

London's dark waters - the River Thames

Every part of the Thames tells a story of the city's past. The Tudors skated on it. The Victorians used it as a toilet. And it was the setting of a James Bond boat chase - London's famous river, the Thames.

Kings and queens have travelled on it. On Sunday 3rd June 2012, Queen Elizabeth II sailed down the River Thames on a luxury boat, decorated with 10,000 flowers among a majestic flotilla of 1,000 boats to mark her 60 years on the British throne.

Today the river is a tourist attraction. Along its banks wonderful old palaces, cathedrals, glass skyscrapers, trendy restaurants and nightclubs can be seen.

But the Thames is much more than fun and beauty. Without it, London might not even exist. Some historians believe that the Romans founded Londinium in the year 50 AD because they thought the river would make trade possible.

Over the centuries, the Thames has gone through many changes. Between 1400 and 1900, while Europe was in the grip of a mini ice age, London got so cold that the river froze over 23 times. In 1536, King Henry VIII went sleigh riding on the ice. Thirty years later, his daughter Elizabeth I took long walks on the frozen river. Later the river played a more serious role. In 1666, the Great Fire of London destroyed thousands of houses and left 100,000 people homeless. Londoners escaped the fire on the river - many of them sitting in boats until it was over.

Less than two centuries later the river became a stink-bomb, caused by flush toilets. During the Great Stink of 1858, the government fled the Houses of Parliament as the smell became unbearable during the hot summer. Thousands of people died of disease from the dirty water.

The name 'Thames' probably comes from a very old word meaning 'dark water' because of the river's muddy colour. But the Thames is dark in other ways, too. There is a dark, troubled side that some visitors to London do not know about.

In the 17th and 18th centuries, the banks of the river at Wapping were known as Execution Dock where murderers and robbers were hanged. The bodies of the most notorious¹ pirates were left hanging in metal cages as a warning to others. Around this time the river got its own police force to keep it free from pirates. Pirates are not a problem any more, but the river police still have a hard job fighting crime.

On your next visit to London, if you take a walk along the Thames, you might see the river in a new light.

(443 words)



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Adapted from 'Spot on' (5/2011), Spotlight Verlag, Planegg/München

¹ notorious - berüchtigt

A. Text-based tasks

1. Decide whether the following statements are right or wrong. (3 pts)

- a) In London's history the Thames did not play an important role.
- b) In 2012, Queen Elizabeth II celebrated her 60th birthday on the Thames.
- c) In 1666, many people in London lost their homes.
- d) Because of its clear water, people called the river 'Thames'.
- e) In the past criminals were hanged on the banks of the river.
- f) The river police was set up in the 20th century.

2. Match (1-4) to the information (a-g). Some information does not fit. (4 pts)

- 1. The Romans
- 2. The police
- 3. The government
- 4. Elizabeth I

- a) ... went for long walks on the river banks in winter.
- b) ... have had a difficult job for centuries.
- c) ... walked on the river in winter.
- d) ... left the river bank as a consequence of the invention of the flush toilet.
- e) ... found the river useful for buying and selling goods.
- f) ... have been troubled because of the muddy colour of the river.
- g) ... came to London because it had been a busy trading town for centuries.

3. Finish the sentences using the information from the text. (6 pts)

- a) On the Thames a James Bond boat chase ...
- b) Londinium ...
- c) A mini ice age ...
- d) In the 19th century dirty water ...
- e) A very old word meaning 'dark water' .
- f) Fighting crime...

4. Answer the questions in complete sentences. (8 pts)

- a) What can you do near the River Thames? (2 items)
- b) Why was London founded near a river?
- c) How did lots of Londoners escape the Great Fire?
- d) Why did the river get its own police force in the 17th and 18th centuries?

5. Ask questions. (6 pts)

On an exchange in London you stay with an English family. Your exchange partner's father is an officer of the river police in London.
Ask him **four** questions about his job.
Use **four** different question forms.

B. Use of language

(18 pts)

1. Find words or expressions that mean more or less the same.

(4 pts)

- a) well-known (lines 1-11)
- b) fashionable (lines 12-16)
- c) illness (lines 24-27)
- d) ancient (lines 28-35)

2. Explain two of the following words in complete sentences.

(4 pts)

- a) skyscrapers (line 13)
- b) historians (line 15)
- c) frozen (line 20)
- d) to destroy (line 21)

3. Vocabulary Grammar

(10 pts)

Read the text. Find the suitable forms of the words and write them down.

The Thames is England's _____ and most famous river.

a) long

It became an _____ trade and transport route in prehistoric times.

b) importance

Situated on the River Thames London soon gained fame and _____.

c) fortunate

All through the Middle Ages the Thames was one of London's main highways. River boats brought fish, wood and wool to the city, while hundreds of _____ in small rowing boats _____ people up and down the river.

d) man e) take

By the 1700s, trading ships arrived which _____ all kinds of goods for _____.

f) carry

g) sell

Tea, silk and a lot of spices came from the East. Sugar _____ from the Caribbean, timber from Norway and Iron from _____ harbours.

h) bring

i) Sweden

The traffic on the Thames was so heavy that boats could not move _____

j) easy

Sometimes, dozens of ships queued for days along the banks, waiting to get a dock to unload.

Adapted from: <http://resources.woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk/customs/questrons/london/thames.htm>

C. Creative writing (27 pts)

1. Give your opinion. (9 pts)

Choose one of the following statements and write about 60 words.

- a) Public transport should be free for everybody.
- b) Tourism destroys nature.
- c) Big cities are dangerous places to live in.

Choose task 2 a) or 2 b). Do not work on both tasks.

2. a) Write a diary entry. (18 pts)

You went on a boat trip on the Thames. Write a diary entry about your trip in about 120 words.

2. b) Write a story. (18 pts)

Yesterday I was walking along the River Thames when I found a message in a bottle...

Finish the story in about 120 words.

D. Skills and techniques (18 pts)

1. Pass on the information. (9 pts)

Du bist Mitglied im örtlichen Jugendclub. Ihr arbeitet an einem Projekt zum Thema Wasser. Du hast den Auftrag, für eine Präsentation aus dem unten stehenden Text wesentliche Informationen weiterzugeben.

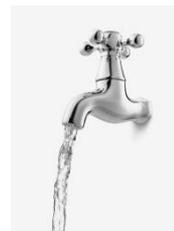
Finde Informationen zu folgenden Aspekten und notiere sie auf Deutsch:

- | | |
|--|-------|
| a) Wasser auf der Erde (4 Fakten) | 4 pts |
| b) Hinweis der Weltgesundheitsorganisation | 1 pt |
| c) Situation in Entwicklungsländern (2 Fakten) | 2 pts |
| d) Bevölkerungswachstum und Wasser | 1 pt |
| e) Entsalzen von Meerwasser | 1 pt |

Water

Water is everywhere, all around us and even inside us. It runs underground. It falls as rain, or forms as dew. And the vast oceans cover about three quarters of the world. There has been the same amount of water on this planet for billions of years. So how can we be running out of it?

"We are not running out of water," says 21-year-old Annalee Sanborn, from the town of Pleasanton in California. "We're running out of safe, clean drinking water." Almost 100 million people have no access to clean water right now. And the World Health Organization says more than



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4,000 children die every year from diarrhoeal disease - caused mainly by drinking polluted water.

"In developed countries, you turn on the tap and water comes out," says Annalee. "In developing countries, many people walk several miles every day to a well and carry home heavy buckets of water. The organization 'There's No New Water' teaches teens that our water supply is limited too. They learn how to conserve water and keep it clean."

About 97 per cent of the water on Barth is seawater. Another two per cent is frozen. That leaves just one per cent for us to use. As the world's population increases, water shortages get worse – even in developed countries. It is possible to desalinate seawater to make it drinkable, but the process is still difficult and very expensive.

Adapted from 'Spot on' (11/2011), Spotlight Verlag, Planegg/München

2. Mediation (9 pts)

Debby, a young woman who works for the organisation 'Save Our Water' has been invited to your school to give you some information on what to do to save water. Not all the pupils at your school can understand or speak English well, so you help.

- PUPIL: Ist es in Ordnung, wenn ich jeden Tag dusche?
- a) You: _____ (1 pt)
- DEBBY: That's okay, but try to keep it short to save water.
- b) You: _____ (1 pt)
- PUPIL: Haben wir zu Hause noch weitere Möglichkeiten, Wasser zu sparen?
- c) You: _____ (1 pt)
- DEBBY: Yes, indeed. For example, turn off the tap while brushing your teeth. Only turn on the dishwasher when fully loaded.
- d) You: _____ (2 pts)
- _____
- PUPIL: Gibt es noch mehr, was wir tun können?
- e) You: _____ (1 pt)
- DEBBY: Sure, I've brought a brochure for you with guidelines of how to save water. You can also use it for projects at school.
- f) You: _____ (2 pts)
- _____
- PUPIL: Okay, Debby, herzlichen Dank für diese Informationen.
- g) You: _____ (1 pt)
- DEBBY: You're welcome.