Census Day

Census day - What mattered to Victorian Gypsies?

LO: To Investigate what mattered to Victorian Gypsies?

- All Students will be able to list some of the key things that would have been important to Victorian Gypsies.
- Most students will be able to explain why these things were important to Victorian Gypsies using evidence and examples.
- Some students will be able to explain how Gypsy life in the countryside contrasts with life in the industrial cities, giving examples.

Use the next slide showing the Census enumerator at a Gypsy camp. Reveal parts of the picture one at a time asking pupils to make sense of what they see. Gradually reveal that this is a Gypsy camp. Ask pupils to work out why the man is there – they should be able to link this back to work on Victorian census returns (see Additional notes for teachers).

Are they surprised that the census included Gypsies? What might the man be asking?

Teachers notes,

Use the Powerpoint file showing the Census enumerator at a Gypsy camp. Reveal parts of the picture one at a time asking pupils to make sense of what they see. Gradually reveal that this is a Gypsy camp. Ask pupils to work out why the man is there – they should be able to link this back to work on Victorian census returns (see Additional notes for teachers).

Are they surprised that the census included Gypsies? What might the man be asking?
Work out from the picture anything you can about how Gypsies lived e.g. what they made and sold, how they travelled, cooked etc. Who did what when the camp was set up?

Stick the picture in your books and annotate what you can see.

Use the worksheet to add to your annotations.
Jobs done by men ...
- Hawking (Going door to door and selling whatever goods they had made)
- Buying, breeding and selling horses
- Tinkering (making and mending metal goods)
- Knife grinding (sharpening tools)
- China riveting (mending vases, plates etc with metal staples)
- Basket weaving
- Making clothes pegs
- Making wooden or paper flowers
- Making beehives
- Playing music for money (e.g. the fiddle)
- Rat catching
- Picking fruit and vegetables at harvest time
- Cutting ferns for fishmongers to lay their fish on

Jobs done by women ...
- Hawking (Going door to door and selling whatever goods they had made)
- Making posies of flowers or heather
- Dukkering - telling fortunes by reading people’s palms or using a crystal ball
- Basket weaving
- Making clothes pegs
- Making wooden or paper flowers
- Picking fruit and vegetables at harvest time
- Making wreaths at Christmas
- Cutting ferns for fishmongers to lay their fish on
- Buying food
- Cooking food
- Washing clothes
- Cleaning inside the caravan
What the children did ...
- Hawking (Going door to door and selling whatever goods they had made)
- Gathering materials for making baskets, pegs etc
- Gathering firewood and water
- Looking after the animals
- Learning the jobs done by their parents by doing them from a very early age

Life in the Gypsy camp ...
- The ground could be muddy and dirty but there were strict rules to keep the insides of caravans and tents clean
- There were strict rules about washing hands regularly in clean water
- There were strict rules about washing men's clothes separately from women's
- There were strict rules to keep the lavatory area well away from the camp
- They spoke their own language as well as English - they called their stopping places "Hatchin Tans"
- They told stories
- They danced and sang
- The men and boys enjoyed boxing
- The men and boys enjoyed horse trotting (racing with carts)
- Gypsies enjoyed meeting at horse fairs or events like the Epsom Derby
Let's read George Smith's Memory together.

Write a paragraph explaining how you think George's life is going to change as a result of the industrial revolution.

Use the list of jobs to help you

Gypsy George Smith looks back on his life in 1886

As I grow older, I often dream of the many well-loved spots on this beautiful land that I visited in my boyhood's days when all was health, glee, and happiness.

Now, alas! where are they? Gone! The busy work of the builders have covered those places once so dear to me.

After even a short absence I seek a place I once knew and loved, to find what? A block of houses! The fairy-like home I travelled far to see has vanished in the past.

Where can I find those times where all we needed to exist in peace and plenty was one fiftieth of the goods that are now available to people? Smoky chimneys, the roaring of machinery and noise of mills, never dreamed of in days gone by, now meet my sight and ears.

Oh, how different it is!

(Adapted from "The Life of a Gypsy" - a booklet written for the International Exhibition in Liverpool)