

Lord Shaftesbury and Doctor Barnardo

Lord Shaftesbury and Doctor Barnardo are two important Victorians who helped the poor.

Lord Shaftesbury (1801–1885)

was a member of the government. Laws to govern the country are set out in documents called Acts of Parliament. The Acts of Parliament have to be approved by the people in the government before the laws can be used. Lord Shaftesbury was responsible for seeing that the Coal Mines Act (1842) and the Factory Acts (1847, 1850 and 1859) were approved by the people in government. These acts contained laws that improved the working conditions of poor people.

In the early part of Queen Victoria's reign parents had to pay for their children to attend school. As many parents had hardly enough money for food and rent, they could not afford to send their children to school and the children remained unable to read or write. In the early 1840s Lord Shaftesbury helped to set up ragged schools. Money was provided to set up the schools and the children could attend without paying. The ragged schools were so successful that in London 300,000 children had attended them by 1881.

Thomas Barnardo (1845–1905)

was born in Dublin and attended a Sunday school, a parish school and a grammar school. When he left school at the age of 16 he went to work for a wine merchant but after a year he began teaching the Christian religion in a ragged school in London. He became so enthusiastic about working with the poor and improving their conditions that he decided to become a doctor. He became so busy working with the poor that he did not qualify as a doctor until 1880.

While Thomas Barnardo was working at a ragged school, he discovered that when the children left the school, many of them slept wherever they could. Some even slept on the roof tops. These children were orphans or had run away from cruel parents or employers. Thomas Barnardo decided to set up homes for these children. He did not have any money but asked wealthy people like Lord Shaftesbury to help him. The first home was started in 1870. By Doctor Barnardo's death, 96 homes had been set up in which nearly 8,000 children lived.

Lord Shaftesbury and Doctor Barnardo

Age range

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

Resources

Copies of the worksheet. Optional for younger students – resources about how Parliament works. Optional for older students – resources on Acts of Parliament and on the plight and care of poor children.

Using the worksheet

If the students have tried activity **3A** you may like to refer to it again now and remind them of the conditions in which poor people worked. You can tell the students that the conditions were so bad because there were no laws to control them. Employers could treat their workers badly without breaking the law. This may need emphasising as today laws and rights form large portions of news broadcasts. This will help to show the importance of people like Lord Shaftesbury who worked hard to improve the conditions of the poor. It is true that he was in a privileged position in society but Doctor Barnardo came from a humble background. His father was a furrier. However by his enthusiasm and energy he, too, was able to improve the conditions of poor children.

Younger students

You may like to use other resources to examine how Parliament works before the students try the activity. The students could then try these questions.

Questions (and answers)

Write these questions on the board for the students to try.

1. How long did Lord Shaftesbury live? (84 years)
2. Where are laws to govern the country set out? (In Acts of Parliament.)
3. Which Act of Parliament helped people working in mines? (Coal Mines Act 1842)
4. Which Acts of Parliament helped people working in mills? (Factory Acts 1847, 1850 and 1859)
5. What kind of school did Lord Shaftesbury help to set up? (Ragged schools.)

6. In which kind of school did Thomas Barnardo start working? (A ragged school.)
7. How old was Thomas Barnardo when he opened his first home? (25)
8. How old was Thomas Barnardo when he became a doctor? (35)

Outcomes

The students can:

- Extract information from a text.
- Perform simple calculations on information in a text.

Older students

The text in this activity is set out to describe Acts of Parliament simply to make the information accessible to younger students. You may like to study Acts of Parliament in more detail as part of work on citizenship. The students could try these questions.

Questions (and answers)

Write these questions on the board for the students to try.

1. How old was Lord Shaftesbury when Victoria was made queen in 1837? (36)
2. How did poor people benefit from the Coal Mines Act? (It contained laws that improved their working conditions.)
3. How did poor children benefit from ragged schools? (They could attend without paying.)
4. How old was Thomas Barnardo when he went to work in a ragged school? (17)
5. Why were some of the children who came to ragged schools homeless? (They were either orphans or had run away from cruel parents or employers.)
6. If there were 8,000 children in 96 homes what would be the average number of children in a home? (Approximately 83.)

The students could follow up this work by researching the plight of poor children today in various parts of the world and what is being done to help them.

Outcomes

The students can:

- Extract information from a text.
- Perform simple calculations on information in a text.