

Most British people in the 19th century were often aware that they were living in a revolutionary age. They were excited by their world. Britannia 'ruled the waves' and they were surrounded by change. That wasn't the same for the poor working class, for who just staying alive was a struggle.

The Industrial Revolution brought factories, mines and machinery. Towns grew rapidly and with them came slums as well as elegant city centres. Steam trains and the Royal Mail made communication easier. There were massive advances in medicine and public health. Political and social reforms changed people's lives



By 1850 there was a new wave of confidence. The Victorians thought that, even if their society was not yet perfect, they were just about to achieve perfection. They believed in self-help, and emphasised strict morals.

By 1851, British society had become divided into social classes:

- The aristocracy, who were powerful and wealthy.
- The middle-class, who ran the businesses, were ambitious and growing in wealth.
- The poor - in the villages, in the towns and working in the factories and mills, or as servants in the homes of the rich – were very poor.

For the **upper class** children, life was fairly easy.

- Which family you were born into meant more than how much money you had.
- A rich baby boy had male tutors and nannies, then went to a public school such as Eton or Harrow. He would likely finish his education at Oxford or Cambridge university. They were expected to gain the experience necessary to take a leading role in society.
- Girls were usually educated at home by a governess, learning about literature, languages, music and art and embroidery but their studies were intended to prepare them to support their husbands when they were married, not to have work of their own.

The eldest son inherited his father's estates and hereditary titles such as Lord or Earl. Many younger sons went into the army where they would pay a sum of money to receive an officer rank to keep away from the fighting. Other younger sons went into the Church as a priest or vicar.





The Middle Class

Many middle-class people aspired to join the upper-classes. Wealthy middle-class businessmen would socialise with the upper class aristocracy. Some even managed to be awarded a knighthood by performing an act of great charity. This meant they were able to join the upper-classes just like Sir Titus Salt.

Many middle-class boys went to grammar schools, or second-rank public schools, where they played healthy games and sports. They also studied Latin, Greek and Ancient History. Girls increasingly went to school but they were still expected to put their effort into getting a husband and learning how to run a home—no jobs for middle class women just yet.

Many middle-class people were 'self-made men', who had created their wealth through success in business. Very few women worked, although some supported their husbands running shops and small businesses.

Many took a keen interest in politics and became town councillors or Poor Law guardians, Titus Salt became the Lord Mayor of Bradford. Many were 'do-gooders', who believed in teetotalism and 'temperance' (not drinking alcohol). They saw this behaviour as beneath them.



Behaviour in a typical middle-class family was 'proper'. Children called their fathers 'sir' and spent most of their time with their nannies. Many middle-class people believed that a mother's job was to stay at home and be 'the angel in the house' ie tell the servants and tradesmen what to do.

The middle-classes held 'Victorian values' – religion, patriotism, duty, charity, modesty, cleanliness, self-improvement and hard work.



Thursday Reading

L.O. To retrieve information and to compare and contrast texts.

Quick starters:

1. Find and copy a word that means a change in the way things are.

2. Name two jobs undertaken by the young men of upper class families.

3. Religion, patriotism, modesty, cleanliness, self-improvement and hard work were all classed as showing what?

4. Which class were ambitious, ran factories and mills and were wealthy?

Going a little deeper

5. The text calls many middle class people “do-gooders”. What do you think that means?

6. What two things made communication easier in the 1800’s? Why were they important?

7. Compare the roles of women in upper and middle class families.

From what you have read today and over the last week, complete the table describing the lives of boys in the upper, middle and lower classes.



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