



Year 8 English – Rags and Riches



As part of your GCSE in English Language you will compare ideas and perspectives from 19th, 20th and 21st century non-fiction texts. In this unit you will explore the Victorian Period to gain a greater insight into the lives of people living at the time in comparison to our lives and experiences today.

Key Knowledge

Common features/themes of C19th Texts

19th century texts tend to use a much more formal register than modern texts irrespective of whether the audience is familiar or not.

Being 'virtuous' was an important quality in 19th-century society - it means having strong morals.

Superlatives (e.g. 'kindest' 'most gracious') are common in 19th-century writing.

19th-century texts often phrase things differently and the sentences are quite long.

Key Vocabulary

tone	The mood or attitude the writer conveys in a piece of writing.
perspective	A particular attitude towards or way of regarding something; a point of view.
costermongers	Street vendors; they most popularly sold fruit and vegetables.
hansom cab	A two-wheeled covered carriage for two passengers, pulled by one horse: the driver's seat is above and behind the cab.
industrialization	The period of social and economic change that transforms a human group from an agrarian society into an industrial society. This involves an extensive re-organisation of an economy for the purpose of manufacturing
satire	The use of humour, irony, exaggeration, or ridicule to expose and criticize people's stupidity or vices, particularly in the context of contemporary politics and other topical issues.
imperialism	A policy of extending a country's power and influence through colonization, use of military force, or other means.
workhouses	An institution where those unable to support themselves financially were offered accommodation and employment.
governess	A woman employed in a private household to educate pupils (usually girls) in a range of "accomplishments" ranging from reading to drawing. Governesses became increasingly popular through the Victorian era for both the Upper and Middle-classes.
Ragged schools	Charitable organisations dedicated to the free education of destitute children in 19th century Britain
The Tread-Wheel	A treadmill with steps set into two cast iron wheels. These drove a shaft that could be used to mill corn, pump water or connect to a large fan for resistance. These were used in prisons in the early Victorian Britain as a method of exerting hard labour, a form of punishment prescribed in the prisoner's sentence.

Comparative connectives

Similarities	Differences
Similarly	However
Equally	Whereas
Likewise	In contrast
Also	Conversely
In the same way	On the other hand

Context

The Victorian Period

- The Victorian era, in **British history, is the period between approximately 1820 and 1914**, corresponding roughly but not exactly to the period of **Queen Victoria's** reign (1837–1901) and characterized by a class-based society, a growing number of people able to vote, a growing state and economy, and **Britain's** status as the most powerful **empire** in the world.
- During the **Victorian period**, Britain was a powerful nation with a rich **culture**. It had a stable government and a growing state. It also controlled a large empire, and it was wealthy, in part because of its degree of industrialisation and in spite of the fact that three-fourths or more of its population was working-class. Late in the period, Britain began to decline as a global political and economic power relative to other major powers, particularly the United States, but this decline was not acutely noticeable until after World War II.
- In the 19th century society was very unequal. The Victorians liked to have their social classes clearly defined. These were broadly understood and functioned as: Working Class, Middle Class and Upper Class.
- Children from poor families often didn't go to school instead they worked to earn money for their families. There were reforms however, in the late 19th century, that made school compulsory for young children.
- A wealthy family's educational experience was very different as rich families commonly sent their children off to study at boarding school or governesses were hired to teach their children at home.
- Women were expected to be maternal and after marriage they were expected to be in charge of the home and children primarily.
- Women didn't have as many rights as men and could not vote at the time nor had control of their own property or money.
- Upper class women were considered to be accomplished by their ability in things like riding, dancing, playing music and speaking languages.
- The Victorian Workhouse was an institution that was intended to provide work and shelter for poverty stricken people who had no means to support themselves, however conditions are recorded to be inhumane and harrowing to witness.

Comparing texts

- When comparing texts you should consider the writer's use of language, tone, structure and style.