

Platanos College News

Friday 7th July 2017

Tours into the past: London Dungeons and Jack the Ripper educational trips

Last week, our Year 10 pupils took part in educational trips to the London Dungeons followed by a Jack the Ripper Walking Tour.

The trips were a joint History and English venture to enhance the learning of pupils in their GCSE studies but were also thoroughly enjoyable and exciting days out for both staff and pupils.

In History, pupils have just completed a unit of work investigating Crime and Punishment from c. 500 to the Present Day. Whilst for their English studies, pupils will be analysing the Jekyll and Hyde novel as part of their GCSE work.

Our first stop was to take a picture at the London Eye in the sunshine before embarking on our 90 minutes' tour of the London Dungeons. Some pupils found the Dungeons a terrifying experience, as we



shuffled in darkness, to be taken by a boat ride underground.

During the visit through the Dungeons, pupils were able to learn about Crime and Punishment through the ages as they were guided by costumed actors. They familiarised themselves with medieval torture implements, listened to stories about the Great Plagues, the Great Fire of London of 1666, the Court System and historical punishments, as well as the Jack the Ripper crimes.

Pupils screamed their way from room to room, and went through a variety of emotions during the visit ranging from fear to laughter - all to the delight of the teachers! Once outside, pupils ate their lunch in the sunshine with a gorgeous view of the Southbank and the hustle and bustle of the Central London location. Following lunch, our Year 10 pupils took a stroll over Westminster Bridge with the gorgeous sunlit view of the River Thames, Parliament and Big Ben in order to continue to the second part of the trip – the Jack the Ripper Walking Tour.

We met our tour guides in East London, Whitechapel. This is the site of the Jack the Ripper serial killings, which took place in 1888. The purpose of the walking tour was to allow pupils to familiarise themselves with the area of the East End, in order for them to understand how the narrow streets enabled a serial killer to escape, and petty crime to be a regular occurrence.



Understanding the area of Whitechapel – the poorest area of London in the 1880s – is not only relevant to the study of the historic environment of the Jack the Ripper murders, but imparts to pupils a contextual understanding of the stark divide between rich and poor in 19th Century Victorian London.

Whitechapel is still used as an area for commerce and entertainment today as it is surrounded by the fashionable Brick Lane, as well as the business district of Liverpool Street leading on to The City of London.



Our tour guides were extremely knowledgeable and were able to convey to the pupils the reality of life in Victorian Whitechapel. We were able to walk around the previously poverty-stricken areas of Flower and Dean Street and Thrawl Street. This really brought home to the pupils what it was like to live in the area of Whitechapel at the time, and why the investigation failed to capture Jack the Ripper.

Overall, it was agreed by both staff and pupils that the trips were a success and a great insight. After thoroughly enjoyable days, pupils returned to school tired but feeling accomplished. Our guides were extremely complimentary of the pupils and highlighted the fact that they were polite and inquisitive. They even commented that some of the questions asked by pupils demonstrated a knowledge and curiosity of a higher standard than some of their adult tours!

Our pupils believe the trips has helped to enhance their understanding of the nature of Victorian London and historical Crime and Punishment, and accelerating their learning in anticipation of pupils' GCSE exams next summer. The History and English departments hope to build upon this success and further develop these collaborative trips next year.

