

The Story of London

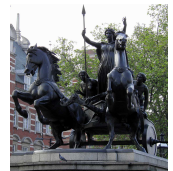
It is a comic book about the exciting history of one of the most important cities in the World. You can get it for less than a hamburger costs. In the meantime, you should prepare for the school trip to London reading this summary.

We know that Stone Age people lived in the area of present London as long as a half million (500,000) years ago. But it was only after the Ice Age, twelve thousand (12,000) years ago, that people like us arrived. They began to use bronze (Cu-Sn alloy) and then the latest iron (Fe) tools. It was quite a busy place, but everyone lived in scattered settlements. There was not a real London town before the arrival of the Romans.



The 1st Roman invasion of Britain was led by Julius Caesar in 54 BC. But, he didn't stay long. In 43 AD Emperor Claudius made Colchester the capital, because Londinium hadn't been built yet. But within 50 years Londinium had grown into a bustling place when a tribal queen named Buodica led a revolt against the Romans and burnt the whole place. But the city

bounced back. A proper bridge was built and by 100 AD it had become the capital of the Roman Britain. Although its fortunes went up and down, Londinium was always full of rich people who came for every part of the Roman Empire. In 200 AD a massive wall was built as a protection during a time of civil war. The river was lined with busy quays where people made money from shipping and trade. But during the 4th century life must be difficult due to attacks of barbarian pirates from the North Sea. Therefore, the Roman legions were needed closer to home. The last ones left Britain in 410 forever.



Not long afterwards Londinium was overrun by Saxons who were farmers and country dwellers. The city meant nothing to them and within a few years it had become a ruined gosh town. In 886 the Saxon king Alfred moved the population into the Roman walls again; in order to be safe under Vikings and Danes attacks. Eduard the Confessor, the last Saxon king, spent most of his time building a magnificent abbey at Westminster. He died in 1066 and was buried just when his abbey was completed.

A few months later William the Conqueror came over from France to invade England, killed Eduard's successor Harold, and had himself crowned at Westminster. He built three castles in the city to impress the local people. One of them was the White Tower, which became the Tower of London. His son William Rufus built a huge hall at Westminster, and replaced the wooden St Paul's by a stone cathedral. The busy City of London was a thousand (1,000) years old. Now a new centre had sprung up at Westminster. London was all set for the next thousand years.



The tower of London: After William completed the White Tower, later kings just kept on adding more towers, walls and buildings. All the royal valuables were kept here, and the most important prisoners. One of the last was Hitler's deputy, Rudolf Hess, during World War II. younger brother vanished here. Richard then declared the skeletons of two boys Bloody Tower. Only royal in the Tower. Among them Boleyn and Catherine Howard. Legend says the Tower will fall if the ravens even leave, but their wings are clipped so they can't fly! A lot of unhappy prisoners entered through The Traitor's Gate. When queen Mary sent her sister Elizabeth I to the Tower, she sat by the river's edge and refused to go in, saying she was no traitor.



Twelve-year-old Edward V and his after their uncle Richard shut them up himself king. Two hundred years later were found under the stairs in the prisoners had their heads chopped off were two of Henry VIII's wives, Anne

During the Middle Ages the City grew into the greatest trading centre in the country. The king had to be careful not to upset the wealthy merchants. In the 12th century they were granted their own government, led by the Lord Mayor. It often seemed to rival the king's government at Westminster. By 1348, when the Black Death arrived, the population was twice as the Roman times. But the plague killed about half of them and London would not grow so large again for another 200 years. The medieval City had at least a hundred churches and several big monasteries. The church was hugely important in people's lives. It was a meeting place. It told them how to live their lives and it provided education and care for the poor. Merchants left large amounts of money and acres of land to the church. Unfortunately, the church's wealth attracted many dishonest priests.

Old London Bridge: Nobody knows what rebuilt or replaced? For London to be a bridge that wouldn't fall down. In 1176 had 20 arches and took 32 years to build, but the longest inhabited bridge ever built. At one



happened to it after Romans left. Was it prosperous it was vitality important to have construction began on a stone bridge. It would last for the next 622 years. It was time there were 138 shops along its length.

When Henry VII, the first Tudor king, came to the throne in 1485 the City of Westminster were still separated by countryside. By 1603, when Queen Elizabeth I died, the whole route had been built up. Henry VIII's decision to get rid of the monasteries meant that the all land they had occupied suddenly become available. There was a mad rush to put up new buildings: St James's Palace, Whitehall Palace, The Royal Exchange, Greenwich Palace, The Globe Theatre,... Elizabethan London exploded with energy. Shipping crammed the Thames loading and unloading goods. The East India Company was just one of the companies set up to develop trade in newly discovered parts of the world.



William Shakespeare (1564-1616): The theatre became hugely popular in Elizabethan London, but theatres were not allowed in walls, so they sprang up outside and across the river. Even in his own time Shakespeare was the most famous playwright. He spent most of his adult life in London and was a part-owner of the Swan Theatre.



The Gunpowder Plot (1605): inside. But Guy Fawkes was and hanged. The king's



Some Catholics plotted to blow up Parliament with King James I found in the cellar at Westminster –just in time! Guy was tortured escape is celebrated each year.



At the time of Charles I (1649-1660) London is grown too big for the kingdom. Even during the Civil War (Oliver Cromwell become Lord Protector in a Republic) it just kept growing. By the end of the XVII century it was the biggest city in the world. Slums grew up all around the City walls. Richer people moved west in the direction of the wind to escape the fumes, steams and stinks. Despite schemes to provide fresh water, most people still drank straight from the Thames. Ever since the Black Death plague had broken out every few years. But the Great plague (1665) was something quite different. Twice as many people died as in any previous epidemic (90,000 people). Worst affected were the rat-infested slums. The Plague and, a year later (1666), the Fire were the two terrible disasters of Charles II's reign. But the city hardly seemed to draw breath as it rushed to get bigger and richer. Charles II loved everything about London, especially the theatre. He got Sir Christopher Wren to design many important buildings. He encourages the Royal Society, which put London at the cutting edge of scientific progress. And he reformed the Navy which protected the merchant ships that made the City rich.



Sir Christopher Wren (1632-1723): Scientist, astronomer and architect. His master plan for rebuilding the City after the Fire was rejected, but 51 churches, St Paul's Cathedral and many other great buildings were completed: Hampton Court, Kensington Palace, The Royal Hospital Chelsea, The Royal Observatory and The Royal Hospital Greenwich.

St. James Park: Charles II created St. James Park and always walked his rather disobedient spaniels there. The mall was originally the pitch for his favourite game, Pall Mall. The Russian ambassador gave him some pelicans for the lake. Their descendants still live there.



During the 18th century London became the first city in the world since ancient Rome to have more than a million people. It was such a bustling chaos that many of them couldn't cope. Drunkenness was a major problem. Business deals were done everywhere, from the new coffee houses to the street. Foreigners who visited were astonished. The docks were easily the busiest in the world, the Thames 'almost this activity created other jobs of every kind. Dealers in shares set up the Stock Exchange. multiplied. The demand for cheap labour never together, disease killed more Londoners than were in –Scots, Irish, French Protestants, Jews, all kinds and as many as 10,000 of African descent. By about 1750 only one in twenty Londoners had been born there. The rich continued to move west into the fine new squares of Mayfair, Bloomsbury and Belgravia, which had until recently been open countryside. The houses they left behind often became slums. To the east, acres of cheap housing grew up around the docks.



Handel (1685-1759): The great German composer was crazy about London. Composed his famous Messiah at his house in Mayfair. He's buried in Westminster Abbey.

Dr. Samuel Johnson (1709-1784): The famous writer and compiler of the first English dictionary moved to London as a young man, where he stayed for the rest of his life.

When George III went mad his son, later George IV, took his place as Prince Regent. With his architect John Nash (1752-1835) he entirely reshaped the West End as we know today: Regent's Park, Regent Street, Piccadilly Circus, Trafalgar Square, the front of Buckingham Palace, etc. The defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo in 1815 confirmed London as a world beater. No other city approached it in wealth or population.



Queen Victoria (1837-1901) was ruling a great empire for 64 years. During the 19th century London's population exploded from one to six million. There had never been such an enormous city or such enormous problems. New methods had to be thought up to deal with the terrible poverty, the crime, the huge amount of pollution and horrendous traffic jams.

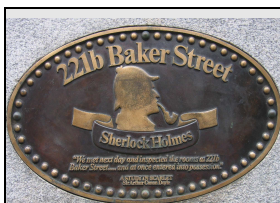
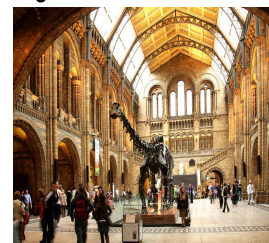


Charles Dickens (1812-1870): All Dickens' great novels centre on the rapidly changing city with its 'Dickensian' mix of poverty and wealth. His own life reads like one of his novels. When he was 12 he suddenly had to leave school to work in a factory after his father was imprisoned for debt. He went on to become by far the best bestselling author of the age. He's probably the best known and best loved of all English novelists. I recommend you to read three novels: 'Oliver Twist', 'David Copperfield', and 'Great Expectations'. You can get cheap English adapted versions for kids.



In the late 1850's a massive scheme was begun to build miles of sewers to collect waste before it reached the River Thames and carry it far enough downstream to flush out to the sea and avoid cholera. There were tens of thousands of horses in Victorian London. The first railway line was built. All today's main lines and stations went up in a spurt between 1838 and 1864. Then in 1863 the first underground line was opened. The electrification came in 1890's. For the growing number of educated

people with money to spend, London was the cultural centre of the world. Many of the theatres still in use today were built during the 19th century. The West End sparkled with plays by Oscar Wilde and others. There was a Great Exhibition, where Britain was brilliant at new inventions; this was housed in the Crystal Palace with 900,000 panes of glass. Six million people visited it. Queen Victoria and her husband, Prince Albert, went 42 times. The profits from the Great Exhibition were used to build Victoria & Albert Hall, the Natural History and the Science Museums at South Kensington. Ragged Schools started in 1854 especially for poor ragged children. Classes often had only one teacher for 200 students; most of them left at ten to start working.



Sherlock Holmes: People still come looking for the great detective's flat in Baker Street, but Holmes was not a real person. He only existed in the novels of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

Jack the Ripper: In 1888 five young women were horribly murdered in the slums of the East End. Even 600 policemen on the job, the murder was never caught. The police tried using bloodhounds but instead of catching the Ripper the dogs turned on the commissioner during training, and chased him.



By 1911 London had 7 million people and was the most known. London was the heart of the empire. By 1911 London was the largest city in the world. But countryside was growing faster than ever. When gathered outside Buckingham Palace. Although official address. Big department stores were built in 1860's. In 1909 Selfridges set a new standard



capital of the biggest empire the world has ever known. By the end of the World War I, New York rivalled London. When World War I broke out, a large patriotic crowd gathered outside Buckingham Palace. Queen Elizabeth lives here, St James' Palace is her official residence. First Whiteleys, then Harrods, began in luxury. Women were not allowed to vote until

1918. In one protest hundreds of respectable looking women produced hammers from their handbags and began breaking windows all over London. They were called suffragettes. The tower Bridge was built in 1894 to look medieval, in keeping with the Tower, it soon become one of the London's most famous landmarks. Nearly 700 people were killed by the Air Raids in World War I. An anti-aircraft gun in Tower Bridge shot a hole in the Tower by mistake. Wembley Stadium was the centre of the British Empire Exhibition in 1924, attended by 27 million people. The F.A. Cup Final was played here until 2000.

The Houses of Parliament: When Westminster Palace burned down, it was replaced by the Gothic style building we see today. At the height of Empire the laws governing one quarter of the world's population were decided here. Several bombs were dropped close by from zeppelins during World War I, but little damage was done.



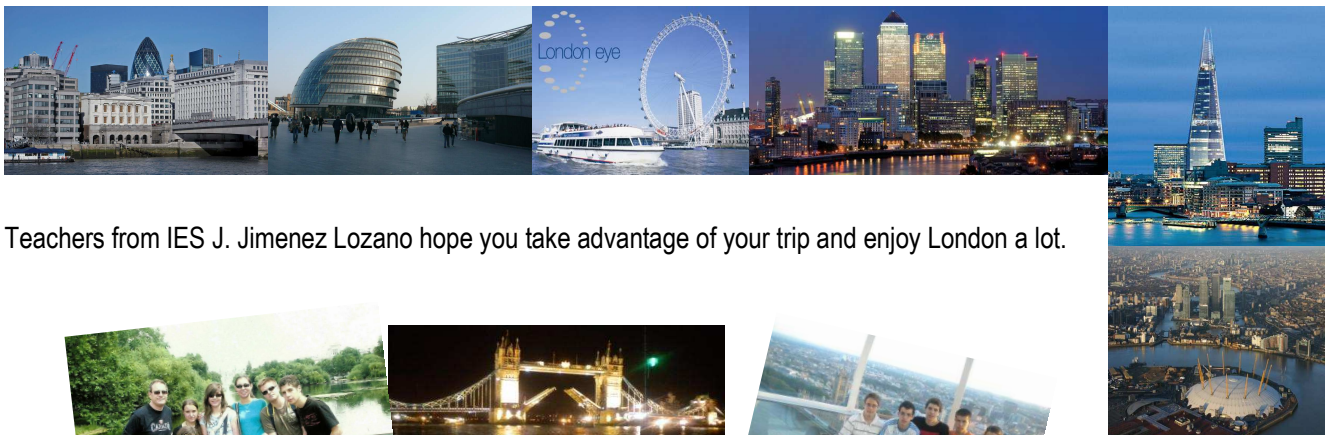
When World War II broke out in 1939, everybody expected London would be bombed immediately. Nothing happened for a year. Then the Blitz began. The worst bombing was in May 1941, especially in the East End. After that things went quiet for a while. Then in 1944 the Germans began sending over flying bombs known as doodlebugs, followed by rocket bombs which were enormously destructive. By the end of the war nearly half of London's houses had been damaged. The job of rebuilding seemed almost superhuman. But as they had after Buodica, the Great Fire and the other disasters, Londoners clambered over the wreckage and got on with life. Several events cheered them up –the 1948 Olympic Games, the Festival of Britain and the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II (1952).



After the war most people thought London had got too big. A ring of countryside, known as the Green Belt, was created around the city with no new building allowed in it. Many Londoners moved to new towns outside the Green Belt. But it didn't stop hundreds of thousands of newcomers arriving, mainly for countries that had once been part of the British Empire. The different races didn't always get on at first. Now their children have grown up as much Londoners as anybody else.

London is growing again. Each year tens of thousands of immigrants arrive in search of streets paved with gold. The old problems still exist, transport is still bad, but prosperity and new laws have improving living conditions for nearly everybody. London is a better place to live than ever before. In 2012 London held the Olympic Games again, and a lot of modern architecture sprung up. Some time around 2050 London will be celebrating its 2000th birthday as it always has done -by getting on with business.

There are so many sights to see in London. The best place to start is at www.londontouristboard.com which has links to all the main attractions. You will especially want to visit the Museum of London: www.museumoflondon.org.uk



Teachers from IES J. Jiménez Lozano hope you take advantage of your trip and enjoy London a lot.

