

# Resource pack: What does the role of the postman reveal about working Britain c. 1850–1914?

Caitlyn Palmer

Addressing Health: Sickness and social reform in the Victorian and  
Edwardian period



## Outline

These resources were produced as part of Historical Association CPD in partnership with the Addressing Health project, which uses the pension records of postal workers, and they include a video by Dr Kathleen McIlvenna from the project. Through using these resources, students' understanding of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century work will improve, including their knowledge of the importance of the railways and the Post Office. These resources are intended to build on students' disciplinary understanding of sources and evidential thinking, using resources from the Addressing Health project and Ancestry (courtesy of the National Archives).

## Resources available

The resources available include:

- a narrative to aid understanding and 'world-building' of late-nineteenth-century Britain and the railways
- source activities focusing on two individuals who worked for the Post Office during this period, including pension records and census records
- a video by historian Dr McIlvenna, using one of the sources from the project

Further details are on Slide 3 of the resource pack.

## How the resources can be used

The resources can be used within pre-existing schemes of work on industrial/Victorian Britain, providing further information on the late nineteenth century and the service industry. A recommended pathway for using the resources is on Slide 5 of the resource pack.

## Why should these resources be used?

Teaching of the Victorian period often focuses on the early period of industrialisation, not giving students a well-rounded understanding of the entire period. Similarly, focus is often on the development of industrial works specifically, rather than all work during this period, with areas such as service work often missing. These resources seek to fill in such gaps in student knowledge, as well as to stress the dangers of work outside of industrial jobs and the importance of the railways to Britain at this time. The importance of sourcework throughout these resources ensures that students develop their evidential thinking, as well as improving understanding of how historians use these sources – an understanding that is often absent.

## Preparation required

These resources are not completed lessons but include activities that could be added to pre-existing lessons and schemes of work.

An understanding of the growth of the railways within industrialisation, the work of the Post Office and source analysis is required. There are recommended links to aid teacher understanding of postal work and the Travelling Post Office on Slide 6 of the resource pack, and information about the Travelling Post Office on Slide 9.

For the sourcework activities, printing out the sources is recommended (Slides 14–15 and Slides 23–27) so that students can work closely with the sources.