



The Victorian Thames

Pre-visit ideas

Local history/Geography/IT

Have a search online for the tallest buildings in London with your class; what do they look like? Make a list of tall buildings to bring along when you visit and see how many of them you can see from the walkway during your guided tour.

Extra information: you'll definitely see the Shard, City Hall, the London Eye, the BT Tower, the Monument, St Paul's Cathedral, the Gherkin (30 St. Mary Axe), the Scalpel, the Walkie Talkie (20 Fenchurch Street), the Tower of London and London Bridge. If there is time you'll also see the view from the East Walkway towards Canary Wharf.

Geography/History

The River Thames has greatly contributed to the development of London. Research with your class how the River Thames has been used in the past – has its use changed? What is the River Thames used for today? Think about who uses the Thames today and see how many different ways of using the Thames you can see on the day of your visit during your guided tour.

Extra information: The Thames was originally used for transporting people and trade, as transporting by water was much cheaper than overland. Nowadays the Thames is used by boats transporting people mostly (tourists and commuters) and to a lesser extent goods using barges and tug boats.

Geography/Maths/English

How are you going to be traveling to and from Tower Bridge on your school trip? Set your pupils the challenge of working it out! Can you use public transport? Which buses or trains will get you from school to Tower Bridge? What time do you need to leave? If you need to do any walking, are there any landmarks you'll walk past to help you find your way?

Extra information: access to TFL journey planner website, maps of your local area and maps of central London would be helpful with this activity.

Post-visit ideas

DT/History/Geography

The UK is hugely reliant on imports to feed the population, and the Pool of London, where Tower Bridge is situated, was once known as the 'larder of London'. Perhaps your class could have a look at their weekly school lunch menu to discover where the food they eat comes from. Maybe a member of your catering team could come and speak to your class to tell them about the different ingredients which go into favourite dishes.

You could do a map display to share your learning with the rest of the school or even cook some dishes which include ingredients your class learned about during their visit. Could you cook a dish that includes at least one ingredient from every continent?

History/English

Perhaps your class could do a creative writing piece imagining they are one of the following people:

- A sailor
- Someone who helped to construct Tower Bridge
- A Bridge worker in the Engine Rooms

What do they see in a typical day? What is their favourite part of their job? What is their least favourite?

Extra information: You could use the '[Toil, Glitter, Grime and Wealth on a Flowing Tide](#)' painting for inspiration, available on the Tate website, or the [descriptive writing activity](#) on our learning resources page.

IT/English/MFL/Geography

Tower Bridge is one of the most famous bridges in the world and attracts visitors from lots of different countries. Can you design a poster or leaflet that could be given to tourists to tell them some facts about the bridge before they visit? What information do visitors need to know? What facts will most intrigue them?

Science/DT

Tower Bridge is made of different types of material and each material was chosen for its individual properties. Discuss the properties of these materials with your class and think about why these materials were chosen.

As an extension activity, you could also have a think about what would happen to Tower Bridge if it were made out of different materials, would it be better or worse? Or your pupils could have a go at designing their own bridges: what materials would they use for their bridge?

Extra information: The materials used in the construction of Tower Bridge were Portland stone, Cornish granite, glass, steel, wood, iron and brick.

Art

Using the 'Toil, Glitter, Grime and Wealth on a Flowing Tide' painting from the workshop for inspiration, ask your class to create their own piece of art showing what the Thames looks like today. What are the similarities and differences? What title would they give to their painting? The painting is available on the [Tate website](#).

For more activities, please see our learning resources
<https://www.towerbridge.org.uk/learning/resources>