Helping your children choose books they will love

I reading

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opening extract from

The Danger Zone:
Avoid being a Victorian Servant

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published by

Book House,

an imprint of Salariya Book Co, Ltd

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From country to city

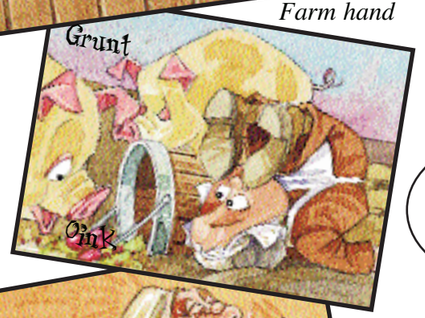
Alternative careers:

Before deciding to be a servant, consider other careers. shop work is exhausting (all day on your feet); farm work is dirty; factory work is dangerous.

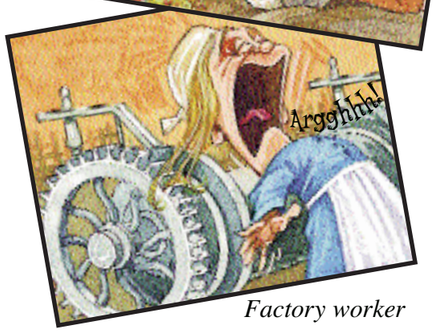
Shop assistant



Farm hand

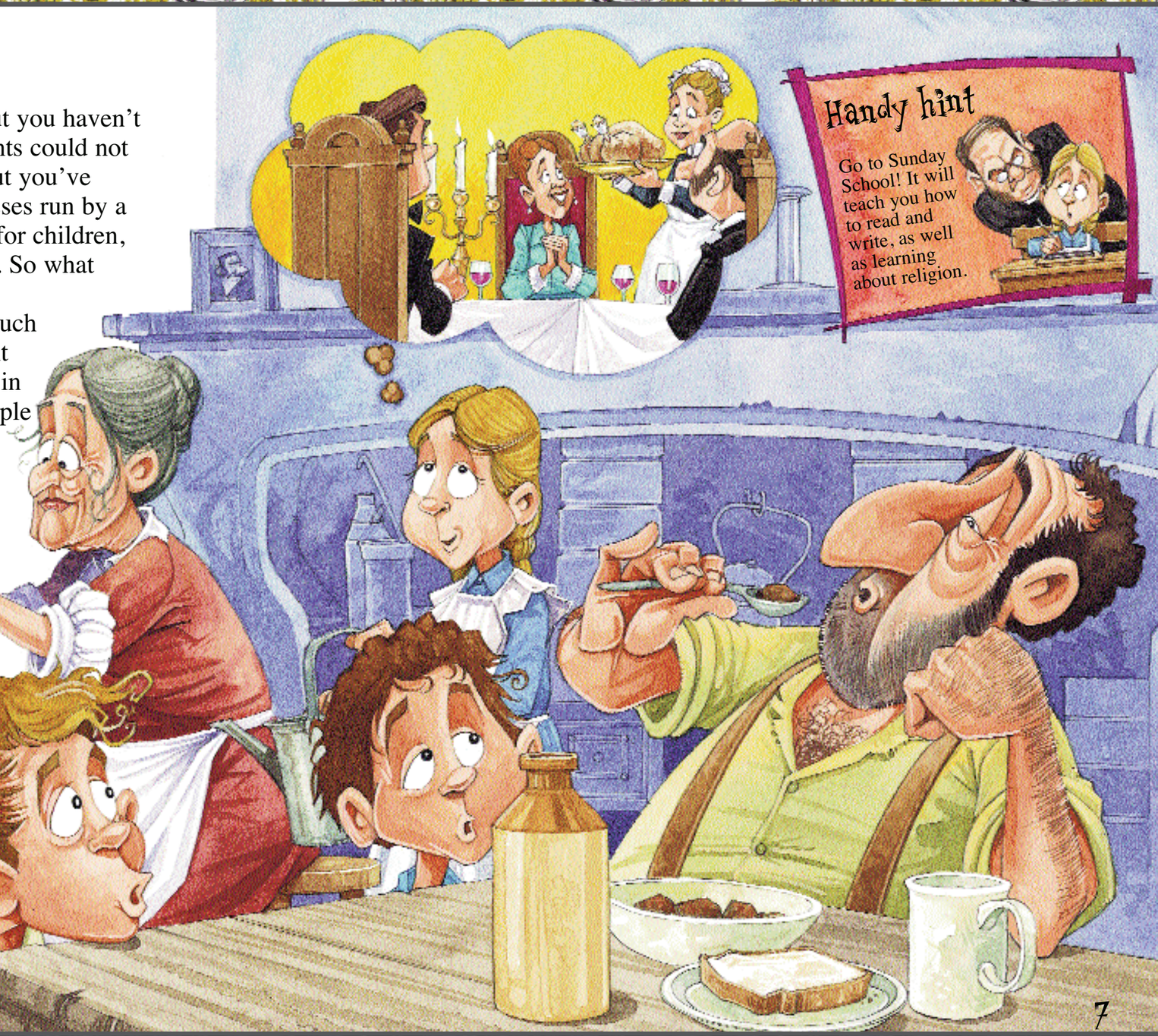


Factory worker



You're bright, keen and lively, but you haven't had much education. Your parents could not afford to send you to school. But you've learned to read and write at classes run by a charity. You know how to care for children, you can count and you can sew. So what kind of job might you do?

Sadly, for most young girls, there is not much choice. Your family wants you to be a servant (13% of the female population in Britain are in domestic service). Without servants, rich people could not lead such comfortable lives. But the pay is bad, the hours are long, and there is not much personal freedom. Is it really the right job for you?

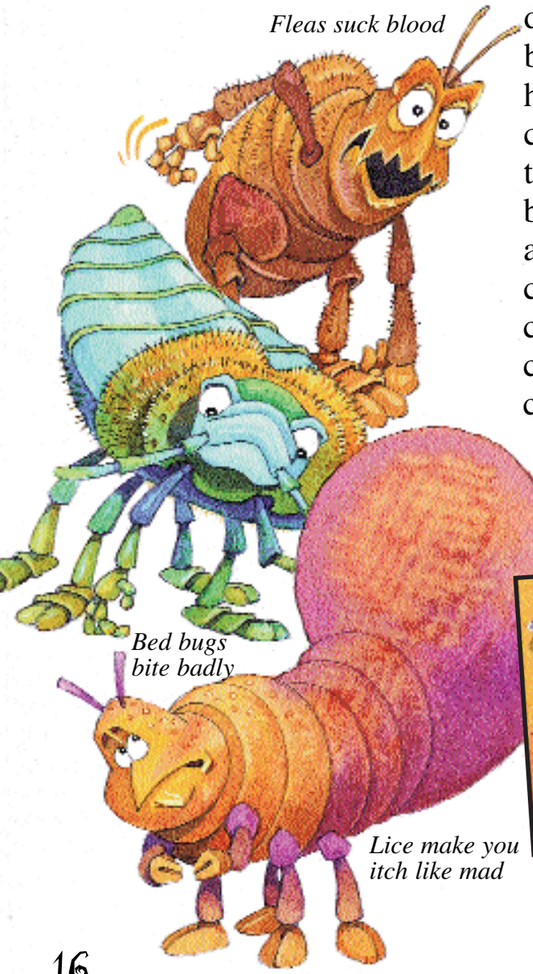


Are you squeamish about slops?

Bothered by bugs!

Bedrooms should be peaceful places to sleep and dream. But bugs make them a nightmare! Insects breed in the soft, cosy furnishings.

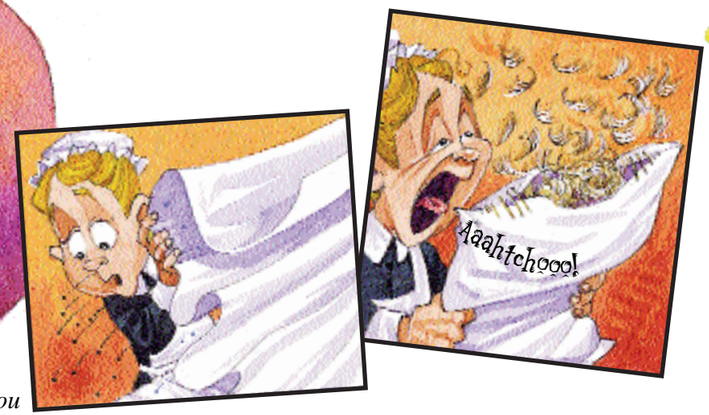
Fleas suck blood



Bed bugs bite badly

Lice make you itch like mad

Your employers will not mention this job, but you know you will have to do it. Every morning without fail you must remove 'used' chamber-pots from each bedroom without being seen and empty the contents down the nearest drain! If your master wants a bath, you have to heave hot water up the stairs in heavy cans to fill it. Afterwards, you carry the cold, dirty water back down stairs to empty into the drains. Servants aren't so fortunate – you'll be expected to have a bath in the kitchen. If you are lucky though, you will have a 'housemaid's cupboard' on each landing. These are special cupboards with taps and drains down which you can pour dirty water and the contents of a chamber-pot.



BUGS live in beds and under wallpaper.

FEATHER BEDS and quilts need to be aired daily.



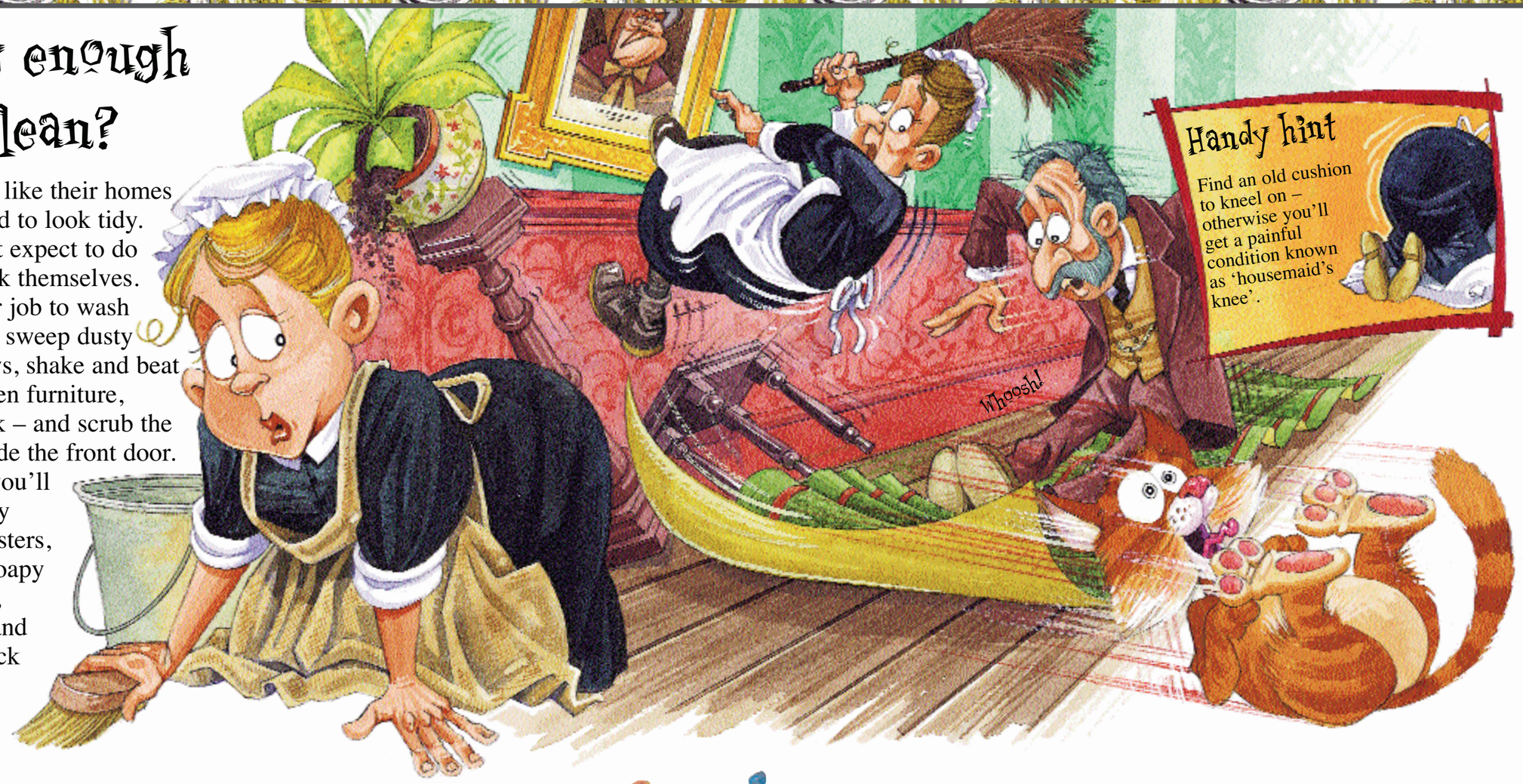
WATCH OUT for rugs – or you'll trip.

DON'T POLISH the floor under rugs or they'll slip.

MIRRORS can be cleaned with vinegar and water.

Are you strong enough to sweep and clean?

Rich Victorians like their homes to be clean and to look tidy. But they don't expect to do any housework themselves. It will be your job to wash muddy floors, sweep dusty stairs, clean huge glass windows, shake and beat the carpets, polish heavy wooden furniture, wipe down walls and paintwork – and scrub the stone steps and pavement outside the front door. The work is exhausting – and you'll have to do it by hand. Your only tools will be brushes, mops, dusters, carpet-beaters and buckets of soapy water. When you've finished it, you'll also have to tidy books and papers, hang up clothes, and pick up children's toys.



A week of cleaning:

YOU'LL HAVE TO clean the kitchen and scullery every day. But employers expect you to keep all the other rooms spotless, too. Draw up a rota, so you don't forget!

Handy Hint 2

To brush dust from the carpets, scatter damp tea leaves and then brush them up.


Monday – Parlour


Tuesday – Dining room


Wednesday – Nursery


Thursday – Front door and stairs


Friday – Spare bedroom


Saturday – Study