By 1901 (the year in which Queen Victoria died) Britain ruled over about 1/4 of the world. At this point, the British Empire was made up of around 400 million people (the population of England was only around 40 million). The empire included the entire Indian subcontinent, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and large parts of Africa. ‘Dominion’ (self-governing) status was awarded to ‘white’ countries (e.g. Australia), however, in some countries (e.g. in Africa) rule was more authoritarian.

Queen Victoria (1819–1901)

Victoria was the Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland from 20th June 1837 until 22nd January 1901. In 1876, she was granted the additional title of ‘Empress of India.’ Her reign of 63 years and 7 months was the longest of any British monarch aside from Queen Elizabeth II, and was known as the Victorian era. Although much of the ruling power at the time was already handed to the government, Victoria still held significant influence in the rule of the country and empire. She married her cousin, Prince Albert in 1840 – their nine children married into noble families all across Europe, earning her the nickname ‘the grandmother of Europe.’ She died in 1901 at the age of 81.

Charles Dickens (1812–1870)

Charles Dickens was a writer, who is widely regarded as the greatest novelist of the Victorian era. His works, including Oliver Twist, Great Expectations and A Christmas Carol were extremely popular during his lifetime. His novels often dealt with the harsh living conditions experienced by the poor at the time.

Elizabeth Garrett Anderson (1836–1917)

Elizabeth Garrett Anderson was a pioneering doctor and political campaigner. She became the first woman to qualify in Britain as a surgeon and the first female mayor and magistrate. She was also the first co-founder of a hospital staffed by women.

Isambard Kingdom Brunel (1806 – 1853)

Brunel is considered to be ‘one of the greatest figures of the Industrial Revolution’. His groundbreaking designs and ingenious constructions including: tunnels, bridges, ships and The Great Western Railway, railway changed the landscape of Britain.

Alexander Graham Bell (1847–1922)

Alexander Graham Bell was a Scottish-born scientist and inventor who is credited with inventing the telephone. Both his mother and his wife were deaf, which influenced Bell to explore hearing devices. He was also a President of the National Geographic Society.
### The Industrial Revolution

The manufacturing of goods moved from small shops to large factories. This meant that more people moved into the cities. It was a time of new technologies and a new, more modern way of life.

**When?**
Around 1760 — 1850

**Key Fact:** Queen Victoria took to the throne at the very end of the revolution.

### Class

Despite the revolution, there were still distinct social classes: the upper class, middle class, and working class. Life was terrible for the poorest: awful working conditions and little food.

**Who?**
The upper classes was made up of very few people.

**Key Fact:** The upper class lived prosperous lives with servants and cooks.

### Workhouses

Workhouses were places where a person went if they could not afford to financially support themselves and their families — they quickly became extremely crowded and unpleasant.

**How?**
People slept in dormitories, where disease easily spread.

**Key Fact:** Many orphans ended up growing up in workhouses.

### Life for Children

Until the late 19th Century, education was only for the rich. As many families were so poor, lots of children had to work instead of going to school. They worked long hours, in dangerous conditions for little money.

**What?**
Children were often exploited, paid very little for long hours.

**Key Fact:** Only in 1880 did primary schooling become compulsory.

### Health

Medicine was nowhere near as advanced as today. Many diseases were rife, and childbirth and poverty were very real dangers to people living in the era, especially the poor.

**How?**
Poor public hygiene played a large part in poor health.

**Key Fact:** On average, rich people lived to 45; the poor lived for half that time.

### Food

As with all aspects of life, there were vast differences between the diets of the rich and poor. The poor survived on little more than potato scraps and rotten vegetables.

**What?**
Workhouses only offered basic rations.

**Key Fact:** The rich dined on fine foods, using expensive cutlery, with servants.

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**Timeline**

- 1837 – Victoria becomes Queen aged 18.
- 1840 – Britain claims New Zealand as a colony to head off the French.
- 1843 – Charles Dickens publishes ‘A Christmas Carol.’
- 1845-1849 – Ireland suffers the Great Potato Famine, causing the deaths of about 800,000 people.
- 1850 – Workhouses were opened, offering basic food and beds in return for work.
- 1856 – Britain defeats Russia in the Crimean War.
- 1861 – Prince Albert dies of typhoid.
- 1880 – School compulsory for 5-10 year olds
- 1901 – Queen Victoria dies. Her son, Edward VII, becomes King.