

CITY LIFE DURING THE MID 1800s

Task: Study the sources carefully and answer the questions that follow. Pay special attention to the number of marks for each question.

Source One: A cartoon drawn in the 1850s at the height of a cholera epidemic (from Punch Magazine)



Source Two: Taken from the internet site 'Victorian Web'; 2002

During the first decades of Victoria's reign, baths were virtually unknown in the poorer districts and uncommon anywhere. Most households of all economic classes still used "privy-pails"; water closets (flush toilets) were rare. Sewers had flat bottoms, and because drains were made out of stone, seepage was considerable. If, as was often the case in towns, streets were unpaved, they might remain ankle-deep in mud for weeks.

Source Three: 1850s cartoon; 'A Court for King Cholera' (From Punch Magazine)



Source Four: Henry Mayhew, 'Jouneys through London'; 1849

We then journeyed on to London Street, down which the tidal ditch continues its course. In No. 1 of this street the cholera first appeared seventeen years ago, and spread up it with fearful speed; but this year it appeared at the opposite end, and ran down it with like severity. As we passed along the reeking banks of the sewer the sun shone upon a narrow slip of the water. In the bright light it appeared the colour of strong green tea, and positively looked as solid as black marble in the shadow - indeed it was more like watery mud than muddy water; and yet we were assured this was the only water the wretched inhabitants had to drink.

As we gazed in horror at it, we saw drains and sewers emptying their filthy

contents into it; we saw a whole tier of doorless privies in the open road, common to men and women, built over it; we heard bucket after bucket of filth splash into it, and the limbs of the vagrant boys bathing in it seemed by pure force of contrast, white as Parian marble.

In this wretched place we were taken to a house where an infant lay dead of the cholera. We asked if they really did drink the water? The answer was, "They were obliged to drink the ditch, without they could beg or thief a pailful of water." But have you spoken to your landlord about having it laid on for you? "Yes, sir and he says he will do it, and do it, but we know him better than to believe him."

Source Five; Father Thames introducing his offspring (Diphtheria, Scrofula and Cholera); A cartoon published in 1858 (From Punch Magazine)



[If this image is unclear, use the following summary:

This shows a lady with a crown being introduced by a strange kind of man coming out of the river to three deformed creatures, looking horrific as they are pushed forward to greet the lady.]

Questions;

1. Study source one carefully

- What does it show? (3 marks)
- What is the message of the picture? (3 marks)
- Skeletons don't 'dispense' water. Therefore the source is useless to a historian of mid 1800s city life. Do you agree? (6 marks)

2. Read source two carefully

- Give three threats to health mentioned in the source (3 marks)

3. Study source three carefully.

- How can you tell that this 'court' is a very unhealthy place? (4 marks)
- Do you think this cartoon is likely to be reliable?
Explain your answer. (6 marks)

4. Study source four carefully

- Do Henry Mayhew's comments back up the views of the cartoonist in source three? (7 marks)

5. Study source five carefully

- 'Dirty water certainly was the main cause of disease in the 1800s'. Do you agree? Explain with reference to any sources you wish and your own knowledge. (8 marks)