

# BRITISH LIBRARY NEWSPAPERS

ORIENTATION RESOURCES

Various source media. *British Library Newspapers*



The aim of this guide is to give you a better understanding of how to use the *British Library Newspapers (BLN)* archive for your research purposes. It will cover finding and filtering material as well as explore some key topics covered by the archive.

## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide is aimed at students and researchers who are using Gale Primary Source Archives for the first time. It will take you through the different stages of using a digital archive. If you are unfamiliar with researching in a digital archive it is worth reading the guide through from start to finish.

If you have some experience working with digital archives and are looking for guidance on *British Library Newspapers (BLN)* specifically, head straight to the KEY TOPICS section. There you will find information on some of the main historical themes addressed by the collections in this archive. There are also some critical thinking questions and useful search terms to help you start your research. The questions in **green** are entry level questions, the questions in **red** are more advanced.

If you are looking for examples of research conducted in this digital archive, the final section CASE STUDIES, will provide you with this. This section draws upon documents found in *BLN* to show you how to use digital primary sources for research and teaching. Again, there are some critical thinking questions and useful search terms to help you start your research. The questions in **green** are entry level questions, the questions in **red** are more advanced. Throughout you will find keywords in bold typeface to help you identify key topics and useful search terms.

---

## LANGUAGE AND TERMINOLOGY

In this section, you will identify the language and words that will produce useful results when you are using the search function in a digital archive.

In all Gale Primary Source Archives, you will find language and terminology that is old-fashioned, unfamiliar and potentially offensive. The documents and other sources held in these archives are reflective of the period in which they were written. Regional publications may also be written in the vernacular, reflecting the dialect spoken by the local people in a particular area. To that end, you will need to think about the words and phrases that you choose to conduct your search.

As an example, if you were searching in this archive for information on Scotland in this period you would most likely start by searching for “Scotland” and “Scottish”. However, contemporary authors used a variety of words and phrases to refer to Scotland and Scottish people. After you have searched for “Scotland” and “Scottish” you will notice other terms appearing in your selected source materials. You can use these terms to extend your search. In this example,

you would need to extend your search to include terms such as “Scots”, “Scotch”, “highlander”, “highland”, “lowland”, “north Briton”, “north Britain”, “north British”, “Pictish” and “Celtic”. The *BLN* contains publications from Scotland as well as England, Ireland and Wales so the vocabulary used will differ depending on where the publication comes from and may reflect the regional dialect. The more time you spend in the archive looking for sources the more familiar you will become with the variety of terms that might be relevant to your topic, as well as their idiosyncrasies (such as non-standard spelling). For example, Celtic in particular was used to refer to multiple groups and places, any results you found from this term would have to be assessed to make sure they were referring to Scotland.

---

## BASIC SEARCH AND FILTERING

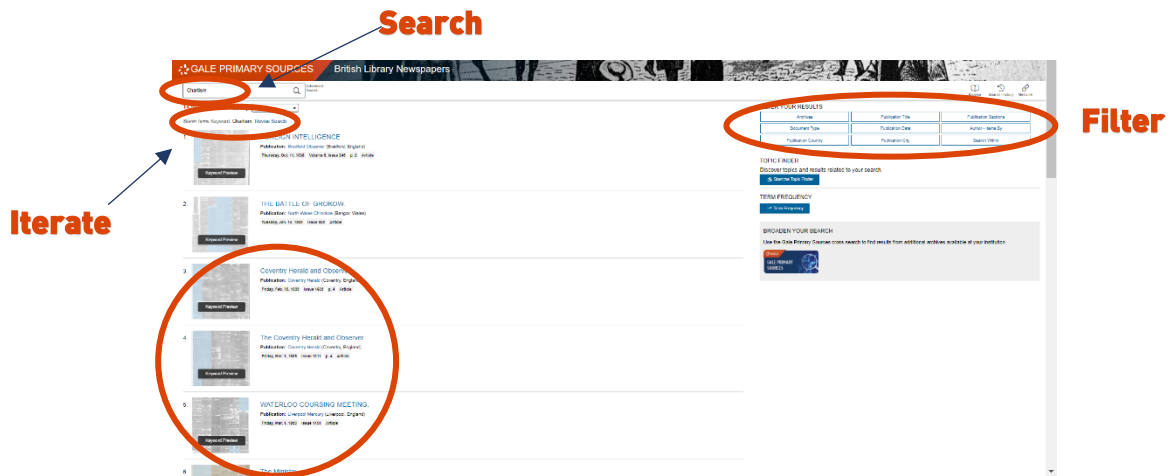


In this section, you will perform a basic search using keywords in *BLN*. It will also cover how to filter your results, and the steps needed to find a useful and comprehensive set of sources tailored to your research questions. When you enter a search term it will be used to scan both the content of the sources and the tags that have been applied to said sources. In *BLN* your search is being applied across the multiple newspaper titles in this archive.

Let's start with a key movement covered in this archive: Chartism.

- Search your key term, Chartism, in *BLN*. You will receive thousands results across multiple publications.
- Filter your results. Using the filter buttons on the right of your results list you can refine your list. You can use these filters to help ensure the source material you are using relates directly to your research question. For example, if you were interested in the viewpoints of the Chartists themselves you can filter your results so that you are looking at radical papers like the *Northern Star* by using the 'Publication Title' filter.
- Assess your results. It is important to remember throughout that these searches are the starting point of your research and as such will provide you with a very broad range of content. Once you have filtered your results you will still need to analyse them to assess their relevance to your topic. In our examination of Chartism and the *Northern Star*, for example, you may want to look at coverage of a particular event or you could focus on a significant person in the Chartist movement and look at coverage written about them or by them.

- Iterate on your search. As you become more familiar with your topic you may also need to go back to your earlier searches and re-assess material you previously discounted. You may also need to undertake new searches using terms you have learnt during your research process. For example, having looked at sources created by the Chartists you may now want to look at sources from their opponents.



## Advanced Search

The 'Advanced Search' function allows users to refine their search for multiple terms and apply the filtering process at the beginning of your search. This can be useful for when you have a very specific research question or in the latter stages of your research project when you have a more defined idea of the source material you are looking for.

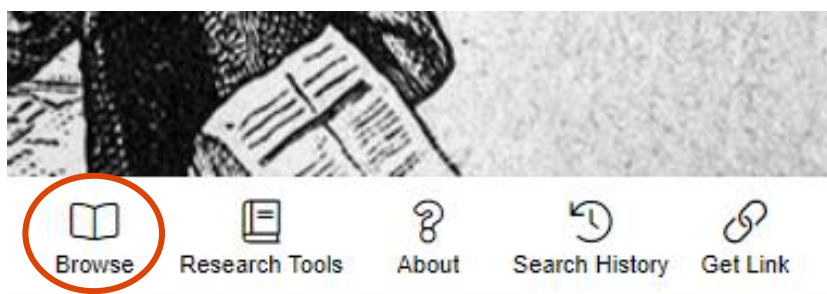




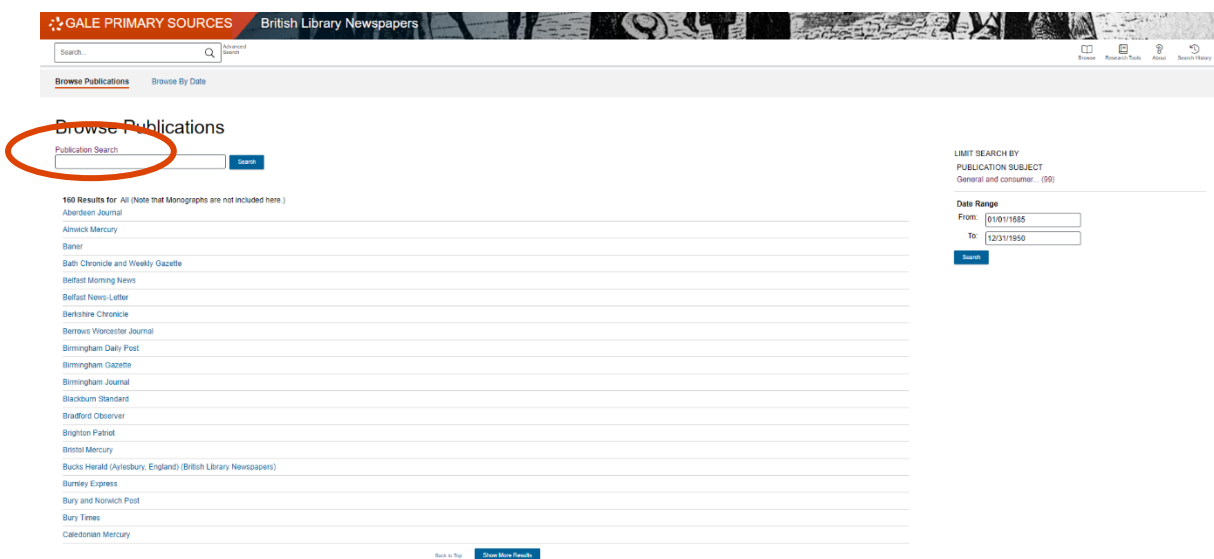
If you are familiar with other Gale Primary Source Archives you may notice that the *BLN*'s advanced search function also offers some bespoke limiters. As *BLN* is specifically a newspaper archive, the advanced search function allows you to conduct searches relevant to that content type such as document type, publication title, publication section etc. This is particularly useful if you are interested in a specific type of reporting for example, you might be investigating how Gaelic women are portrayed in adverts so by using the document type and publication country limiters you could refine your search to advertisements from Scottish or Irish publications.

## Browse

The "Browse" feature allows you to look through the publications by title.



Publications are listed alphabetically or, if you know the name of the newspaper you are looking for, you can use the 'Publication Search' to locate a specific newspaper or journal.



Using this feature, you can select a specific newspaper or journal and examine its individual issues, search within that publication and learn more about that title itself. Take the newspaper [Banner](#) for example, under 'About This Publication' you can learn its coverage, alternative titles, place of publication, format, publication frequency and language. Some titles even include a 'Description' which provides further context about the publication such as its editorship.



This is particularly important when you are investigating reporting from a specific publication or publications, rather than looking at a general topic. For instance, you might be investigating advocates for Welsh home rule so wish to look specifically at reporting in Welsh newspapers, such as *Baner*, as opposed to English publications, to gauge the level of support in the home nation. Browsing specific titles as opposed to searching by keyword will allow you to find source material that may not come up via keyword search.

You might want to consider using both the 'Browse' and 'Advanced Search' features together, not only to provide a greater number of results (which otherwise might have gone undiscovered) but a wider variety of perspectives which could introduce ideas and questions you had not previously considered.

## USING NEWSPAPERS AS SOURCES

This section will introduce you to using newspapers as a primary source. Like any source, newspapers betray an authorial bias, and it is important to understand the factors that feed into that bias in order to critically assess the material. It is also useful to compare and contrast material across different newspapers to build a three-dimensional understanding of the topic you are researching. The topics and questions below are designed to help you understand how to critically interrogate a newspaper as a source. The questions in **green** are entry level questions, the questions in **red** are more advanced.

Once you have identified an article that is useful for your research, you can use the following themes and questions to understand the bias ingrained in it. The themes themselves can be explored and understood in more detail by browsing the content in the archive, and by exploring the supporting academic essays available in the 'Resource Centre'.

## Audience

Newspapers are an important channel of public opinion and a newspaper's target audience significantly affected the content and style of reporting. A newspaper's readership may be determined by region, political ideology or class and although the audience of most newspapers remained the male-adult reader, by the late nineteenth century there was more content aimed at a gender and age specific audiences. Select a newspaper from the *BLN* and answer the following questions:

- Explain how the newspaper's content and reporting style appeal to its audience.
- How would a national newspaper differ from a regional newspaper in their reporting?
- Identify how can you tell what social class a newspaper is targeted at.
- Who are the newspapers competitors?
- Compare your selected newspaper to its top competitor(s) and examine how the papers distinguish themselves?
- Evaluate the importance of a female audience to the newspaper's success.

## Political Position and Class

The political stance and intended audience of a newspaper will heavily affect its reporting, especially the way in which it presents government decisions. Note that not all newspapers maintain a consistent political stance throughout their lifetime. For instance, in 1800 four main daily newspapers were being published in London: the *Morning Post*; the *Morning Chronicle*; the *Morning Herald* and *The Times* and their reporting reflects not only their intended audience but their editorship.

- The *Morning Post* was said to be the preferred reading of the aristocracy. Describe ways this might affect the paper's reporting.
- The *Morning Chronicle* was originally a Whig paper but was purchased by a consortium of Peelites in 1848. How might this change the political stance of the newspaper? Discuss the impact this has on the coverage of key events.
- In 1841 John Delane was appointed editor of *The Times*. During his editorship the newspaper was loosely identified with liberalism but his main concern was to maintain the paper's independence. Explain how this position impacted the political stance of the newspaper.

- In 1848 the *Morning Herald* was acquired by James Johnstone, who also owned the *Evening Standard*. Johnstone charged 4d a copy for the *Morning Herald* but only 2d for the *Evening Standard*. Compare both papers and evaluate what impact this might have had on readership and how it might have affected reporting?

### Style

Like audience, political position, and class, a paper's style might change throughout its history, and it is important to understand how this style affects reporting and coverage. Many things may affect a newspaper's style including logistical factors such as printing costs and taxation.

Select a newspaper from the *BLN* and answer the following questions.

- Can you recognise how the newspaper's style affects the way a story is presented?
- Discuss the affect the newspaper's style has on the reader.
- Analyse the extent to which audience defines a newspapers style and vice versa.
- Compare and contrast the style of the newspaper and its competitor papers.

### Influence of Ownership and Editorship<sup>1</sup>

The political stance, content and style of a newspaper is often heavily influenced by its owner or editor(s). Not only may their personal opinions have influenced reporting but as newspaper publishing grew as a viable business (as opposed to relying on patronage) owners and editors became more commercially minded, requiring journalists to provide writing which satisfied the demands of a business. This emphasizes the importance of understanding the context of any primary source and the environment in which it was created as well as using multiple newspapers to create a balanced picture. Select a newspaper from the *BLN* and answer the following questions.

- Can you identify whose influence is visible in the newspaper's coverage and how?
- Explain the ways in which the owner's influence affects reporting and style.
- Analyse the presence and importance of the various influences throughout a publication's lifetime.

---

<sup>1</sup> PRO TIP! If you pick a title and select 'About This Publication' some titles (although not all) include a 'Description' which provides information about a publications editorship or ownership.



## KEY TOPICS

This section will introduce you to some of the main subject areas covered by *BLN*. These subject areas were chosen because they relate to publications that make up *BLN*, as well as reflecting historiographical debates and key teaching areas. There are also questions designed to help guide your research into these topics in the archive. You will also find lists of further useful search terms which will assist you in broadening your knowledge of these subjects. These terms have already been tested via the *BLN* search function so should provide you with helpful results.

### History of Newspaper Publishing in Britain

As well as covering the social, political, and cultural events across three centuries, as a newspaper archive the *BLN* also documents the evolution of the British press and how this was impacted by censorship, taxation as well as technological innovations in printing and global communication amongst other things.

- Discuss what effect mass education and increasing affluence have on newspapers.
- Describe the impact the worldwide development of undersea cables had on press agencies.
- In 1802 and 1815 the tax on newspapers was increased resulting in many untaxed newspapers, examine how this influenced these newspapers' political stance.
- Over the course of the nineteenth century there was a rise in the economic position of journalists impacting on their professional status. Debate what impact this had on their reporting.

Other useful search terms: pamphlets, journal of record, printing, circulation, edition, tabloid

---

### Regional and Provincial History

By the nineteenth century newspapers were well established in all regions of Britain, from major cities to small towns, providing an alternative view from the London-centric national press. For researchers of social history, provincial newspapers offer insight into the minutiae of local life rather than affairs of state.

- What can advertisements in provincial newspapers tell us about local life?
- How might reporting in newspapers from Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Wales differ from English national newspapers?
- How does the reporting on the Peterloo Massacre in a provincial, Northern newspapers differ from the reporting published in London? Compare two or more publications and analyse their coverage.

Other useful search terms: town, village, city, nation, county

## Radicalism

Across the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Britain there were several radical movements demanding changes to the political and social systems. Increased literacy amongst the poor as well as the rise of the urban middle-class caused by the Industrial Revolution meant an emergence of new social classes that began to reject political orthodoxy.

- What was the impact of the 1832 Reform Act on the working-class?
- How were the revolutions of 1848 viewed in Britain?
- What impact did the *Northern Star* have on the Chartist movement? What can this publication tell us about working-class thinking?
- Did Chartists really want to change the way Parliament was elected or was this just a strategy to start a revolution? Justify your argument using primary sources.

Other useful search terms: radicalism, conservatism, socialism, communism, cooperation, rebellion, progressive

---

## Crime and Policing

Understanding the history of crime and the criminal justice system of any period helps us to better comprehend society at that time. The types of crime; gender, age and ethnicities of criminals; law enforcement and policing; the law and courts; as well as punishment and prisons were all reported in Britain's newspapers.

- How did the attitudes towards crime and offenders in the eighteenth century differ from those of the nineteenth century?
- How did the mechanisms to address crime change over the nineteenth century?
- How was crime conceptualized as a moral issue in the eighteenth century?
- Evaluate how tabloids, such as the *Illustrated Police News*, used true crime as a form of entertainment.
- Discuss how men's and women's crimes were reported differently in the press.

Other useful search terms: morality, vice, prostitution, policing, punishment, constabulary, constable, policemen, murder, corporal punishment, capital punishment

---

## Industrial Revolution

The Industrial Revolution was the change from an agrarian and handicraft economy to one dominated by industry and machinery manufacturing. Technological innovations such as chemical manufacturing, iron production, the use of steam and water power, machine tools and mechanized factory systems modernized several industrial production methods. The socioeconomic and cultural results were immense.

- Why did towns and cities grow during the Industrial Revolution?
- How did industrialization change life for working-class families?
- Why was the steam engine important to the Industrial Revolution?
- Assess the impact of the Industrial Revolution on children. To what extent was child labour a problem?
- Compare industrialization in the United States to Britain, how can they be distinguished from each other?
- Analyse the Great Exhibition of 1851, what does this event tell us about the Industrial Revolution?

Other useful search terms: textile, cotton, silk, wool, gas, glass, cement, paper, agriculture, mining, transport, roads, railways, factory, Luddites, urbanisation, labour

---

## Empire and Colonialism

Spanning over 400 years, at its height the British Empire was the largest in history impacting not only national but global events and resulting in widespread constitutional, legal, linguistic, and cultural effects. The rise and fall of the Empire were well documented in the British press.

- Why was slavery finally abolished in the British Empire?
- What impact did the American Revolution have on the British Empire?
- Did the British Empire enable the Industrial Revolution?
- To what extent did the people of Britain and the Empire see themselves as being part of a single British people?
- Assess the impact of the two World Wars on the relationship between Britain and its Empire.

Other useful search terms: North America, East India Company, American War of Independence, India, Egypt, South Africa, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, British Raj

---

## 'Ladies Columns' or 'Hints for Housewives'

Specialist magazines aimed at women came of age in the nineteenth century (although they had existed since 1693) leading many mainstream and family newspapers to publish specially commissioned articles aimed at a female audience. These were often written by female journalists and focused on what were considered 'female concerns'. Some were structured like the modern 'problem page', offering advice and tips.

- Why was there an increase in publications and articles aimed at women in nineteenth century?
- Why were these articles aimed at middle-class women?
- What do columns and articles aimed at women tell us about society's perception about what the 'ideal woman' should be?
- Were columns and articles aimed at women always pro or anti the women's suffrage movement? Justify your argument.

Other useful search terms: womanhood, marriage, recipe, cleaning, domestic economy, health, cooking, fashion, clothing, beauty routine, home decoration

---

## Children's Columns

Children's columns were added to some newspapers and became a regular feature in many northern provincial newspapers from as early as the 1880s. These included short stories, poems, nursery rhymes, competitions, word puzzles, wholesome jokes and letters written by children.

- How did children's columns encourage moral behaviour?
- What do children's columns tell us about the Victorian's conception of childhood as pure, natural, and innocent?
- How does content aimed at children use the idea of 'boyhood'? Analyse what this tells us about society's conception of masculinity in the early twentieth century.

Other useful search terms: girlhood, play, tomboy, teenager, game, fable, nonsense, school

---

## War and Conflict

The development of serial newspapers and magazines also saw the emergence of the modern war correspondent reporting on major conflicts such as the Crimean War, Anglo-French Wars including the Napoleonic Wars, the Russo-Japanese War, the Balkan Wars, the First and Second World Wars as well as many others.<sup>2</sup>

- How was the idea of war tied to a sense of a British nationalism?
- How were overseas conflicts viewed by ordinary people living in Britain?
- Explain what the language used by war reporting tells us about attitudes to war.
- Compare the reporting on First World War to the coverage of the Second World War.
- Assess the impact of Britain's wars on her imperial ambitions.

Other useful search terms: soldier, army, military, battle, trenches, victory, treaty, defence

---

## Sport

In the late nineteenth century there was more emphasis on sport in newspapers, a reflection of the increased leisure of all classes. Newspapers were relying more on advertising than circulation to pay for their production costs so needed content that appealed to the masses and events such as boxing, horse racing and football provided that draw.

- What role did cricket play in the British Empire?
- Consider the ideas of Christian Masculinity on the spread sport in the British Empire?
- How does the coverage of female football matches differ from male football matches?
- How did sport contribute to a sense of English national identity?
- How do social and cultural factors shape the characteristics of, and participation in, sports in post-industrial Britain?

Other useful search terms: association football, St George's Cross, British Union Flag, rugby league, rugby union, tennis, pitch, stadium, cricket

---

<sup>2</sup> PRO TIP! What's in a name? Remember the name by which we know a conflict or an event now, may not have been what was used at the time. For instance, the term 'First World War' only came into use in 1939, after the Second World War had begun. Before that it had been known as 'The Great War'. Consider this when choosing your search terms.



## Entertainment

Newspapers and magazines were home to prose, poetry, cartoons, illustrations and much more, intended to entertain the masses. Serialised fiction published in magazines and newspapers helped the novel to become the leading literary genre in Victorian Britain. Many novelists and poets also worked as either editors or journalists (sometimes both) and their articles and columns can often offer insight into their creative works. Many literary greats that you may recognise can be found in the *BLN* such as **Mary Ann Evans**, George (Lord) Byron, John Keats, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, **Thomas De Quincey**, **William Makepeace Thackeray**, Thomas Hardy and Charles Dickens.

Satirical cartoons and illustrated newspapers also became highly popular in the nineteenth century offering both sensationalized news and illustrated fiction.<sup>3</sup> They were a source of both information and amusement offering vivid portrayals of melodrama from Britain and around the world as well as being a social commentary on current events.

- Why was serialized fiction so popular in nineteenth-century Britain?
- Many novelists and poets working as journalists wrote under pseudonyms, what examples can you find?
- Analyze the influence the illustrated newspaper [The Graphic](#) had within the art world.
- Examine the role newspapers played in the development of new cultures of consumption and leisure in nineteenth-century Britain.
- Evaluate the role of cartoons and illustrations of Jack the Ripper as a form of news.



Other search terms: review, theatre, artist

---

## CASE STUDIES

These case studies provide some examples of the sorts of material found in *BLN*. They will show you how the source material found in *BLN* relates to some of the key topics discussed above. They will also introduce you to the kinds of specific questions you can use to interrogate individual sources.

These case studies can also be used as a teaching tool. They can be used to help educators explain using digital primary sources to new users. Together with the instructions above ('Basic Search and Filtering'), they can help in

---

<sup>3</sup> PRO TIP! When searching for cartoons, charts, drawings, images, maps or photographs related to a specific topic use the 'Advance Search' function to filter by Illustrated Works.

explaining to new users how to navigate a digital archive. They also provide clear examples of the source materials in BLN, and the kinds of critical thinking that need to be applied to these sources.

## Women Journalists

As well as an increase of columns and articles written for women, nineteenth-century Britain also witnessed a dramatic rise in female journalists. By 1895, the Society of Women Journalists was established to protect and champion the status of women within journalism.

Note the difference between journalistic content 'for women' and 'by women'. Although these two categories often overlapped, it is important to make this distinction. For instance, women's pages and gossip columns intended for a female readership were often the remit of female journalists but not exclusively.

### THE WORLD OF WOMEN.

Conducted by **ELICE BEERE.**

Many women of to-day, even among the most up-to-date, must have gasped in surprise at the latest feat of the modern athletic woman.

The Jiu-jitsu test of the little woman and the big policeman, in which, at any rate over her first opponent, the little woman got the better of it, shows pretty plainly that the Suffragettes have long ago relinquished the conclusion that persuasion is better than force.

But there are some victories which are better lost than won, and some battles which are better never fought. I did not see this particular encounter, but I felt a thrill of horror go through me as I pictured the struggle of feminine skill against masculine strength. And, in the second struggle, when the woman's champion encountered defeat, grace and dignity must have gone altogether by the board.

It may be that women will never get the vote until they make themselves sufficiently unpleasant, just as it is the disagreeable member of the family, who, for peace sake, is made the first consideration. But, in either case, is the game worth the candle?

It is true that women in certain classes have a very hard time of it, and that anything which tends, or would tend, to ameliorate their lot deserves the support of all thoughtful members of their sex. Even Jiu-jitsu, if a necessary weapon, must be conceded to them.

There are "cats" of women who try to curry masculine favour by running down women of stronger views. The attitude of these people is detestable, and it says much for men's sense of fairness that they often get a well-merited snub for their pains.

The "cat" type of woman needs to be very careful nowadays before she criticises the modern woman to the

*Continued on page 55.*

---

**RECIPES.**

**BAKED FILLETED STEAK.**—A filleted steak makes a very savory dish when treated as follows:—Slice a carrot, an onion, and a turnip, put them with the steak into a baking-tin, add a thin slice of fat bacon, and cover all with water. Bake in oven for forty minutes.

**DEVILLED EGGS.**—Boil a sufficient quantity of eggs hard; when cold, peel and dip first into well-beaten raw egg, next into oil, and roll them in salt, mixed with a small quantity of cayenne pepper. Make a little tray by twisting up the corners of half a sheet of oiled notepaper, place the eggs in it, put on a gridiron over a clear fire, and shake it about until the eggs are quite hot. Meanwhile, make a mixture of equal parts of olive oil and chutney sauce, arrange the eggs on a dish, put the sauce around them, garnish with parsley, and serve.

**SALAD OF DUCK.**—Put two tablespoonfuls of butter into a saucepan, and when melted add two tablespoonfuls of flour, and stir until well browned; then add one-and-a-half cupfuls of stock and stir until it boils. Add a pint of cold seasoned duck cut into small pieces, ten olives, one tablespoonful of tomato ketchup, and one tablespoonful of Worcester sauce. Cover and simmer gently for thirty minutes, and serve up very hot.



**A PARIS COWH:**  
The cowhess is of white silk embroidered with blue in satin, draped with black lace.

**CHILDREN TO MOTHERS. TEething**

**MRS. WINSLOW'S Soothing Syrup**

Has been used over 60 years by millions of mothers for their children who teething with perfect success. It soothes the child, cures the gums, allays all pain, cures wind colic, and is the best remedy for diarrhoea.

Contains no poisonous ingredient.

Sold by all Chemists at 1/11 per bottle.

tered defeat, grace and dignity must have gone altogether by the board.

It may be that women will never get the vote until they make themselves sufficiently unpleasant, just as it is the disagreeable member of the family, who, for peace sake, is made the first consideration. But, in either case, is the game worth the candle?

It is true that women in certain classes have a very hard time of it, and that anything which tends, or would tend, to ameliorate their lot deserves the support of all thoughtful members of their sex. Even Jiu-jitsu, if a necessary weapon, must be conceded to them.

There are "cats" of women who try



**BROWN'S BRONCHIAL TROCHIES.**  
Of 27 Years' Reputation.

FOR  
COUGHS and COLDS,  
INFLUENZA, BRONCHITIS,  
ASTHMA, CATARRH,  
LOSS OF VOICE.

*Of all Chemists, 1/3 per Doz.  
ACCEPT NO SUBSTITUTES.*

- How are the Suffragettes portrayed by this author?
- What does this article tell us about nineteenth-century attitudes towards female athletes and athleticism?
- What does the advert placement alongside this article tell us about expectations of women in society?
- How might the portrayal of Suffragettes differ between male and female journalists? Were female journalists always supportive?
- Analyze the impact emerging topics such as feminism and women's suffrage had on female journalism in the nineteenth century.

Beere, Ellice. "THE WORLD OF WOMEN." *Penny Illustrated Paper*, 9 July 1910, p. 54+. *British Library Newspapers*, [link.gale.com/apps/doc/BA3207799405/BNCN?u=webdemo&sid=BNCN&xid=1aa0e44b](https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/BA3207799405/BNCN?u=webdemo&sid=BNCN&xid=1aa0e44b). Accessed 21 Dec. 2020.

## Charles Dickens & Capital Punishment

Serious crimes in Britain were punished with the death penalty until the twentieth century. The most common method of execution since the seventeenth century being hanging and capital punishment was carried out in public until 1868. Victorian Britain was a notable time for social reform however, and the debate over whether to abolish the death penalty was a hot topic in the late nineteenth century with many prominent figures publicly voicing their opinions.

Writer and social critic Charles Dickens campaigned for multiple causes through his fiction and journalism including to stop public executions and to ideally abolish capital punishment all together. Dickens wrote several letters to newspapers on this topic and the following is an example of Dickens' attempt to bring the issue to public attention.

- How would you describe the attitude of Dicken's to capital punishment?
- How does Dickens describe the crowd?
- How is Dickens attempting to persuade his reader to agree with his point of view?
- Assess the use of religion in this article.
- Between 1840-1869 the Commons voted on measures to abolish capital punishment with several prominent figures publicly opposing its use. What impact did 'celebrity' have on social reform?
- Does this article offer any insight on Dickens' literary works? Can any comparisons be drawn?

## "MORAL" EFFECTS OF EXECUTIONS.

*To the Editor of the Times.*

SIR,—I was a witness of the execution at Horse-monger-lane this morning. I went there with the intention of observing the crowd gathered to behold it, and I had excellent opportunities of doing so, at intervals, all through the night, and continuously from daybreak until after the spectacle was over.

I do not address you on the subject with any intention of discussing the abstract question of capital punishment, or any of the arguments of its opponents or advocates. I simply wish to turn this dreadful experience to some account for the general good, by taking the readiest and most public means of advert- ing to an intimation given by Sir G. Grey in the last session of Parliament, that the government might be induced to give its support to a measure making the infliction of capital punishment a private solemnity within the prison walls (with such guarantees for the last sentence of the law being inexorably and surely administered as should be satisfactory to the public at large), and of most earnestly beseeching Sir G. Grey, as a solemn duty which he owes to society, and a responsibility which he cannot for ever put away, to originate such a legislative change himself.

I believe that a sight so inconceivably awful as the wickedness and levity of the immense crowd collected at that execution this morning could be imagined by no man, and could be presented in no heathen land under the sun. The horrors of the gibbet and of the crime which brought the wretched murderers to it, faded in my mind before the atrocious bearing, looks, and language of the assembled spectators. When I came upon the scene at midnight, the shrillness of the cries and howls that were raised from time to time, denoting that they came from a concourse of boys and girls already assembled in the best places, made my blood run cold. As the night went on, screeching, and laughing, and yelling, in strong chorus of parodies on Negro melodies, with substitutions of "Mrs. Manning" for "Susannah," and the like were added to these. When the day dawned, thieves, low prostitutes, ruffians and vagabonds of every kind, flocked on to the ground, with every variety of offensive and foul behaviour. Fightings, faintings, whistlings, imitations of Punch, brutal jokes, tumultuous demonstrations of indecent delight when swooning women were dragged out of the crowd by the police with their dresses disordered, gave a new zest to the general entertainment. When the sun rose brightly—as it did—it gilded thousands upon thousands of upturned faces, so inexpressibly odious in their brutal mirth or callousness that a man had cause to feel ashamed of the shape he wore, and to shrink from himself, as fashioned in the image of the Devil. When the two miserable creatures who attracted all this ghastly sight about them were turned quivering into the air, there was no more emotion, no more pity, no more thought that two immortal souls had gone to judgment, no more restraint in any of the previous obscenities, than if the name of Christ had never been heard in this world, and there were no belief among men but that they perished like the beasts.

I have seen, habitually, some of the worst sources of general contamination and corruption in this country, and I think there are not many phases of London life that could surprise me. I am solemnly convinced that nothing that ingenuity could devise to be done in this city, in the same compass of time, could work such ruin as one public execution, and I stand astounded and appalled by the wickedness it exhibits. I do not believe that any community can prosper where such a scene of horror and demoralization as was enacted this morning outside Horse-monger-lane gaol is presented at the very doors of good citizens, and is passed by, unknown or forgotten. And when, in our prayers and thanksgivings for the season we are humbly expressing before God our desire to remove the moral evils of the land, I would ask your readers to consider whether it is not a time to think of this one, and to root it out.

I am, Sir, your faithful servant,

CHARLES DICKENS.

Devonshire-terrace, Tuesday, Nov. 13.

# CITATION

CITATION GOES HERE