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A woman wearing a floral patterned shirt and a man looking through a microscope are shown in a laboratory or classroom setting. The woman is on the left, looking down, and the man is on the right, looking through the eyepiece of a microscope.

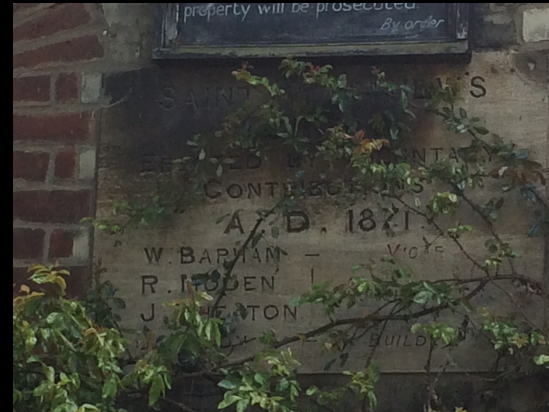
Life in a Victorian School



Cambridge's School Numbers Continue to Grow!

In the Victorian Era the number of Cambridge Schools grew massively for a number of reasons.

The population was growing because of industrialisation and the coming of the Railway in 1845 which brought more trade and families to live and work in Cambridge. A number of charities opening schools to help educate poor children, new education acts being passed in 1870 and 1880 and school becoming free for all in 1891, were amongst the reasons for the large number of schools being built in the Victorian Era.



Can you spot the dates on the signs?

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Plaques showing the dates of opening from outside St. Matthew's School and Morley Memorial School Victorian buildings

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Cambridge builds new Schools in the Victorian Era

So many families settled in Cambridge for work that the newly founded schools became full, especially those close to the Railway Station where the railway workers families lived. For example, St Philip's School became too crowded with hundreds of children trying to squeeze into the classrooms. This led to the school splitting into parts and girls and boys were separated in different schools. The boys were in Ross Street which although it was enlarged in 1898, it soon filled up with schoolboys, so that the Romsey Council School had to be built in 1904. The girls were next to the infant school for St Philip's on Catherine Street. This also filled up with over 870 children in two rooms by 1911 so they had to build a larger school!

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This is a picture of inside Ross Street Community Centre today, which used to be St. Philip's boys school. You can still see the wooden beams and original walls and roof which were built in the Victorian Era.

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Life in a Victorian School

It's difficult to imagine, but in 1837, at the beginning of the Victorian Era, there was no law saying that children had to go to school!

Children from richer families paid to send their boys to school and the girls and younger boys would be taught at home by a Governess.



But many poor children did not have the opportunity to go to school at all and worked from a early age. Like the children in this picture.



Painting of a Governess, by Rebecca Solomon, painted c. 1851, exhibited at the Royal Academy 1854

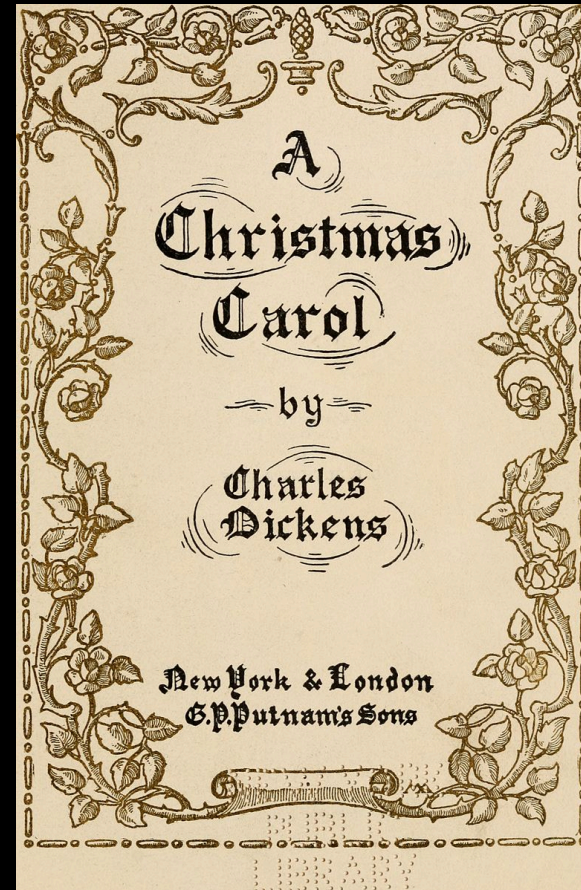
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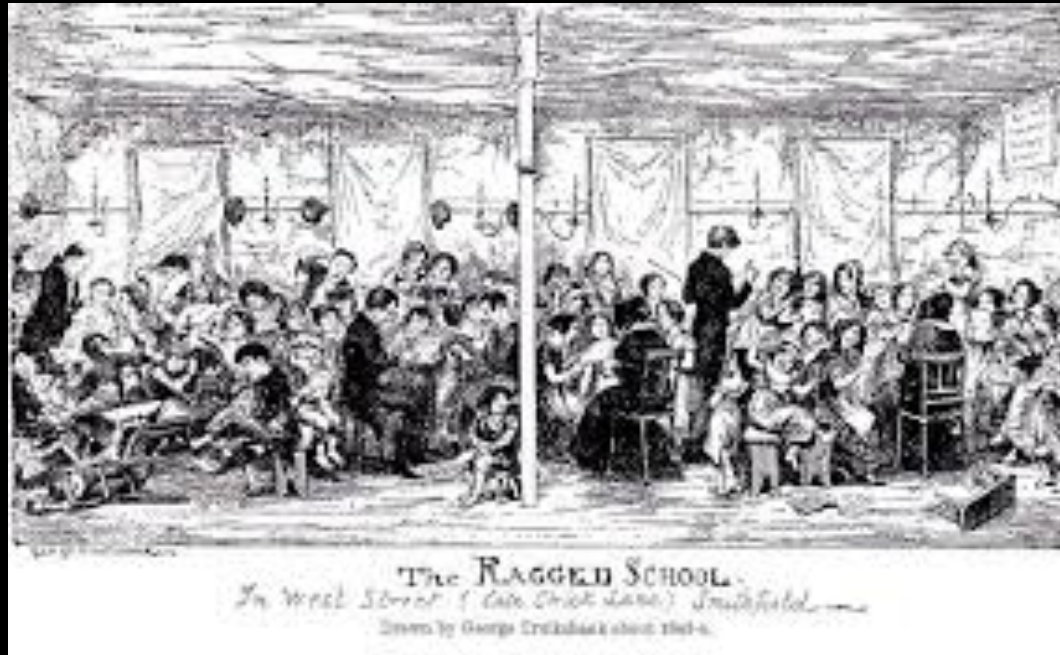
Ragged Schools

Some poor children went to ragged schools, which were schools that were set up in big cities, offering poor and homeless children free school teaching.

Charles Darwin wrote about children going to the ragged schools in his book 'A Christmas Carol' which he wrote in the Victorian Era.



Brunswick Infant School (feeder for St Matthew's School)



There was a Ragged School in Cambridge which was founded by a charity. It was located near St Matthew's School and the building is still there today! We have descriptions from Victorian diarists of fundraising for shoes and clothes and books to help the Ragged School.

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Elementary Education Acts: 1870 & 1880

In 1870 a new law was passed to ensure all children could go to school, meaning new schools were built all over the country.

St. Matthew's School on Norfolk Street was opened in 1871 shortly after the first Education Act was past in 1870.



Can you spot the date on the plaque outside the school?

A new Elementary Education Act was past in 1880 which mean children had to attend school between the age of 5 and 10.

Parents paid about 2p (2d) each week for them to attend.

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School Free for All!

In 1891 the law changed so that parents no longer had to pay for their children's education from the age of 5-10. So it was now free for children to go to school.

**FREE
EDUCATION
FOR ALL!**



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Separating Girls and Boys

All children aged 5-7 were taught in the Infant School, but from the age of 7 girls and boys were taught separately.

Girls and boys had to use different entrances and had separate classrooms.



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Photos of St. Matthew's School Girls
And Boys Entrances at the Victorian
School House

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The Victorian School Day

The Victorian School day started at 9 o'clock sharp. You needed to make sure you were on time, or you would be sent to the Headteacher's Office for a telling off and some Headteachers hit pupils with a cane!

The day always started with Assembly, which went on until 9.30am. At Assembly the Headteacher would lead all children in saying 'The Lord's Prayer', singing a hymn and listening to a story from the Bible.

FACTOID!

The bell would ring to tell children it was time for school as not many people had clocks or watches at home.

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School Lessons- The '3 Rs'

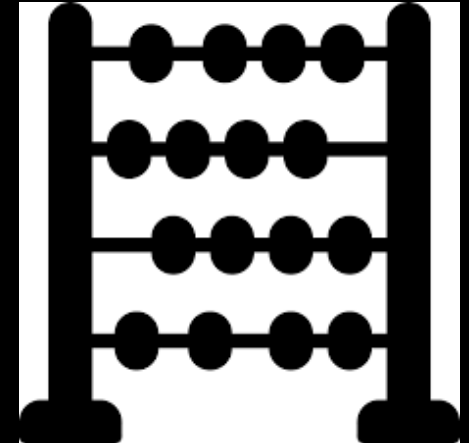
After Assembly it would be time to get on with your lessons.

Each day lessons were based around the '3 Rs':

- Reading
- wRiting
- aRithmetic



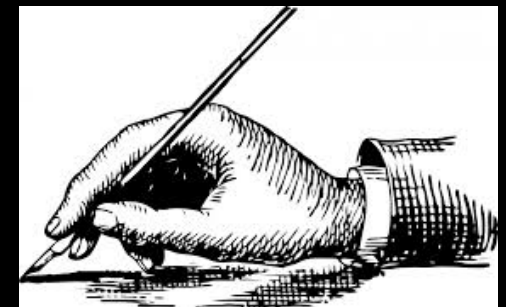
Reading



Arithmetic

FACTOID!
If you didn't sit up straight in your lessons you could be forced to sit with a back straightener pressed into your back to make you sit up straight and concentrate!

[Click here to see a picture of a back straightener.](#)

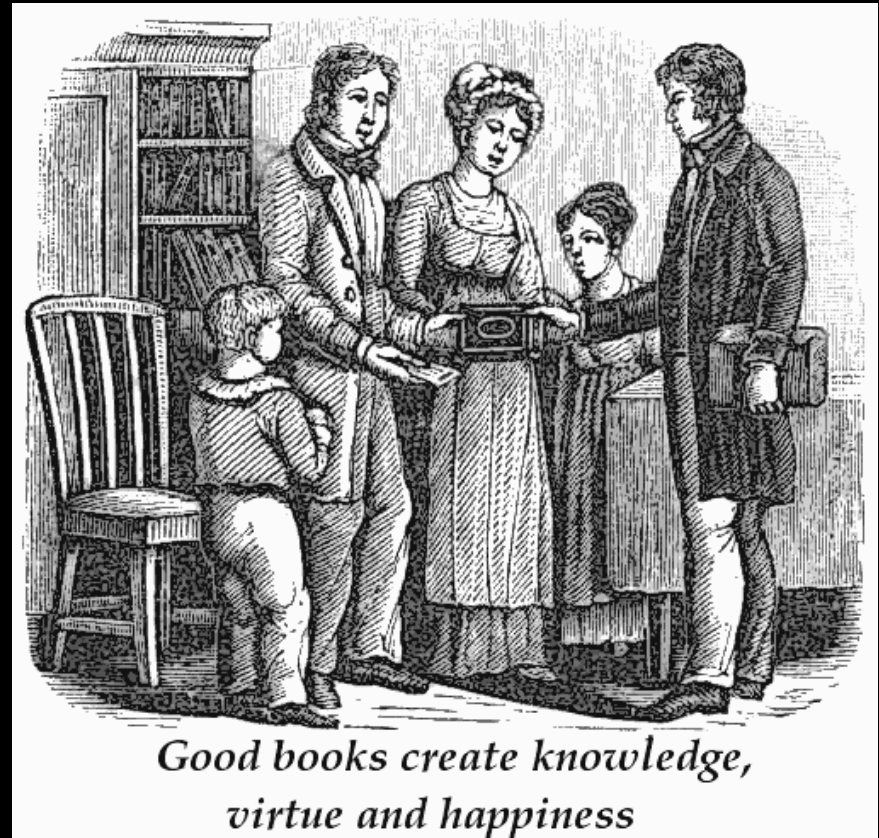


Writing
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Learning to Read

The first lesson of the day was reading, which started straight after the register had been taken. At the start of the lesson everyone would be given a 'reader' by a monitor. A 'reader' was a special book that had simple sentences for children to learn to read from. Children took it in turns to read out loud to the rest of the class, stood at the front of the classroom while the other children would follow along in their own 'reader'. If you made a mistake then the teacher would tell you to try again until you got it right!



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The picture shows a Victorian family buying an educational book from a book seller

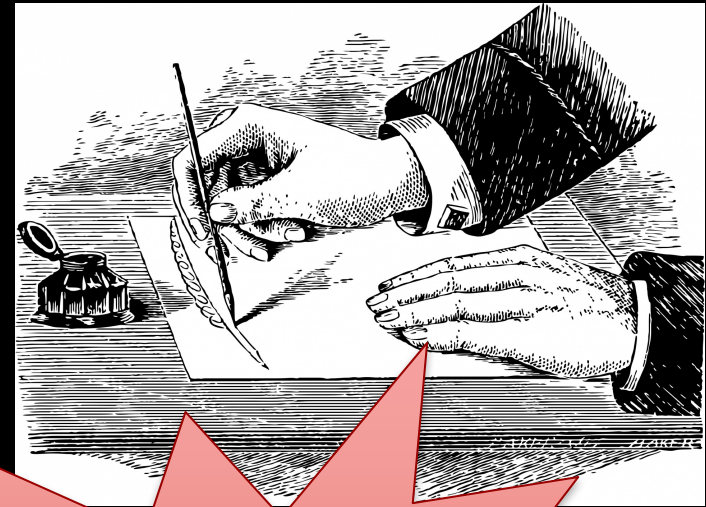
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Learning to Write



Children learnt to write on slates using thin slate pencils, as it was much cheaper than paper.

Writing slate, purchased in 2011 in the [Portuguese](#) city [Oporto](#). By [Petr Adam Dohnálek](#)



But beware, if you made ink blots in your copybook then you would be punished!

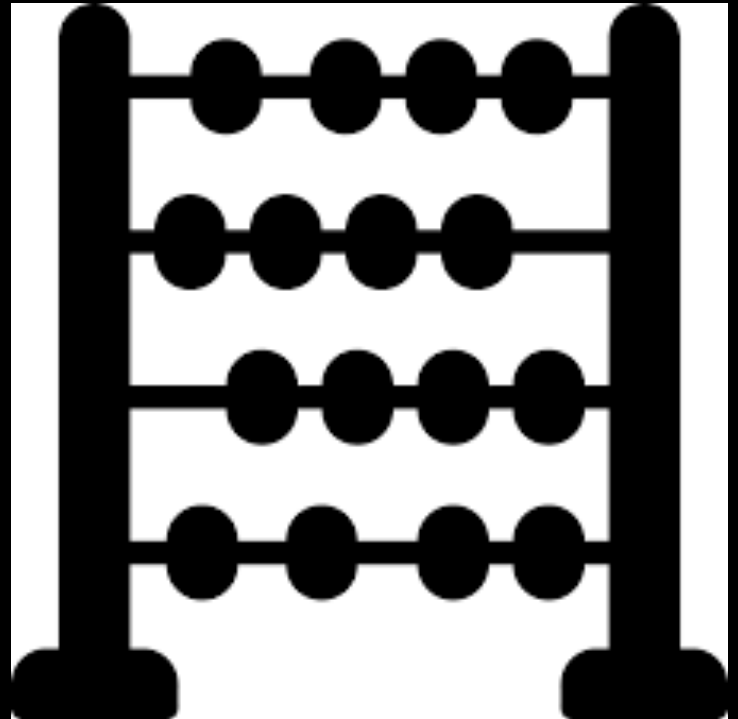
Once they were older they used copybooks, made of paper, which they wrote in with pen and ink, stored in inkwells on their desks, which often dripped in and could get very messy!

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Learning Arithmetic

Children learnt to count using an abacus but were also expected to do a lot of mental arithmetic, so doing lots of sums in your head. They learnt to add, subtract, multiply and divide using this method of the abacus and practicing doing sums in your head.



Object Lessons

As school lessons developed other more interesting lessons were also introduced.

In Infant Schools children had object lessons, where the teacher would hold up an object or picture for the class to look at, such as a rock, mineral, dead insect or dried plant to help them learn about the world around them. Then they would ask children questions about it. It was in a way an early kind of Science lesson.



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The Victorian Classroom



What can you spot in this photo that would be used for the different Victorian lessons?

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Photo of a Replica Victorian School Room at the Ragged School Museum London | by Karen V Bryan

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School Punishment

Victorian Schools were very strict places and if you did not obey the teacher, concentrate hard or give the correct answer you would be severely punished.

Children were often given the cane, which meant they were whacked on the bottom or hands with a special stick called a cane.



The Dunce Cap Punishment

Like using 'the naughty step' for infants who are playing up today, in the Victorian era, children who were not paying attention or didn't know the answer to a question, would often be given a dunce cap to wear until the end of the lesson, or the end of the school day, as humiliation.



FACTOID!

The hat was always pointy and had a big letter D on it short for 'Dunce Cap'.

Schools Built in the Victorian Era (1837-1901)

Here is a list of some Cambridge schools founded during the reign of Queen Victoria. Was yours one of them?

**Abbey
Meadows**

St. Paul's

St. Philip's

St. Matthew's

**Ragged
School**

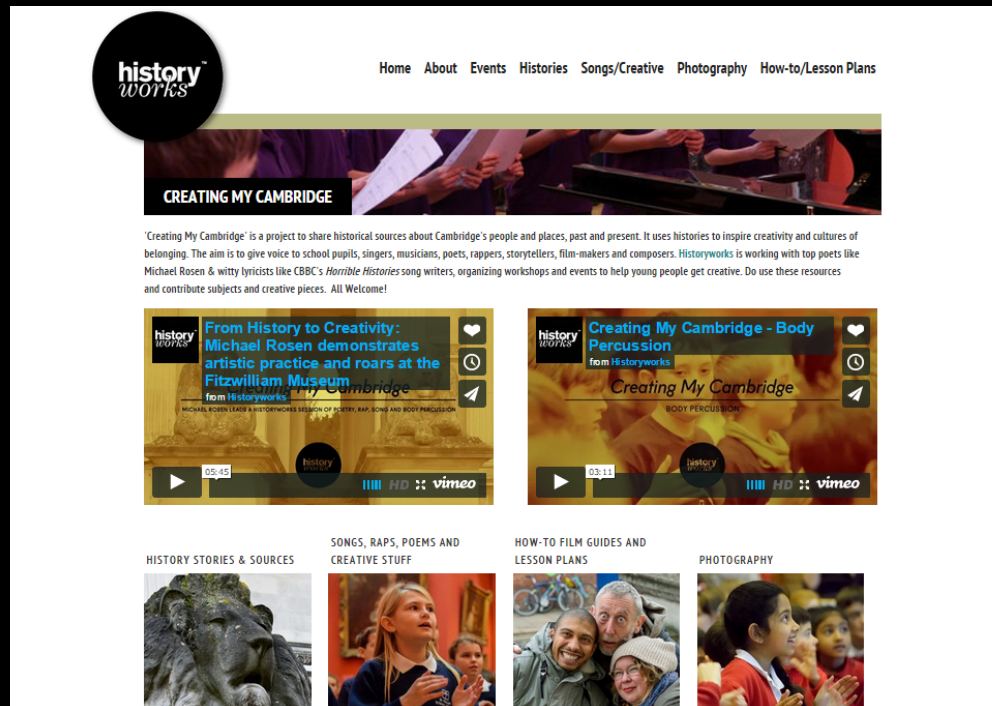
Morley

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Web Resources available at:

<http://www.creatingmycambridge.com/history-stories>



The screenshot shows the 'historyworks' website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links: Home, About, Events, Histories, Songs/Creative, Photography, and How-to/Lesson Plans. The main header features the 'historyworks' logo and a large banner for 'CREATING MY CAMBRIDGE' with a video thumbnail. Below the banner, a paragraph describes the project: 'Creating My Cambridge' is a project to share historical sources about Cambridge's people and places, past and present. It uses histories to inspire creativity and cultures of belonging. The aim is to give voice to school pupils, singers, musicians, poets, rappers, storytellers, film-makers and composers. Historyworks is working with top poets like Michael Rosen & witty lyricists like CBBC's *Horrible Histories* song writers, organizing workshops and events to help young people get creative. Do use these resources and contribute subjects and creative pieces. All Welcome!

Below the text are two video thumbnails. The first is titled 'From History to Creativity: Michael Rosen demonstrates artistic practice and roars at the Fitzwilliam Museum' and has a duration of 05:45. The second is titled 'Creating My Cambridge - Body Percussion' and has a duration of 03:11. Both videos are from 'historyworks' and are available on Vimeo.

At the bottom, there are four categories with corresponding images: 'HISTORY STORIES & SOURCES' (a stone lion), 'SONGS, RAPS, POEMS AND CREATIVE STUFF' (a girl singing), 'HOW-TO FILM GUIDES AND LESSON PLANS' (a group of people), and 'PHOTOGRAPHY' (a group of children).

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