

## The story of London

The Romans invaded England in 43 AD when they landed in Kent and marched west towards a strategic location near the river Thames. Here, they built houses, buildings and roads. They called the settlement Londinium.

By 200 AD Londinium became a dense settlement and a strategic port. The Romans built a wall around the town to protect it from invasions. Parts of the wall survive today at the Barbican and Tower Hill.

When the Romans left London (410 AD), Anglo-Saxons settled in the area around Londinium. They called it Lundenwic (London trading town). Then, in the 9<sup>th</sup> century the Vikings attacked the city. Their inconsistent attacks continued over the following 200 years and severely damaged London.

In 1066 William the Conqueror of Normandy became king of England. He built fortresses to protect and control London. The most important of these was the Tower of London. For the next 300 years, London became the centre of a bitter fight for power. The protagonists were the Church, the Crown, the merchant classes and the nobility.

By the 17<sup>th</sup> century London became the centre of trade and one of the greatest cities in Europe. It attracted European businessmen and refugees. In the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries people from West Africa and the Caribbean were brought to London by force as slaves and servants. London was also the place where theatres were very popular. Playwrights such as William Shakespeare performed their plays in theatres like the Globe.

London was also dirty and full of diseases. From the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries it experienced outbreaks of bubonic plague. The Great Plague of 1665 killed some 70,000 people. A year later the Great Fire destroyed most of London as buildings were made of wood. The city was rebuilt in brick and stone.

The Industrial Revolution and the growth of the British Empire in the 19<sup>th</sup> century brought more people to London because it was the centre of world trade and the capital of a large and powerful Empire. By 1890, 4 million people lived in the city.

In 1915, during World War I, the first air raid by Germany hit the city. Almost 700 people were killed. During World War II, London was intensively bombed by Nazi-Germany. The air raids killed almost 35,000 people and injured 50,000 civilians. Much of the city's buildings, docks, industrial, residential and commercial districts were destroyed. About 700,000 children were evacuated to less dangerous places.

When the war ended, reconstruction went ahead rapidly and many immigrants from Europe and Britain's ex colonies came to live and work in London. London hosted important events such as the Olympic Games (1948), the Festival of Britain (1951), the World Cup Final (1966) – just to name a few. Over the past 50 years, it has undergone other major transformations to become the city we know today: a global capital of ideas, creativity and pop culture, a very important financial and business centre, and a visitor-friendly cosmopolitan and beautiful metropolis with lots to do and see.

## *London super quiz*

### **Choose the correct answer.**

- 1 The story of London as a town begins with the Romans because
  - A in 43 AD they invaded England and built a settlement called Londinium in a strategic location near the river Thames.
  - B in 43 AD they invaded England and built a settlement called Londinium in Kent.
  - C in 43 AD they invaded England and built a settlement called Londinium in the West Kent area.
  
- 2 When the Romans abandoned London, Anglo-Saxons
  - A settled in Londinium which they called Lundenwic.
  - B settled in an area very far from Londinium which they called Lundenwic.
  - C settled in the area around Londinium which they called Lundenwic.
  
- 3 In the 9<sup>th</sup> century Vikings
  - A conquered London and made it their home for 200 years.
  - B conquered London, but never settled permanently.
  - C attacked London and their raids continued over the following 200 years.
  
- 4 William the Conqueror built the Tower of London because he
  - A liked defensive structures.
  - B wanted to protect and control London.
  - C wanted to get a good view of London.
  
- 5 The next 300 years saw London at the centre of a bitter fight for power. The protagonists were
  - A the merchant classes and the Church.
  - B the Church, the Crown, the merchant classes and the nobility.
  - C the Crown and the Church.
  
- 6 In the 17<sup>th</sup> century European businessmen and refugees came to London because
  - A it was the centre of trade and one of the greatest cities in Europe.
  - B it was the centre of trade and the greatest cultural city in Europe.
  - C it had many theatres but they weren't popular.
  
- 7 From the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, London experienced outbreaks of bubonic plague because
  - A it was overpopulated.
  - B it was dirty and full of diseases.
  - C it was dirty.
  
- 8 In the 19<sup>th</sup> century London was a very important city because
  - A it was the centre of world trade and the capital of a powerful Empire.
  - B it had many inhabitants.
  - C it was a world of extreme wealth and poverty.
  
- 9 During World War I, the first air raid by Germany hit the city
  - A in 1917.
  - B in 1916.
  - C in 1915.

10 During World War II,

- A London was heavily bombed by Nazi-Germany, but did not suffer much destruction.
- B the German bombing raids had a devastating impact on London and Londoners.
- C London was not bombed by Nazi-Germany.

11 After the hostilities ceased,

- A rapid *reconstruction* started immediately.
- B it took a long time to recover from the war.
- C reconstruction was not a priority.