

Life in a Workhouse

What is a workhouse?

A long time ago, a workhouse was a big building where many very poor people had to live and work.

Men, women and children all lived in different parts of the workhouse.

Work in the workhouse

Work in the workhouse was very hard.

Here are some of the jobs the men and women had to do:

| | |
|-------|---|
| Men | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• stone breaking• chopping wood• grinding corn |
| Women | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• washing clothes• kitchen jobs• scrubbing walls and floors |

They had to be up at 6 o'clock in the morning and went to bed at 8 o'clock.

Children had lessons in reading, writing, maths and religion. Girls had to learn how to knit and sew too.

If you broke the rules, you might end up in prison!

Clothes

Everyone had to wear clothes made of a hard fabric. Men wore trousers, a shirt and a cap. Women wore dresses with aprons.

Workhouses were closed on 1st April, 1930.



Food:

Food was basic.

- broth
- bread
- cheese
- potatoes



Questions

1. Who had to live in a workhouse?

2. What was the work like in there?

3. Name one job men had to do in the workhouse.

4. What time did they have to get up in the morning?

5. Name two things they would be given to eat.

6. Where might you go if you broke the rules?

Answers

1. Who had to live in a workhouse?

Many poor people had to live in a workhouse.

2. What was the work like in there?

The work was hard in there.

3. Name one job men had to do in the workhouse.

Men had to do stone breaking, chopping wood and grinding corn (accept any one).

4. What time did they have to get up in the morning?

They had to get up at 6 o'clock in the morning.

5. Name two things they would be given to eat.

They were given broth, bread, cheese and potatoes (accept any two).

6. Where might you go if you broke the rules.

You might go to prison if you broke the rules.

Life in a Workhouse

What is a workhouse?

During the Victorian times, a workhouse was a large building where many very poor people had to live and work.

Families

If a father could not find a job, he would have to live in a workhouse. His wife and children had to go with him. Men lived in a separate area of the building to the women and children.

Work in the workhouse

Work in the workhouse was very hard.

Here are some of the jobs the men and women had to do:

| | |
|-------|--|
| Men | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• stone breaking• chopping wood• working in the fields• grinding corn |
| Women | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• washing clothes• sewing• kitchen jobs• weaving• scrubbing walls and floors |

Children had lessons in reading, writing, maths and religion. Girls did not have as many lessons as it was not thought to be as important for girls to learn as it was for boys.



Clothes

Everyone had to wear a uniform. It was made of rough, dark fabric. Men wore caps and women wore aprons and bonnets.

Workhouses came to an end on 1st April, 1930.



Food: Breakfast was a water porridge called gruel. Dinner was usually broth, bread and cheese, with meat only twice a week.

In a workhouse you were not allowed to:

- be noisy
- be dirty
- play cards

Questions

1. Who had to live in a workhouse?

2. What happened if a father could not find a job?

3. What happened to the family in a workhouse?

4. Name 2 jobs women would have to do in a workhouse.

5. What did people in the workhouse have for breakfast?

6. Name 2 things children had lessons in.

7. What did men wear with their uniforms?

Answers

1. Who had to live in a workhouse?
Many poor people had to live in a workhouse.
2. What happened if a father could not find a job?
If a father could not find a job, the whole family had to move into a workhouse with him.
3. What happened to the family in a workhouse?
In the workhouse, the family had to live in a different areas.
4. Name 2 jobs women would have to do in a workhouse.
Women had to wash clothes, sew, kitchen jobs, weaving, scrub floors and walls (accept any 2).
5. What did people in the workhouse have for breakfast?
Breakfast was a water porridge called gruel.
6. Name 2 things children had lessons in.
Children had lessons in reading, writing, maths and religion (accept any 2).
7. What did men wear with their uniforms?
Men wore caps with their uniforms.

Life in a Workhouse

What is a workhouse?

In Victorian times, a workhouse was a large building where many very poor people had to live and work. Making the poor work and live in the workhouse seemed like a good way to get them off the streets.

Families

If a father could not find a job to support his family, he would have to live in a workhouse, and his wife and children had to go with him. Then the family would be split up, with the men and women sleeping and working in different parts of the building.

Most children in the workhouses were orphans. This meant they had no parents to take care of them.

When the children were older than 7 years old, they too had to live somewhere else in the building, away from their parents.



Food: Breakfast was a water porridge called gruel. Dinner was usually broth, bread and cheese, with meat only twice a week.

Work in the workhouse

Work in the workhouse was tiring and difficult. Adults had to do stone breaking, work in the fields, grind corn with huge mill wheels, and chop wood. Women had to do the scrubbing, laundry, needlework, spinning and weaving. Bed was at 8pm.

Children had three hours of lessons, which were reading, writing, maths and religion. Girls did not have as many lessons as it was not thought as important for girls to learn as it was for boys.

Clothes

Everyone had to wear a uniform. It was made of a scratchy, uncomfortable fabric, and it was usually a dark colour.

Men had to wear caps and women wore bonnets.

If someone entered a workhouse, they very rarely left it.

In a workhouse you were not allowed to:

- refuse to work
- be noisy
- be unclean
- use bad language
- play cards

Workhouses came to an end on 1st April, 1930.

Questions

1. Why were workhouses built?

2. Why would a whole family end up in a workhouse?

3. Why would an orphan have to live in a workhouse?

4. Would you have wanted to live in a workhouse? Explain your reasons.

5. Name 3 jobs a man might have to do.

6. What was gruel?

7. What did the children have lessons in?

8. Choose two things that you were not allowed to do. Give one reason for each, explaining why this was not allowed.

9. Which fact has surprised you the most about life in a a workhouse?

Answers

1. Why were workhouses built?
Workhouses were built for very poor people to live and work in, to keep them off the streets.
2. Why would a whole family end up in a workhouse?
A whole family would end up in a workhouse if the father could not find a job.
3. Why would an orphan have to live in a workhouse?
An orphan would have to live in a workhouse because they did not have any parents to take care of them.
4. Would you have wanted to be in a workhouse? Explain your reasons.
Answers will vary.
5. Name 3 jobs a man might have to do.
A man might have to do stone breaking, work in the fields, grind corn with huge mill wheels, and chop wood (accept any three).
6. What was gruel?
Gruel was a water porridge eaten at breakfast.
7. What did the children have lessons in?
Children had lessons in reading, writing, maths and religion.
8. Choose two things that you were now allowed to do. Give one reason for each, explaining why this was not allowed.
You were not allowed to refuse work, be noisy, be unclean, use bad language or play cards (accept any 2 and appropriate reasons).
9. Which fact has surprised you about life in a workhouse?
Answers will vary.