

# BLenheim SQUARE

## LOCAL STUDY: URBAN SPACES

### VICTORIAN BRITAIN



---

#### **Teachers' notes: Introduction and lesson 1**

*These notes are divided into six lessons, with lesson 1 summarised at the end of this first document. Each of lessons 2 to 6 is given in a separate document.*

This is an account of a series of lessons focussing on a local urban square. Teachers can adapt this to suit their own circumstances.

The teaching took place in an inner city Leeds primary school, with pupils from 48 different nationalities on roll. The pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds: some have come from Africa or Asia, some are British-born, some are the children of academic parents studying for post-graduate degrees at the nearby university. Several live in households where no-one is employed.

The Blenheim Square lessons occupied six Friday mornings following the SATs tests. After the preparation and effort expended on the SATs Year 6 were exhausted and visibly drooping.

The challenge was to bring the history of a local urban square to life and give the children an insight into life there in Victorian times. The unit covered six separate lessons, and focused on Blenheim Square, just up the road from the school. These lessons focused mainly on history, but children also collected leaves and identified trees, and made collages that illuminated what the Victorian Square might have looked like.

Blenheim Square had begun as a desirable address for genteel and professional Victorians away from the noise and filth of Leeds city centre. Today, the Square has gone down in the world: many of the houses are in poor repair, many have been divided into flats, and drugs are a problem in the area.

The two major primary sources for teaching about the Square were historical maps and the 1881 census. Personal stories would have been good but none were to be found. However there was once an archery club alongside the Square.

#### **Year group/class**

Year 6, 26 in the class. There is a very wide range of ability in the class. For half of the children English is an additional language.

## Time for the whole unit

Six lessons, four of 70 minutes long and two lasting all morning – approximately 2.5 hours.

## Learning objectives for the unit

For the children to:

- Engage with the past, present and future of an urban square local to them
- Observe and record features of Blenheim Square as it is now
- Learn about aspects of life in Blenheim Square and Victorian Britain
- Through role play, experience and therefore understand some of the feelings and perspectives of people living in a different world from theirs
- Use a range of sources of evidence to construct a picture of the past.

## Key questions

What is Blenheim Square like now?

What was it like in the past?

What is the evidence?

What would we like for the future?

## Resources

*Resources for the series of lesson are summarised here and also given at the beginning of each lesson.*

### Lesson 1:

Background information about Leeds , for the teacher

Pictures of Leeds in the past

Examples of goods manufactured in Leeds – some woollen garments

Maps of Blenheim Square from Victorian times to the present

### Lesson 2:

Map of Blenheim Square in 1990, one per child.

Recording sheet: Your house at Blenheim Square, one per child.

### Lesson 3:

Handwritten copies from 1851 Leeds census, Back George's Street, one sheet per pair of children (obtained from Leeds Local History Library).

Blank census forms, one per child.

Copies of 1881 census for Blenheim Square, one per child.

Photographs of the houses on the Square, taken in Lesson 2.

### Lesson 4:

Video: BBC Landmarks: Victorian Britain 3 'Home life' (includes details about a day in the life of a housemaid).

Extract from Mrs Beeton's Household Management (1907 edition): *The duties of the housemaid*, one per child. See <http://www.mrsbeeton.com/>

A selection of topic books about life in Victorian Britain.

Victorian-style clothing for adult story-teller

**Lesson 5:**

Set of Victorian mob caps, long skirts, smocks, cravats/scarves, waistcoats, trousers, jackets – hired from Ilkley Playhouse.

Crockery, trays and cutlery for providing tea and sandwiches for 12 people (no modern designs – try for the Victorian look).

Ingredients for tea and cucumber sandwiches: cucumbers, butter, white bread, vinegar, tea, milk, white sugar.

12 copies of a Victorian Family Temperance Pledge, available from: <http://2eyougottagetitgoing.blogspot.com/> (Scroll down to May 18, 2006 and click on the Pledge image to enlarge it for printing).

**Lesson 6:**

Table: Evaluating Blenheim Square, one per child.

Outline maps of Blenheim Square, one per child.

**The lessons**

- 1 Victorian Leeds and Blenheim Square**
- 2** Visiting Blenheim Square
- 3** Census work: Who lived in Blenheim Square in 1881?
- 4** Story-telling: living in a 19th-century house
- 5** Role play: upstairs, downstairs
- 6** Thinking about the future

**The teaching**

**Lesson 1 Victorian Leeds and Blenheim Square**

*A brief summary*

In the introductory lesson we told the children about the key features of Victorian Leeds, with its lucrative wool, dyeing and manufacturing industries, its extremes of wealth and poverty, pollution and disease. We passed round sets of pictures of rich and poor people and housing in Victorian Leeds. The children identified key features within their pictures. We also gave the class a range of woollen goods (scarves, shawls, jackets, trousers, jumpers) to feel, to illustrate the range of dyes and finishes produced by the woollen industry.

We then turned to Blenheim Square, telling its story from its creation in 1822 to the present day.

We also examined five maps, ranging from 1847 to 1990, observing how the area around the school had changed over 150 years, focusing on the development of Blenheim Square.

The children traced the chronological development of the area, forming a timeline from the maps. They also placed information cards about developments in Blenheim Square on the timeline.

## **Learning outcomes of the whole unit**

The children:

- Were fully engaged in relating to their local area: exploring the past, present and future of Blenheim Square
- Gained insight into aspects of life in Blenheim Square and Victorian Britain
- Experienced and understood some of the feelings and perspectives of people living in a different world from theirs, through taking on the identities of past people
- Used a range of sources of evidence to construct a picture of the past.

### **Leeds Urban Spaces project**

**Author of this unit:** Jacqui Dean

© Jacqui Dean 2006

Thank you to the staff and pupils of Blenheim Primary School, Leeds, particularly Steve Boothroyd the Head teacher and Dawn Lowry the year 6 class teacher.

downloaded from the Nuffield Primary History website  
[www.primaryhistory.org](http://www.primaryhistory.org)