



HERITAGE NEW ZEALAND
POUHERE TAONGA

Victorian Kitchen – pre and post visit experiences

Before electricity

Mindmap to assess students' knowledge of kitchen and laundry equipment before electricity was available in Auckland homes. Collect pictures and stories and search for information. Interview people who were born in the 1940's or earlier, to find out how technology has changed since they were young.

Sample questions:

- How was butter and meat stored before refrigeration?
- How was the cooking done and who did it?
- How was your washing and ironing done when you were a child?
- Where did your water come from and how was it heated?
- How were clothes dried and aired?

Record information learnt under headings and record questions for further inquiry. Discuss the changes that have been made in kitchen and laundry technology since the 1940's or earlier.

Care and Maintenance

In Victorian times kitchen equipment was often made of cast iron. Great care needed to be taken to prevent it from rusting. Here is an account of how to look after your iron.

..It is well to wash the irons thoroughly with hot water, soda and a brush and dry thoroughly. On no account must an iron be black leaded. Never allow them to stand flat on a stove when the fire is going out as damp collects and rusts them. If you once allow them to get rusty the surface is never so smooth again.

How do you think a range oven was maintained? What about cooking equipment, wash tubs and clothes lines?



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Iron innovations in the 20th century

Many new designs for irons began to appear during the 20th century using fuels such as kerosene, Methylated spirits or petroleum. The fuel was held in a container attached to the rear of the iron.

Electric irons began to make an appearance by the end of the 19th century but were not commonly in use until the 1920's when electricity was connected to most homes. The real revolution though, was the thermostatic control of the 1930s.


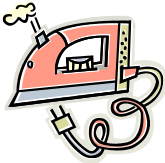


Next came the steam iron and from then on it became more a matter of marketing form over function. This was reflected in some of the American brands of the 1950s: Mary Proctor Never-Lift, Sunny Suzy, the glass Pyrex Silver Streak, the Universal Stroke Saver and the Steam-O-Matic, as well as the first cordless iron.

Read the information above and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each invention.

Design an advertisement for one of the irons described.

Comparisons

Make a pictorial comparison chart showing examples of kitchen and laundry equipment before electricity and after electricity, for example:

Before electricity	After Electricity
	
	

Invite students to comment on changes caused by electricity in the home under headings such as time, effort, life impact and technological impact.

Selecting the best materials



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The following is a list of materials used to make irons in the past. Decide on the advantages and disadvantages of each material. Research for more examples.

When? What?	How was it heated?	Made from?	How was it held?
1700's to 1800's - charcoal irons	Hot charcoal	Brass Wood	Wooden handle
1800's - oriental pan irons	Hot charcoal	Iron	Cast iron handle and cloth
1800's and 1900's – flat irons	On a hot coal range	Iron Wood	Cast iron handle and cloth
1800's and 1900's – flat irons with detachable handle	On a hot coal range	Iron Wood	Detachable cast iron and wood handle
1900's – electric “shoe”	Electricity	Steel Bakelite Pyrex (glass)	Insulated Bakelite handle

Comparing fabrics

Decide what fabric would be used today.

Victorian Times	What item	Today
Wool	underwear	
Cotton	petticoat / underskirt	
Linen – heavy cotton	bed sheets	
Damask – Irish linen	tablecloth	
Flannel – wool or cotton	shirts	
Wool	jackets and waistcoats	
Lace	curtains	



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Inventions

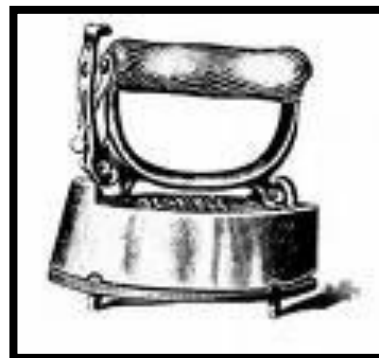
Mrs Potts' Sad Irons

During its first fifty years, the U.S. Patent Office granted more than 10,000 patents. Only two dozen of these were issued to women. One was to Mary Florence Potts of Ottumwa, for her improved sad iron. Her new iron was designed to stay hot longer; it was filled with a Plaster of Paris which is a non-heat conducting material and had a wooden handle.

Mrs Potts made further improvements and on April 4th 1871 she received a second patent. The new design stayed hot even longer, distributed the heat more evenly, but best of all had a detachable handle. This enabled the handle to be taken from the iron which had been returned to the stove, and attached to the next iron to be used. The iron was a hit at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia in 1876. It was subsequently sold in sets of three irons and one handle.

Mary Potts' picture and name were used in advertising the irons which were still being made in the early 1950s. Sadly though, as is often the case, the invention made more money for the manufacturer than the inventor.

Read through the extract above. Think about some of the reasons why Mary Potts' invention did not make her a wealthy woman.





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The role of the Laundry Maid

Extract from *“The Country House Servant”* Pamela A. Sambrook, Sutton Publishing Ltd
in Association with the National Trust UK, 1999

When dry, the wash was re-sorted, this time into ten piles, according to the method of finishing.

Needing starching, damping and ironing:

- 1. Neckerchiefs, muslins and collars*
- 2. White gowns and white frocks*
- 3. Coloured gowns and frocks*
- 4. Shirts*

Damping, folding and mangling

- 5. Cotton stockings, shifts, pinafores, sheets, pillow cases, chamber towels, table linen, glass cloths, knife cloths, kitchen cloths*

Ironing

- 6. Flannel and woollen clothing*

Damping, folding and ironing

- 7. Petticoats, shifts*
- 8. Cotton waistcoats*
- 9. Nightcaps, drawers*
- 10. Handkerchiefs*

Read through the list above then make a similar list of sorting needs for dry laundry in a typical household today. Write some summary statements comparing laundry needs in the 19th century and the 21st century.



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Advertising

Look at the advertisement below:



Discuss the effectiveness of this advertisement. Sample questions:

- What do you think is so special about this iron?
- Why was it considered a good Christmas present in 1938?
- What parts of the advertisement lead you to suppose that this is an excellent product?

Design a poster advertising a current laundry product of your choice.