



# Education Pack 1

## Geography-London and city planning

This Education Pack contains:

- Teacher's Notes
- Student's Guides



## Teacher's Introduction

The story of the growth and development of London and its transport routes over the last two thousand years is a fascinating study of geographical change through time. Like many other settlements, London grew up at the junction of a number of routes. For hundreds of years, the River Thames provided an easy way to travel into the centre of southern England from the coast. The road from the Kent coast to the Midlands and north of England, has reached the Thames at Southwark since Roman times, and it was the Romans who built the first simple bridge across the river, two thousand years ago, on the site of the present London Bridge. For almost 1000 years, from Saxon times to the 18th century, one bridge succeeded another on the same site. It was the only river crossing available to travellers until 1750, when Westminster Bridge was constructed. In the next one hundred years, another nine bridges were put up, as London grew, but all of them were west of the London Bridge site. During the 19th century, eastwards expansion of the city meant that more than one million people were living east of London Bridge, but had no means of crossing the river there.

As well as providing a potential route for invasion, the Thames had also provided a means of transporting goods from all over the world right to the heart of London. Until the docks were constructed in the 1820s, ships were moored at the riverside itself, often three or four abreast on each bank, so that only a narrow lane for navigation remained in the centre. Even after the advent of the docks, the number of warehouses along the banks of the river is testament to the continuing importance of the Pool of London for shipping. The growth of the British empire during the 19th century caused the trade to grow and grow, until London became one of the biggest and most important ports in the world, with ships continuously coming and going.

The evolution of the design for Tower Bridge as we know it today shows how difficult it was for Victorian engineers to create a bridge which would answer both geographical needs - that of Londoners to move from one bank to the other across the river, and ships to travel along it. In the century since the bridge was built, patterns of transport have changed almost beyond recognition. The huge growth in size of ocean-going freighters means that they are quite unable to travel up rivers, but must instead unload their cargoes at specially adapted coastal ports. In the middle of the 20th century, London itself completely ceased to function as a port, and the development of Docklands and conversion of so many riverside buildings have been a response to that change. In contrast to river transport, road movement in London has grown enormously. It is a testament to the quality of Sir Horace Jones' design that Tower Bridge still serves a useful purpose in such completely different times.

The more time that you can spend on preparing, the more your students will gain from their visit, when they come. Here are some interesting ways of introducing Tower Bridge to your class, before you set off.

## **Before Your Visit**

### **The Growth of London**

Look at a map or a series of maps showing the growth of London from Roman through medieval to modern times. (A simple and clear one for children can be found in the Usborne Book of London, published Usborne 1987, on page 9). Explain how London grew outwards from a central core, which was roughly where the present-day City is now. Discuss the succession of bridges that were built on the site of London Bridge, and find, or get the children to find, pictures of how earlier bridges (especially the medieval one) looked. Explain how, for over a thousand years, this was the only bridge across the Thames. Get children to mark on a map where the new extra bridges were built in the 18th and 19th century so that they can see that all of them were built to the west of the London Bridge site, and how urgent the need for an eastern crossing was.

### **Changing Transport**

Discuss the differing modes of transport through history - perhaps the children could draw a time line to show which types of transport dominated at particular times and when new ones first appeared. Describe the state of roads before the advent of tarmac surfaces, and why river transport was often a smoother and quicker alternative. Explain why London almost completely ceased to be a port in the second half of the 20th century, with the arrival of huge freighters and container ships. If possible look at some old photos of the Pool of London in the late 19th or early 20th century, to give the children an idea of how busy and congested it was.

### **Make Your Own Survey**

Activities on the visit will include making a survey of the amount of road and river traffic passing over and under the bridge. If the children have not undertaken a traffic survey before, it might well be a good idea to do a practice one at school. Show them how to make a tally sheet on site, then to record their findings formally and draw their conclusions from them.

Don't forget to photocopy enough children's guides for everyone to bring one on the day!

## **During Your Visit**

Using their workbooks as a guide, the children will learn

- To identify the main landmarks in modern London.
- How to make a traffic survey, and draw conclusions from it.
- How the use of the River Thames has changed over the past century.
- Why many of the buildings on the banks have also changed use.

## **After Your Visit**

### **The Great Riverbus Debate**

To develop the children's understanding of changes in river transport, and to look at the issues surrounding it, organise a role play! This is the setting:

A commission of enquiry has been set up to look into the possibility of giving financial support to, and licensing, ten new river buses to work on the Thames. They will need heavy subsidy from the government in their first few years of operation, and this money will have to be taken away from other forms of land transport. Give out the slips describing different points of view to individuals or groups of children, and let them work out what they will say to the Commission (the other members of the class). After about ten minutes preparation time, invite each in turn to put forward their point of view. After everyone has been heard, give the whole class a chance to vote on whether they think the river buses should be allowed.

## The Great Riverbus Debate

### River Bus Owner

You are the owner of a river bus company. At present, you have three boats carrying people up and down the river. You want to buy ten more boats, at a cost of half a million pounds each, to expand your service. You think that river transport is the transport of the future - the answer to London's traffic problems. You want the government to give you licences for the new boats, and give you some of the money to buy the new boats.

### Bus Company Owner

You own a bus company which runs fifty double decker buses. Many of them are getting old and need to be mended or replaced. If the new river boats come, you are afraid that you will lose many of your passengers, and your company will lose money. You won't be able to buy new buses and you may even have to sack some drivers. You think that buses are great for London - it is cars that are the problem.

### Naturalist

You love to watch the birds and animals that live along the banks of the river Thames. If ten more huge river buses are put on the river, and lots more people come to the river banks, you are afraid that rare species may disappear for ever, frightened away by the disturbance.

### Shop Owner

You own a shop near the banks of the river in a converted warehouse. You want the new river buses to come because you think they will bring lots of new customers to you as they travel up and down the river.

### Tired Commuter

You live on the eastern edge of London, but work in the centre. Every day you have to travel to your office, on a bus and a train. They are often late, and crowded, and the tickets are expensive. You want the new river buses to come because you will have a quicker, cleaner and cheaper journey to work.

### The Houseboat Owner

You live in a houseboat on the river Thames. You bought the boat because you love the peace and quiet of life on the water. You do not want the buses to come because they will disturb you early in the morning and churn up the water in the river.