



The Heritage Family History

School Records Project

Information Sheet 8: Victorian Britain

The term *Victorian Britain* relates to the time when Queen Victoria was on the throne of the United Kingdom. She was on the British throne for almost 64 years from 20 June 1837 until 22 January 1901. She is the longest reigning British monarch in history!

Victoria was born on 24 May 1819 and became Queen of Britain when she was only 19 years old. She succeeded (followed) her uncle William IV to the throne because he did not have any children to succeed him. The British crown descends from a king or queen to his or her sons and daughters first of all but if there are none, it then passes to his or her eldest living sibling. If there are none still alive it then passes to the eldest child of the eldest sibling. Sibling means brother or sister.

Victoria married a German prince called Prince Albert of Saxe Coburgh Gotha in 1841. Saxe Coburgh was the name of a state in modern day Germany. Victoria and Albert had nine children many of whom went on to make marriages with other royal families in different countries. Prince Albert died in 1861 leaving Victoria a widow for the remaining 40 years of her life.

Victoria's reign was a time of great change of Britain with the introduction of many new ideas and inventions such as the introduction of photography, railways, the postage stamp,

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typewriters, telephones, cars and many other machines which meant jobs could be done more quickly. For much of the nineteenth century Britain was a prosperous (rich) country, and led the way in the development of the many new inventions that were to change the world. She also traded (bought and exchanged) goods with many foreign countries. Many of these formed parts of the British Empire, a group of countries over which Britain had control.

The Victorian period is an easy one to research as there are lots of different sources you can use. Some of these were records such as census returns that were made at the time while other sources have been created after the Victorian period and take the form of books and websites where historians have written about what happened in the past. You can use both types of record to find out how children like you and their families lived in the nineteenth century and how things have changed since then. The Victorian period was such an exciting time that there are lots of different projects and themes for you to work on, so with the help of your teacher, you can chose where you want to concentrate your research interests, whether it be on machines and inventions, life of the poor people, school life, roads, maps and transport, how jobs changed over the years or how your local area as a whole developed.

Use the information sheets and the timetable as your starting point and chose where you want to go in this fascinating journey into the past!