HOW THE RESOURCE WILL WORK

This resource has been designed to support teachers visiting the Museum's permanent collection and temporary exhibition The Fallen Woman. The resource can be used as a guide to support teachers leading a session independently in the Museum, or used to accompany an artist-led workshop. The resource requires materials to complete the activities; these will be provided when with an artist, when visiting alone, please make sure you have the correct materials with you.

NATIONAL CURRICULUM LINKS

The resource has been designed to work as an enrichment of the National Curriculum with a focus on Victorian Britain and a local history study of Bloomsbury and the surrounding area. The resource has cross curricular links to Key Stage 1, 2 and 3 History and Art & Design. It is also a good learning resource to stimulate and develop spoken language and listening skills.
INTRODUCTION
Creative Studio, 10 minutes

THE VICTORIANS

The Victorian era of British history describes the period of Queen Victoria’s reign from 1837 until 1901. The Victorian era was a period of great growth for Britain’s population and it saw much change in the standards of living for many people. Many of today’s technologies were invented during the nineteenth century, such as electric lighting, flushing toilets, the London Underground and bicycles.

The Outcast, Richard Redgrave, 1851 © Royal Academy of Arts

THE FALLEN WOMAN

The Fallen Woman exhibition explores the way in which Victorian society treated women. The term ‘fallen woman’ was used to describe respectable women who had had a relationship with a man that she was not married to. This loss of chastity for an unwed woman had multiple side effects.

THE FOUNDLING HOSPITAL

The Foundling Museum tells the story of the Foundling Hospital. The Museum building is built on the site of the Foundling Hospital, England’s first home for abandoned children. During the nineteenth century the Foundling Hospital often took in the babies of fallen women in order to give both mother and child the chance of a better life.
The Victorians believed that the characteristics of a good woman should be to be a dutiful daughter, a loyal wife, and most important of all an adoring mother. Women were expected to hold the family and the home together, and that was her only job.

Look together at Mother and Child (1852) by Carlos Cope and The Happy Mother by George Elgar Hicks. These paintings show the Victorian notion of an ideal woman.

As a group discuss what is happening in these paintings. Look at the sorts of colours and items that are surrounding the women.

Think about:
The sorts of colours and objects that are surrounding the women.
What these paintings have in common.
What the women are doing that shows you they are good women.

It was common for a woman to be abandoned by her family if she did not live up to this ideal vision. Many women in this situation ended up living on the streets with no one to help or support her.
THE FALL
Temporary Exhibition Gallery, 10 minutes

Lots of Victorian writers and artists were interested in fallen women - and depicting the reasons behind their fall.

In various paintings in the exhibition different reasons are given for a woman falling such as:
Alcohol
Vanity
Men leading them astray

As a group look at the different paintings and try to identify different reasons the painters thought the women were not living up to the Victorian standard of an ideal woman.
Think about the ways in which these paintings look different from the images of the ideal woman – look at the objects that the women are surrounded by and the colours the painters have used.

ACTIVITY

Give each child two sheets of paper. Ask them to draw the Victorian notion of an ideal woman on one sheet. Ask them to think about the paintings they have seen in the exhibition and how the painters have used light, colour and setting to convey a positive view of women. Encourage them to surround the woman with objects or words that show she is an ideal woman.

Now ask the children to draw an image of a fallen woman on the second sheet of paper. Again ask them to think about the paintings they have seen in the exhibition and the use of colour, light and setting. Ask them to surround the fallen women with words or objects that show what has led to her fall.

THE ROLE OF THE FOUNDLING HOSPITAL

The Foundling Hospital took in children who could not be looked after by their parents. During the Victorian era the Hospital Governors believed that even if a woman made a mistake, she could still get her life back on track, and be accepted by society again, if they took her baby and brought it up as a foundling. Foundlings were brought up not knowing who their birth parents were. This allowed mothers and children to be removed from the stigma of having a child out of wedlock.

Discuss with the students what they think of this idea.
In what ways is it good for the woman and child?
In what ways is it bad for the woman and child?
CONSEQUENCES
Temporary Exhibition Gallery, 15 minutes

THE PETITION PROCESS

As a group, look at the piles of petitions.

From the late eighteenth century, if a woman wanted the Foundling Hospital to look after their child, they had to go through an application process.

To apply, a woman had to complete a petition form and be interviewed by a panel of male Governors. They questioned her on the information she had provided, her background, how she became pregnant and what she knew of the father’s current whereabouts. The contents of the interview were recorded in the petitioner’s statement.

The Hospital’s Enquirer then checked the woman’s story to ensure its truthfulness and request references. On this evidence, the Governors made a decision as to whether the petitioner’s child could be accepted.

In these documents there are many stories from women. These accounts give us more information about what happened to them; however we have to remember that they may or may not have been telling the truth.

Within the petitions there are many stories of women being victims of men who were violent and forced them to get pregnant. There are no stories of unmarried women getting pregnant because they wanted to or because they loved the man and made a mistake. Women couldn’t admit to these sorts of things in Victorian society, because women were supposed to be obedient and respectable.

ACTIVITY

Listen to the soundscape by artist Steve Lewenson.

Ask the group to think about:
What these voices tell us?
How it feels to hear these stories read aloud?
Do they feel sympathy for the women?
ADMISSIONS
Introductory Gallery, 15 minutes

An Exact Representation of the Form and Manner in which Exposed and Deserted Young Children Are Admitted Into the Foundling Hospital,
Nathaniel Parr, 1749 © Coram in the care of the Foundling Museum

From the time that it opened, there was an overwhelming demand for places at the Foundling Hospital. The Governors might accept twenty infants at a time but there were often up to one hundred waiting for admission. During the nineteenth century the Governors used a petition system to help them to decide which children to take into the Hospital. In the eighteenth century a ballot scheme was used. Adults wanting to leave a child in the care of the Foundling Hospital would attend reception days. Each adult would draw a ball from a bag. The colour of the ball would determine the fate of the child: white meant yes (if they passed a medical examination), red meant maybe and black meant no.

As a group, look at the ballot engraving by Nathaniel Parr. This engraving shows mothers going through the ballot system on a reception day.
Ask the students to identify the people they see.
Reception days were watched by wealthy people as entertainment. Ask the group if they would enjoy watching this process, and discuss the sorts of entertainment we watch today.

ACTIVITY

Hand around the bag of raffle tickets and ask the children to take one ticket each without looking.

Blue tickets - You are not allowed into the Foundling Hospital.
Red tickets - You are on a waiting list. Wait until the end of the day, and if there is still space you can come in.
White tickets - You have a place in the Foundling Hospital – as long as you pass the medical exam and don’t have any diseases.

Ask the children how they feel with each of their tickets?

Discuss with the group:
If they think this ballot system is more or less fair than the petition system that the Victorians used.
How the petition system shows that the aims of the Foundling Hospital had changed.
At the beginning of the nineteenth century very few children went to school. Most children from poor families worked long hours to help pay for their family’s food, clothing and housing. Schools were open to boys and fees were high so only rich families could afford to pay them – very occasionally schools offered free places to poor boys. Girls from wealthy families were taught at home by a governess but girls from poorer families ended up with little or no education.

The Foundling Hospital had its own school and educated all of the foundlings, girls and boys alike, until they were old enough to leave at the age of 14. All foundling children were given a basic education in English and mathematics and were also taught practical skills such as sewing for girls and rope making for boys.

Babies were admitted to the Foundling Hospital under the age of two and all were re-christened and given a new name. They were placed with wet nurses until the age of five and brought back to the hospital to live and be educated until they were apprenticed out, around the age of fourteen.

FOUNDLING UNIFORMS

Gather the students around the case with the Foundling Hospital uniforms

The foundlings had to wear very strict uniforms all the time. Ask the students to describe what these uniforms are like, get them to think about how they might feel and what it would be like to have these as their only clothes.

All the foundling children had similar haircuts, one style for boys and one for girls. Ask the students what they think it would have been like to dress and look alike – does it convey a sense of unity or does it squash individuality?

LESSONS

Look at the cabinet opposite the uniforms

Girls and boys were separated for all of their lessons. A daily routine during the nineteenth century would include: prayers and religious instruction, writing, reading, English Grammar, more writing, geography and tables (mathematics). In addition to these there were practical activities: boys would learn rope building and the girls would learn embroidery.
ACTIVITIES
Picture Gallery, 20 minutes

ACTIVITY 1 - VICTORIAN HANDWRITING
Hand out copies of a handwriting sheet.
Ask the children to write their name in the style of the Foundling Hospital handwriting sheet.
Discuss how this handwriting differs from the one they use today – is it easier or harder to write?

ACTIVITY 2 - FOUNDLING SCHOOL UNIFORMS
Hand out copies of Foundling Girl and Foundling Boy, Harold Copping, 1919.
Ask the students to draw a self-portrait of themselves as a foundling in the Foundling Hospital uniform and with the Foundling Hospital haircut.
Ask the students to line up the finished drawings to see how they would all look as foundlings.

ACTIVITY 3 - MORAL DEBATING
Place three signs around the space:
AGREE
DISAGREE
NOT SURE

Ask the students to think about what has been discussed today.
Read out the following statements.
Ask the children to move to whichever sign reflects their opinion about the statement.
Discuss why they have chosen to agree, disagree or are not sure.

Statements:
1) The ballot scheme is the fairest way to decide who gets a place in the Foundling Hospital.
2) Society is fairer for women now than in Victorian times.
3) The children were better off in the Foundling Hospital than with their unmarried mothers in Victorian times.
4) Everything is equal for men and woman today.
STEREOSCOPES
Temporary Exhibition Gallery, 15 minutes

Back in the gallery space, look at the stereoscopes as a group. These are an example of Victorian toys based on optical illusions.

What images do they show?
Are these rich or poor Victorians?
What is happening to them in the images?

ACTIVITY

Hand out the circles of card, pencils and straws - one of each per person.

Victorian optical illusion toys were very popular entertainment.

Ask the students to draw a woman in a Victorian-style dress on one side of the card.

Next ask the students to turn the card over and draw angel wings and a halo, where they would be positioned on the head and shoulders of the woman they have just drawn.

Next, ask the students to tape their card to the top of their straw like a lollipop.

Ask the students what they see when the straw is spun
OUTCOMES AND ENDINGS
Committee Room, 10 minutes

The final part of the exhibition looks at the possible ways the story can end for fallen women during the Victorian era.

Look at the paintings and prints on display and discuss with the group the different consequences that are depicted.

*Found Drowned*, George Frederic Watts, c. 1848–50 © Watts Gallery

As a group look at and discuss *Found Drowned* (1848–50) by George Frederic Watts.

Think about:

The way this painting makes you feel and think about the woman depicted.
The sort of atmosphere that the painting portrays.
The techniques Watts has used to create this atmosphere.
The effect that the size of the painting has on the way emotions it evokes.
The way that the artist has represented death.

CONCLUSION

Review as a group what we have learnt and discussed today. Each member of the group shares one thing they have learnt that they didn’t know before.