

Finding Out About Washday in the Past Session Plan

St Barbe Museum

A 1½ hour session for one class of KS1 or KS2 children

2 classes may be accommodated at a time with one class working on provided tasks in the gallery under teacher supervision.

We request an adult:child ratio of 1:5

Supports QCA Unit What Was it Like for Children Living in Victorian Britain.

Organisation

During the session you will need to divide into groups. When working in groups the Museum Educator will lead the session but adult helpers will lead each group.

Objectives

- Use a range of resources including museum artefacts, museum displays and practical tasks to extend their understanding of life in the Lymington area in the past.
- To learn about the lives of some children in Victorian times

Session Outline

Introduction

Welcome to St Barbe Museum, introduction to the Museum. Health and safety information will be given. Deposit coats and bags. Instructions will be given on how the session will run. If Victorians is the theme, the class group is divided into 2 groups (unless the group is 15 or less). 'Washday' group to sit in kitchen area of the Museum on cushions.

Activities

The Educator will lead a discussion about washday processes, adding information and asking relevant questions. A child will be dressed in costume and act out parts of the washing process using washboard, soap etc.

Pupils will build a picture of washday in the locality in Victorian times.

Plenary.

An opportunity to revisit key ideas and learning points and to ask further questions. Teachers may photograph pupil in dress.

Teaching Notes: Activity to last about 25 mins with time for gallery exploration/ activity sheets.

Preparation.

Remove from dressing up area:
Collect from gallery Victorian girl's print dress,
strong apron, mob-cap (if available)

Remove from wooden box by coat
pegs:
Enamel bowl
Jug
Items for washing
Soap, starch etc
String for a line and pegs

Ask children to say/act out how people in their house do the washing:
Open door of washing machine, put in clothes, put in the wash tablets/powder/liquid/ shut door, push and
leave!

1. What was the first thing they did?	Fetch water. Where from? Country areas no taps in the house so use a pump, well. Choose a child and dress as laundress. She acts going to the well with a yoke and buckets, filling with water and carrying back. Heavy, and mind her shoes with water slopping over!
2. Will she wash with cold water? How will she heat it up?	Pour into big pans on the range (pupils can be told about coppers with a fire underneath kept in an outhouse or scullery)
3. Pour carefully into the bowl. Child, with help pours a LITTLE water into the bowl. What else do we need?	Soap (soap powder not invented till after Victorian times), washboard. (Use one on display) Ask child to wash item, and ask children if she should work harder. Say that washday went on all day and was very hard work. Children would get bread and cold meat or another simple meal as lady of the house would have a full day with no time to cook. Assist in rinsing in water and wringing out by hand.
4. What could be used for large items?	Washing dolly and dolly tub, washing posser (item with copper end) and a bucket or galvanized tin bath.
5. What else happened next?	Mention starching and show packet of starch.
6. How shall we dry it?	Ask teacher/helpers/reliable pupil to hold each end of string. Child pegs on the item. Mention Gypsy-made pegs and show some. No tumble dryers, but might have an indoor rack called a Sheila Maid which was pulled up high out of the way. A wringer could be used to squeeze out water (show one on display which is much later than Victorian but same idea).
7. Have we finished? No! Ironing when still damp. Can you see one? How were they heated?	Take a dry item and an iron from the kitchen range. Talk about how heavy/compare with irons today. Simulate heat on range and lift with pad of cloth. Pupil can iron carefully.
8. Opportunity for photos. Any other questions. Thank the pupil and give a round of applause.	Change water when pupils have vacated area. Do not leave items unattended or everyone will want a go.

Be aware of safety considerations of possible water on floor which must be mopped up and dry before leaving the area.