV or radio in the early 1900s. The fair provided rides, stalls, games and entertainments like acrobats and film shows. It was also an opportunity to dress up, meet friends and flirt with the opposite sex. There was usually a fair bit of drinking as well.

#### **246: *Panoramic View of the Morecambe Sea Front (1901)***

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### Lesson ideas

#### [Worksheet](#)

- Start by showing film 527 all the way through. Then show the film again and pause at the section which shows that the films being taken will be on show to a paying audience. Now ask the students whether they think the people in the film knew they were being filmed for this purpose and whether this makes the film a less useful historical source for finding out about what Victorians considered to be fun.
- Follow this up by asking students how they behave today when a camcorder is pointed at them!
- Now show film 246 and then 291. Ask students to list all the activities, stalls and entertainments shown in the films. Then ask them to say how many of these are still found at holiday resorts and funfairs. Finally, ask them to consider what features of modern holiday resorts and fairs are not found in the film.
- You could get students to follow up this line of research by looking at websites on Victorian leisure. Excellent starting points are 'Victorian Britain: a happy nation?' (<http://www.learningcurve.gov.uk/victorianbritain/happy/default.htm>) and 'Victorian fun and games' (<http://www.logicmgmt.com/1876/funandgames.htm>).



## Representations of Victorian middle-class life: how accurate are they?

### Objective

To consider the nature and intent of various representations of Victorian middle class life.

### Suggested films

**291:** *Whitsuntide Fair at Preston* (1906)

**617:** *Halifax Catholic Procession* (c 1905)

**746:** *Race for the Muriatti Cup, Manchester* (1901)

These films are all faithful records of particular features of middle-class life. They could be used to compare and contrast with other representations from art or literature.

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Finally, ask students to consider the issues of film sources as evidence, and discuss how these considerations do or do not apply to the other sources explored as representations of Victorian middle class life.