

1. What do you know about Charles Dickens?
2. What period of time did he write about? Have you read any of his books?
3. Is there an author who wrote about another period in a similar way? Is there a particular piece of literature that illustrates a particular period well?

Read article here: [Dickens's London Reading](#)

4. Is there a type of food that defines a particular period of your country's history?
5. Did your co-citizens have any doubtful forms of entertainment in the past?
6. Were there any upsides to living in the Victorian era for poor people?
7. Which of the following do you agree with? Why?
 - a) The buying and selling of street food is localism at its best: local people creating economic activity that nourishes and rewards the community.
 - b) Food standards have increased people's life-spans.
 - c) If Victorians had had social media, many more people would have died in fires.
 - d) We are only a burst pipe, a drought, or a change in the climate away from economic meltdown.
 - e) We should bring back elaborate door knocks as an additional security measure.
 - f) Greater awareness of death would encourage today's society to lead a more cautious life.
 - g) It is no longer important to know who your neighbour is, nor what they do: technology has made us autonomous.
 - h) Internet paywalls mean that news still has to be paid for: technology has not liberated us.
8. Do you feel nostalgic about a particular period of your country's history?
9. 'Literature is just as useful for learning about the past as any history textbook'. Can you think of any examples?
10. Imagine that it is the year 2169, which writer(s) will encapsulate life in the 2010/20s? What will future readers be most surprised about?

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Situation

You are a literary journalist with a broadsheet newspaper. You've been sent to interview a well-known author (your teacher) about their new book on a famous capital city. Quiz them on the differences between today's city and its earlier history. Focus on topics such as food, entertainment, basic public utilities, and attitudes to death.

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Discuss quotes

"Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards."

— Søren Kierkegaard

"You realize that our mistrust of the future makes it hard to give up the past."

— Chuck Palahniuk

"People who say that yesterday was better than today are ultimately devaluing their own existence."

— Karl Lagerfeld

"Anyone who can solve the problems of water will be worthy of two Nobel prizes - one for peace and one for science."

--- John F. Kennedy

"If you don't read the newspaper, you're uninformed. If you read the newspaper, you're mis-informed."

— Mark Twain