

# History Hackers: Victorian Venture

Charlie pocketed the small bag and quickly began to rummage through the stacks of paper and scrolls that littered the desk. Eventually, he pulled out a piece of thickly folded paper, which he opened out across the wooden surface.

“Now, where is that doorway?” he wondered aloud, searching the sketched streets of York, which stretched across the map like arteries and veins. “Victorians might have been poor, but surely they were more civilised than the Romans. What’s the worst that could happen?”

According to Professor Howe’s journal, this map plotted the location of a number of time doors – the professor called them ‘gates’ – leading back to different periods in the city’s history. The small bags that hung from each pin contained coins and trinkets from those periods and it was these items that could enable the holder to pass through their chosen gate.

Tilda had been sceptical at first, not quite prepared to believe time travel was possible. Yet, when they had both finally discovered how to put the professor’s theories to the test, the results had been astonishing.

“We’d never find the right clothes,” Tilda said, peering over Charlie’s shoulder. “We’d stand out like sore thumbs and that would attract trouble.”

“We can go to the fancy dress shop,” Charlie declared. “They’ve always got Oliver Twist costumes in stock – is that a Dickens one?”



As exciting possibilities began to bubble in Tilda's mind, her eyes skirted the map's inked streets and roads until she found one marked 'Shambles'. Perhaps York's most historic and famous street, the Shambles was still filled with timber-framed buildings, which hung over the ancient cobbles like the hoods of watchful spectres.

Tilda's gaze settled upon the sketch of a key sitting a few backstreets away. A single word, so carefully written beneath the key, grabbed her attention: 'Victorians'.

Perhaps sensing his big sister's brewing enthusiasm, Charlie dragged the little fabric pouch out of his pocket and dropped it onto the map.

"We can both be in Victorian York by tomorrow lunchtime. We'd see for ourselves what life was really like. And remember, Tils – time stands still here while we're away, so we've got nothing to lose. It'll be a laugh!"



# Questions

1. What was Charlie looking for on the map? Tick the correct choice.

- a scroll
- a desk
- a doorway
- some clothes

2. What was contained in the small bags that were hanging up? Select **two**.

- pins
- coins
- clothes
- trinkets

3. Number these events in the order that they happen in the story. The first one has been done for you.

- 1 Charlie rummages through the stacks of paper on the desk.
- Charlie suggests that they go to the fancy dress shop.
- Charlie opens the map out across the desk.
- Tilda says that they don't have the right clothes.

4. Draw lines to match the words or names with the correct descriptions.

the Shambles	a time traveller who left his journal
York	a street in York
Professor Howe	Charlie's big sister
Tilda	the city shown on the map

5. Fill in the missing word(s):

According to Charlie, the Victorians 'were much more civilised than \_\_\_\_\_.'

6. What kind of costume did Charlie suggest was always in the fancy dress shop?

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7. How soon did Charlie think the children could be in Victorian York?

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# Answers

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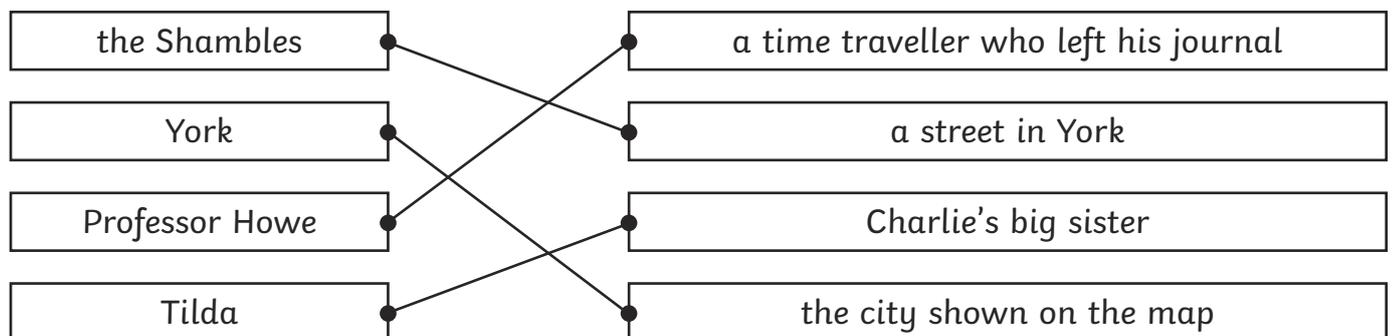
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- 2** Charlie opens the map out across the desk.
- 3** Tilda says that they don't have the right clothes.

4. Draw lines to match the words or names with the correct descriptions.



5. Fill in the missing word(s):

According to Charlie, the Victorians 'were much more civilised than **the Romans**.'

6. What kind of costume did Charlie suggest was always in the fancy dress shop?

**Accept 'Oliver Twist' only.**

7. How soon did Charlie think the children could be in Victorian York?

**Accept 'tomorrow lunchtime' only.**

# History Hackers: Victorian Venture

The tatty, rectangular corkboard hanging above the seventeenth-century writing desk looked little more than a useful storage area. A collection of small, fabric bags hung from individual pins, each labelled with a period from York's history. These stretched from 'Ancient Britain' to the more recent 'WWII'.

Charlie was wearing the grin of a mischievous toddler as he reached out and plucked a bag from the pin labelled 'Victorians'. The room filled with the clink of coins as he bounced it gently against his palm.

"All we have to do is find the doorway," Charlie reminded his sister.

Tilda felt her stomach churn with nerves and excitement. It was a feeling that she had wrestled with the first time Charlie had reached for one of the small bags. She wondered if she would ever get used to the adrenaline rush of preparing for time travel. Before letting the excitement reach her face and become a grin, Tilda allowed her older-sister caution to take over momentarily.

"Haven't you learnt anything?" Tilda wagged a finger at her younger brother. "Travelling back in time is dangerous. Think about what happened when we went back to Roman times – I almost had my head cut off!"

"Yeah," Charlie shivered. "You had a narrow escape."

"Exactly," Tilda replied. "We definitely need to think this through."

Charlie pocketed the small bag and quickly began to rummage through the stacks of paper and scrolls that littered the desk. Eventually, he pulled out a piece of thickly folded paper, which he opened out across the wooden surface.

"Now, where is that doorway?" he wondered aloud, searching the sketched streets of York, which stretched across the map like arteries and veins. "Victorians might have been poor, but surely they were more civilised than the Romans."



What's the worst that could happen?"

According to Professor Howe's journal, this map plotted the location of a number of time doors – the professor called them 'gates' – leading back to different periods in the city's history. The small bags that hung from each pin contained coins and trinkets from those periods and it was these items that could enable the holder to pass through their chosen gate.



Tilda had been sceptical at first, not quite prepared to believe time travel was possible. Yet, when they had both finally discovered how to put the professor's theories to the test, the results had been astonishing.

"We'd never find the right clothes," Tilda said, peering over Charlie's shoulder. "We'd stand out like sore thumbs and that would attract trouble."

"We can go to the fancy dress shop," Charlie declared. "They've always got Oliver Twist costumes in stock – is that a Dickens one?"

As exciting possibilities began to bubble in Tilda's mind, her eyes skirted the map's inked streets and roads until she found one marked 'Shambles'. Perhaps York's most historic and famous street, the Shambles was still filled with timber-framed buildings, which hung over the ancient cobbles like the hoods of watchful spectres.

Tilda's gaze settled upon the sketch of a key sitting a few backstreets away. A single word, so carefully written beneath the key, grabbed her attention: 'Victorians'.

Perhaps sensing his big sister's brewing enthusiasm, Charlie dragged the little fabric pouch out of his pocket and dropped it onto the map.

"We can both be in Victorian York by tomorrow lunchtime. We'd see for ourselves what life was really like. And remember, Tils – time stands still here while we're away, so we've got nothing to lose. It'll be a laugh!"

# Questions

1. Number these events in the order that they happen in the story. The first one has been done for you.

- 1 Tilda's stomach churns with nerves and excitement.
- Charlie rummages through the stacks of paper on the desk.
- Charlie suggests that they go to the fancy dress shop.
- Charlie opens the map out across the desk.
- Tilda says that they don't have the right clothes.

2. Draw lines to match the words or names with the correct descriptions.

the Shambles	a time traveller who left his journal
York	a street in York
Professor Howe	Charlie's big sister
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3. Where did Charlie suggest they could get an Oliver Twist costume from?

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4. What was contained in the 'small, fabric bags'?

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5. What problem had Tilda faced when going back to Roman times?

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6. What was Tilda's attitude towards time travel at first?

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7. Look at paragraph 14.

'...the Shambles was still filled with timber-framed buildings, which hung over the ancient cobbles...'

What impression does this give of the street?

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8. Using any evidence from the text, what do you predict will happen to Charlie and Tilda if they travel back in time to Victorian York?

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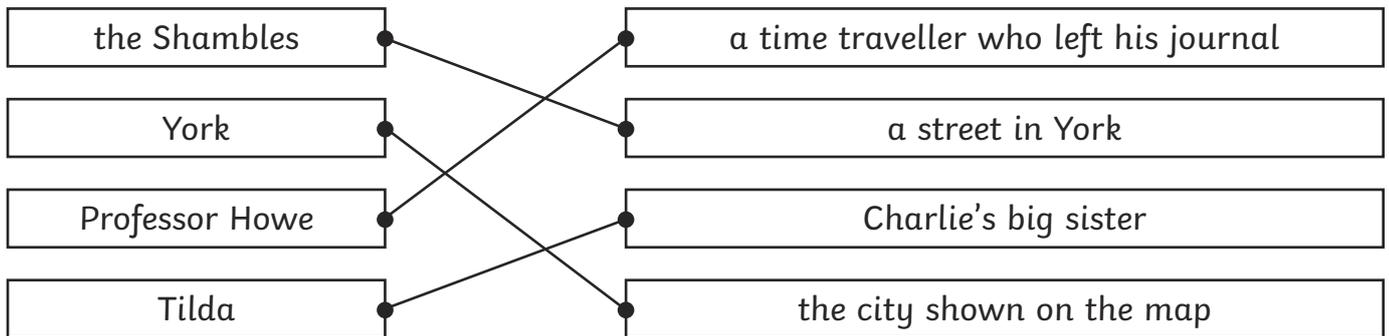
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# Answers

1. Number these events in the order that they happen in the story. The first one has been done for you.

- 1** Tilda's stomach churns with nerves and excitement.
- 2** Charlie rummages through the stacks of paper on the desk.
- 5** Charlie suggests that they go to the fancy dress shop.
- 3** Charlie opens the map out across the desk.
- 4** Tilda says that they don't have the right clothes.

2. Draw lines to match the words or names with the correct descriptions.



3. Where did Charlie suggest they could get an Oliver Twist costume from?

**Accept 'the fancy dress shop' only.**

4. What was contained in the 'small, fabric bags'?

**Accept 'coins and trinkets' only.**

5. What problem had Tilda faced when going back to Roman times?

**Tilda almost had her head cut off.**

6. What was Tilda's attitude towards time travel at first?

**She was sceptical, not quite prepared to believe it was possible.**

7. Look at paragraph 14.

'...the Shambles was still filled with timber-framed buildings, which hung over the ancient cobbles...'

What impression does this give of the street?

**Accept reference to the fact that the street is very old and still has historical features there today, such as the timber frames or cobbled streets.**

8. Using any evidence from the text, what do you predict will happen to Charlie and Tilda if they travel back in time to Victorian York?

**Children's own responses, justified with evidence from the text, such as: 'I think that Charlie and Tilda will be able to blend in because they will borrow Victorian costumes from the fancy dress shop.'**

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Tilda's brother dismissed her comments with a wave. "I already know what life was like in Victorian times – we learnt all about it last term."

"Oh, really?" Tilda fixed her brother with a challenging stare. "Tell me what it was like, then."

After shrugging his slim shoulders and casually twitching both eyebrows, Charlie said, "Everyone was poor! They wore rags for clothes, most had no shoes and they lived in slums piled with stinking sewage."

Tilda couldn't prevent a burst of laughter from exploding out of her mouth. "Are you sure that you paid attention in class?"

"It's true!" Charlie insisted. "Factories belched smoke everywhere. Poor children had to go to work when they were ten and if you didn't have a job, they threw you into a workhouse that was worse than prison."

"Nonsense!" Tilda shook her head so hard that both of her sandy-coloured bunches danced like angry snakes. "It was the end of the industrial revolution and, for the first time, almost everyone had a job. People flocked to cities to work and improve their lives. York had a huge carriage-building industry."

She tapped the Charles Dickens novel against her knuckles. "I'd love to live or work in a Victorian family home. It certainly sounded far more pleasant and civilised than life today."

"You've been watching those historical dramas with Mum again."

"Actually, those programmes are very educa-"

"Whatever," Charlie smirked. "My teacher said that life was harsh for ordinary people back in Victorian times. You're living in a fantasy world if you think that it was nice."

"Rubbish!" Tilda could feel anger heating her cheeks. "If we go online, we can –"



“We don’t need the Internet,” Charlie announced. He strode across the room until he was standing beside a corkboard filled with pins. “We can go back and see for ourselves – if you dare!”

The tatty, rectangular corkboard hanging above the seventeenth-century writing desk looked little more than a useful storage area. A collection of small, fabric bags hung from individual pins, each labelled with a period from York’s history. These stretched from ‘Ancient Britain’ to the more recent ‘WWII’.



Charlie was wearing the grin of a mischievous toddler as he reached out and plucked a bag from the pin labelled ‘Victorians’. The room filled with the clink of coins as he bounced it gently against his palm.

“All we have to do is find the doorway,” Charlie reminded his sister.

Tilda felt her stomach churn with nerves and excitement. It was a feeling that she had wrestled with the first time Charlie had reached for one of the small bags. She wondered if she would ever get used to the adrenaline rush of preparing for time travel. Before letting the excitement reach her face and become a grin, Tilda allowed her older-sister caution to take over momentarily.

“Haven’t you learnt anything?” Tilda wagged a finger at her younger brother. “Travelling back in time is dangerous. Think about what happened when we went back to Roman times – I almost had my head cut off!”

“Yeah,” Charlie shivered. “You had a narrow escape.”

“Exactly,” Tilda replied. “We definitely need to think this through.”

Charlie pocketed the small bag and quickly began to rummage through the stacks of paper and scrolls that littered the desk. Eventually, he pulled out a piece of thickly folded paper, which he opened out across the wooden surface.

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# Questions

1. Where were the bags of coins kept? **Select one.**

- on a desk
- in a drawer
- pinned to a corkboard
- in the shop

2. Find and copy a **simile** that the author uses to describe the movement of Tilda's hair.

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3. Find and copy a word that shows Tilda felt unconvinced or doubtful at first that time travel was possible.

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4. What was the difference between Charlie and Tilda's views on Victorian England?

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5. What problem had Tilda faced when going back to Roman times?

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6. What is the name of the famous York street mentioned in the extract?

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7. Look at the line: '...searching the sketched streets of York, which stretched across the map like arteries and veins.'

What impression does this give about the layout of the streets on the map?

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8. Match each character description to the correct sibling. Write 'Charlie' or 'Tilda' for each description.

	Charlie or Tilda?
slim shoulders	
sandy-coloured bunches	
the grin of a mischievous toddler	

9. How did Tilda's feelings change during the extract about going back to Victorian times?

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10. Using any evidence from the text, what do you predict will happen to Charlie and Tilda if they travel back in time to Victorian York?

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# Answers

- Where were the bags of coins kept? **Select one.**
  - on a desk
  - in a drawer
  - pinned to a corkboard**
  - in the shop
- Find and copy a **simile** that the author uses to describe the movement of Tilda's hair.  
**Her bunches 'danced like angry snakes'.**
- Find and copy a word that shows Tilda felt unconvinced or doubtful at first that time travel was possible.  
**Accept 'sceptical' only.**
- What was the difference between Charlie and Tilda's views on Victorian England?  
**Accept answers which refer to any two conflicting opinions of the main characters, including the following.**  
**Charlie thought that:**
  - **life was harsh for ordinary people;**
  - **everyone was poor;**
  - **they wore rags for clothes;**
  - **most people had no shoes;**
  - **they lived in slums piled with stinking sewage;**
  - **factories belched smoke everywhere;**
  - **poor children had to go to work when they were ten;**
  - **if you didn't have a job, they threw you into a workhouse that was worse than prison.****Tilda said that:**
  - **it was the end of the industrial revolution and for the first time, almost everyone had a job;**
  - **people flocked to cities to work and improve their lives;**
  - **it was 'far more pleasant and civilised than life today'.**
- What problem had Tilda faced when going back to Roman times?  
**Tilda almost had her head cut off.**

6. What is the name of the famous York street mentioned in the extract?

**Accept 'Shambles' or 'the Shambles'.**

7. Look at the line: '...searching the sketched streets of York, which stretched across the map like arteries and veins.'

What impression does this give about the layout of the streets on the map?

**Accept reference to the following suggestions: the streets were jumbled/crisscrossing/ looked tangled; there were a lot of streets running in lots of different directions; it was a complicated map; the roads were not all straight, parallel or at neat right angles.**

8. Match each character description to the correct sibling. Write 'Charlie' or 'Tilda' for each description.

	Charlie or Tilda?
slim shoulders	Charlie
sandy-coloured bunches	Tilda
the grin of a mischievous toddler	Charlie

9. How did Tilda's feelings change during the extract about going back to Victorian times?

**Accept reference to the fact that at first, Tilda was cautious about going back in time again, but by the end of the extract, she is more excited. For example: At first, Tilda was worried because last time they found themselves in trouble and she didn't feel they had the right clothes, but later, her stomach churns with excitement and she has 'brewing enthusiasm'.**

10. Using any evidence from the text, what do you predict will happen to Charlie and Tilda if they travel back in time to Victorian York?

**Children's own responses, justified with evidence from the text, such as: 'I think that Charlie and Tilda will be able to blend in because they will borrow Victorian costumes from the fancy dress shop.'**