

Mary's little helper!

Washing the laundry was really hard work and normally happened each Monday.

Servants would need to learn exactly what was needed for each different kind of fabric and stain, not only to make sure that they got the washing clean, but also to make sure that they didn't ruin it in the process!

Some loads of laundry needed homemade soap jelly, some needed dangerous chemicals such as sulphuric acid, some even needed handfuls of fresh ivy leaves – and this is to name just a few!

Soap sometimes made white linen a funny yellow colour. Blue dye would get rid of this, leaving your sheets a fresh, bright white!

Depending on the time of year, drying laundry could take a very long time. In the city, this was usually done inside to avoid the washing becoming dirty again in the sooty air. Basements became very damp and often the washing might be put away before it was properly dry (very smelly!).



Here are the steps the laundry maid in Charles Dickens' house may well have followed when trying to wash some very important items – the bed sheets!

Today is Mary, the laundry maid's, first day – can you help her?

First match each action with the correct picture by drawing a line. Then put the actions in the correct order for Mary, by writing the numbers in the circles. She has worked the first one out, but can you help her with the others? Hurry – if she isn't quick enough, cook will tell her off and there will be no supper!

Charles Dickens Museum

Empty out the hot, soapy water.

Fill the copper with water and light the fire underneath.

If sheets are still a little bit yellow, repeat steps 3-6 and add blue dye.

Iron the sheets, fold the sheets and put them away (it must be time for bed now – yawn!)

Rinse the sheets in fresh cold water.

Put the sheets into the washtub.

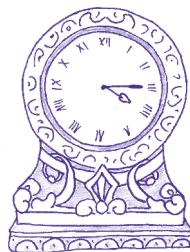
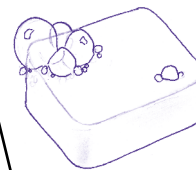
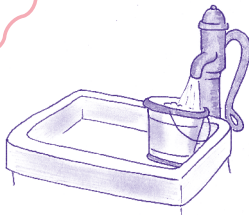
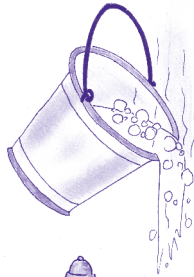
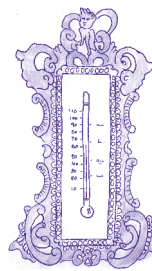
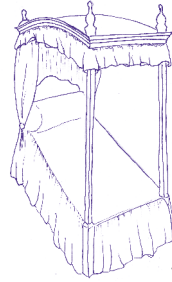
Squeeze the water out of the sheets and hang them up to dry.

Wait for the water to get hot (this could take a while!)

Take the dirty sheets off the beds and carry them downstairs to the laundry.

Rub homemade soap jelly through the sheets. Do this three times!

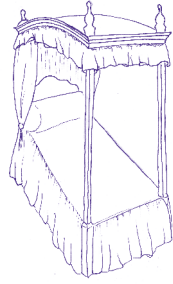
Scoop the water out of the copper and into the washtub with the sheets (be careful, it's very hot!)



Charles Dickens Museum

Answers

- 1 Take the dirty sheets off the beds and carry them downstairs to the laundry.



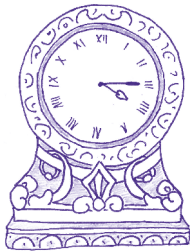
- 2 Put the sheets into the washtub.



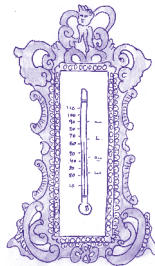
- 3 Fill the copper with water and light the fire underneath.



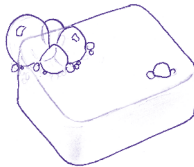
- 4 Wait for the water to get hot (this could take a while!)



- 5 Scoop the water out of the copper and into the washtub with the sheets (be careful, it's very hot!)



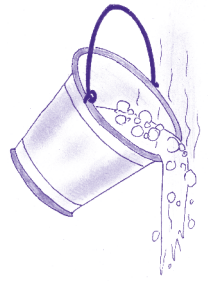
- 6 Rub homemade soap jelly through the sheets. Do this three times!



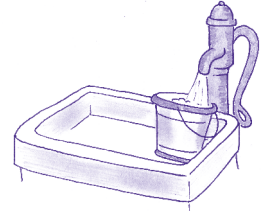
- 7 If sheets are still a little bit yellow, repeat steps 3-6 and add blue dye.



- 8 Empty out the hot, soapy water



- 9 Rinse the sheets in fresh cold water.



- 10 Squeeze the water out of the sheets and hang them up to dry.



- 11 Iron the sheets, fold the sheets and put them away (it must be time for bed now – yawn!)

