

Who can remember *the story of Jim Jarvis 'The Street Child'*? This book we read was based on a true story about a boy who escaped from a Victorian workhouse and met a man who helped him. The text below, that you are going to read and answer questions about, will tell you even more about what these places were like. Although we discussed it slightly in school, the text below will allow you to find out even more. Make sure you read carefully.

Living in the Victorian Workhouse

What Were Workhouses?

Workhouses were large buildings where poor people who had no home or job lived. It was introduced as part of the Poor Laws system, where those who were paupers could live and work. It was intended as a place for people to work themselves out of poverty, though many were seen as prisons for the poor, orphaned children, the sick, disabled, elderly and unmarried mothers.

Living in a workhouse was the last thing people wanted to do. If a man with a wife and children had to enter a workhouse, his whole family had to go with him. It was thought to be shameful because it meant he could not look after his own family and he could not get a job.

Families in a Workhouse

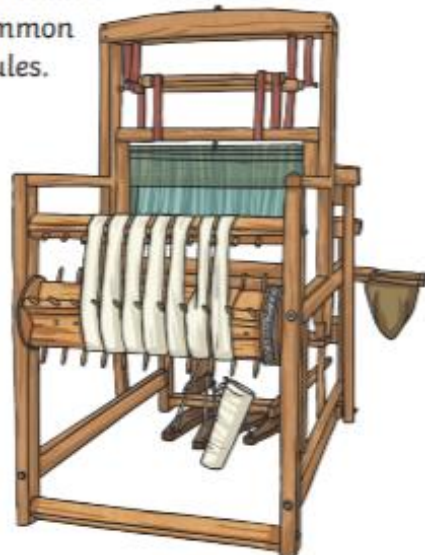
The men, women, and children were housed in different parts of the building and were kept apart as often as possible, even when not working. People were crammed into as small a space as possible, with most people having to share beds. This meant that diseases, such as ringworm, spread easily.

Children had lessons in reading, writing, maths and religion for three hours a day. However, teachers were often cruel. There were rules in place against beating children but there are reports that some were hit with a ruler or stick in class. Girls were taught how to sew, as well as other skills that would help them become a maid when they left the workhouse at fourteen years old.

Food was small portions of plain, simple meals, usually bread, broth, cheese and occasionally meat. Second helpings were strictly forbidden and many people went hungry. It was a common punishment to miss mealtimes if you broke any rules.

Jobs in the Workhouse

Jobs in the workhouse involved a lot of hard work. Men were expected to perform tiring tasks, such as stone breaking, grinding corn, chopping wood and working in the fields. Women were expected to sew and weave, clean the laundry, scrub the walls and floors and other general cleaning tasks. Both men and women had to work on unpicking old ropes, known as 'oakum'.

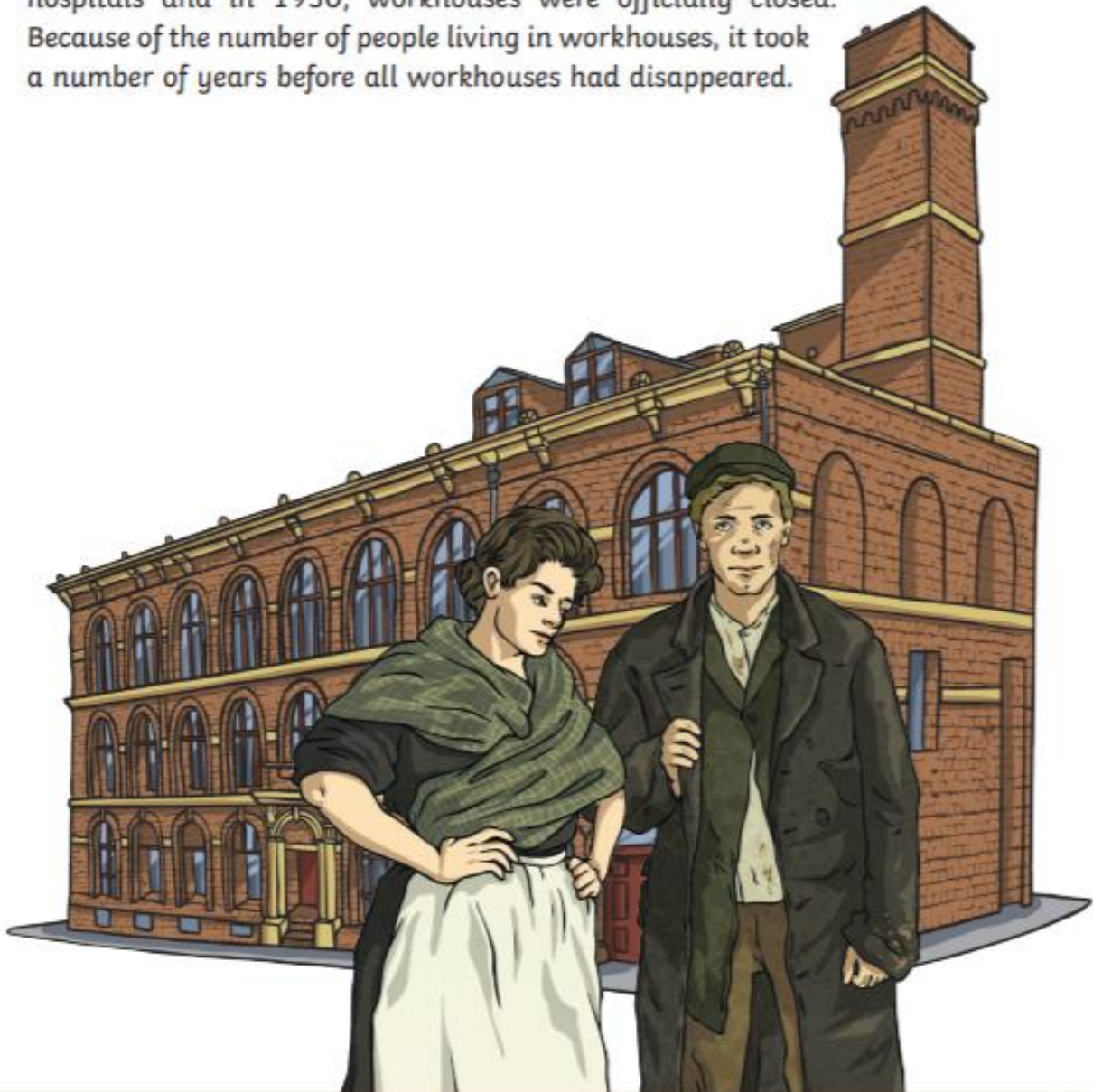


The working day in the workhouse was long. People would be woken early, around 5 a.m., and aside from prayers and meal times, were expected to work until they were sent to bed around 8 p.m.

Bad Reputation

Workhouses became known for their terrible conditions and people starving there. Many people, including the writer Charles Dickens, were against their use. Dickens famously used a workhouse as part of the setting for his book, *Oliver Twist*, showing them to be cruel places.

By 1929, new laws were introduced to allow workhouses to be turned into hospitals and in 1930, workhouses were officially closed. Because of the number of people living in workhouses, it took a number of years before all workhouses had disappeared.



Make sure you have read the text carefully. It might be useful to read through a few times or ask someone at home to help you if you are unsure.

Monday

Now that you have read the text, try and identify the words that you are unsure of. You could either underline these or write the words out and research the definitions or ask someone if you are unsure. Once you have worked out their meanings, re-read the text putting your word in place of the word you are unsure of. This should help you to understand the text better and will help you to answer questions later in the week.

Tuesday

Have a go at the following questions. These are all retrieval questions which means that all of the answers are in the text. Find the key words in the question and in the text to help you to find the best answer. Check all possible answers if it is multiple choice and remember, you should not make anything up as all of the answers are there somewhere.

- 1) What were workhouses introduced as part of? Pick one.
 - a) The Workhouse Laws
 - b) The poor Laws
 - c) The Homeless Laws
 - d) The working Laws

- 2) Which of these people were sent to the workhouse? Choose **two**.
 - a) The sick
 - b) The wealthy
 - c) The elderly
 - d) The employed

- 3) What food were people in the workhouse fed?

- 4) Tick to say whether each job was done by men or women.

| Job | Men | Women |
|--------------------------------|-----|-------|
| Scrubbing the walls and floors | | |
| Working in the fields | | |
| Breaking stones | | |
| Sewing and weaving | | |

- 5) What was the name of the book written by Charles Dickens that is set in a workhouse? Choose one.
 - a) Bad Reputation
 - b) Oliver Twist
 - c) Cruel Teachers
 - d) The Poor Laws

Wednesday

Your questions today all involve you to understand the meaning of words. You can use your work from Monday to help you to answer these questions. If there is multiple choice, make sure you check all possible options and choose the BEST answer.

- 6) Find and **copy** a word which means squeezed.

- 7) Which of these is closest in meaning to the word pauper? Choose one.
 - a) Rich person
 - b) Poor person
 - c) Friendly
 - d) Cruel

- 8) ‘...teachers were often cruel’. Explain the meaning of the word ‘cruel’ in this context.
- 9) Find and **copy** a phrase from the paragraph ‘**Families in a Workhouse**’ which shows that the people who lived in the workhouse were definitely not allowed to get any more food.
- 10) Which of the following is the closest in meaning to the word ‘**shameful**’ in this sentence ‘*It was thought to be shameful because it meant that he could not look after his own family*’?
- Good
 - Poor
 - Disgraceful
 - Shocking

Thursday

Thinking Thursday. These questions today will require you to think more than the previous days. These questions contain a ‘what/why do you think...’ Remember that these types of questions require some of your opinions but you do however need to use some evidence from the text to help support your opinions and ideas.

- 11) Why do you think it took a number of years for all workhouses to disappear? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.
- 12) Why do you think people feared being sent to the workhouse?
- 13) Why do you think diseases spread so quickly in the workhouses? Use evidence from the text and your own understanding to answer the question.
- 14) What do you think the best and worst aspects of the workhouses were? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.
- 15) How do you think we know about what workhouses were like? Where do you think people got information from which told us that workhouses were terrible places?

Friday

Your Friday activity is to log onto Epic! and read a book of your choice. Once you have read the book, your activity requires you to write a short summary of what the book was about and a book review to tell me whether the book is worth reading. Happy reading!



Class Sign In Instructions

Laptop or Chromebook

Have your students open their web browser and

1. Go to **www.getepic.com/students**
2. Sign in with your class code **zbu3135**
3. Select their name and they're in!

iOS/Android

Have your students open the Epic! app and

1. Click on “**Have an account? Sign In**” then click on “**Students & Educators**”
2. Sign in with your class code **zbu3135**
3. Select their name and they're in!

As always, if you have any problems, send me an email at CPSClass11@corporationroad.darlington.sch.uk

Remember that you can also read anything around your house which has writing on, for example, a newspaper, a recipe, a cereal packet, a magazine, a book that you have at home or TV guide. Just make sure you are reading something every day.