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Words that are printed in bold, **like this**, are explained in the Glossary on page 31.

# England in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century

Life in 18<sup>th</sup> century England was very different from life today. People's lives mostly centred around their home and village or city. They rarely travelled further than the next town.

## The Industrial Revolution

The Industrial Revolution, which began around the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, changed life forever. New machinery was invented that saved time and made some people very rich. The population grew quickly and cities became crowded. Many people were out of work because their jobs could now be done by machines.

England was ruled by King George III. The British **Empire** was growing bigger under his rule. England already had **colonies** in India, America and South Africa. European countries were often at war with each other as they tried to gain power and control.

## New Holland

In 1770, Captain James Cook claimed the east coast of New Holland (now called Australia) for England. Explorers from other countries had already visited New Holland, but no European country had laid claim or tried to own it.

The Indigenous people were ignored. As far as England was concerned, the Indigenous people didn't own the country because they hadn't cleared any land, built lasting houses or planted crops.

## Building Empires

In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, European countries thought that the first nation to discover and explore a new territory had the right to claim it.

Young children were sent to work in factories during the Industrial Revolution.



# Life for the Rich

England in the 18<sup>th</sup> century was like two different worlds, depending on whether you were rich or poor.

## The Upper Classes

The wealthy upper classes had a **privileged**, grand life. As England became more powerful and wealthy due to the Industrial Revolution, the rich people became richer and the poor even poorer.

Many wealthy people lived in large mansions on huge estates. Life was filled with fancy social events, such as dinner parties, operas and the theatre.

Children were well educated and often had their own tutors who taught them how to read, write, do arithmetic and play musical instruments.

### Upper-class Riches

Most upper-class people would not have bothered to steal, because they already had everything they needed.

## What the Upper Class Thought

The rich often treated the poor with **disdain**. Many had no sympathy or understanding for the poor, and blamed them for their own situation.

Many wealthy people had never worked in their lives. Their money was **inherited**, so they had very little knowledge of how harsh life could be. They had never suffered from lack of food, shelter or clothing. They never had to empty their own **chamber pot**, or cook their own food, or do their own washing. That was left to the poor, working-class people.



A chamber pot



Most clothing for the upper classes was specially designed and made from expensive fabrics.

# Life for the Poor

For the poor, life in 18<sup>th</sup> century England was extremely difficult.

## The Lower Classes

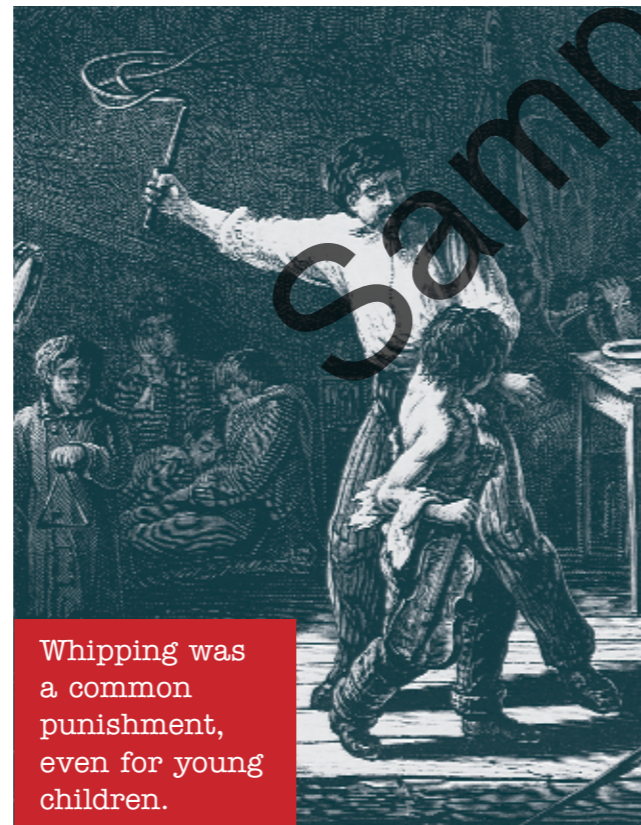
For those with jobs, life was bearable because they could usually afford food, clothing and shelter. For people out of work, life was a never-ending struggle to find food, somewhere to sleep and ways to keep warm during the freezing English winters. Life was even worse for those with a family to look after.

Many people moved to the cities to find work. Towns and cities became more and more crowded and jobs were hard to find. Food was expensive and people were always hungry. It was difficult to stay clean, so deadly diseases spread quickly and easily.

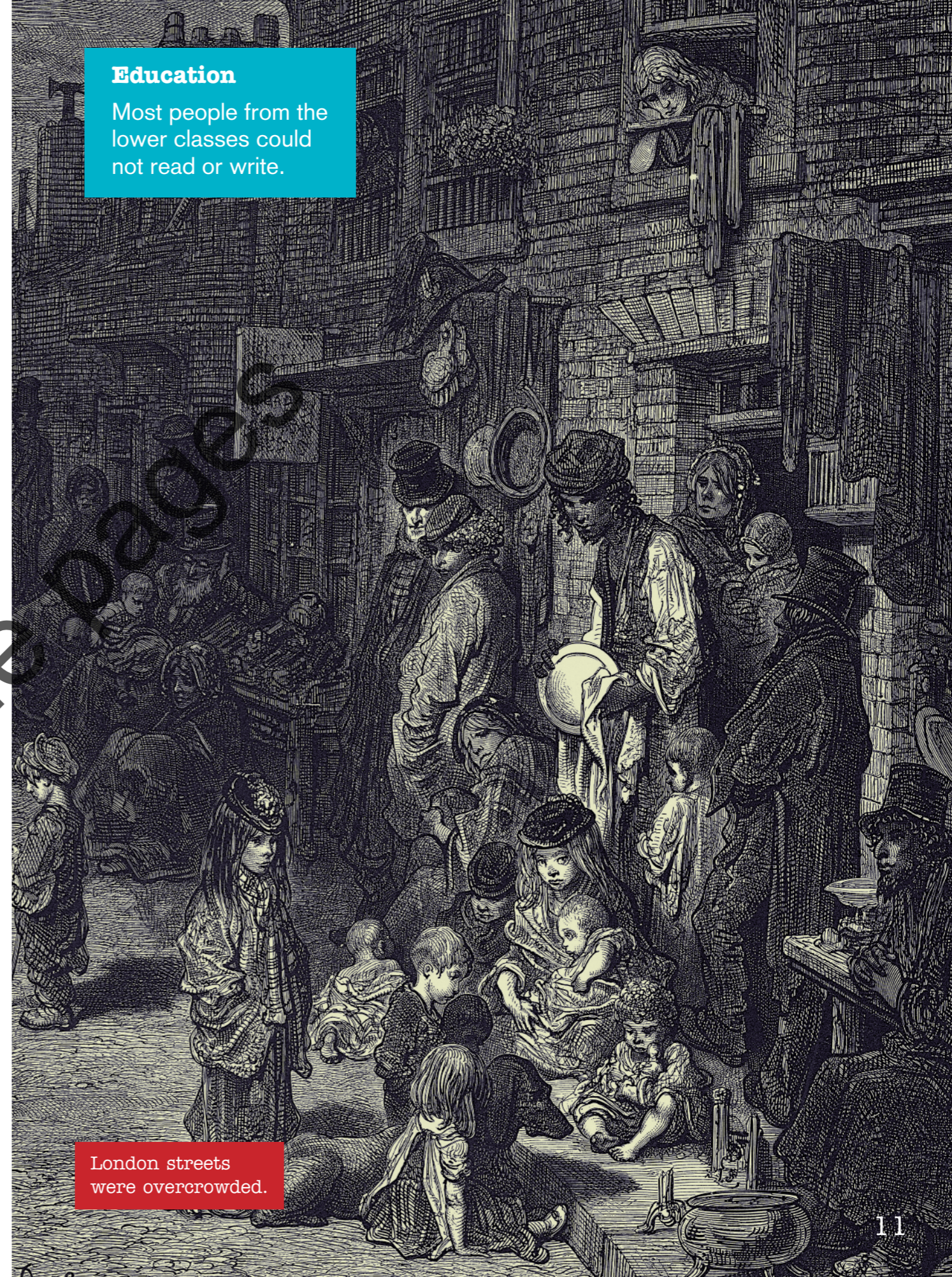
The government didn't care about the poor. There was no help for people who were poor, old, sick, disabled or out of work. Everyone had to look after themselves.

## Children of the Lower Classes

Many children suffered, especially those who had no one to look after them. Orphan children often wandered the streets alone. Life was **desperate**, and for some people, the only way to survive was to steal. Children from poor families were not able to go to school, so it was difficult for people to improve their lives.



Whipping was a common punishment, even for young children.



## Education

Most people from the lower classes could not read or write.

London streets were overcrowded.

# Prison Hulks

Prisons all over England became overcrowded, and it was very difficult to manage the prisoners.

## The Hulks

The government decided to move some convicts onto old ships that were no longer being used for sailing. Old trading ships and navy ships were changed into floating prisons, known as **hulks**. The hulks were meant to be a temporary answer, but they were in use for about 80 years.

### Fear Among the Wealthy

The hulks were full of rats, lice and fleas that carried diseases that could be caught by humans. The wealthy were terrified that prisoners would escape and spread diseases.

## Life on Board

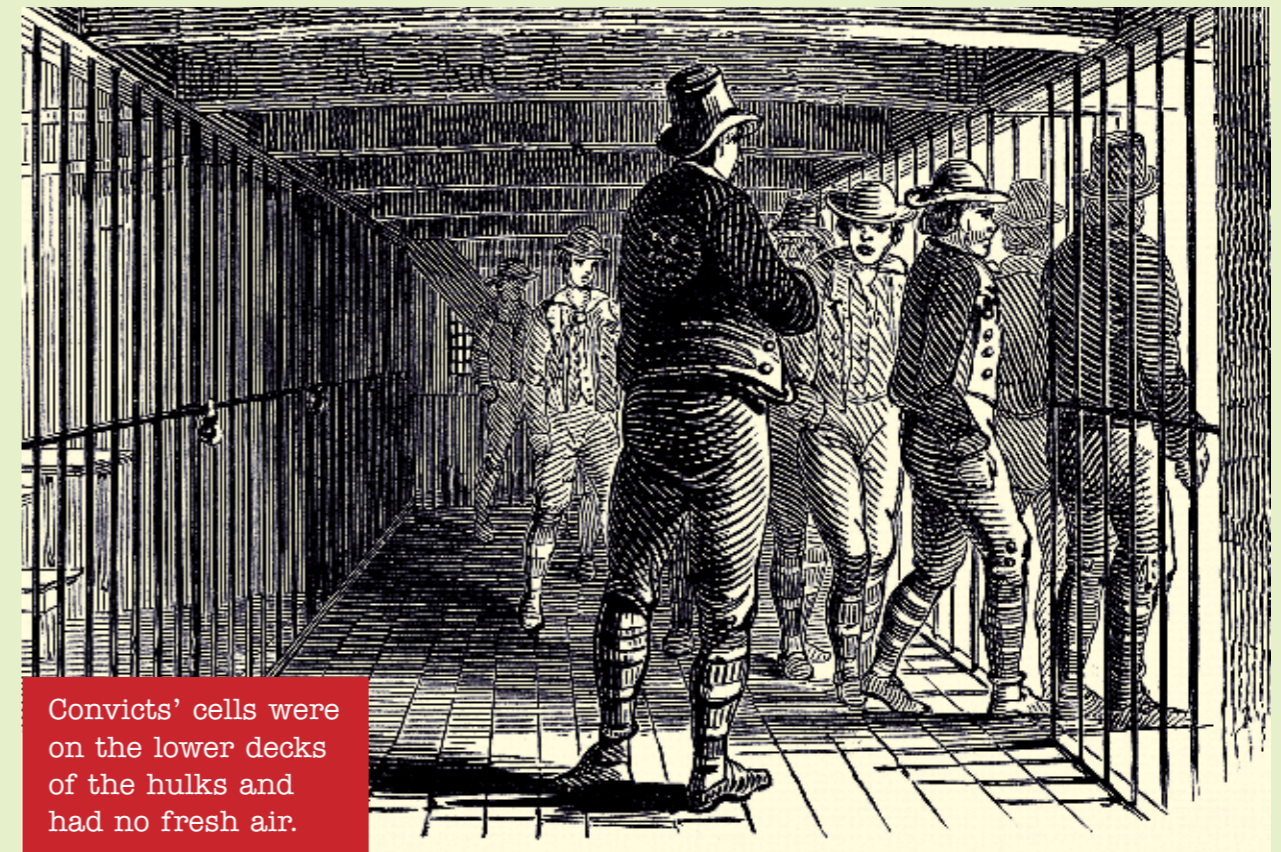
While the hulks reduced crowding in the prisons, life on board them was unpleasant. Some prisoners stayed on the hulks for years. Some were waiting for **transportation** to the new **colony**, while others had sentences of **hard labour**.

The hulks were meant to hold about 400 prisoners, but because so many people were being convicted of crimes, the hulks soon became overcrowded. Prisoners were chained or **fettered**. Many were ill, seasick, freezing cold or dying. Child convicts were also kept on board the hulks among the adult convicts.

## The Uprising

England was shocked when there was an **uprising** of convicts aboard one of the prison hulks in March 1786. Forty-four prisoners were shot, and eight of them died. With the number of convicts growing daily, something had to be done urgently.

Many convicts were seasick on the hulks, especially those who had never been on the sea before.



Convicts' cells were on the lower decks of the hulks and had no fresh air.