

# Children in Victorian Britain

## Learning Objective:

To understand some of the changes that took place for poor children in the 19th century.

NEXT



In Victorian times, there were no laws to protect children at work like there are today. Children were often forced to do dangerous jobs for little money because there was no other option for them. Although children had been working for hundreds of years, the Industrial Revolution meant that the jobs children were doing in the 19th century were even more dangerous. Some worked in factories where they had to crawl around under moving machinery. Others were sent down coal mines and had no breaks or fresh air. These jobs could injure or even kill them.

How would you feel if you were forced to go to work every day, knowing that you could get seriously hurt or even killed?



BACK

NEXT

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But not everyone agreed that this was right. Some people started campaigning for more ways to protect children.

Do you know who these men are?

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## Dr Barnardo

Thomas John Barnardo was born in 1845 in Dublin. When he came to London in 1866 and saw children sleeping and begging in the streets, he wanted to do something to help them. He set up a Ragged School where poor children could get a basic education and he opened a home for boys.

The work with children he started then continues today with the charity Barnardo's.



HOPE PLACE, WORLD'S END, E., WHERE  
DR. BARNARDO BEGAN HIS WORK

**Believe in  
children**  
 **Barnardo's**



BACK

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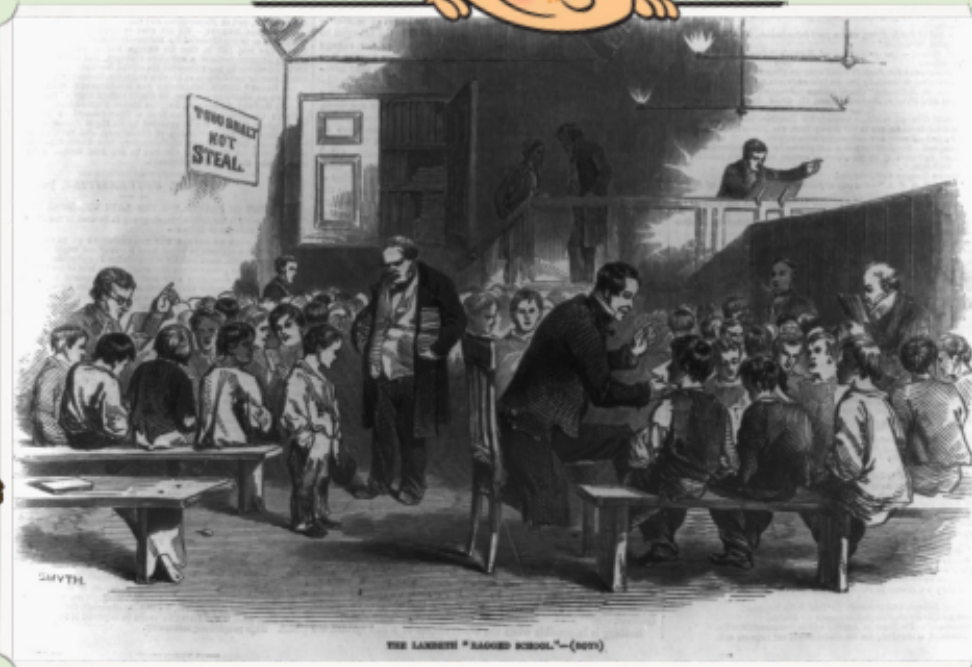
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## What was a Ragged School?

Ragged Schools were charitable organisations that gave education to children who were too poor to be sent to school, often as well as food, housing and care. These started around 1840 as individual schools set up by rich people who wanted to help, but the Ragged Schools Union was soon set up as the idea spread. By 1851, 26,000 pupils were given an education at a Ragged School.

Did you know they were called Ragged Schools because they were open to children who were dressed 'raggedly'.



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NEXT

### Lord Shaftesbury

Anthony Ashley Cooper, 7th Earl of Shaftesbury, was born in 1801 and at the age of 25 became a Member of Parliament. As a politician, he became interested in the working conditions of children. He set up many commissions and campaigned to pass new laws that would protect children. He devoted his life to helping poor children and making sure that working children, particularly in factories, were protected. He also became chairman of the Ragged Schools Union for more than 40 years.

[BACK](#)[www.planbee.com](http://www.planbee.com)[NEXT](#)

But it wasn't only these two men who were trying to change the child labour situation. Lots of other MPs wanted social reform too. Here are some of the Acts that were passed in the 19th century:

**1842 Mines Act:** Children under 10 years old are forbidden to work in mines.

**1847 Factory Act:** Children under 18 years old are not to work more than 58 hours a week.

**1864:** Boys under 10 years old are forbidden from being chimney sweeps.

**1874 10 Hour Act:** People can't work for more than 10 hours a day and children under 14 are not allowed to be employed full time.

**1878 Factory & Workshop Act:** Children under 10 are forbidden from working in factories and workshops.

BACK

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Do you think everyone would have been happy with these changes?



Why do you think some MPs may have fought against laws to protect working children?

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### Task 1

Using the information you have learnt today and the sheet about Dr Barnardo, can you complete the character profile in your books.

### Task 2

Today you will be Victorian MPs, debating the issue of child labour in Parliament.

You will each have a character card. You will need to arrange yourselves into 2 groups:

those who are against the new laws to protect children and

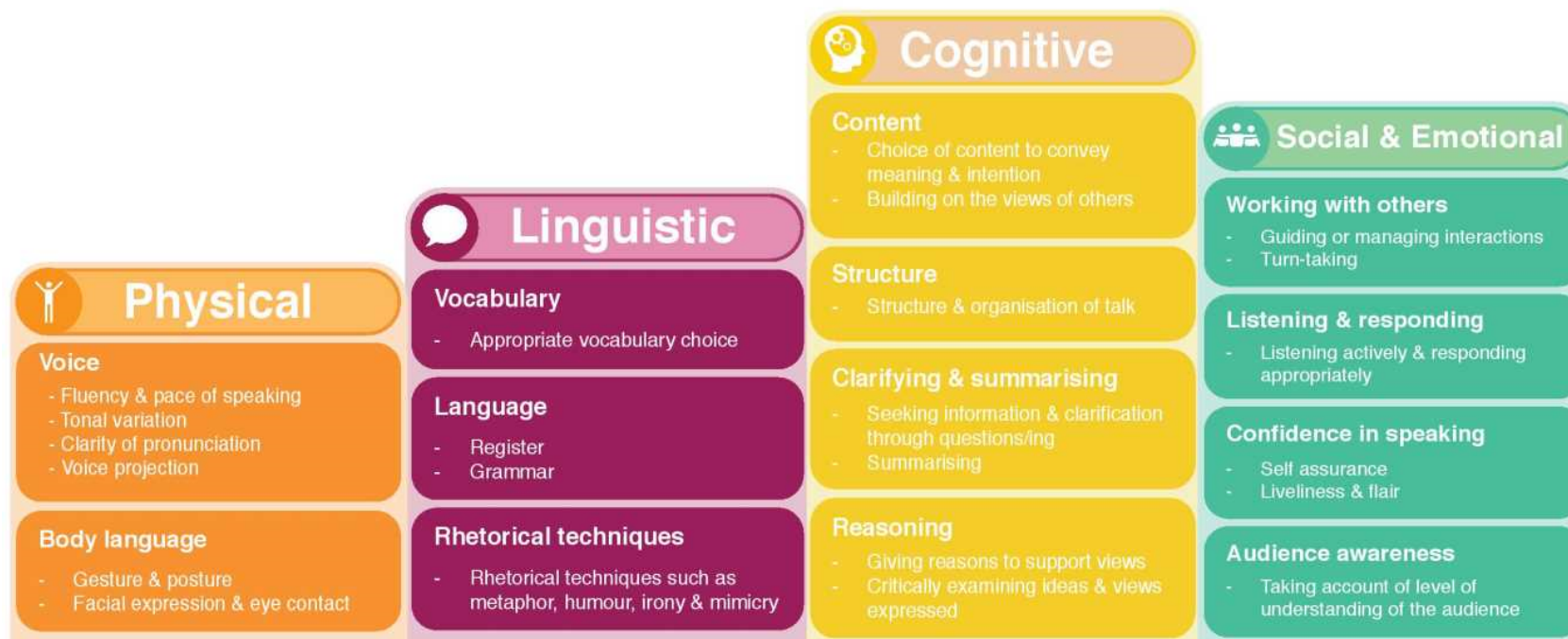
those who are for them.

We will have a class debate on this issue. Remember to use appropriate vocabulary and to include facts and details that are appropriate to the task.

Let's also remind ourselves of our ORACY SKILLS

## Oracy: The Four Strands

Use the oracy framework to understand the physical, linguistic, cognitive, and social and emotional skills that enable successful discussion, inspiring speech and effective communication.



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