

Victorian Britain

Read the text

By the end of the 19th century, 41 million people lived in the UK where material prosperity was enormous and faith in progress was very strong.

People rode bicycles, crossed the Atlantic in a week thanks to the latest big iron steamships, travelled to almost every part of the Empire, had their photos taken for the first time, made their first phone calls, travelled by motor car and faster trains and went to the seaside for the day. Spa towns and seaside holidays became very popular.

Victorian society was male-dominated. Men were involved in the public sphere and were the “masters” of the household. Wealthy women stayed at home, taking responsibility for the private sphere and enjoyed a good social life. By contrast, in working class families women worked really hard: they had jobs in factories, mines, the domestic service and agriculture, and had to manage the household and bring up children.

Many British people were proud of the Empire and thought that the colonies were lucky to have Christianity, education and British government. Others thought that the British Empire exploited the resources and people of the colonies.

Answer the following questions.

- 1) How many people lived in Britain by the end of the 19th century?
- 2) Was Britain a rich nation?
- 3) What became very popular?
- 4) What role did men play in Victorian society?
- 5) Were wealthy women involved in the public sphere?
- 6) What did women do in working class families?
- 7) Were women discriminated against in Victorian Britain?
- 8) What was the British people's attitude towards the Empire?