

## Unit 12 Snapshot 1900: what was British middle-class life like?

### About the unit

This unit focuses on the British middle class and provides pupils with experience in interrogating and cross-referencing different types of nineteenth-century source material. Pupils use the local area to build up a picture of the complexity of middle-class life: housing, occupations, income, expenditure, education and leisure pursuits. The unit uses the local area to teach the study of Britain 1750–1900 as required.

This unit is expected to take 8–11 hours. There is scope to adjust some of the teaching activities to take account of the time constraints in different schools.

### Where the unit fits in

This unit builds upon unit 11 ‘Industrial changes’ and complements unit 14 ‘The British Empire’. This unit links with unit 9C ‘Personal places, public spaces’ in the art and design scheme of work, which involves exploring the local area. Also links could be made with unit 9 ‘Shopping – past, present and future’ in the geography scheme of work.

### Expectations

#### At the end of this unit

**most pupils will:** demonstrate knowledge of the wide range of occupations in the nineteenth century that were defined as ‘middle class’; describe how the middle class was changing in the years 1851–91; make critical use of a range of local sources when reaching conclusions about the nature of middle-class life in their locality; explain how there can be different ways of interpreting middle-class Victorian life

**some pupils will not have made so much progress and will:** demonstrate knowledge of some of the different occupations that made up the British nineteenth-century ‘middle class’; identify at least one way in which there were changes in the lives of the middle class during 1851–91; using local sources, identify some Victorian middle-class housing in their own area; describe some of the ways the Victorian middle class spent its leisure time

**some pupils will have progressed further and will:** demonstrate detailed knowledge of the range of middle-class occupations in the nineteenth century; analyse any significant differences between the national and local patterns; show some independence in following lines of investigation when studying local sources relating to middle-class life; evaluate different interpretations of middle-class life

### Prior learning

It is helpful if pupils have:

- knowledge about industrialising Britain, the opportunities for investment and the tremendous number of new jobs that were created
- an idea of internal migration at this time
- some knowledge of the local area
- used and evaluated a range of historical sources as part of an investigation into aspects of the past

### Language for learning

Through the activities in this unit pupils will be able to understand, use and spell correctly words relating to:

- source material, *eg census, street directory*
- work and leisure, *eg lawyer’s clerk, music hall*
- income and expenditure, *eg budget, investment*

Speaking and listening – through the activities pupils could:

- discuss and respond to initial ideas and information, carry out the task and then review and refine ideas
- discuss and question what they are learning and how it is relevant in other contexts or when using different variables

Writing – through the activities pupils could:

- organise facts/ideas/information in an appropriate sequence
- group sentences into paragraphs that are clearly focused and well developed
- use correctly full stops, commas, dashes, brackets and colons to extend and clarify sentences

### Resources

Resources include:

- source material relating to the local area in the nineteenth century, *eg census returns, maps and plans, photographs and pictures*
- CD-ROMs, *eg ‘Britain 1750–1900’ (British Library)*
- websites, *eg the virtual museum at [www.j-sainsbury.co.uk](http://www.j-sainsbury.co.uk); Spartacus internet encyclopedia of British history 1700–1920 – [www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/industry.html](http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/industry.html)*

### Out-of-school learning

Pupils could visit:

- areas of middle-class housing
- Victorian schools and surviving places of entertainment and recreation
- suburban housing specifically built for the middle classes or with specifically designated middle-class housing

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## Future learning

Pupils can research middle-class life in other, possibly contrasting, areas. They can further explore new middle-class occupations relating to one developing industry, *eg railways*. Pupils can draw on their detailed knowledge of one section of society in Britain in 1900 to consider the diversity of society in Britain and in other countries in subsequent studies. Pupils build on the different formats of communicating their knowledge and understanding in later units, such as unit 16 'The franchise' and unit 20 'Twentieth-century medicine'.

**Who were the middle classes?**

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• that the Victorians categorised people into classes according to their occupation</li> <li>• that, in Victorian terms, the middle classes comprised a very wide range of occupations and incomes</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide pupils with sets of cards, each of which either describes a 1900 occupation or shows it visually. Ask pupils to sort cards into aristocracy and gentry, middle class and working class, as defined by occupation.</li> <li>• Whole-class discussion: establish the criteria they used to define the three classes.</li> <li>• Introduce the idea that Victorians defined the middle class as 'those who do not have to earn their living by manual labour' and 'gentry and aristocracy' as 'those who do not have to work'. Ask pupils, in groups, to re-sort their occupation cards.</li> <li>• Whole-class activity: compile a list of middle-class occupations as defined by the Victorians.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• categorise information according to specific criteria</li> <li>• explain, in outline, what constituted membership of the Victorian middle class</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The number of occupations in each set of cards will be determined by the ability level of the pupils. However, it is important that a full range is presented to pupils. Occupations should range from bricklayers and breeches-makers through teachers, railway guards, post office clerks and mill owners to landed aristocrats.</li> </ul> |
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### Who were our local middle classes and where did they live?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to use source material to identify and locate middle classes in the area local to the school</li> <li>• to identify surviving Victorian housing in the locality</li> <li>• to present findings in different ways</li> <li>• that the Victorian middle classes lived in a wide range of different types of houses and locations</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using street directories, the 1891 census returns and other local material, ask pupils to identify local middle-class occupations and streets in the locality where the middle class lived.</li> <li>• Using large-scale street plan(s), mark where local middle classes lived, together with their occupations. Are there any obvious patterns? Do, for example, all those with railway-associated occupations live near the railway line and station? Do the wealthier middle-class people (mill owners, cotton merchants) live further out of town? If so, why?</li> <li>• Plan ways to record what still exists of this Victorian middle-class housing. This could be by photographs or sketches, which could then be located on an enlarged street plan with brief written descriptions that could link back to what was discovered in the 1891 census about the families living there.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identify source material that can be used to answer specific questions</li> <li>• select, organise and record information appropriately</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Census returns are readily available from libraries and local record offices.</li> <li>• If the school is situated in a large industrial town, <i>eg Bradford, Birmingham</i>, it will be necessary to select one area of the town. If the school is situated in a rural area, it will probably be necessary to draw on areas of a nearby town.</li> <li>• Remember that it may be necessary to get the owner's permission to photograph or sketch a private house.</li> <li>• ICT: pupils can build on skills developed earlier to incorporate digital images and text. A digitised map can also be used. As in unit 11 'Industrial changes', opportunities exist to exchange information with other schools and make local and national comparisons.</li> </ul> |
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Pupils should learn:

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### New jobs and new people: where did the middle classes come from?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to use census returns for extracting information and for showing change over time</li> <li>• that there was considerable internal migration and population growth within the British Isles and that this was one cause of the growth or decline of cities and towns</li> <li>• that internal migration and population growth were the direct result of industrialisation</li> <li>• to plan and undertake a structured piece of work</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask pupils to work with the censuses for 1851–91 that relate to their local area. They identify, by occupation, the middle classes and where they were born. Taking the censuses consecutively, ask pupils to note the growth in numbers of the middle classes, the changing patterns of occupation, the introduction of ‘new’ middle-class occupations and, by noting the place of birth of the middle-class people, whether there is still a migration of people into the area.</li> <li>• Ask pupils to decide, after work on the 1851 census, how best to record data from the other censuses. Once the data is collected, ask pupils to decide how best to present it. This could be in written or graphic form, and as ‘findings’ or as answers to specific questions.</li> <li>• Introduce data (in written, graphic and/or map form) of internal migration and population growth on both a national and regional scale over the period of the five censuses.</li> <li>• Ask pupils to discuss the relationship between their local data and the national data and to suggest reasons for any differences.</li> <li>• Ask pupils to work out a framework/structure for presenting this relationship. It could be presented graphically, by a series of maps or charts, in a grid or diagrammatically. Pupils undertake this work individually.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• make links between local and national features</li> <li>• examine and begin to explain reasons for changes</li> <li>• use different ways of presenting quantitative data</li> <li>• select, organise and deploy relevant information in a structured piece of work</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When comparing local with national patterns and trends, links could be established with the local study undertaken as part of the work in unit 11 ‘Industrial changes’.</li> <li>• In preparing for the written work, it is important that pupils understand the need to provide support from the data for their conclusions and, where they are speculating on possible reasons for the differences between the national and local patterns, that they say so.</li> <li>• ICT: the use of census data provides an ideal opportunity for pupils to interrogate data and investigate patterns. Although entering census data is time-consuming, there is the opportunity for pupils to decide the fields for data capture and to experiment with the different ways of interrogating their database and of displaying the results. This reinforces understanding of the use of sources in historical investigation.</li> <li>• Key skills: these activities provide opportunities for pupils to demonstrate evidence of IT (using a database).</li> </ul> |
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Pupils should learn:

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### Wages and prices: how well did the middle classes live?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• about the relationship between domestic income and expenditure</li> <li>• that the Victorian middle classes had a wide range of annual income and widely different household needs and expenditure</li> <li>• to use, select and combine information from sources about middle-class family budgets and reach provisional conclusions</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead a discussion on budgeting for a household <i>What outgoings, today, have to be covered by income? Would these have been the same in 1900?</i> Show the class a weekly budget for a middle-class family in the period 1890–1900.</li> <li>• Provide information on a range of middle-class salaries and wages as well as information on the cost of rents, coal, food, etc.</li> <li>• In groups, ask pupils to select a middle-class family from the 1891 census and, using the data provided, work out a weekly budget. <i>Was there anything left over at the end of the week? Could the family save for, say, monthly expenditure on clothes and/or annual expenditure on holidays?</i></li> <li>• Ask pupils to present the budget of 'their' family to the class. These presentations serve as a focus for discussion about the nature of the different budgets and the diversity of the Victorian 'middle class'.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• select and use information for a specific purpose</li> <li>• show an understanding of budgetary constraints on the nineteenth-century middle classes</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Census data on servants, lodgers, etc will provide evidence of possible expenditure.</li> <li>• Families should be chosen to represent a wide range of occupations.</li> <li>• Links can be made in unit 14 'The British Empire' with the provision of goods from the Empire.</li> <li>• ICT: pupils could use the internet to investigate the types of shops and shopping available to middle-class families in 1900. Alternatively, pupils enter the salaries and wages of a range of middle-class families into a computer spreadsheet. Prices of goods, coal, rent, etc are also added. Pupils use the spreadsheet to work out a weekly budget for each family and use the spreadsheet functions to find out what was left over at the end of the week. <i>Was it possible to save, and what would happen to the families if prices rose?</i></li> <li>• Language for learning: pupils will use speculative types of questions when preparing the budget. They discuss and respond to ideas and information, and review and refine ideas. This activity also contributes to the development of pupils' financial literacy.</li> <li>• Key skills: these activities provide opportunities for pupils to demonstrate evidence of application of number and IT.</li> </ul> |
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### Leisure time and entertainment: what did the middle classes do for fun?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to use local source material as evidence of how middle-class Victorians spent their leisure time</li> <li>• to identify and use sources to undertake small-scale research into different types of middle-class Victorian entertainment</li> <li>• to use a range of source materials to devise a holiday 'package' that would be attractive to middle-class Victorians</li> <li>• to identify local evidence of civic pride and to put this into the national context</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask pupils to work with local street plans and trade and street directories to identify places that would have provided leisure-time activities and entertainment, <i>eg theatres and music halls, song and supper rooms, clubs, sports grounds, parks and libraries</i>.</li> <li>• Put local findings into the national scene: how the Victorians used their increasing leisure time. Ask pupils, in groups, to select one activity, <i>eg music halls or organised sport</i>, for more detailed research and to present their findings (dramatically, orally, visually) to the class.</li> <li>• Focus on the nearest railway station to the locality being studied. Use local posters, timetables and advertisements for trips, holidays, etc from the period as evidence of the ways in which local/national businesses utilised the increasing leisure time of middle-class Victorians and the expanding rail network.</li> <li>• Ask pupils, in groups, to work as travel companies and, using the national rail network and timetables, devise holiday trips for the travelling middle class. This will involve research into, for example, the seaside towns and spas that were growing and developing around 1900, the length of time a journey would take and the comforts a travel company might provide for travellers on the way. This could develop into a larger-scale activity involving, for example, the production of posters and brochures.</li> <li>• Some middle-class Victorians took their leisure time seriously. Return to the local scene and look for statues of local worthies, foundation stones laid by local worthies, public parks and gardens, etc. Ask pupils to discuss these as evidence of growing civic pride and involvement in the community on a local and national scale.</li> <li>• Contextualise the local scene and look at the growth of civic pride on a national scale.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• make links between different features of a period on a local and national scale and link the local to the national</li> <li>• demonstrate understanding of a period by the selection and deployment of source material and knowledge about leisure and entertainment for the Victorian middle classes</li> <li>• recognise the growing importance of civic pride</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citizenship: links between civic pride and citizenship can be made as a background to aspects of local government and the work of community-based voluntary groups.</li> <li>• Work on local dignitaries can be developed through using unit 22 'The role of the individual'.</li> <li>• Language for learning: if the pupils produce brochures they may well benefit from specific guidelines, <i>eg use of key vocabulary/emotive or persuasive language; sequencing and layout; colons to introduce lists, brackets for persuasive parenthesis, dashes to suggest anticipation/excitement</i>.</li> </ul> |
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### Representations of Victorian middle-class life: how accurate are they?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• that there are different representations of Victorian middle-class life and that these vary in their accuracy</li> <li>• that there are a variety of reasons for these differences</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide pupils with representations of late Victorian middle-class life and discuss the ways in which these are, or are not, accurate representations.</li> <li>• Give pupils, in groups, the task of refurbishing a museum, one gallery of which will be illustrative of middle-class life in Britain. They have to decide upon a layout, select items, write information labels and devise notes for volunteer guides. Pupils should be directed to use full stops, dashes, brackets and colons correctly.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• evaluate source material against their own knowledge of Victorian middle-class life</li> <li>• describe and begin to explain different interpretations and representations</li> <li>• select, organise and use source material for a representative display</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Representations can be written or pictorial. Examples include photographs and paintings of 'respectable' family life as well as museum and themed presentations of life at the end of the nineteenth century.</li> <li>• Depending on the representations selected, pupils may be able to explore the reasons why the representations are as they are.</li> <li>• Language for learning: the activity provides opportunities to organise facts and ideas into an appropriate sequence and group ideas into paragraphs that have a clear focus. Some pupils will need a structure to help them to organise and present their written work. Pupils could check punctuation with their learning partners.</li> </ul> |
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