

Living in the Victorian Workhouse

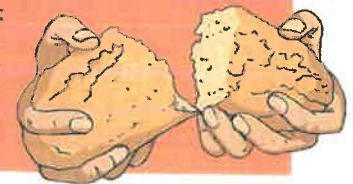
What Were Workhouses?

Workhouses were large buildings where poor people who had no home or job lived. People would do jobs around the workhouse in order to stay there to have a roof over their heads. It was seen as a way for the poor to support themselves but many feared going there. As well as the poor, orphaned children, the sick, disabled, elderly and unmarried mothers were also usually sent to the workhouse.

Living in a workhouse was the last thing people wanted to do. If a man with a family had to enter a workhouse, his whole family had to go with him. It was thought to be shameful because it meant he could not look after his own family and he could not get a job.

Food

Food was bread, cheese and sometimes meat. It was common to miss a meal if you did something wrong.



Families in a Workhouse

The men, women, and children lived in different parts of the building. Children only spent a short amount of time each week with their parents. Large groups slept in the same room and many were made to share beds.

Children had lessons in reading, writing, maths and religion. However, teachers were often cruel. Children were not supposed to be hit, but there are reports that they were often hit with a ruler or stick in class.

Girls were taught how to sew as well as other skills that would help them become a maid when they left the workhouse at fourteen years old.

Jobs in the Workhouse

Jobs in the workhouse involved a lot of hard work. Some of the jobs included:

Men	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> stone breaking grinding corn chopping wood working in the fields
Women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> laundry cleaning scrubbing walls and floors sewing and weaving

Bad Reputation

Workhouses became known for their terrible conditions and people starving there. Many people, including the writer Charles Dickens, were against their use.

By 1929, new laws were introduced to allow workhouses to be turned into hospitals and in 1930, workhouses were officially closed. Because of the number of people living in workhouses, it took a number of years before all workhouses had disappeared.



Questions

1. Which of these groups was **not** sent to the workhouse? Tick **one**.

- elderly
- wealthy
- disabled
- orphaned children

2. What happened if a man with a family was sent to the workhouse?

3. Which of these foods were part of daily meals? Tick **two**.

- cheese
- vegetables
- bread
- fruit

4. Match the jobs to whether they were done by men or women.

men

women

laundry

stone breaking

wood chopping

scrubbing walls

5. Fill in the missing words.

Workhouses became _____ for their _____
 conditions and people _____ there.

6. What were many workhouses turned into after 1929? Tick **one**.

- schools
- churches
- houses
- hospitals

7. At the start of the text, it says that people feared going to the workhouse. Why do you think this is? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

Workhouse

a b r e a d g m i c k l
p n o p q r r n i v w d
o z a b c o f t g h o p
v l m n f i e r s r a o
e x y i r m y d m u g r
r j n m h r o i p r e p
t u w t d z t e c d s h
y h i n k o r n o p e a
s r u v r x y z a b e n
a a g y i j k l m n h p
l g n i b b u r c s c b
v i c t o r i a n s m n

bread
cheese
uniform
dormitory

laundry
scrubbing
pauper
Victorians

orphan
arithmetic
infirm
poverty