



Edwardian Schools – How were we taught

What was school like 100 years ago?

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Introduction

Life at school in the Edwardian era was very different to how it is now. These photographs can tell us a lot about how children were taught at the beginning of this century.

These children were in fact quite lucky, as they were at school and not working. Until 1918 it was legal for children over 9 years old to work for a living. In 1918 this was raised to 12 years old.

Edwardian schools were similar in a lot of ways to modern ones. Classes were taken in the 3 R's (Reading, Writing and Arithmetic) and there were also physical education lessons. Girls were generally also taught how to cook, clean and run a house properly.

In addition to their normal lessons, young people also usually attended Sunday School, which was often taught by their classroom teachers.

Tasks

Look at Source 1

1. This is a photograph taken at Boys Home Industrial School in 1910. Can you find:
 - a) the master's desk
 - b) a framed photograph
 - c) any evidence of heating and lighting

Look at Source 2

2. This is a photograph of boys from the Boys Home Industrial School studying and playing dominoes. Can you explain:
 - a) what the classroom might have been like in the winter.
 - b) how what is on the wall is different from your classroom.
 - c) why the windows are so large

Look at Source 3

3. This is a photograph of a physical exercise display. It was taken on Founders Day at the Boys Home Industrial School in about 1910. Can you describe:
 - a) the uniform the boys are wearing
 - b) the equipment they are using
4. How different is this school to the school you are at today? Make a list of the things that are different and the things that are the same:

Ask your teacher or someone at home to tell you how their teachers treated them when they were at school. Do you think that school teachers in Edwardian times

would normally sit with the children? Or do you think these teachers posed for the photographs?

Background

Up until the end of the Nineteenth century there was no law that meant you had to be educated at all. In early Victorian Britain many children never went to school. Parents had to pay for their children to go to school, but many families were too poor to afford this. They sent their children to work in the factories instead.

From 1833 the Government gave money to churches and charities to set up schools which more people could afford. If there was not a church school in the local area, children might be sent to a Dame school. Here old ladies would use their front room as a classroom. If this was still too expensive, parents could send their children to ragged schools. Here children were taught and also trained to work in industry.

Of course, the rich had better choices. When rich children were young, they were taught by a governess or master who lived in their homes. When the boys were older, usually 7 or 8 years old, they would be sent away to boarding schools. Famous schools for the sons of the rich were Harrow, Eton College, Rugby or Winchester. Here the boys would learn Latin, Greek, mathematics, history, geography and sport. Boys learned things that would help them earn a living.

Meanwhile, girls would continue to be taught at home by governesses. Their lessons would be quite different from their brothers'. They would learn French, housekeeping, music, and sewing. Girls learnt how to keep a good home, care for children and be a good hostess.

From 1870 all children were supposed to be educated between the years of 5 and 10. New schools were needed. These were called Board Schools. Children at these schools had to pay a few pence but even then some families could not afford this. Eventually, these schools were made free for everyone in 1891. However, this did not stop children from poor families going out to work. The school day was organised in such a way that children were able to go school and hold down a job. This was not stopped until 1918.

Teachers Notes

This lesson provides material for examining photographs as evidence. It can also be used as stimulus material for looking at the history of education.

The Boys Home Industrial School, which is featured in these photographs, was based in Regents Park Road, Primrose Hill, London. The school was founded to provide "For the maintenance and training of destitute boys not convicted of crime".

Boys who attended to school were trained in a number of disciplines, including baking, printing and shoemaking, and some boys went on to work for the William Morris Company once they had left the school.

Extension Questions:

Pupils could investigate the history of their own school, particularly if it is Victorian. Pupils could interview their parents/guardians or an older generation to find out if schooling has changed from when they were younger.

Sources

Illustration : Boys Home Industrial School - Boxing Class 1910 MH 1201/2692 f79

Source 1 : Boys Home Industrial School Classroom 1910 MH102/2691

Source 2 : Boys Home Industrial School - Boys at work and play MH102/2691 f12

Source 3 : Physical exercise display on Founders Day at the Boys Home Industrial School c1910 MH 201/2692 f26

Schemes of Work

What was it like for children living in Victorian Britain

Key Stage 1 & 2 Unit 11

How did life change in our locality in Victorian times?

Key Stage 1 & 2 Unit 12

Source 1 : Boys Home Industrial School Classroom 1910 (MH102/2691 f.11)



Source 2 : Boys Home Industrial School - Boys at work and play (MH102/2691 f12)



**Source 3 : Physical exercise display on Founders Day at the Boys Home Industrial School
c1910 (MH 201/2692 f26)**

