Activity Pack: Victorian Housing

The following activities focus on housing conditions in Victorian England, using original sources from the Harris Museum in Preston, which can be found in the [companion pack of documents](http://www.mylearning.org/victorian-homes-in-preston/p-/resource/1969/).

**Curriculum links:**   
KS2 History – Local History Study  
(This resource was originally designed for the QCA History unit 11 – *What was it like for Children Living in Victorian Britain*.)

**This resource was developed with the Harris Museum & Art Gallery in Preston. The museum provides a facilitated Victorians workshop. Find out more via:** [**www.harrismuseum.org.uk/learning**](http://www.harrismuseum.org.uk/learning)

**Lifestyles – rich and poor**

**Documents:**   
Image of Whinfield House (document 2)

This 'To Let' advert for Whinfield House was published in the *Preston Guardian* on 15 April 1882.What does it tell you about the lifestyle of the people who lived there?

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| ASHTON-UPON-RIBBLE, PRESTON. - TO BE LET, for a term of years, the charming residence “WHINFIELD,” situate on the banks of the Ribble. The residence contains four entertaining rooms, eight bedrooms, the usual offices, extensive gardens, hothouses, conservatories, vineries, ample stable accommodation, with gardener’s and coachman’s cottages, together with four acres of pasture land. Whinfield is of recent construction, admirably designed, and one of the most beautiful suburban residences in Lancashire.  – For cards to view and terms, apply to Mr. JOSEPH HARDING, Lune Street, Preston. |

Compare the description of Whinfield House with Edwin Waugh's description of a widow's house in Hope Street below. Underline the words that describe what each house is like.

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| ‘When we got to the lower end of Hope Street, my guide stopped suddenly, and said, ‘Oh, this is close to where that woman lives whose husband died of starvation.’  Leading a few yards up the bystreet, he turned into a low, narrow entry, very dark and damp. Two turns more brought us to a dirty, pent-up corner, where a low door stood open. We entered there. It was a cold, gloomy-looking little hovel. In my allusion to the place last week I said it was ‘scarcely four yards square.’ It is not more than three yards square. There was no fire in the little rusty grate.  The day was sunny, but no sunshine could ever reach that nook, nor any fresh breezes disturb the pestilent vapours that harboured there, festering in the sluggish gloom. In one corner of the place a little worn and broken stair led up to a room of the same size above, where, I was told, there was now some straw for the family to sleep upon.  But the only furniture in the house, of any kind, was two rickety chairs and a little broken deal table, reared against the stairs, because one leg was gone. A quiet-looking, thin woman, seemingly about fifty years of age, sat there, when we went in. She told us that she had buried five of her children, and that she had six yet alive, all living with her in that poor place.’ |

* This account was written in 1862, during a time known as the Cotton

Famine:  
- Can you find out more about the Cotton Famine?   
- What impact did it have on the cotton workers of Preston?

* Use the format of the advertisement for Whingate House to write a ‘to let’ ad for the worker’s cottage in Hope Street.

**Use census information to discover how people lived**

**Documents:**1861 census returns for Queen Street (document 5 )   
Winckley Square (document 6)

Winckley Square and Queen Street are two very different parts of Preston. Use the census to find out more about the people living in those streets.

* How many males and how many females lived in the Queen Street/ Clarksons Court households? Compare these numbers with those of the people living in the houses in Winckley Square. What do you notice?
* How many of the women in Winckley Square are working and how many in Queen Street? Are any of the working women married? Do they have children?
* Compare the jobs the heads of the households in the two streets are doing. What are the differences?
* What age is the youngest working child in Queen Street? What is her job?
* How many people live in each house. What is the maximum number of people in one house?
* Why do you think there are so many people sharing one house? Are the reasons the same for people in Queen Street and Winckley Square?
* What is Thomas Miller’s job? Can you find out more about him?

**Activity:**

The houses in Queen Street/Clarkson’s Court were very similar to thecottages you have looked at already in document 1a.

The measurements of the rooms are given in the plan of the cottages (document 1b).

* The front room measured 2.87m x 4.18m
* The back room was 1.95m x 3.51m
* The yard was 3.44m x 4.18m.   
  In addition to the ground floor rooms, there would have been two more rooms of approximately the same size on the first floor.

Use string or tape to mark out the size of two rooms on the floor. Work out where all members of the household would have slept and act out a scene in this space.

**Discuss it:**

Queen Street was similar to the street pictured in document 1a and it was mentioned in Rev Clay’s 1842 *Report on the Sanitary Conditions of Preston* as being among the worst streets in Preston at the time.

* How might the filthy environment and overcrowding have affected the health of the people living in these houses? Use the facts in document 8 document 9 in your discussion.

**Take it further:**

* Would conditions have been the same for rich and poor people?
* Find out more about Winckley Square and the people who lived there in Victorian times on [www.winckleysquare.org.uk](http://www.winckleysquare.org.uk)
* Find Queen Street, Hope Street, Winckley Square and Whinfield (Ashton Park) on a modern map of Preston. Compare this map with a map from Victorian times, e.g. the OS First Edition Map of Preston from c. 1890 and/or Brown's Map of 1889, which you can find online at [www.lancashire.gov.uk/environment/oldmap](http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/environment/oldmap). What has changed?
* Can you find out more about how towns in Victorian times dealt with waste and sewage?
* Develop a class role play in which half pupils play people who live in Queen Street and the other half those who live in Winckley Square.   
    
  - Give out roles based on the census information (e.g. a widow with five children, a thirteen-year-old weaver, a cotton manufacturer, a butler, a kitchen maid etc.).   
    
  - Ask pupils to think about what the people from these two different parts of town would be doing on a typical day. Would they ever meet each other?