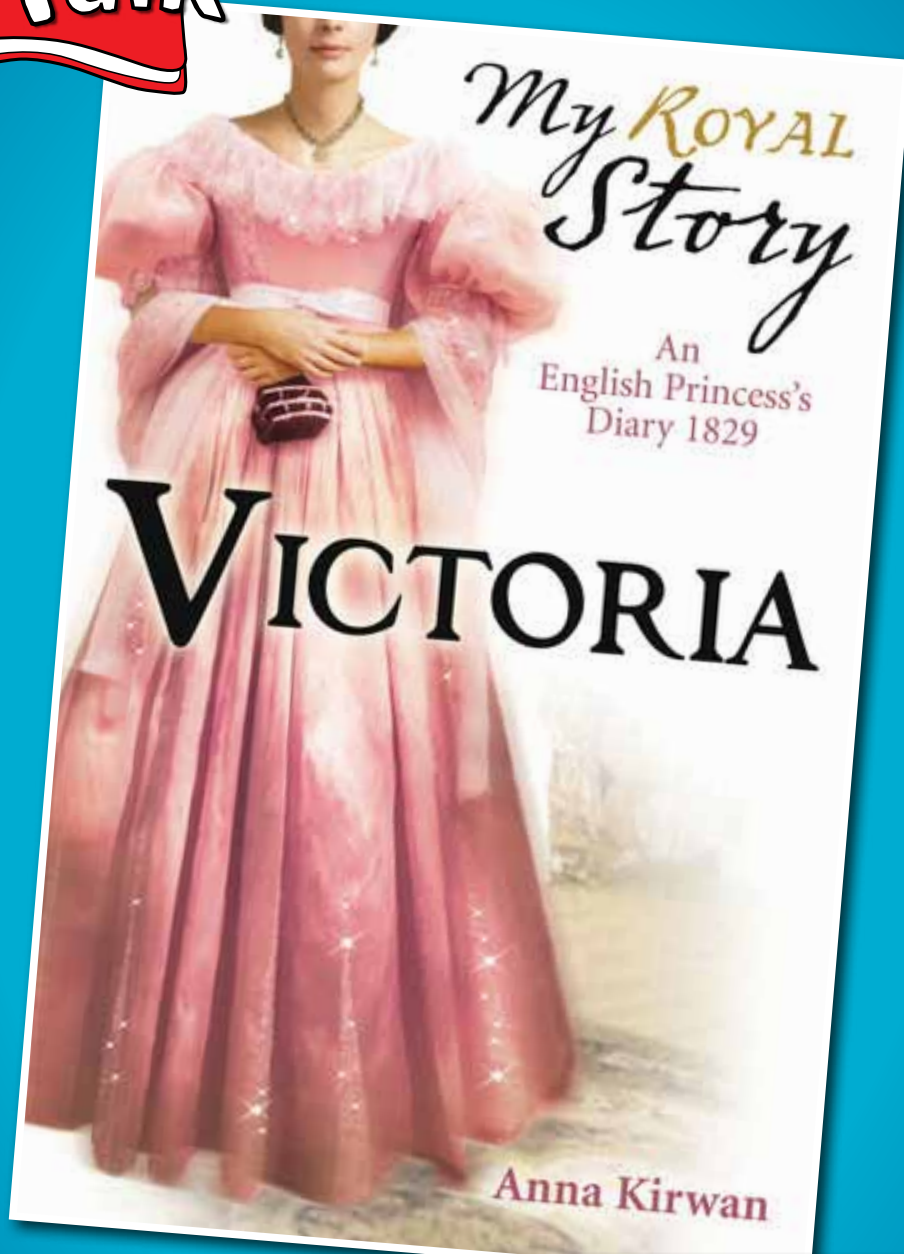
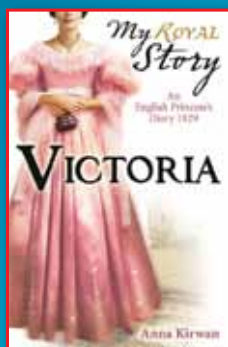


**Book
Talk**



AGES 8+

**Engage and inspire your
pupils with a Book Talk!**



Look out for this book at your Fair!

AGES 8+

Price	£6.99 / €8.40
Case	Read On
Author	Anna Kirwan
Publisher	Scholastic Children's Books

Using this book in your classroom

Themes

This book has lots to tell us about **royal life** in the years leading up to Queen Victoria's reign. It gives a glimpse of the real person behind the fusty image of **Queen Victoria**. It also gives insights into what life may have been like for **aristocratic children** during this period.

Summary

Anna Kirwan has given us a charming, lively and often funny insight into the life of Princess Victoria before she became Queen. The book takes the form of young Princess Victoria's fictionalised diary, and retells the real events of her life from 1829 to 1831, when the Princess was 10 to 11 years old. The diary covers momentous events such as the death of King George IV and the accession of King William IV, which left Victoria next in line to the throne. It also shows the sinister power that the bullying Sir John Conroy exerted over Victoria's mother as he schemed to be made Victoria's Regent in the event of her acceding to the throne as a child. But just as important in the story are the daily events which paint a vivid picture of Victoria's life as a young princess. Sometimes Victoria gives a very full description of life at Court and the intrigues and personalities surrounding her – and sometimes her diary entries are very brief and show some of the boredom and frustration that were also a part of her life. For example, the entry for 25th May 1831 simply reads: 'Early strawberries. Late tulips. Too much Latin. Not enough dancing.'

Did you know?

- When she started writing this book, Anna Kirwan wasn't sure how much she would like the Princess Victoria – but she ended up liking her a great deal, and this certainly shows in the sympathetic way she has written the book.
- Although it is fiction, the book is strongly based on historical fact. Anna Kirwan is keen for readers to understand that in places she used her imagination to alter details or fill in gaps. For example, it is known that in 1830 Victoria observed something inappropriate in Sir John Conroy's treatment of her mother, but no one knows exactly what Victoria saw, so Anna Kirwan has given her own interpretation of the event in the book.

The Story Session

1. Introducing the story

Before sharing this story with the class, ask the children whether they know anything about Queen Victoria. What kind of person do they think she might have been? Talk about how her image is of a person with no sense of humour, who behaved in a dignified but sad (or even grumpy) way. It might be useful to show a picture of Queen Victoria – for example one of the iconic pictures of her in her black mourning clothes after Prince Albert's death. Explain that this book shows a different side of Victoria, revealing the lively, witty child that she was before she became Queen.

2. Reading the story

- Read the first diary entry, for 1st April 1829 (pages 2-11). Pause, and ask: "What kind of person do you think Victoria was, based on what we find out in this diary entry? Why did she have to steal the journal? Why did she have to keep it so carefully hidden?" Talk about the impression the children get of Princess Victoria's life. Does it sound like fun? Would they want to swap lives with her if they could? What reasons can they give for their decision?
- If time allows, read some more of the diary together – for example, up to 8th April (page 25). Talk about what we find out about Captain Sir John Conroy and his daughter, Toire. What kind of picture of them does Victoria's diary create? Ask the children to sum up what Victoria thinks of them, and why.
- Encourage the children to read the rest of the diary independently or in reading groups.

3. Follow-up

- Go back to the children's initial impressions of what Queen Victoria was like, and talk about whether reading this diary has made them feel differently about her. The children could draw up two character profiles – one for Queen Victoria as an adult, and one for Princess Victoria as a child.
- If appropriate, the children could write a diary entry of their own, about their own life. Encourage them to add lots of details, just as Princess Victoria does, and to be as open as they can about their feelings. If the children choose to write openly about their own lives and feelings, let them decide whether to share their writing with you and others, or to keep it private.
- Encourage children to find out more about Queen Victoria. There are lots of websites aimed at children that describe Queen Victoria's life and the world around her. For photographs and paintings of Victoria and many of the people mentioned in the book, visit:

www.btinternet.com/~sbishop100

YOU TELL US

- Did you use these notes to have a Book Talk in class?
- Were they helpful?
- Are there any changes you'd like to see to make them more useful?

We're always happy to hear your comments, so please email us!

For the UK, email: bookfairs@scholastic.co.uk

For Ireland, please email: bookfairs@scholastic.ie