

AQA GCSE

English Language



Insert

- **Source A – 19th Century non-fiction**

Extract from *London Labour and the London Poor* by Henry Mayhew, 1865

- **Source B – 21st Century literary non-fiction**

A Guardian newspaper article “Many children are living in Victorian conditions – it’s an inequality timebomb” by Frances Ryan

Source A – 19th Century non-fiction

In this extract, Henry Mayhew is interviewing a street seller of watercress. She is eight years old

The little watercress girl who gave me the following statement, although only eight years of age, had entirely lost all childish ways, and was, indeed, in thoughts and manner, a woman. There was something cruelly pathetic in hearing this infant, so young that her features had scarcely formed themselves, talking of the bitterest struggles of life, with the calm earnestness of one who had endured them all. I did not know how to talk with her. At first I treated her as a child, speaking on childish subjects; so that I might, by being familiar with her, remove all shyness, and get her to narrate her life freely. I asked her about her toys and her games with her companions; but the look of amazement that answered me soon put an end to any attempt of fun on my part. I then talked to her about the parks, and whether she ever went to them. 'The parks!' she replied in wonder, 'where are they?' I explained to her, telling her that they were large open places with green grass and tall trees, where beautiful carriages drove about, and people walked for pleasure, and children played. Her eyes brightened up a little as I spoke; and she asked, half doubtingly, 'Would they let such as me go there – just to look?' All her knowledge seemed to begin and end with watercresses, and what they fetched. She knew no more of London than that part she had seen on her rounds, and believed that no quarter of the town was handsomer or pleasanter than it was at Farringdon-market or at Clerkenwell, where she lived. Her little face, pale and thin with privation, was wrinkled where the dimples ought to have been, and she would sigh frequently. When some hot dinner was offered to her, she would not touch it, because, if she eat too much, 'it made her sick,' she said; 'and she wasn't used to meat, only on a Sunday.'

The poor child, although the weather was severe, was dressed in a thin cotton gown, with a threadbare shawl wrapped round her shoulders. She wore no covering to her head, and the long rusty hair stood out in all directions. When she walked she shuffled along, for fear that the large carpet slippers that served her for shoes should slip off her feet.

"I go about the streets with water-creases, crying, 'Four bunches a penny, water-creases.' I am just eight years old – that's all, and I've a big sister, and a brother and a sister younger than I am. On and off, I've been very near a twelvemonth in the streets. Before that, I had to take care of a baby for my aunt. No, it wasn't heavy – it was only two months old; but I minded it for ever such a time – till it could walk. It was a very nice little baby, not a very pretty one; but if I touched it under the chin, it would laugh. Before I had the baby, I used to help mother, who was in the fur trade; and, if there was any slits in the fur, I'd sew them up. My mother learned me to needle-work and to knit when I was about five. I used to go to school too; but I wasn't there long. I've forgot all about it now, it's such a time ago; and mother took me away because the master whacked me, though the missus use'n't to never tough me. I didn't like him at all. What do you think? He hit me three times,

45 ever so hard, across the face with his cane, and made me go dancing down stairs; and when mother saw the marks on my cheek, she went to blow him up, but she couldn't see him – he was afraid. That's why I left school.”

Source B – 21st Century literary non-fiction

In this article, Frances Ryan explores how some children in 2015 are living in situations similar to those of Victorian Britain

5 **Many children are living in Victorian conditions – it’s an inequality timebomb**

Our fears about child poverty in the UK are coming true: that austerity is entrenching hunger, stigma and educational exclusion. And this sort of damage lasts

10 What does it mean to be one of the richest countries in the world? I wondered this as I read through the report by the Children’s Commission on Poverty (CCP) at the end of last year, in which British children describe the hunger that comes with not being able to afford lunch, or the wait for a “good day” when their mum has 25p spare for a snack. I was reminded of this by the teaching union NASUWT’s warning this week
15 that there are children in this country living in “Victorian conditions”, turning to charity for regular meals and going without a winter coat.

Britain’s economic recovery can be felt in the lives of “hardworking taxpayers”, David Cameron claimed at a rally on Easter Monday. Yet children are coming to school in dirty or fraying clothes, eight in 10 teachers surveyed report. Other children are
20 vanishing halfway through the term, evicted and without a home near their school to go back to. I imagine it is difficult for them to feel the coalition’s economic recovery – if only their parents had worked harder.

The union’s message is clear: the financial crisis is impacting on the poorest children’s attainment. Hungry and tired children cannot concentrate in class. Living in
25 a cramped flat or temporary accommodation means doing maths on your knee or producing English coursework with no internet, let alone your own laptop. Teenagers who are worrying whether their parents can pay this month’s rent are likely to become withdrawn, not confident students ready for university interviews.

There is no such thing as an equal life chance in Britain. This will not be news to the
30 former free school meals child now scrubbing toilets for a minimum wage, or to the Eton alumni born to sit in Downing Street. The system is rigged – and it is rigged in favour of the ones who don’t need the advantage. That is the greatest irony of inequality and education: the school system is both the emancipation of the working

class and confirmation of its place. Austerity's architects could never have thought
35 that growing inequality – where the elite have seen their fortunes rocket as the
poorest suffer – would do anything but worsen this.

As further evidence of this, the educational “achievement gap” between richer and
poorer children is widening, as of this year. Only one in three disadvantaged pupils is
40 hitting the government's GCSE pass target – compared with over 60% of their richer
peers. And the education system literally divides children along class lines – our
schools are among the most socially segregated in the developed world. We group
together children of immigrants: 80% are taught in schools with “high concentrations”
of other immigrant or disadvantaged pupils. Poorly educated parents – defined as
45 those who don't have five good GCSEs – see their kids taught together, shut away
from advantaged children. Meanwhile, private schools continue to let privilege buy
privilege. The best comprehensives and academies practice social selection by
stealth, siphoning out the poor kids on free school meals.

It is 2015 and children in this country are going to school hungry, as they sit in class
50 in dirty uniforms. Where exactly do we expect them to be in 2025? Austerity is
starving the poorest out of their future.

