

Rose – the house maid


Good day to you. I am Rose. I am the house maid in Mrs Smith's House. Here is a list of my daily duties.

- 6.00 Wake up and get washed and dressed.
- 6.30 Take hot water from the kitchen up to Mrs Smith's bedroom and open the bedroom blinds.
- 6.35 Tidy up the drawing room. The Smiths have left things around as they always do every evening.
- 7.00 Call Miss Smith to awaken her.
- 7.05 Dust the parlour even though it will not be used today.
- 7.15 Clean the ladies boots so they are ready for the morning walk.
- 7.30 Call Master Smith to awaken him. Brush the clothes to be worn today and set them out for when the family is ready to dress.
- 7.45 Set out the dining room table for breakfast.
- 8.00 Have my own breakfast in the kitchen.
- 8.30 Take the bedclothes off the beds, clean the washstands and tidy up the bathroom.
- 9.00 Make the beds.
- 9.30 Tidy the bedrooms – dust them and sweep the carpet.
- 10.00 Clean the stairs and landings and polish the furniture and brasses.
- 12.00 Tidy up the pantry, clean the cutlery and polish the silver tableware.
- 12.30 Change into a clean uniform for lunch.
- 12.45 Set out the dining table for lunch.
- 1.00 Have my own lunch in the kitchen.
- 2.30 Clear the dining table and wash the table silver.

For the rest of the afternoon I may clean the windows and tend to the fires. I will have cleaned the fireplaces and set up the fires at other times during the day.

1. If Rose was working for the Smiths today which tasks might she not have to do?



2. How long did Rose spend: (a) cleaning the drawing room and parlour 

(b) setting out the dining room for meals 

(c) attending to the bedrooms and bathroom? 

3. Compare Rose's day to a day in the workhouse in activity **4A**. Why do you think girls would prefer to be housemaids than live in the workhouse?





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Age range

- Years 3/4 (SP4/5).
- Years 5/6 (SP6/7).

Resources

Copies of the worksheet.

Using the worksheet

A family's wealth was measured by the number of servants it employed. Women and girls were employed as housekeeper, cook, housemaid, kitchen maid, lady's maid, scullery maid and laundry maid. There were different grades of most positions. For example a girl could begin her work as fourth laundry maid. Fewer men were employed as servants. They may be employed as a butler, valet, footman, coachman, groom and even odd job man! You can find more details about servants on the web site for this page in the student book.

The activity can be used as a comprehension or used with activities **3A** and **4A** to compare lives in the factory and workhouse.

Answers

1. Light fires (the houses have central heating now), take water up to the bedroom (the houses have plumbing and a hot water system now), call the family (the family uses alarm clocks now).
2. (a) 35 minutes, (b) 30 minutes, (c) 1 hour and 5 minutes.
3. The conditions are much better than those in the workhouse.

Younger students

Some of the students may need help with questions 1 and 2.

Outcomes

The students can:

- Extract information from a text.
- Make simple calculations from the information in the text.
- Make comparisons of living conditions in Victorian times with conditions today.

Older students

The students could use the timeline as a basis for a short play describing Rose's morning. Characters for Mrs, Miss and Master Smith could be explored, and an additional characters, such as the cook, could be created. The play could form part of a Victorian day with the actors dressing in appropriate costume. The students could study pictures of Victorian rooms and try and use their imaginations and craft skills to recreate them.

Outcomes

The students can:

- Extract information from a text.
- Make simple calculations from the information in the text.
- Make comparisons of living conditions in Victorian times with conditions today.
- Use a timeline to make a short play.