

Platanos College News

Monday 2nd July 2018

London History: London Dungeons and Jack the Ripper Tour

On Monday 25th and Tuesday 26th June, a total of 90 Year 10 students took part in a trip to the London Dungeons followed by a Jack the Ripper Walking Tour. The trip was a joint History and English venture to enhance the learning of students in their GCSE studies, but was also a thoroughly enjoyable day out for both staff and students.

Students in History lessons have completed a unit of work investigating Crime and Punishment from c. 500 to the Present Day. While in English, students will be studying the Jekyll and Hyde novel as part of their Year 11 work. Therefore the trip gave students an understanding of crime, punishment and poverty over time with a particular focus on the Victorian period.

The day promised to be a challenging one with sweltering heat and so it was important for students to keep hydrated in order to deal with the challenges of a long and tiring day. Once our group had arrived on the Southbank we took our usual photo opportunity in front of the London Eye before continuing on to our first stop – a 90-minute tour of the London Dungeons.



During our visit through the Dungeons, students learnt about Crime and Punishment through the ages as they were guided by costumed actors who explained medieval torture devices and gave us an idea of what life was like during the Great Fire of London and the Black Death. Our Year 10 students were sentenced under an 18th Century judge and sent to the gallows in the form of a screaming drop ride.

Students screamed their way from one experience to another and went through a variety of emotions during the visit ranging from fear to laughter - all to the delight of the teachers and actors supervising the tour. Once outside, students ate their lunch in the sunshine with a gorgeous view of the Southbank and the hustle and bustle of the Central London location. Despite the heatwave, students were impeccably behaved and a real credit to the school. We couldn't have been prouder of these Year 10 students representing our school.

Following lunch, our students walked over the River Thames and on to our next stop – the Jack the Ripper Walking Tour. As they did so, students were able to take in the views of our Parliament building and the magnificent skyline of Central London.

We met our tour guides in Whitechapel, East London, which was the site of the Jack the Ripper serial killings. These were a series of murders taking place in 1888 with at least five known victims. The purpose of the Walking Tour was to allow students to familiarise themselves with the area of the East End, in order for them to get to grips with key themes concerning Victorian crime and poverty (topics that are relevant to their GCSE studies).

Our students were able to grasp how narrow streets enabled Jack the Ripper to slip away and why life was tough for the average inhabitant of Whitechapel living in poverty. Students were also able to see how the area of the East End has developed today with its unique culture and vibrancy evident through colourful artwork.





Our tour guides were extremely knowledgeable and created a tailor-made tour for our school relaying the realities of life in Victorian Whitechapel. We were able to walk around the once poverty-stricken areas of Flower and Dean Street and Hanbury Street. The guides pointed out significant locations where victims' bodies were found. As we stood outside The Ten Bells pub we were able to gain a real insight into the lives of the victims. This really brought home to the students what it was like to live in the area of Whitechapel at the time, and why the investigation by the police failed to capture Jack the Ripper.

After a thoroughly enjoyable day, students returned to school tired but feeling accomplished. They had shown real curiosity through asking thought-provoking questions and making links to their classroom learning. Our students acted as wonderful representatives for our community and conducted themselves well throughout the day including on the Underground network. This is a valuable trip which we aim to continue next year in order to develop students' curiosity and continue to enthuse their learning.