

Mitchell and Kenyon DVD Collection teacher notes

Progress 1850–1900?

Progress: Work and industry

Objective

To encourage students to use their contextual knowledge along with new knowledge and new primary source material in the form of the films.

Suggested films

28: *Messrs Lumb and Co Leaving the Works, Huddersfield (1900)*

58: *Pendlebury Colliery (1901)*

59: *Alfred Butterworth and Sons, Glebe Mills, Hollinwood (1901)*

All of these films show essentially the same basic scene – large numbers of employees leaving large factories or works of some sort. They provide us with a view of the people who worked in these businesses. They help us to assess the age and gender balance of workers. They allow us to compare earlier static images and descriptions with living, breathing examples of workers around 1900. Although it is a subtle process, with suitable prompting students should be able to see that for the majority of workers life had improved by 1900. Life was still very hard by modern standards, but most workers had better pay, better working conditions and more leisure time and disposable income than their counterparts in 1850.

Lesson ideas

Worksheet

Start with a brainstorm session asking students to recall some of the main features of working conditions around 1850. You may need to prompt them with references to women and children working, hours, wages and so on. Students should also think about the working environment – large mills, cities shrouded in smoke and grime from coal fires, the problem of sewage and pollution. They should also try to remember the improvements which had started to take place by 1850, most notably the Mines and Factory Acts. You may wish to use a small selection of web sources such as: Spartacus

(<http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/IRchild.main.htm>), Gladstone Pottery Museum

(<http://www2002.stoke.gov.uk/museums/gladstone/gpminf46.htm>) or the more detailed

Victorian Manchester (<http://raq2168.uk2net.com/history/victorian/Victorian1.html>). Build up a picture using a mind map or similar device on the board and ask students to keep a copy.

- Now ask students to examine film 28 closely and see if they can see anything which suggests that life has changed (for better or worse) or stayed the same for industrial workers.
- Now introduce some new information about life in Britain around 1900:
 - By 1900 most ordinary working class men had the vote. A large number of them belonged to trade unions which helped to get better wages and working conditions.
 - By 1900 most local authorities were responsible for services such as clean water and sewage. This brought massive improvements. However, the main fuel was still coal so air pollution was still widespread, although most people were so used to it they rarely complained!
 - By 1900 the majority of working class people were much healthier and wealthier than they had been in 1850, although a significant percentage (around 25 to 30 per cent) still suffered from terrible poverty.
 - The Factory Act of 1891 gave women four weeks off work after having a baby and employers had to keep their jobs available.
 - Very large numbers of women still worked in mills, just as they had done in 1850, even though reformers of the 1830s to 1850s wanted to greatly reduce female labour.
 - By the early 1900s children under 12 were not allowed to work in factories. They had to be in school.
- Ask students whether they can recall anything from film 28 which suggests any of these changes.
- Repeat this process for films 58 and 59.
- Ask students to write a short script for one of the films as though it is being used in a documentary. Their aim is to explain to the viewer how their film shows that there had been progress in terms of living and working conditions between 1850 and 1900.

Progress: Education

Objective

To study how far the Mitchell and Kenyon films suggest that progress had been made in education in Britain since 1850.

Suggested films

266: *Audley Range School, Blackburn* (c1904)

269: *Special March Past of St Joseph's Scholars and Special Parade of St Matthew's Pupils, Blackburn* (1905)

Both of these films give a very clear indication of how far schooling had come since the 1850s. Elementary (primary) education was now compulsory and was organised by local authorities. Schools were permanent buildings. The curriculum was limited – basic skills, a lot of physical exercise with the emphasis on drill and discipline. From 1906 schools provided free meals and also free medical inspections for children. In many areas churches charities continued to play an important role in education, either actually running schools or helping out less fortunate children where possible.

Lesson ideas

Worksheet

- A good starting point for looking at developments in education is the Spartacus website (<http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/education.htm>). From here students can see that education for working class children in 1850 could be very good or very bad. A good example of this was the Dame school. Dame schools were usually run by elderly women in their homes. For a small fee these schools might provide a sound basic education. On the other hand, many were little more than places to dump children while parents worked.
- Contrast this image with the picture of schooling provided in films 266 and 269. Ask students to consider these issues:
 - Is there a proper school building?
 - Are the children well dressed?
 - Is it possible to tell whether they are well fed?
 - Do they seem to have proper organisation and activities?
 - What age are the oldest children?
 - Was it better for these children to be at school than working?
 - As a follow up, students could return to the Spartacus site and look at other types of schools in 1850 and the developments which led from the uneven provision in 1850 to the more uniform provision of the early 1900s.

Leisure

Objective

Students tend to associate working class Victorian life with misery and hardship. The aim of this session is to show that there was another side to life as well.

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.

772: *Sedgwick's Bioscope Show Front (1901)*

Another highlight of the social calendar was the funfair, especially if there was a film-maker around to add extra interest by getting the crowd and the performers to help him perform a simple illusion. The crowd's involvement would make it more likely they would come back and pay to watch the show that night!

200: *Blackpool Victoria Pier (1904)*

Cheap railway travel and rising prosperity meant that most working class families in the north of England could afford occasional days out to Blackpool. Sometimes the employer organised such days. Blackpool was a favourite of the working classes. Morecambe and Southport were generally seen as being a bit more respectable.

606: *Sheffield United v Bury (1902)*

Professional football was one of the most popular pastimes in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Huge crowds watched football matches and players were heroes, just like today. Unlike almost any other sport, football was a true business with professional players and fulltime coaches and managers.

155: *Dewsbury v Manningham (1902)*

Rugby was another popular sport. In 1895 rugby split into Rugby Union and Rugby League. League was predominantly a northern sport, formed because the players could not afford to play without being paid. Rugby Union preferred to keep the game amateur.

Lesson ideas

- Start by showing film 527 all the way through. Then show it 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 772. Get students to describe the scenes using the guidance in the section 'Attentive observation' in '[Mitchell and Kenyon films as historical sources](#)'. Having established what is happening at face value, ask students to think about what is really happening. Is the whole exercise a ruse by the film-maker? Even if it is, what does this tell us about the leisure time and spending power of the Victorian working classes?
- Now show film 200. Ask students to list all the activities, stalls and entertainments shown in the films. Then ask how many of these are still found at holiday resorts and funfairs. Finally, ask them to consider features of modern holiday resorts and fairs which are not found in the film.
- Next, study films 606 and 155. What conclusions can be drawn from the size of the crowd, the organisation of the fixture, the scale of the stadium?
- You could get students to follow up this line of research by looking at websites on Victorian leisure. An excellent starting point is 'Victorian Britain: a happy nation?' (<http://www.learningcurve.gov.uk/victorianbritain/happy/default.htm>).