

Name \_\_\_\_\_



## Life in the English Countryside

By Sharon Fabian

As life was changing rapidly in the large cities of England, life in other areas remained much the same as it had been for centuries. Factories brought huge population increases to the cities, and city life boomed. City residents discovered a new way of life, but in country villages the traditional lifestyle remained nearly unchanged.



There were a few changes, particularly the new steam-powered machinery, that made farm production more efficient. But for the people who remained in the countryside, daily life continued much as it had before the Industrial Revolution.

Life in country villages continued to move at a slow pace. The daily schedule depended on the times that the sun rose and set and on the weather.

In a typical village, the largest number of workers was still employed in agriculture or in domestic service. A smaller number of people worked in various trades. Even fewer worked in the professions.

One of the agricultural workers was the farmer who owned and operated the farm on the estate. Many more were farm workers who were employed to work in the fields. Others may have had small farms or gardens where they raised items to sell at the market.

Craftsmen like shoemakers and blacksmiths worked in the village to provide items that families could not make for themselves. Village craftsmen also became skilled at other jobs related to their craft. For instance, the blacksmith might also become the person a farmer would go to for a quick repair to his farm equipment. Others chose to

become handymen, or jacks-of-all-trades. The services of all of these skilled workers were much in demand.

Some villages specialized in a particular craft, and in that way, services could be shared among neighboring villages. Village trades also included the craft of the wheelwright, brick maker, and carpenter.

Many women, particularly single women and widows, worked as domestic servants. They worked in the homes of the upper class cooking, doing housework, and providing child care.

Other women earned a living by sewing and doing laundry. Both of these occupations were much in demand as well, since the social world of the upper class constantly required new outfits of clothing. Outfits were changed frequently throughout the day, and each outfit was made from yards and yards of elegant fabric. There was always work for both the seamstress and the laundress.

A few people in the village worked in professional occupations. There were teachers and maybe a solicitor, or lawyer. The solicitor may have commuted into the nearby city to find enough work.

The wealthier women usually did not take on jobs but rather spent their time managing their families' homes. Children, by the late 1800s, went to school. They may have been released from school at busy times of the year to help out on the farm.

Unlike in the city, the day ended with the setting sun for many people in the village. Workers and school children returned home for an evening meal of dumplings and potatoes, with maybe an apple, an onion, or some cheese. Maybe they did a few indoor chores such as repairing a tool handle or darning a sock. Then they blew out their candles and went to sleep.

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**Questions**

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- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. While city life changed rapidly in London of the 1800s, country life \_\_\_\_\_.
  - A. did not change
  - B. ceased to exist
  - C. changed rapidly too
  - D. changed very little
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. After steam powered machinery made farm production more efficient, we can assume that \_\_\_\_\_ people continued to work on farms.
  - A. the same number
  - B. a varying number
  - C. more
  - D. fewer
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Many village workers had jobs in \_\_\_\_\_.
  - A. agriculture
  - B. domestic service
  - C. both
  - D. neither
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Few village workers had jobs in \_\_\_\_\_.
  - A. farming
  - B. domestic service
  - C. agriculture
  - D. professions
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Village craftsmen included all of the following except \_\_\_\_\_.
  - A. blacksmiths
  - B. farmers
  - C. shoemakers
  - D. wheelwrights

- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. \_\_\_\_\_ may have had to travel into the city because there was not much work for them in the village.
  - A. domestic servants
  - B. farm laborers
  - C. teachers
  - D. solicitors
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Wealthy women usually \_\_\_\_\_.
  - A. worked in the city
  - B. worked as domestic servants
  - C. worked as teachers
  - D. did not have jobs
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Most village children \_\_\_\_\_.
  - A. went to school
  - B. worked long days on the farm
  - C. did no work
  - D. worked in factories

**How do you think changes of season affected village life?**

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