

Living conditions in 19th-Century Britain

Use the sources to complete tasks 1-4.

During the industrial revolution many people moved from the countryside to towns and cities to work in the new factories. The rapidly rising urban population meant there wasn't enough housing. Therefore, the working classes had to live in cramped and dirty conditions which were ideal for spreading disease.

Source 1

...in the neighbourhood of the Ouseburn, ...the backs of the houses being built against an embankment, down which the wet oozes into the dwellings, while there is not a convenience [toilet] attached to the houses, and neither drain nor ash-pit [toilet] from one end of the street to the other; the inhabitants making use of the Ouseburn as a receptacle for filth of all descriptions.

Cholera and the Water Supply of Newcastle upon Tyne, 1853, Clarke 1535, Tract 7, Page 3.

Source 2

The smoke pall that hangs over Newcastle week after week, from Monday morning till noon on Saturday, is fearful to behold.

On the influence of the purity or impurity of the external air on the health and moral tendencies of a dense population, 1882, Cowan Tracts, Volume 18, Tract 5, Page 5.

Source 3



View of Gateshead, Local Illustrations.



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Use the sources to answer questions 1-4.

Source 4

The room contained three wretched beds with two persons sleeping in each: it measured about 12 feet in length and 7 in breadth, and its greatest height would not admit of a person's standing erect; it received light from a small window, the sash of which was fixed. Two of the number lay ill of the cholera, and the rest appeared afraid of the admission of pure air, having carefully closed up the broken panes with plugs of old linen.

A report on living conditions in Gateshead in Edwin Chadwick's Report on the sanitary condition of the labouring population of Great Britain, 1842, page 21-22.

Source 5

... the room was very dirty; it was 9 feet broad by 15 feet long, and contained four beds, in which slept two men, four women, and thirteen children. I found in one of the beds two children very ill of scarlet fever; in another, a child ill of the measles; in another, a child that had died of the measles the day before; and in a fourth, a woman and her infant, born two days before...

A report on living conditions in Gateshead in Edwin Chadwick's Report on the sanitary conditions of the labouring population of Great Britain, 1842. page 326.

Tasks

- 1 Study Source 1. Describe two problems faced by people living in the Ouseburn area of Newcastle-upon-Tyne in the 19th Century.
- 2 Study Source 2 and Source 3. What do you think caused the air pollution in 19th-century Newcastle? Explain your answer.
- 3 Study Source 4 and Source 5. Identify five problems with living conditions in 19th-century Newcastle.
- 4 Edwin Chadwick was employed by the government to report on the conditions and suggest improvements. Study all the sources. If you were Chadwick, what would be your top three recommendations to improve the living conditions of the working classes in 19th-century Britain?

