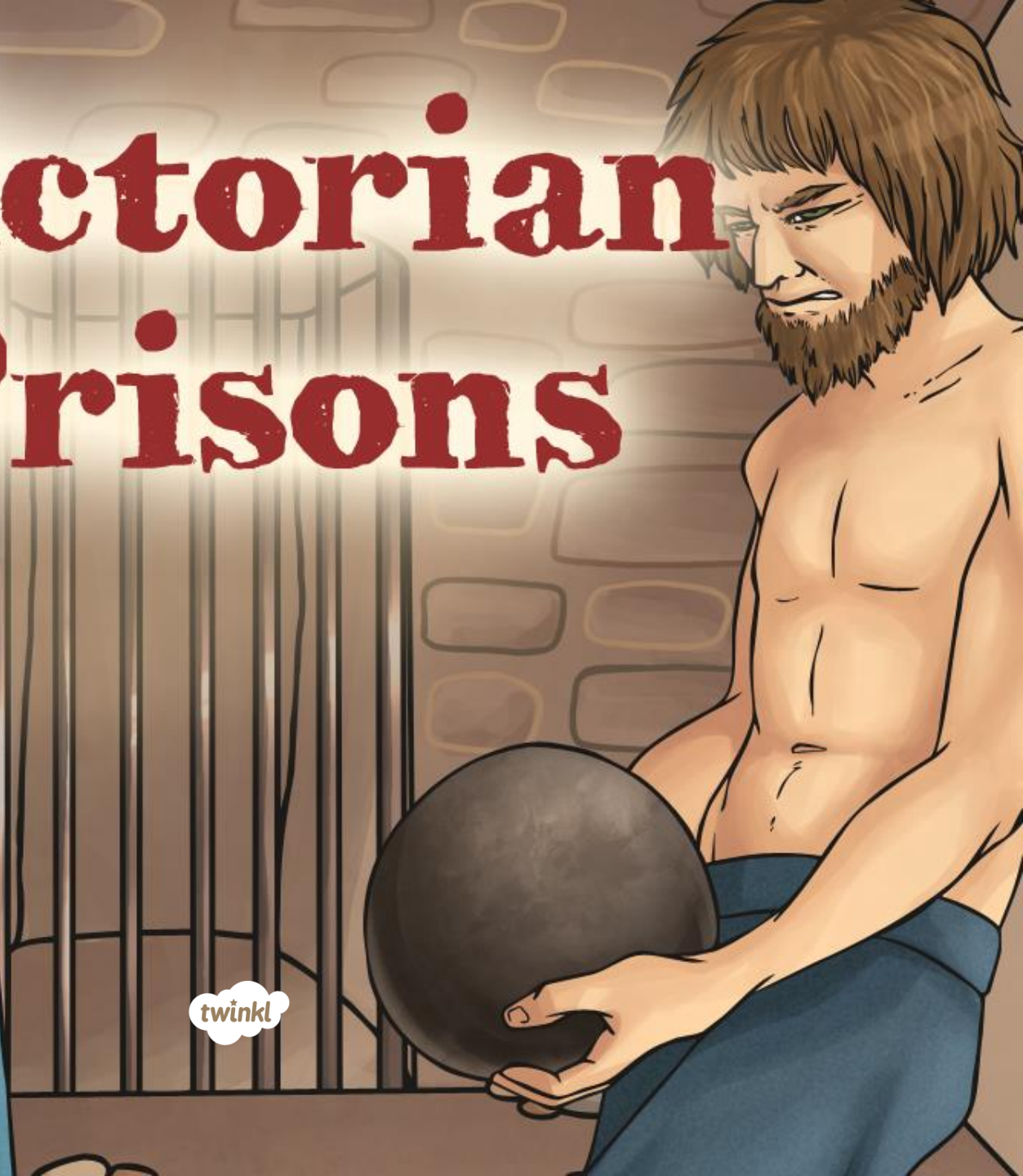




History

Crime and Punishment

Victorian Prisons



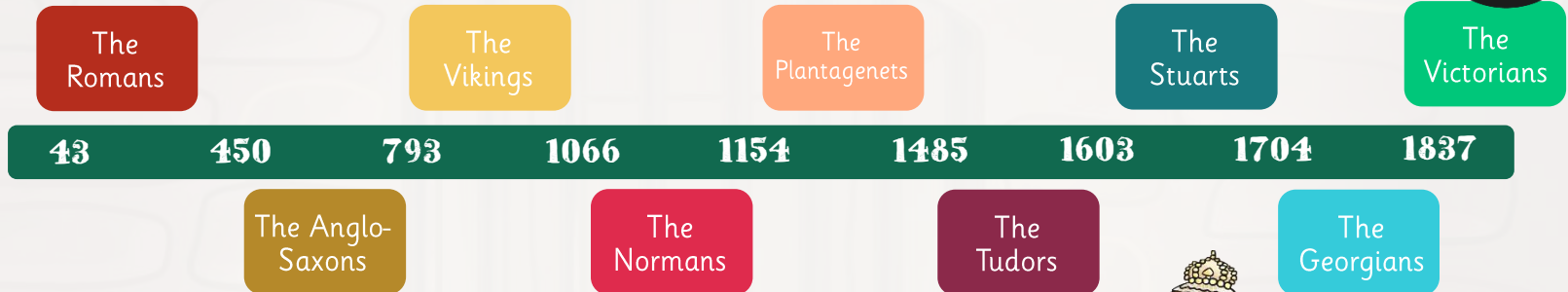
Aim

- I can understand the experiences of Victorian prisoners.

Success Criteria

- I can recall two main things that the Victorians introduced to prevent crime.
- I can explain the hard labour tasks that Victorian prisoners had to do.
- I can describe how I think a Victorian prisoner would have felt.

The Victorians



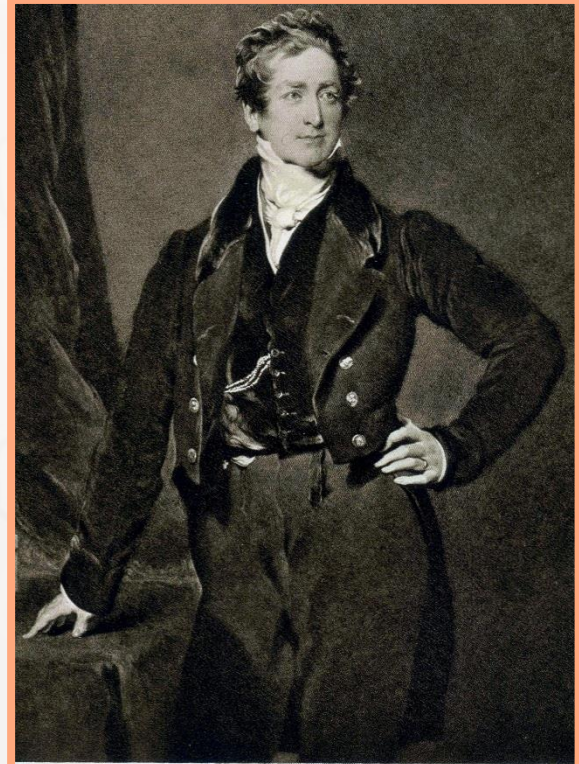
Queen Victoria reigned from 1837 until 1901.

During this time, Britain became one of the most powerful and richest countries in the world. Many factories and machines were built, along with many more ships, buildings and bridges. The car and steam train were invented, which changed the way that people lived their lives.



The Police Force

The police force was first introduced in London in 1829. Sir Robert Peel introduced them as part of a campaign to improve public law. These policemen were called 'Bobbies' or 'Peelers'. By 1839, other areas of the country were developing their own police force.



*Sir Robert Peel.
Par Sir Thomas Lawrence, P.R.A.*

How can you tell who the policeman is in the photo?

The Police Force



The policemen or 'Peelers' wore long, blue coats and tall hats that were strengthened to protect them from blows to the head. Their only weapon was a truncheon – such as those shown in the picture below.



Photo courtesy of Kim Traynor @Wikimedia Commons - granted under creative commons licence - attribution

Victorian Prisons

The Victorians worried about crime. However, they were growing increasingly angry about people being hanged as punishment – often for committing smaller crimes. This created a problem: how should criminals be punished? As a result, other ideas were tried out. One of these was building prisons and using jail to prevent people from committing further crimes.

During the Victorian period, prison became the main form of punishment for lots of different crimes. Between 1842 and 1877, 90 prisons were built or added to. It was a huge building programme which cost millions of pounds.



Pentonville Prison, as illustrated in *The Illustrated London News*, 1842.

Victorian Prisons:

Hard Labour, Separation and Silence

Life in a Victorian prison was extremely tough. Even people who were put into prison for less than three months had to do **hard labour**. This meant carrying out very physically demanding tasks in complete silence, and often they were for no purpose at all. The main tasks were:

- **Treadwheel** – moving a huge wood and iron wheel with steps; the prisoner had to step on them with all his weight to make the wheel move.
- **Shot drill** – lifting a heavy iron cannonball, move three paces to the right, put it down. Move back three paces and repeat the task again.
- **Picking oakum** – pulling apart tarred rope so that it could be used again.
- **The crank** – turning a crank 10,000 times a day, to earn meals for the day.

Prisoners were kept on their own in cells for most of the time. When they were allowed out, such as for exercise, they were not allowed to see or talk to each other.

The Life of a Victorian Prisoner



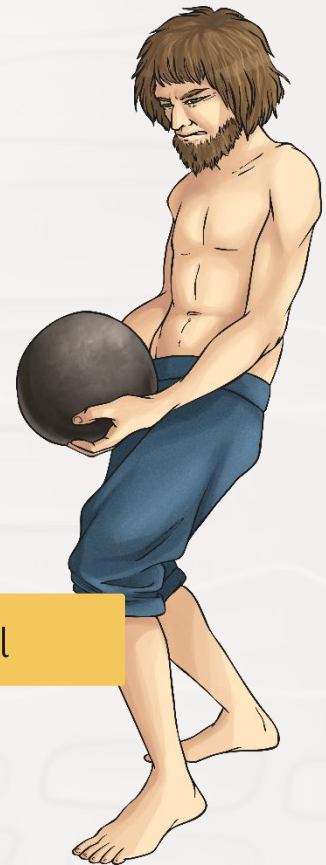
treadwheel



picking oakum



the crank



shot drill

A Day in The Life of a Victorian Prisoner

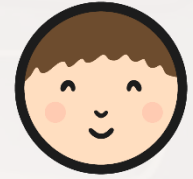


Questions

1. How did you feel?
2. How would it have felt to do that thousands of times every day?
3. What do you think would happen to you after a few weeks?
4. After a few months?
5. Did you try to communicate with each other? How could you do this without being caught by the wardens?



A Day in The Life of a Victorian Prisoner



Activity

Your task: write a diary entry, imagining you are a Victorian prisoner in Pentonville Prison.

- Can you describe how you feel after a day's hard labour?
- What did you have to do?



*** A Day in the Life of a Victorian Prisoner**

○○○

Imagine you are a Victorian prisoner in Pentonville Prison. You have just finished a whole day of hard labour. Choose some of the tasks listed below to write about. What did you have to do? How do you feel?

Can you draw a picture of what you had to do today?

shot drill
picking oakum
treadwheel
the crank

twinkl planit

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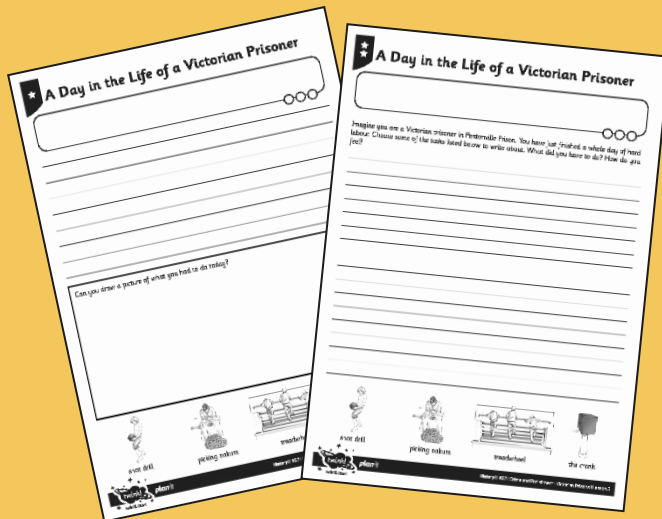
Comparing Our Diaries



Questions

Read your partner's diary.

1. Can you find any similarities with your own diary entry?
2. Are there any differences?



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