

# The Victorians

## Learning Objective:

To find out what the Victorians did during their leisure time.

NEXT

What do you like doing in your spare time?



Where does your family like to go for days out? Think, pair, share your ideas.



BACK

NEXT

During the Victorian period, and especially after around 1850, people had more leisure time than ever before. Britain was prosperous so more people had well paid jobs that allowed them to take time off work. Laws were introduced to limit the number of hours people were able to work to protect employers from taking advantage of their employees. Public holidays were also introduced. This meant that instead of leisure time being only for the rich, more and more people were able to enjoy time off.



What kind of leisure activities do you think the Victorians enjoyed?

BACK

NEXT

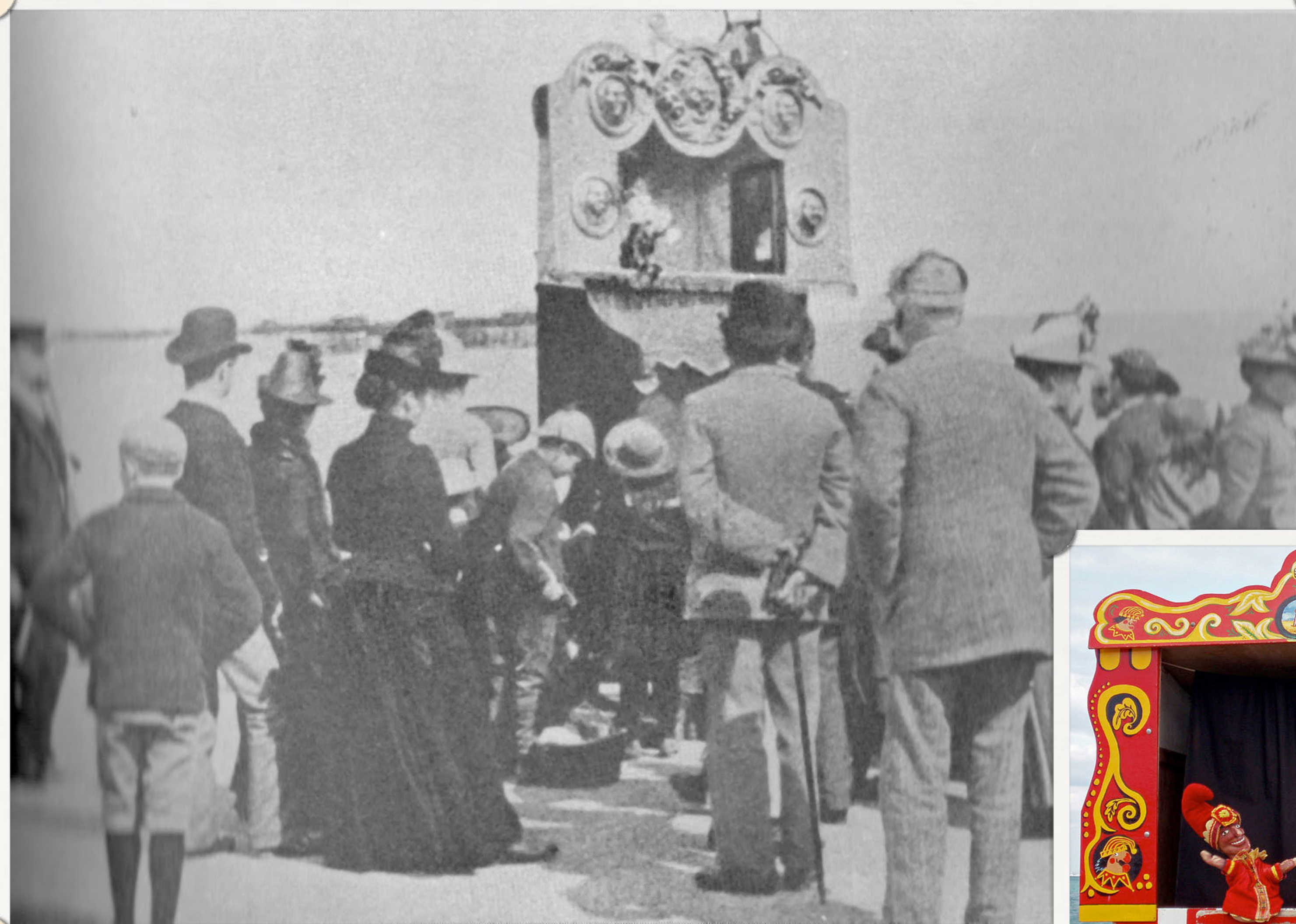
## Seaside trips



The invention of the steam train meant that people could quickly and cheaply travel to the seaside for the day and seaside holidays became very popular. Seaside resorts, such as Blackpool and Brighton, expanded rapidly and not only offered holiday-makers fun with buckets, spades and paddling but also provided Punch and Judy shows, fish and chips wrapped in newspaper, shopping arcades, brass bands and concert halls.

BACK

NEXT



# Watching a Punch and Judy Show



BACK

NEXT



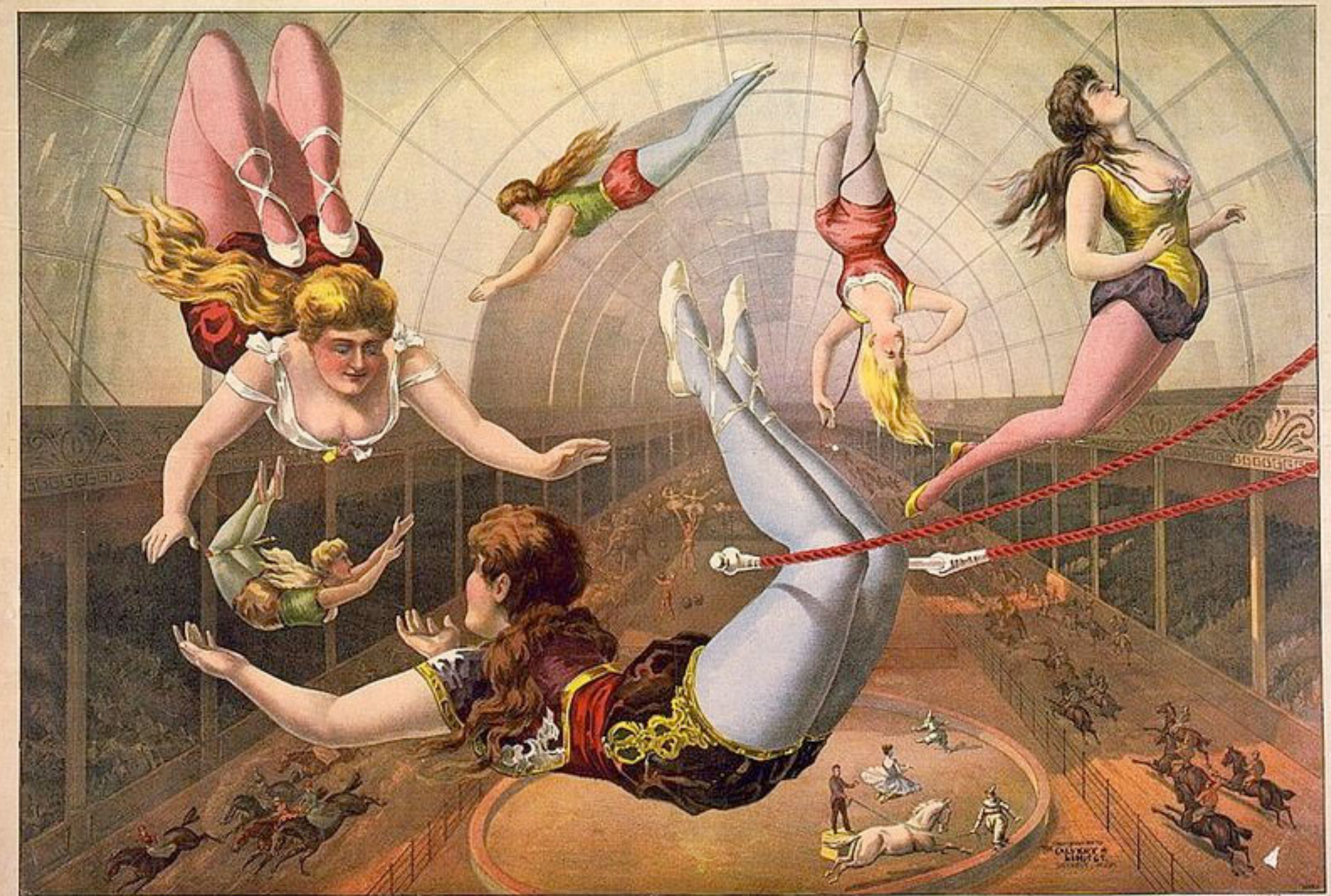
# Blackpool Pier, 1894

BACK

NEXT

# The Circus

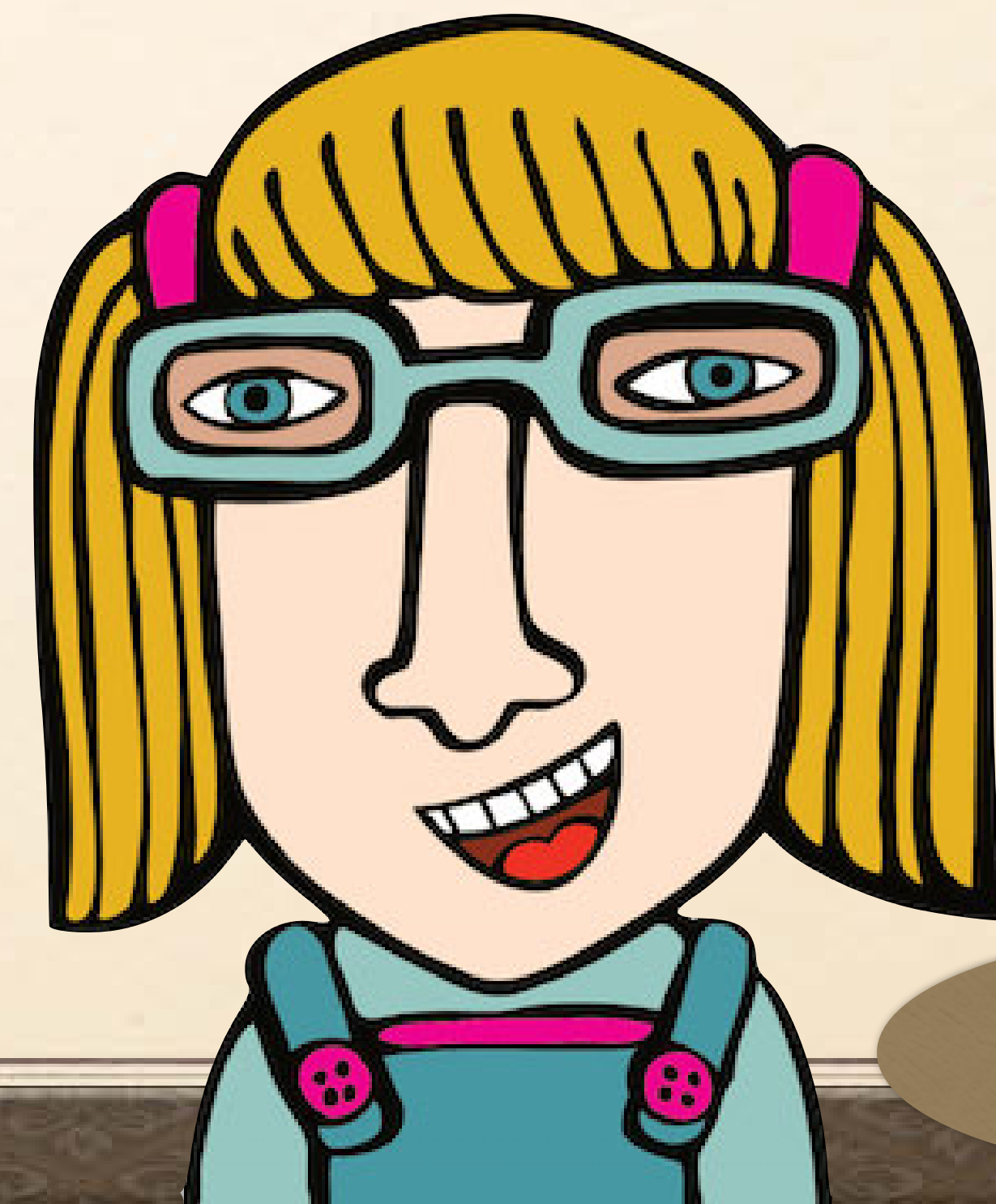
Circuses became extremely popular during the 19th century. Touring circuses travelled all over the country with wagons of performers and equipment in tow. They were able to travel more easily as the railways developed. The Victorians loved seeing jugglers, clowns, trapeze artists, horse riding stunts and wild animals.



BACK

NEXT

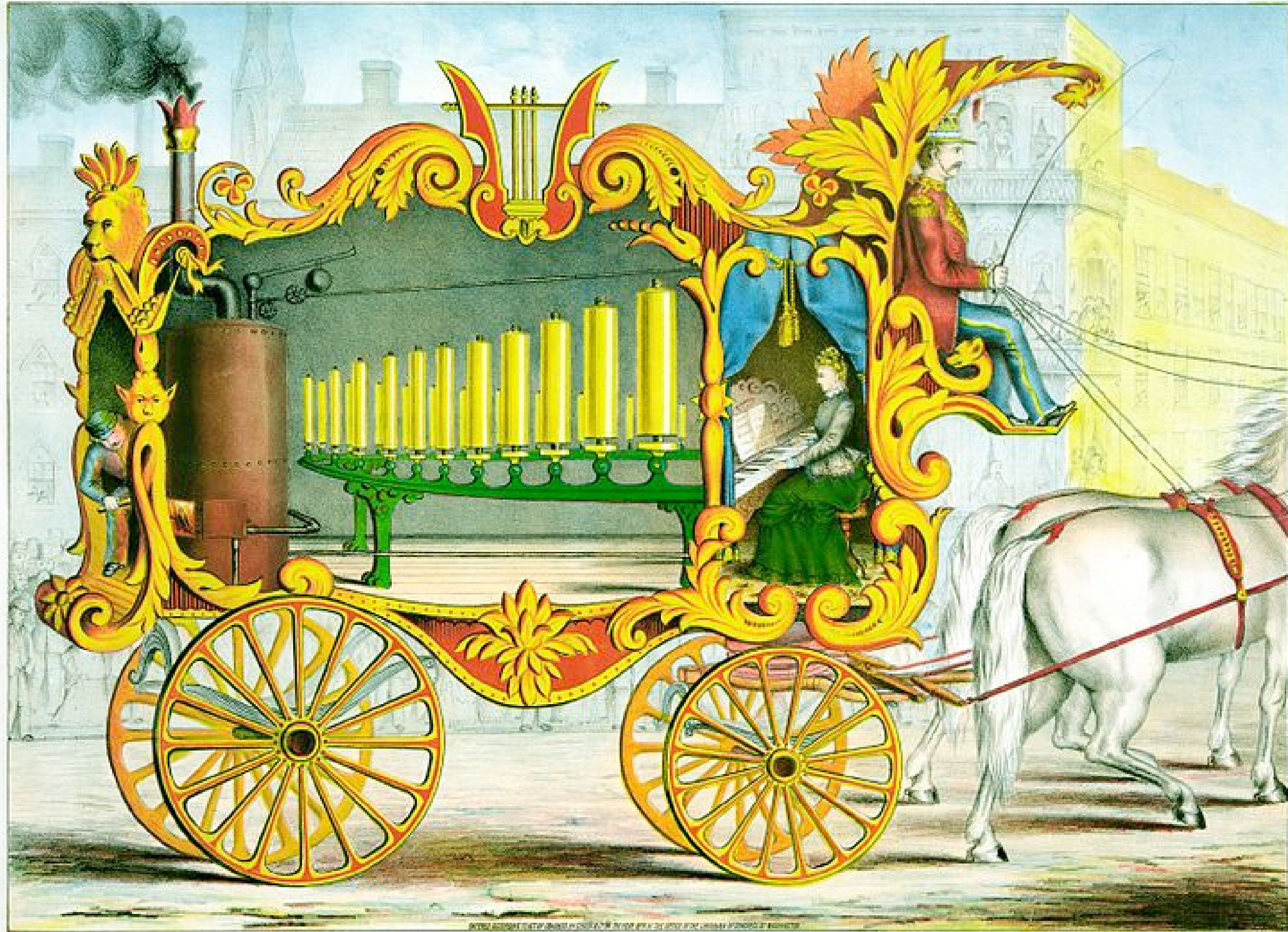
Look at the  
circus adverts on the  
next slides and discuss  
what they are  
advertising.



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**CALLIOPE!** THE WONDERFUL OPERONICON OR STEAM CAR OF THE MUSES,  
AS IT APPEARS IN THE GORGEOUS STREET FACENT OF THE GREAT

# **EUROPEAN ZOOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION!**

BRITISH MUSEUM, ROYAL COLISEUM, GALLERY OF ART, WORLD'S CONGRESS AND GIGANTIC CIRCUS! 12 Tents! 900 Men and Horses! One Ticket Admits to All!

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NOVEL FEATURE AT  
ASTLEY'S ROYAL AMPHITHEATRE  
THE RING & STAGE COMBINED



TO FORM ONE VAST ARENA  
IN WHICH THE  
**BATTLE OF THE ALMA**  
IS PERFORMED  
**EVERY EVENING**  
LESSEE AND MANAGER, MR W<sup>m</sup> COOKE.

G. WEBB & CO. LITHO. JUDGEMORE HILL, LONDON.

G. 545-1194

BACK

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Circuses often had freak shows too. These were acts of curiosity such as very small people, bearded ladies, giants, siamese twins or people with deformities. People flocked to see these examples of humanity they had never witnessed before.



BACK

NEXT

# The Theatre



The theatre was always a fun trip out for a Victorian family. Some theatres became known as music halls. Music halls held a wide variety of acts, such as singing, dancing, comedian shows and other acts. Music hall songs became very popular and people enjoyed singing along to the well-known tunes. Richer people also went to the theatre to watch ballet, opera or classical concerts. These theatres were much grander than those used for music hall.

BACK

NEXT

Families also enjoyed going to pantomimes. Writers started to re-write old stories such as Jack and the Beanstalk and Cinderella into pantomime stories and the scenery and costumes became much more elaborate.



Sometimes, shows would last as long as 5 hours. People loved the trickery that was used to create effects, like trap doors and smoke screens.

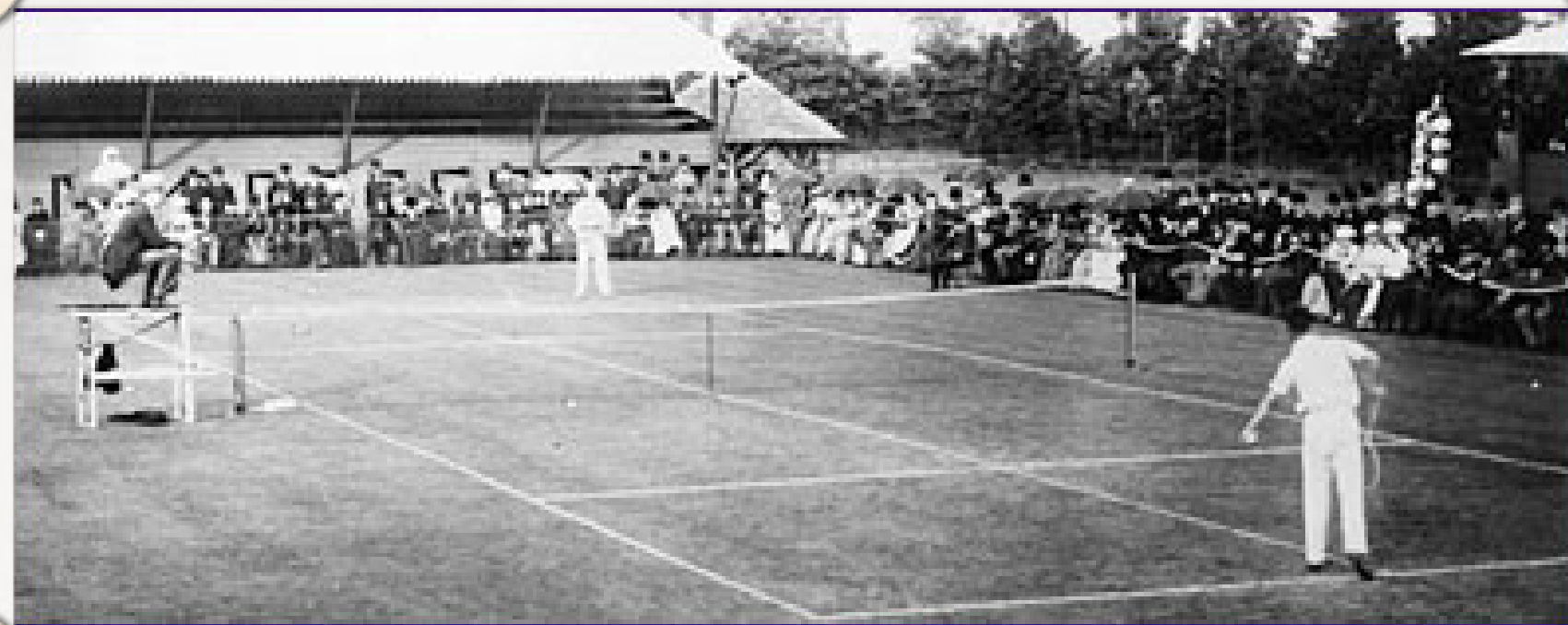


BACK

NEXT

# Sports

People have always loved sports but until the Victorian era, teams couldn't travel far to play different teams and they didn't have the time to play hours of sport. Different areas had different rules for the same game but this slowly changed as sport became more organised and organisations were formed to set up rules and tournaments. For example: in 1863 the Football Association was formed; in 1871 Rugby Football Union was set up; in 1877 the first international cricket test match was held and the first Wimbledon tennis championship was held. Sport became just as much fun to watch as to play.



Wimbledon 1877

BACK

NEXT



Britain's first rugby team, 1871

BACK

NEXT

## Parks and zoos



VICTORIA PARK : THE SAND-PIT.

Public parks became very popular during the Victorian period. They were often planted with exotic flowers and had lakes and trees. In busy cities, they were a welcome slice of the countryside. They often had bandstands for entertainment too and vendors selling kites, balloons and other treats.

BACK

NEXT



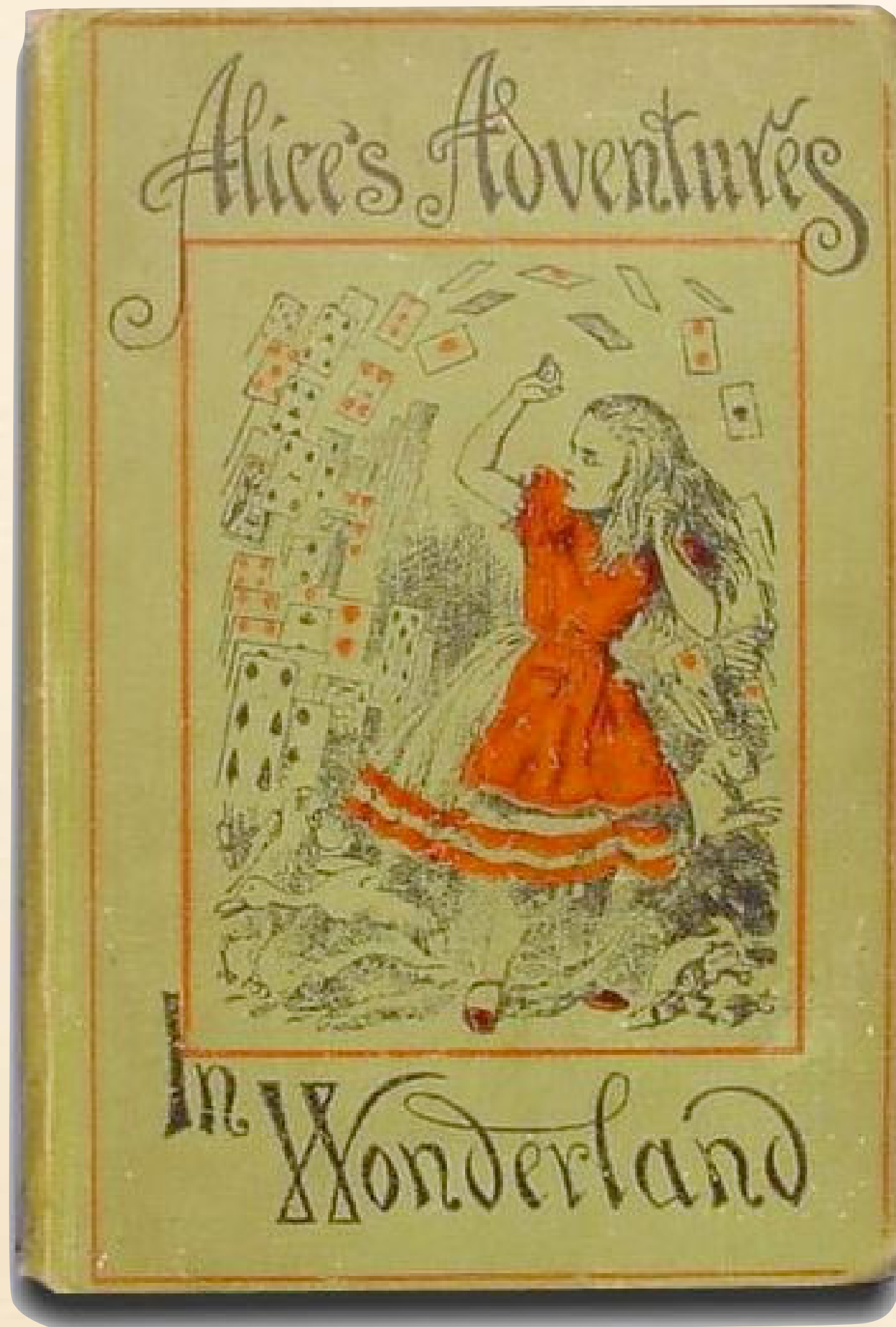
Some parks also had zoos where children could see animals from other countries, such as bears, lions, tigers, hippos, leopards, elephants, camels and exotic birds.



BACK

NEXT

# Leisure at home



Of course, there were plenty of ways to enjoy yourself at home too. With more children going to school because of the change in child protection laws, reading became more and more of a popular pastime. There were more public libraries too which let people take books out for free. Lots of children's books were published during this time, including classics such as *Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll. Comics for children were also introduced.

BACK

NEXT

Discuss your ideas.

Can you think  
of any other leisure  
activities that people  
would have done at  
home?



BACK

NEXT