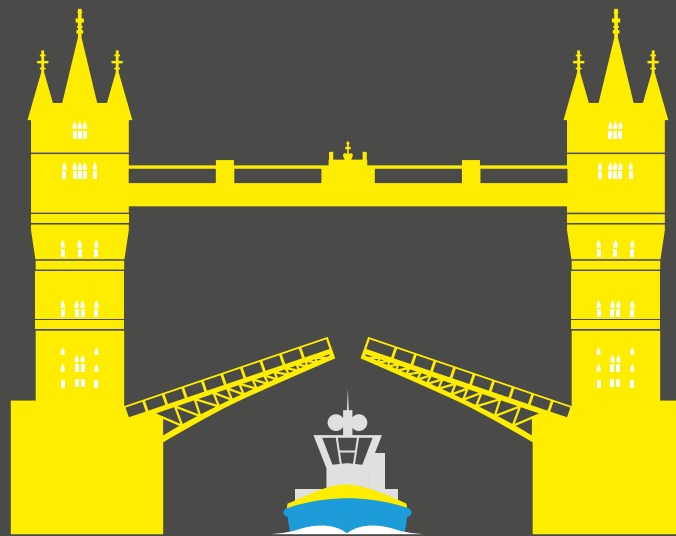


MAYOR OF LONDON

**THE LONDON CURRICULUM
ENGLISH KEY STAGE 3**

TALES OF THE RIVER



THE LONDON CURRICULUM

PLACING LONDON AT THE HEART OF LEARNING

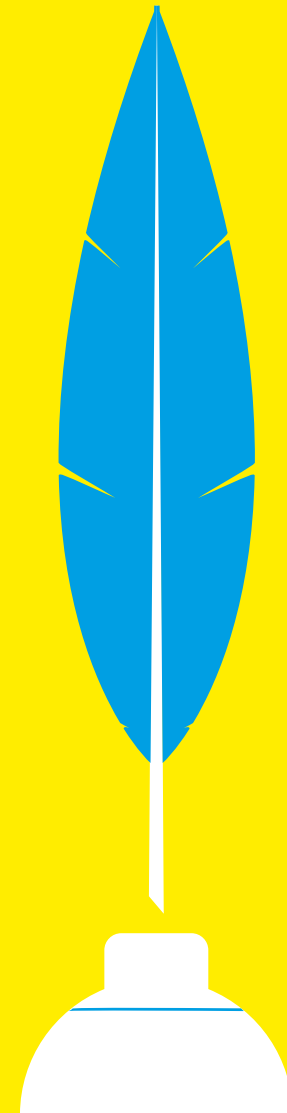
The capital is the home of innovations, events, institutions and great works that have extended the scope of every subject on the school curriculum. London lends itself to learning unlike anywhere else in the world. The London Curriculum aims to bring the national curriculum to life inspired by the city, its people, places and heritage.

To find out about the full range of free resources and events available to London secondary schools at key stage 3 please go to www.london.gov.uk/london-curriculum.

English in the London Curriculum

London is one of the most written about cities in the world, has inspired countless authors and poets and has been a centre of innovation in theatre since Elizabethan times. London Curriculum teaching resources aim to support English teachers in helping their students:

- ♦ **DISCOVER** literature inspired by the city or central to the city's literary life
- ♦ **EXPLORE** the city known to the London writer and the London theatres where texts come to life
- ♦ **CONNECT** their learning inside and outside the classroom to develop their own descriptive and creative writing.



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TALES OF THE RIVER OVERVIEW



THE RIVER THAMES

UNIT AIMS AND ACTIVITIES

The Thames has run through the imagination of London's storytellers and poets throughout time. This unit will support students' appreciation of the role of the River Thames in literature, as a metaphor for the city or as a canvas for the writer's hopes, fears and dreams.

Students will study and compare the figurative language chosen to convey the river by a range of powerful writers, including Conrad, Dickens, Wordsworth, Selvon and Duffy. Inspired by their reading and a visit to the Thames, students will capture the river in their own descriptive writing, enhancing their work with rich new vocabulary, imagery and symbolism.

KEY STAGE 3 NATIONAL CURRICULUM

This unit addresses some core requirements of the new key stage 3 national curriculum. It provides specific opportunities for students to:

- ♦ understand increasingly challenging texts through: learning new vocabulary; making inferences and referring to evidence in texts; and knowing and drawing on the purpose, audience and context of writing to support comprehension
- ♦ read critically: knowing how figurative language, vocabulary choice and text structure presents meaning; recognising a range of poetic conventions and understanding their use; studying setting and the effect of this; making comparisons across texts; and studying a range of high-quality authors
- ♦ draw on knowledge of literary devices and new vocabulary from their reading and listening to enhance the impact of their writing to achieve particular effects
- ♦ write for a wide range of purposes and audiences, including: well-structured formal expository and narrative essays, poetry and other imaginative writing, notes and polished scripts for presentations

- ♦ discuss reading and writing with precise and confident use of linguistic and literary terminology

In meeting some of the requirements of the national curriculum, this teaching unit contributes to its aims for key stage 3 students, which include:

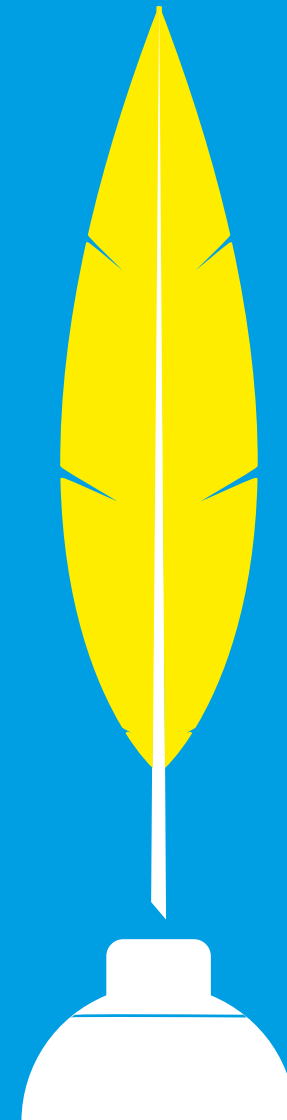
- acquiring a wide vocabulary
- appreciating our rich and varied literary heritage
- writing clearly, accurately and coherently, adapting their language and style in and for a range of contexts, purposes and audiences
- using discussion in order to learn; they should be able to elaborate and explain clearly their understanding and ideas
- developing competence in the arts of speaking and listening and making formal presentations

DISCOVER

Students will explore the ways that Wordsworth, Wilde, Dickens, Conrad, Selvon and Duffy have portrayed the River Thames in their poetry and prose.

Students will be encouraged to think about the Thames as a canvas onto which a wide range of dreams, hopes, anxieties and nightmares have been projected by writers.

Alongside imagining London's past, students will learn how writers have used the river to convey change and transformation.



LESSON 1

CELEBRATIONS OF THE CITY



THE BIG IDEA

Students will understand that authors have used the Thames and its surroundings as a focal point to describe their admiration of the city using a range of literary techniques.



LESSON OBJECTIVES

All students will understand that the writer's words have been carefully chosen to paint a picture of their vision of the Thames, which depicts London as a place of prosperity and promise.

Most students will be able to describe the effect of the literary devices to create impact.

Some students will be able to relate the author's vision of the Thames to their life and/or the times of their writing.



RESOURCES

- ♦ **Resource 1.1:** What's in a word? (one copy per pair)
- ♦ **Resource 1.2:** *Composed upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802* by William Wordsworth (one per student)
- ♦ **Resource 1.3:** Imagery and senses

YOU WILL NEED:

- ♦ Images of the River Thames of your choosing

LESSON 1: CELEBRATIONS OF THE CITY

LANGUAGE AND LANDMARKS

LANGUAGE OR LANDMARK	EXPLANATION	SYNONYM
Sonnet	(noun) A poem of fourteen lines written with a structured rhyme scheme. English sonnets usually have 10 syllables per line	
Romanticism	(noun) An artistic and literary period marked by an emphasis on nature, imagination, emotions and individuality	
Westminster Bridge	Opened in 1750 the bridge connects Westminster on the north side of the Thames with Lambeth on the south side. Today's bridge is painted mainly green, which is the same colour as the seats in the House of Commons	
Soul	The spiritual and emotional part of humans	Heart, essence, core
Doth	Do	
Garment	A piece of clothing	Dress, costume, attire
Temple	A place dedicated to worship	
Steep	Having an almost vertical slope	Sharp, high ascent

LESSON 1: CELEBRATIONS OF THE CITY

SETTING THE SCENE

THE RIVER THAMES IN LITERATURE

‘a babbling procession of the best stories in the world, sent from the heart of the earth to be told at last to the insatiable sea’

Kenneth Grahame, *Wind in the Willows*, 1908

London exists because of the Thames and the river is at the heart of city life. For many centuries the Thames has been a stage for celebrations and culture, a working river and a route to the world. Authors and poets through time have captured the river’s moods, light and dark.

Edmund Spenser painted an idyllic picture of the ‘silver-streaming Thames’ in *Prothalamion* (1596). The poem’s refrain ‘Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song’, has been drawn on by poets since, including T S Eliot and Carol Ann Duffy.

Kenneth Grahame drew on childhood memories to create a world of innocence on the banks of the river in *Wind in the Willows* (1908). Charles Dickens’ childhood also shaped his writing. However, his unhappiness working as a boy beside the Thames, and the dark presence of the river in his novels, are very different from Grahame’s life and writing.

Like many other writers, Dickens portray the Thames in a way that speaks as much about the city, and his own hopes and fears, as the river itself.



TOY THEATRE SHEET OF LONDON BRIDGE
FOR OLIVER TWIST, C 1870

John Redington © Museum of London

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH (1770–1850)

William Wordsworth was passing through London, travelling from his home in the Lake District to France, when he was struck by the beauty of the river view at dawn. The brief moment inspired a much-loved poem that celebrates the River Thames and London: *Composed upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802*. Wordsworth was one of the most important poets of the Romantic period, when poets wrote about nature and emotions and, in particular, the connections between them. The Romantic period started in the late 18th century and lasted until the mid-19th century. Often Romantic poets wrote sonnets, commonly thought of as love poems. A sonnet has 14 lines and, usually, 10 syllables – or ‘beats’ – per line. Sonnets became associated with the Romantic poets, including Wordsworth who wrote 523!



WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, 1850
Henry William Pickersgill
© National Portrait Gallery, London



WESTMINSTER FROM THE SOUTH, 19TH CENTURY
John Anderson © Museum of London

LESSON 1: CELEBRATIONS OF THE CITY

ACTIVITIES

STARTER: WHAT'S IN A WORD?

The purpose of this activity is for students to begin to think about the connotations of authors' word choices.

Explain to students the word 'connotation'. A connotation is an idea or a feeling that a word triggers when you hear it. For example, the word talkative may make you think of someone who is friendly, noisy or confident.

In pairs, students should take it in turns to read aloud a series of words from Resource 1.1 (page 12) (these have been taken from the lesson's selected text). The first student should read aloud each word from list A and the partner should say out loud the first word or two that pops in to their mind. Students may like to record their words on a mini whiteboard. Students should swap roles for list B. Allow five minutes maximum.

Differentiation

Produce a supplementary sheet using easier words that pupils will have few problems with. This will help them grasp the concept of 'connotation'.

Composed upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802

Introduce students to the topic of the Thames in writing and to William Wordsworth, drawing on the information given in 'Setting the scene' (page 7).

Hand out Resource 1.2 (page 13).

Read through the poem as a whole class. There are six blank spaces in the poem. These can be filled in from the lists on Resource 1.1 (page 12). Ask students for the most plausible suggestion as you reach each space. Ensure incorrect suggestions are corrected, so that every student has a complete and correct version in front of them.

MAIN 1: CLOSE-READING QUESTIONS

The purpose of these questions is to make sure students know what is happening in the poem. This will enable students to engage with the meaning behind the poem, which is considered later in the lesson. Students may give verbal responses to the questions. These questions may be used later on in the unit for assessment purposes. Model answers have been provided.

Q Where is the poet standing in the poem?

A ***The poet is standing on Westminster Bridge.***

This bridge crosses the Thames, joining Westminster and Lambeth.

Q What is moving in the poem?

A ***The river is moving – or ‘gliding’ – through the city.*** The river is moving gently at its own pace. Everything else is still and peaceful.

Q What time of day is it in the poem?

A ***It is early in the morning*** and the city is still and calm. The sun is rising.

Q Based on your knowledge of William Wordsworth’s life, why do you think he admired the river and its surroundings?

A ***Wordsworth was from the Lake District, in the countryside, so saw the river from the point of view of someone passing through the city.***

At points in the poem, he sounds surprised, perhaps he is surprised that the city is as beautiful as the natural scenes he is used to.

Differentiation

The part of the answer in bold indicates the minimum expectation for a correct answer. Encourage your students – in particular those requiring extra stretch – to extend their answers in line with the sentences in regular type (above).

MAIN 2: IMAGERY AND THE SENSES

Explain to students the word 'imagery'. Imagery is a way of describing something in a way that appeals to our senses (seeing, hearing, feeling, smelling, tasting), sometimes imagery does this in a non-literal or 'figurative' way. Words are chosen to paint a picture in the reader's mind. For example the subject may be compared to something else in order to heighten its effect:

The leopard ran fast > The leopard ran as fast as a speeding car.

Differentiation

To support students who may struggle with this tricky concept, ask students to identify the imagery in a number of example sentences. For example: 'The boy felt the **scorched** earth **boil** his toes.'

- ♦ The little boy melted in the heat.
- ♦ The rabbit froze in the headlights.
- ♦ Dreamy clouds floated through the sky.

The job of the reader is to detect as many of the clues – or symbols – that are used in the descriptions to work out the writer's meaning. What is the city described as in Wordsworth's poem? The city is described as a person: 'This City now doth, like a garment, wear' and 'And all that mighty heart is lying still!'. When we describe something by giving it human qualities – such as movement – we call this personification.

The imagery in Wordsworth's poem appeals to all of our five senses. Ask students to use the graphic organiser in Resource 1.3 (page 14), to match the phrases with the senses they think they evoke. Do any phrases 'wake up' more than one of the senses?

PLENARY: CREATE YOUR OWN

Display a series of images on the IWB depicting the River Thames. Try to use contrasting images. Ask students to create their own imaginative sentences to describe features of the images.

Differentiation

To support pupils, provide oral sentence stems ('River ripples moved like...').

Assessment questions

Q What is the effect of Wordsworth 'hiding' the subject of his poem until the fourth line?

A Wordsworth builds suspense in the first three lines of the poem. His reader does not know whether he is describing a person, a place or an object until the fourth line, which mentions 'This City.' This structure also describes the poet's own surprise and love of the scene in front of him.

LESSON 1: CELEBRATIONS OF THE CITY

RESOURCE 1.1



WHAT'S IN A WORD?

List A

Student's name

WORD	CONNOTATION
------	-------------

Glittering

Splendour

Majesty

List B

Student's name

WORD	CONNOTATION
------	-------------

Glideth

Fair

Mighty

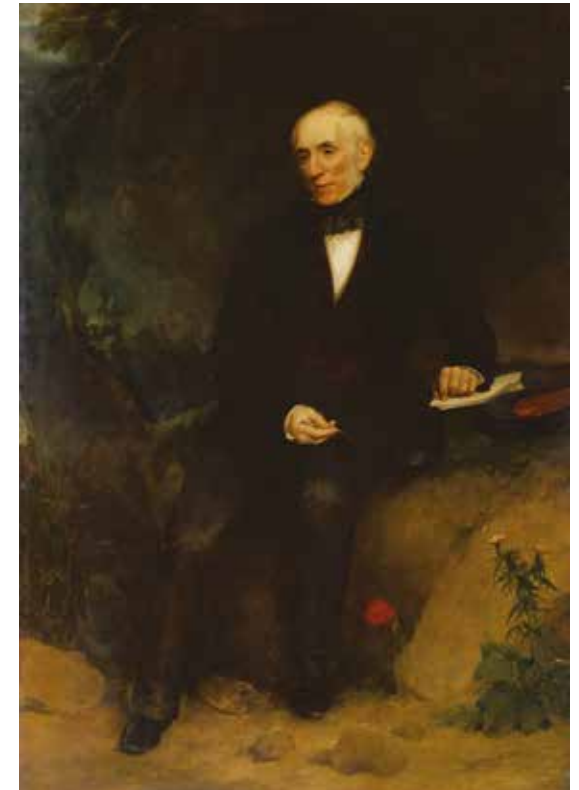
LESSON 1: CELEBRATIONS OF THE CITY

RESOURCE 1.2



COMPOSED UPON WESTMINSTER BRIDGE, SEPTEMBER 3, 1802 BY WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

Earth has not anything to show more :
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its :
This City now doth, like a garment, wear
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatre, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
All bright and in the smokeless air.
Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first, valley, rock, or hill;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
The river at his own sweet will:
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
And all that heart is lying still!



WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, 1850
Henry William Pickersgill
© National Portrait Gallery, London

LESSON 1: CELEBRATIONS OF THE CITY

RESOURCE 1.3



IMAGERY AND SENSES

The imagery in Wordsworth's poem wakes up all of our five senses. Place these phrases from the poem under the sense you think it stirs.

'All bright and glittering'

'silent, bare'

'smokeless air'

'lying still'

'The river glideth'

'beautifully steep'

'that mighty heart is lying still'

HEARING (AUDITORY)

SMELLING/TASTING

TOUCHING AND FEELING (TACTILE)

SEEING (VISUAL)



WESTMINSTER FROM THE SOUTH,
19TH CENTURY

John Anderson © Museum of London

LESSON 2

AN ANCIENT AND MYSTERIOUS RIVER



THE BIG IDEA

The purpose of this lesson is for students to understand that for some authors the Thames was a place of ancient mystery and that they have used this as a theme in their descriptive writing. Students should begin to draw comparisons between Conrad – the focus of this lesson – and Wordsworth, the focus of lesson one.



LESSON OBJECTIVES

All students will recognise the Thames as an ancient and mysterious place in the selected work. All students will understand that the author's words have been carefully chosen to paint a picture of their own vision of the Thames (imagery).

Most students will be able to describe the effect of the literary devices to create impact.

Some students will be able to compare this extract to images and feelings created in Wordsworth's poem.



RESOURCES

- ♦ **Resource 2.1:** Extract from Chapter 1, *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad (one per student)
- ♦ **Resource 2.2:** Effective imagery
- ♦ **Resource 2.3:** Glossary of terms (one each)

LESSON 2: AN ANCIENT AND MYSTERIOUS RIVER

LANGUAGE AND LANDMARKS

KEY WORD	EXPLANATION	SYNONYMS
Knight	A mounted soldier in the medieval ages	
Blaze	Bright flame or fire	Flames, fire
Commander	An officer in a military unit (eg army or navy)	
Trireme	A warship with three banks of oars on each side	
Mediterranean	Features relating to the places and people surrounding the Mediterranean Sea	
Gauls	Ancient inhabitants of France	
Legionaries	Soldiers belonging to one of the legions of the Roman Army	
Rigid	Something that is stiff and cannot move easily	Stiff, inflexible, fixed
Concertina	A musical instrument with button-like keys that folds in on itself to compress air in order to make a noise	
Savage	Untamed and usually angry (person) or wild (place)	Uncivilised, fierce, cruel
Precious	Of high value or price	Valuable, cherished
Civilized	Usually in reference to a person, people or place meaning cultured, educated and rational	Educated, calm, orderly
Falernian	Something that comes from or is made in Campania in Italy (eg a particular type of wine)	
Military	Something that relates to the armed forces	
Tempest	A violent storm with lots of rain	Storm
Exile	To officially send away from a particular area of land	Banish, evict, cast out, deport
Skulk	To keep in hiding or move around in a stealthy manner	Lurk

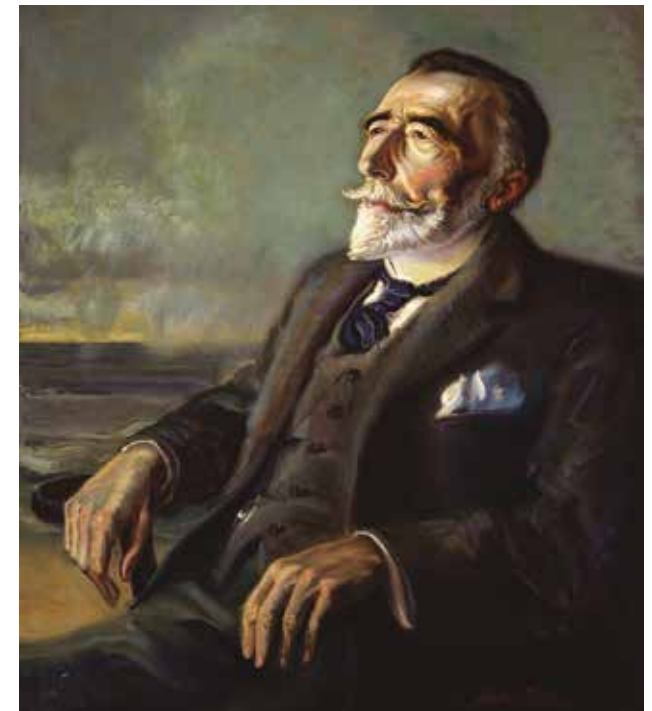
LESSON 2: AN ANCIENT AND MYSTERIOUS RIVER

SETTING THE SCENE

JOSEPH CONRAD (1857–1924)

When Joseph Conrad arrived in London aged 20 years old, he spoke just a few words of English. Yet his novels are considered by many to be amongst the greatest in the English language. Originally named Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski, Conrad was born in Poland in 1857. Before turning to writing Conrad was a seaman and he knew the Thames well. He saw the river as a place of ancient mystery.

Heart of Darkness, one of Conrad's most famous novels, begins on a boat on the Thames. Before Marlow, the narrator, unfolds his tale of a voyage down the River Congo, he imagines the Romans, who founded London two thousand years ago, arriving at their new settlement on the River Thames.



JOSEPH CONRAD, 1923-1924

Walter Tittle © National Portrait Gallery, London

LESSON 2: AN ANCIENT AND MYSTERIOUS RIVER

ACTIVITIES

STARTER: BUILDING WORD BANKS

Build on students' work on connotations and synonyms. Display the word 'mystery' on the whiteboard. Also display a three-minute timer. Students have to write down as many synonyms or words they associate with this lesson's key word. Once the three minutes is up, collate these words on the whiteboard in the form of a spider diagram. Leave these displayed on the whiteboard for students to draw on later in the lesson.

MAIN: IMAGERY IN *HEART OF DARKNESS*

Introduce students to Joseph Conrad, drawing on the information given in 'Setting the scene' (page 17). Ensure that students know that London was founded by the Romans.

Read the extract from chapter one of *Heart of Darkness*. Pause to explain new vocabulary using the glossary provided. Students may make short notes to remember these words in the margins of the text.

What kind of image of the Thames does Conrad paint? Ask students to reference words and phrases from the extract or displayed on the whiteboard in their oral answers.

What makes the image of the Thames and its surrounding area mysterious? Steer students to consider the mystery and adventure that lay before the sailors. Those aboard the *Nellie*, the boat in Conrad's book, are imagining themselves as great explorers, like Sir Francis Drake, delving into unknown lands. Conrad also reminds readers of the Romans arriving in Britain. Whilst it was a wild and savage land long ago, the Romans looked upon their new discovery with excitement and a bit of nervousness too.

Read through the first questions of Resource 2.2 (page 21) as a class, which encourages students to think about the effect of the imagery in this extract. Ask students for verbal contributions to the answers. Ensure their answers build on the imagery and senses work completed earlier in the lesson. You may choose to display a class answer (in full sentences) to the first question on the whiteboard for students to write down (the remaining questions will be completed in the rest of the lesson and for homework).

Differentiation

You may choose different students to identify a) sentences with strong imagery, b) the specific words or phrases that create the imagery, and c) which sense this has an effect on and how.

PLENARY

Display your choice of images of the Thames to the class. Ask students to look at these pictures of the Thames carefully. Which do they think is closest to the image in Wordsworth's mind? Why? Which is the closest to Conrad's description?

Homework idea

Ask students to complete Resource 2.2 (page 21) for homework, which encourages students to consider the effect of the imagery in the extract from Conrad's novel. For students requiring additional support in the exercise, ensure they have written a model answer to question 1, discussed in the lesson. Make sure these students have a copy of Resource 2.3 (page 22), a glossary of terms to support the task. For students requiring extra stretch, teachers may want to include the question below in their homework.

Assessment questions

- Q Conrad's description of the Thames is one of an untamed wilderness. It could be described as 'threatening'. Where in the extract does Conrad suggest that London is a place of exciting possibility?**
- A Conrad makes reference to the Romans in the first sentence of this extract. When the Romans travelled to London they did not know what they would find; however, they were very excited about expanding their empire and would fight anyone who stood in their way. Conrad describes the bravery of men in this extract, which supports this image of the Romans entering London on the Thames. Conrad writes 'Light came out of this river since', which could mean that he believes the Roman's saw London as a place for wonderful things to develop: like colonisation and trade. It may have been a savage place, but they saw potential there.

LESSON 2: AN ANCIENT AND MYSTERIOUS RIVER

RESOURCE 2.1

**Extract from Chapter 1, *Heart of Darkness*
by Joseph Conrad**

I was thinking of very old times, when the Romans first came here, nineteen hundred years ago—the other day. . . . Light came out of this river since—you say Knights? Yes; but it is like a running blaze on a plain, like a flash of lightning in the clouds. We live in the flicker—may it last as long as the old earth keeps rolling! But darkness was here yesterday. Imagine the feelings of a commander of a fine—what d’ye call ‘em?—trireme in the Mediterranean, ordered suddenly to the north; run overland across the Gauls in a hurry; put in charge of one of these craft the legionaries,—a wonderful lot of handy men they must have been too—used to build, apparently by the hundred, in a month or two, if we may believe what we read. Imagine him here—the very end of the world, a sea the colour of lead, a sky the colour of smoke, a kind of ship about as rigid as a concertina—and going up this river with stores, or orders, or what you like. Sandbanks, marshes, forests, savages,—precious little to eat fit for a civilized man, nothing but Thames water to drink. No Falernian wine here, no going ashore. Here and there a military camp

lost in a wilderness, like a needle in a bundle of hay—cold, fog, tempests, disease, exile, and death,—death skulking in the air, in the water, in the bush. They must have been dying like flies here. Oh yes—he did it. Did it very well, too, no doubt, and without thinking much about it either, except afterwards to brag of what he had gone through in his time, perhaps. They were men enough to face the darkness. And perhaps he was cheered by keeping his eye on a chance of promotion to the fleet at Ravenna by-and-by, if he had good friends in Rome and survived the awful climate. Or think of a decent young citizen in a toga—perhaps too much dice, you know—coming out here in the train of some prefect, or tax-gatherer, or trader even, to mend his fortunes. Land in a swamp, march through the woods, and in some inland post feel the savagery, the utter savagery, had closed round him,—all that mysterious life of the wilderness that stirs in the forest, in the jungles, in the hearts of wild men.

LESSON 2: AN ANCIENT AND MYSTERIOUS RIVER

RESOURCE 2.2



Effective imagery

Imagery is a way of describing something in a non-literal way. Words are chosen to paint a picture in the reader's mind. Your job as a reader is to detect as many of the clues – or symbols – that are used in the descriptions to work out the writer's meaning. The imagery often appeals to all of our five senses. Use these questions as a prompt to help you think about the effect of Conrad's imagery.

1 **'Lost in a wilderness, like a needle in a bundle of hay.'** What picture does this imagery paint in your mind?

2 **'Imagine him here—the very end of the world.'** How does this phrase make you feel?

3 **'A sea the colour of lead, a sky the colour of smoke.'** What do these colours make you think of?

4 **'They must have been dying like flies here.'** What picture does this imagery paint in your mind?

5 **'Light came out of this river.'** What do you think the author is trying to tell you about the river?

6 **'The wilderness that stirs in the forest.'** Conrad uses the 'forest' to describe man's passions and ambitions. What do you imagine is going through the minds of these men?

LESSON 2: AN ANCIENT AND MYSTERIOUS RIVER

RESOURCE 2.3



GLOSSARY OF TERMS (SUPPORTING RESOURCE 2.2)

KEY WORD	EXPLANATION	SYNONYMS
Wilderness	A wild, natural environment or place	Jungle
Bundle	A group of things tied up together	Bale, bunch
Hay	Long, dried grass	Straw
Lead	A dull, grey, heavy metal	
Stir	To move slowly	
Forest	An area covered by lots of trees	Wood

LESSON 3 FOGGY WATERS



THE BIG IDEA

The purpose of this lesson is for students to understand that authors have used the Thames as a focal point to describe their nightmares and anxieties about life in London.



LESSON OBJECTIVES

All students will recognise that authors have used the Thames and the fog that covers it to illustrate their anxieties or sense of sadness about London life. All students will recognise these authors' writing about the Thames as a contrasting view to those of Wordsworth and Conrad.

Most students will understand the effect of metaphor in the texts.

Some students will be able to understand Dickens' and Wilde's 'pictures' of London as representative of the poverty widespread in the city at the time of writing using their knowledge of Victorian London society.



RESOURCES

- ♦ **Resource 3.1:** Selected texts (one each)
- ♦ **Resource 3.2:** The opening of *Bleak House* (one each)
- ♦ **Resource 3.3:** Colourful connotations (one each)

LESSON 3: FOGGY WATERS

LANGUAGE AND LANDMARKS

KEY WORD	EXPLANATION	SYNONYMS
Ait	A small island in a river	
Defile	To make dirty and unclean	Ruin, pollute, foul
Caboose	A car on a freight train used by the crew	
Collier-brig	A small ship with two masts carrying coal	
Gunwale	The upper edge of a vessel, where guns used to be set	
Wrathful	Very angry	Raging, furious
Apprentice	A person who works for another in order to learn a trade	Learner, novice
Parapet	A defensive wall or barrier that protects	
Nether	Lying or believed to lie beneath the earth's surface	
Nocturne	Gentle classical music, a poem or painting depicting a night scene	
Ochre	An earthy colour	Yellow, orange, red, earthy
Wharf	An area that is built on or right next to a harbour	
Flare	A large flame or light that may blow in the wind	
Loiter	To linger around aimlessly	Linger, dawdle, dally
St Paul's Cathedral	One of the most famous London landmarks, St Paul's Cathedral was designed by Sir Christopher Wren and completed in 1710	

LESSON 3: FOGGY WATERS

SETTING THE SCENE

CHARLES DICKENS (1812–1870)



E. Machin, R.A.

R. Graves A.R.A.

CHARLES DICKENS.

CHARLES DICKENS, 19TH CENTURY

© Museum of London

A tough London childhood shaped both the writing and the character of Charles Dickens, one of the most celebrated English authors. After his father was imprisoned for debt, Charles was sent to work as a boy in a blacking (boot polish) factory at Hungerford Stairs (near where Charing Cross Station now stands) overlooking the River Thames. The 'grief and humiliation' that Dickens felt during his childhood haunted him for the rest of his life. He was a passionate campaigner for better living conditions for London's poor.

Dickens' childhood experiences shaped his stories, which were often about vulnerable children facing tragedy and poverty. His books appeared in serial form – published, chapter by chapter, in popular magazines. They are likely to have been unsettling at the time; few writers had described the lives of the poor in this way before. Still his writing was extremely popular and his readers looked forward to each new episode of his stories with great anticipation.

In Dickens' writing the River Thames is often a place of darkness, of drowned corpses, scavengers and 'ooze and slime and other dregs of tide' (*Great Expectations*).



HUNGERFORD STAIRS ON THE THAMES BANK,
WHERE DICKENS WORKED AS A BOY, 1820

George Harley © Museum of London

OSCAR WILDE (1854–1900)

Oscar Wilde was one of the most popular and unconventional authors of the late 19th century. He wrote poetry, plays, novels and short stories. He was born in Ireland and studied at the University of Oxford. Today he is remembered for his witty social commentary, his flamboyant personality and his infamous imprisonment for homosexuality, as well as his best-loved classic books and plays such as *The Importance of Being Earnest* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. For some time Wilde lived near the river in a house he renamed Thames House.



OSCAR WILDE, 1881

Elliott & Fry © National Portrait Gallery, London

SAMUEL SELVON (1923–1994)

Sam Selvon was born in Trinidad and moved to London in 1950. His 1956 novel, *The Lonely Londoners*, portrayed the experience of Caribbean migrants arriving in the capital with high hopes but encountering coldness. Selvon was writing at a time when a growing number of Caribbean writers were beginning to shape London literature. He described it as a wonderful time, 'a period which marked the beginning of our future'. *My Girl and the City*, was published in 1957 in a collection of short stories, *Ways of Sunlight*, set in Trinidad and in London. The story is about the narrator's love for the city as much as it is about his love for 'My Girl'.



SAMUEL SELVON, 1956

Ida Kar © National Portrait Gallery, London

THE FOGGY CITY

During the Victorian era and into the 1950s, London was notorious for its thick fogs or 'smogs'. Smoke from coal fires in homes, factories and power stations combined with naturally occurring fog, shrouding the city for days at a time. While it was foul-smelling and dangerous to health, the fog that draped across river and the city streets fascinated writers and artists alike. Oscar Wilde described them as 'the wonderful brown fogs' and painters such as Whistler, Turner and Monet sought to capture the shrouds of mist and fog on the river in their art.



BATTERSEA BRIDGE – MISTY MOONLIGHT,
1869

Walter Greaves © Museum of London

LESSON 3: FOGGY WATERS

ACTIVITIES

STARTER: SYNONYMS

Synonym: (noun) a word or phrase that means exactly or nearly the same as another word or phrase in the same language, for example *rapid* is a synonym of *fast*.

The purpose of this first oral activity is for students to familiarise themselves with the concept of a synonym and to know that there are synonyms for lots of different types of words, including nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs.

Explain the term *synonym* to students. Ask students to create their own synonyms for features of the classroom. For example, *the tidy desk* could be *the neat workstation* and *the worn out rucksack* could be *the shabby backpack*. In pairs students can pick an object and challenge each other to think of synonyms to describe it. Choose a couple of examples to share with the class.

Differentiation

To support lower ability students, provide a bank of suitable and unsuitable (including antonyms) for a range of objects in the classroom. You may choose to display these on the whiteboard or a separate sheet.

The objective of this part of the lesson is to get students thinking about the literal and metaphorical connotations

of describing a scene as 'foggy', which is a key feature of the imagery deployed by Dickens and other writers in portraying London.

MAIN 1: METAPHORS

Read and display this sentence to students: 'The foggy roads made it difficult to drive.' Ask students to think about the meaning of the sentence. What synonyms could they replace 'foggy' with? The important point here is that 'foggy' describes how the roads actually were.

Now, read and display this sentence to students: My memory of the incident is foggy. Can someone's memory actually be foggy, like the roads? Ask students to think about the meaning of the sentence. 'Foggy' is used as a metaphor. Explain to students that a metaphor is a word or phrase used to make a comparison between two things. It helps us to build a picture of what something looks, smells, tastes, sounds or feels like. Metaphors are non-literal, which means that the words don't mean what they actually say. For example, 'The snow is a white blanket' and 'He is a night owl' are examples of metaphors.

Synonyms for foggy may include: misty, murky, hazy, bleary, fuzzy, dim, cloudy, blurred, unclear.

MAIN 2: CHARLES DICKENS

Introduce students to Charles Dickens, drawing on information in 'Setting the scene' (page 25).

Read the excerpt from *Bleak House* (Resource 3.1 page 31) aloud with the class. Discuss the scene with students: what picture does Dickens paint of life near the Thames? Explain difficult vocabulary.

Ask students to read the passage again by themselves and complete the questions on Resource 3.2 (page 32). The purpose of Resource 3.2 is to encourage students to think about the connotations of the foggy conditions in the opening to *Bleak House*.

MAIN 3: OSCAR WILDE AND SAMUEL SELVON

Introduce students to Oscar Wilde, drawing on the information in 'Setting the scene'.

Read *Impression du Matin* as a class. What is Wilde describing in his poem? What time of day or night is it? What senses does Wilde encourage the reader to use in the poem?

Introduce Samuel Selvon and read the extract from *My Girl and the City*. Compare the imagery used by the writers and the mood created.

Encourage students to focus on the colours used in *Impression du Matin*.

Just as students learnt that words have connotations, so too do colours. We often use colours as symbols that are widely recognised all over the country.

For example, green is associated with health (first aid boxes, nature, trees) and red is associated with warning (traffic lights, road signs). Ask students:

- ♦ What is your favourite colour?
- ♦ Close your eyes: what does your favourite colour make you think of?

MAIN 4

Ask your students to complete Resource 3.3 (page 34), which will help them to think about the connotations of the colours in the poem. Compare students' connotations. Are any very similar or very different?

PLENARY

By now, students should be able to see that Dickens, Wilde and Selvon approach the Thames and its surroundings in different ways to the pictures presented by Wordsworth and Conrad. Each writer depicts their own view of London as a city, which in turn gives the reader an insight into their feelings about the society in which they lived. In this respect, they weren't just describing the physical environment; they were using the physical environment to describe all of the positive and negative features of the city from their own perspective.

Ask students: whose picture of London do they feel a connection with? Dickens', Wilde's or Selvon's lonely, desolate London? Or perhaps Wordsworth's bright and dazzling display of the city's beauty? Or maybe students empathise with Conrad's excitement and fear about discovering new places?

Use this opportunity to prepare for the visit to the Thames. Explain to students that they will be visiting the river and writing about its effect on them. Following the visit, they will have an opportunity to work on their own creative piece of writing to describe their own picture of the Thames using metaphors and strong imagery.

Homework idea

Ask students to research the landmarks they will be able to see from the location of the visit, including bridges, famous buildings close-by and in the skyline.

Assessment questions

- Q What do you think is the most striking part of Charles Dickens' description of the fog?**
- A Students may give their personal response and should be rewarded for citing relevant words or phrases from the extract to support their views.
- Q Wilde chose the colours blue, gold, yellow and grey to represent his bleak view of London. What colours would you choose and why?**
- A Students may give their personal response and should be rewarded for the plausibility of their colour choices and detail of their justifications.

Find out more

www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/oscar-wilde

LESSON 3: FOGGY WATERS

RESOURCE 3.1



SELECTED TEXTS

**Extract from Chapter 1,
Bleak House by Charles Dickens**

Fog everywhere. Fog up the river, where it flows among green aits and meadows; fog down the river, where it rolls defiled among the tiers of shipping and the waterside pollutions of a great (and dirty) city. Fog on the Essex marshes, fog on the Kentish heights. Fog creeping into the cabooses of collier-brigs; fog lying out on the yards and hovering in the rigging of great ships; fog drooping on the gunwales of barges and small boats. Fog in the eyes and throats of ancient Greenwich pensioners, wheezing by the firesides of their wards; fog in the stem and bowl of the afternoon pipe of the wrathful skipper, down in his close cabin; fog cruelly pinching the toes and fingers of his shivering little 'prentice boy on deck. Chance people on the bridges peeping over the parapets into a nether sky of fog, with fog all round them, as if they were up in a balloon and hanging in the misty clouds.

***Impression du Matin* by Oscar Wilde**

The Thames nocturne of blue and gold
Changed to a Harmony in grey:
A barge with ochre-coloured hay
Dropt from the wharf: and chill and cold

The yellow fog came creeping down
The bridges, till the houses' walls
Seemed changed to shadows and St. Paul's
Loomed like a bubble o'er the town.

Then suddenly arose the clang
Of waking life; the streets were stirred
With country waggons: and a bird
Flew to the glistening roofs and sang.

But one pale woman all alone,
The daylight kissing her wan hair,
Loitered beneath the gas lamps' flare,
With lips of flame and heart of stone.

LESSON 3: FOGGY WATERS

RESOURCE 3.1 CONTINUED



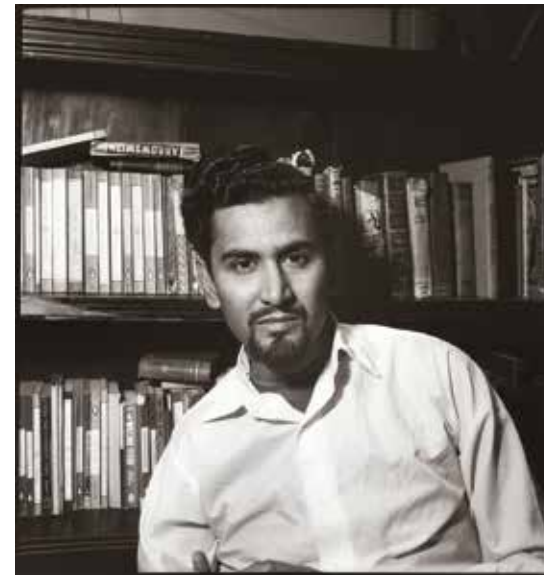
SELECTED TEXTS

Extract from *My Girl and the City*, Samuel Selvon

But why do you love London, she said.

You can't talk about a thing like that, not really. Maybe I could have told her because one evening in the summer I was waiting for her, only it wasn't like summer at all. Rain had been falling all day, and a haze hung about the bridges across the river, and the water was muddy and brown, and there was a kind of wistfulness and sadness about the evening. The way St Paul's was, half-hidden in the rain, the motionless streets along the Embankment. But you say a thing like that and people don't understand at all. How sometimes a surge of greatness could sweep over you when you see something.

Courtesy of the Estate of Sam Selvon.



SAMUEL SELVON, 1956

Ida Kar © National Portrait Gallery, London

LESSON 3: FOGGY WATERS

RESOURCE 3.2



THE OPENING OF *BLEAK HOUSE*

1. Make a list of the words and phrases in the opening paragraphs of *Bleak House* that make the fog seem to be a living thing. (These make the metaphors in the text.)
2. List the colours that Dickens mentions in the opening paragraph.
3. What other colours does the paragraph make you think of?
4. What is the effect of repeating the word 'fog' again and again?
5. What mood do you think Dickens was trying to create in the 'foggy' opening of his novel? Explain your answer.

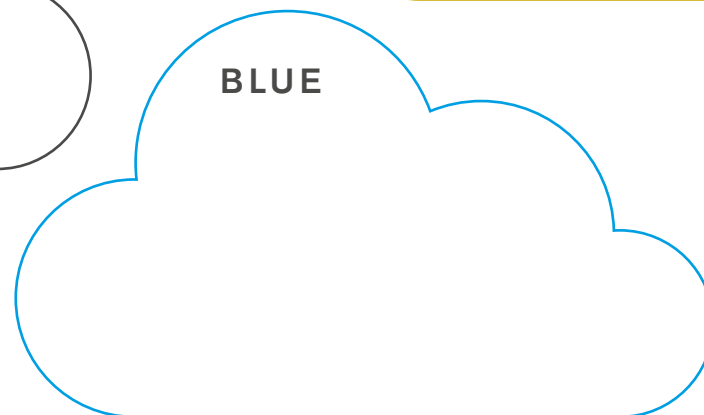
LESSON 3: FOGGY WATERS

RESOURCE 3.3

COLOURFUL CONNOTATIONS

Colours, just like words, have connotations. Remember that a connotation is an idea or a feeling that something makes you think or feel when you see it.

Fill the clouds with the things each colour makes you think of. These may be sights, smells, noises, or how you the colour makes you feel.



LESSON 4

LIQUID HISTORY



BIG IDEA

Students will learn about the role of the Poet Laureate of the United Kingdom and explore the imagery and aural devices of *The Thames, London 2012*, by today's Poet Laureate, Carol Ann Duffy.



LESSON OBJECTIVES

All students will understand the role of the UK's Poet Laureate and will know that Carol Ann Duffy's poem, *The Thames, London 2012*, was composed to mark the Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations. All students will be able to identify examples of onomatopoeia in Duffy's poem. All students will try recording an extract of Carol Ann Duffy's poem.

Most students will recognise some of the allusions to landmarks and significant events signposted in Carol Ann Duffy's poem, *The Thames, London 2012*. Most students will be able to create their own onomatopoeic sentences. Most students will memorise their lines and record their extract of the poem with fluency and accuracy.

'The Thames is liquid history.'
John Burns 1929



RESOURCES

- ♦ **Resource 4.1:** Poet Laureate comprehension (one each)
- ♦ **Resource 4.2:** *The Thames, London 2012* by Carol Ann Duffy (one each)
- ♦ **Resource 4.3:** The River Thames: events and images (one each)

YOU WILL NEED:

- ♦ A recording of Carol Ann Duffy reading her poem aloud
http://news.bbc.co.uk/today/hi/today/newsid_9716000/9716076.stm

LESSON 4: LIQUID HISTORY

LANGUAGE AND LANDMARKS

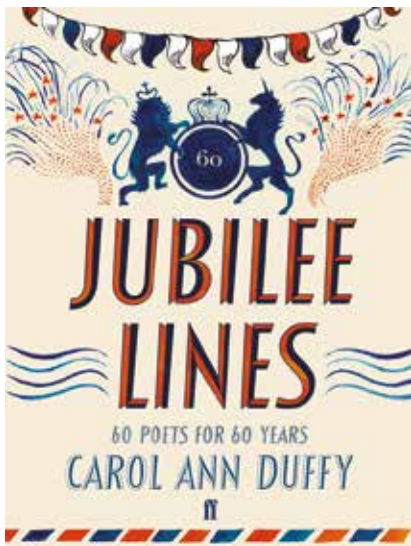
KEY WORD	EXPLANATION	SYNONYMS
Livid	Furiously angry	Furious, enraged, angry
Sever	To cut off forcefully and suddenly	Cut off, detach, amputate
Ox	An animal, like a cow or bull, sometimes kept for meat or milk	n/a
Wherry	A rowing boat, usually used to transport passengers	n/a
Marchioness	The wife or widow of a marquess (a nobleman). The Marchioness was the name of a pleasure boat that sank in the Thames in August 1989, 51 people drowned	n/a
Apprentice	A person – often young – learning a trade from a skilled employer	Trainee, novice, learner
Foul	Offensive to the senses, e.g. a disgusting smell or sight	Disgusting, revolting, sickening
Lament	An expression of disappointment or regret	Deplore, complain about, bemoan
Barge	A long boat used for carrying people or goods. Powered by oars, sails or pulled by horses	Thames barge
Caesar	A reference to Julius Caesar, a very powerful Roman emperor who was eventually murdered. He is believed to have lived between 100-44 BC	n/a
Flotilla	A fleet of boats or ships	n/a
Onomatopoeia	A word that sounds like its meaning, for example 'sizzle' and 'flow'	
Alliteration	The repetition of the same initial sounds in two or more neighbouring words, for example 'The rolling river'	
Assonance	The repetition of vowel sounds near one another, for example, 'Do you eat stew?'	

LESSON 4: LIQUID HISTORY

SETTING THE SCENE

THE THAMES, LONDON 2012

The story of the River Thames has long been linked with the story of the country. In *The Thames, London 2012* Carol Ann Duffy, Poet Laureate for the United Kingdom, portrays the river as drinking in and recalling thousands of years of history. The poem was her own contribution to *Jubilee Lines: 60 Poets for 60 Years* (Faber & Faber, 2012), Duffy's anthology of specially commissioned poems to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee.



CAROL ANN DUFFY

Images courtesy of Faber & Faber

The river stories behind the poem

The Thames, London 2012 is full of historical references, a jumble of 'memories' that the river holds. Here are some to spot:

- ♦ The Romans founded London. Julius Caesar called the river Tamesa – 'the flowing one'.
- ♦ Queen Elizabeth I's body was taken by water from Richmond to Whitehall. The 17th century poet William Camden wrote: 'The Queen was brought by water to White-hall, At every stroke the oars did tears let fall'.
- ♦ Frost fairs brought feasts, entertainers, coffee houses (and even an elephant!) onto the frozen waters between the 17th and 19th centuries.
- ♦ Watermen ferried passengers on the river in small boats called wherries. They fed their apprentices on salmon from the river.
- ♦ Hundreds of years ago traitors and criminals were beheaded and their heads stuck on spikes at the southern end of London Bridge.

- ◆ During the Great Fire of London (1666) the diarist Samuel Pepys saw pigeons with burning wings falling down as they tried to fly.
- ◆ Before modern flood defences were built, the River Thames had a long history of flooding. In the 13th century Westminster Hall was so severely flooded that wherries (small boats) were rowed across it.
- ◆ The sewage of Victorian London went straight into the river. Thousands of Londoners died because drinking water became poisoned.
- ◆ During the Blitz of World War II the docks on the River Thames were heavily bombed.
- ◆ A whale was stranded and died after getting lost and swimming up the Thames in 2006.
- ◆ The River Thames carried the largest procession of boats ever on 3 June 2012 when 670 vessels took part in the Diamond Jubilee River Pageant to celebrate Queen Elizabeth II's 60 year reign.



FROST FAIR, 1814

Luke Clenell © Museum of London



THE 'SILENT HIGHWAY' - MAN.
'YOUR MONEY OR YOUR LIFE', 1858

John Leech © Museum of London

LESSON 4: LIQUID HISTORY

ACTIVITIES

STARTER

Ask students to recall the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, which celebrated the 60 year reign of Queen Elizabeth II. Do students remember some of the celebrations they participated in, or perhaps they remember seeing parties on the streets or television?

Mention that the River Thames played an important role in the celebrations. The river carried the largest procession of boats ever on 3 June 2012, when 670 boats took part in the Diamond Jubilee River Pageant.

MAIN 1: *THE THAMES, LONDON 2012*: IMAGES OF THE RIVER

Explain to students that to mark the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, the UK's Poet Laureate, Carol Ann Duffy, was asked to write a poem to celebrate the occasion. Before reading Duffy's poem, students will learn about the role of poets laureate.

Distribute Resource 4.1 (page 41) to students. You can either ask students to read the text and answer the comprehension questions individually or complete these together as a class. Mark the questions as a class, addressing misconceptions in understanding.

Remind students that Carol Ann Duffy, our Poet Laureate, wrote a poem to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. The poem is called *The Thames, London 2012*.

Give students individual copies of Carol Ann Duffy's poem (Resource 4.2, page 42). Explain that the Thames is the main character in the poem, recalling dramatic events that it has seen.

Play students a recording of Carol Ann Duffy reading her poem aloud (remind students of the oral roots of poetry).

The following activity will help students to understand the poem's historical references. Display the images included in Resource 4.3 (page 43) on your interactive whiteboard. Ask students to match the pictures with lines from the poem, possibly in pairs. Ask students to feedback their conclusion to the class and explain their answers.

Use the images as a prompt to delve into the imagery of Carol Ann Duffy's poem, encouraging students to think about their reaction. Does it paint a positive picture of London – like Wordsworth's poem – or does it paint a negative picture of London – like parts of Wilde's poem?

MAIN 2: *THE THAMES, LONDON 2012*: SOUNDS OF THE RIVER

Remind the students of the tradition of oral poetry. Explain that Duffy carefully chose the words in her poem to a) tell some stories about the river using imagery but also b) for their aural impact – the sound they make when spoken aloud.

Explain to or remind students that an onomatopoeic word is one that sounds like the thing it is describing. Display examples of onomatopoeic words on the whiteboard. Ask students to say them aloud emphasising each sound in the word. Can students think of their own examples?

Ask students to find as many examples of onomatopoeic words in Duffy's poem as they can. Give pairs of students highlighters to mark their copies of the poem. To challenge students, ask them to think of alternative onomatopoeic words in the margins of the poem. Share pupils' suggestions with the whole class.

You may also wish to explore alliteration and assonance with your students. A focus on the section of the poem from 'A severed head' to 'Cut' illustrates these devices well.

PLENARY

Create a class recording of Carol Ann Duffy's poem, *The Thames, London 2012*. Give students a line or two each to record into a recording device such as a Dictaphone or school smartphone. Can students say the onomatopoeic words (or alliteration or assonance) in the poem with lots of expression? Differentiate by giving students more/fewer lines and by encouraging students to memorise their own lines. Use this plenary as an opportunity to remind students of the oral tradition of poetry and the role of the Poet Laureate: to disseminate new poetry about important events. You may decide to record different groups of students reading Duffy's poem aloud.

Homework idea

Ask students to create a timeline of poets laureate, starting with Carol Ann Duffy and working backwards through time. How far back can they go and what special occasions did each Poet Laureate write about?

Assessment questions

Use the questions from Resource 4.1 (page 41) and images from Resource 4.3 (page 43) to check students' understanding of the lesson. These resources should be used within the lesson to aid learning and can also be used at a later date to assess recall.

Find out more

www.poetryarchive.org/poet/carol-ann-duffy

LESSON 4: LIQUID HISTORY

RESOURCE 4.1



WHAT IS A POET LAUREATE?

The word 'laureate' comes from the laurels with which the ancient Greeks traditionally crowned their most popular poets. A laurel is a large plant with green glossy leaves that grows in the Mediterranean, near Greece.

Years ago Poets Laureate wrote poems to celebrate the birthdays of kings and queens. Their poems were a bit like presents, which could be shared and enjoyed by the public. Traditionally, before lots of people could read and write, poems were read aloud to large audiences. For example, great crowds used to congregate to hear the famous ancient Greek poet, Homer read his poems aloud. He wrote epic poems, including two called *The Odyssey* and *The Iliad* about a man's adventures at sea.

Who is today's Poet Laureate?

There is only one Poet Laureate for the UK at any one time and each Poet Laureate takes on the position for 10 years. The people who are awarded this prestigious position are already very popular poets: they have usually sold lots of copies of their poetry anthologies and are held in high esteem by poetry critics around the world. The current Poet Laureate is Carol Ann Duffy. When she became Poet Laureate it was a

particularly important occasion because she is the first female Poet Laureate for the United Kingdom.

Today it is up to the Poet Laureate of the time to decide why they compose a new poem. Many have still chosen to write poems to mark special national occasions, such as royal weddings and funerals. Today's poets laureate campaign for more reading and writing of poetry in schools and at home, as well as writing their own poems about public events and issues. For example, some Poets Laureate have held poetry workshops with children at famous places, such as Buckingham Palace. One day, you might have the opportunity to take part in an event with a Poet Laureate!

Comprehension questions

- 1 What is the role of a Poet Laureate?
- 2 Who can become a Poet Laureate?
- 3 Who is today's Poet Laureate for the United Kingdom?
- 4 For how long do poets keep their role as Poet Laureate?
- 5 Why was the appointment of today's Poet Laureate so significant?

LESSON 4: LIQUID HISTORY

RESOURCE 4.2



THE THAMES, LONDON 2012 **BY CAROL ANN DUFFY (B. 1955)**

History as water, I like back, remember it all.
You could say I drink to recall; run softly
till you end your song. I reflect. There was a whale
in me; a King's daughter livid in a boat.
A severed head
fell from its spike, splashed.
There was *Fire* –
birds flailed in me with burning wings –
Ice – a whole ox roasting where I froze, frost fair –
Fog – four months sunless, moonless, spooked
by ships –
Flood – I flowed into Westminster Hall
where lawyers rowed in wherries, worried –
Blitz – the sky was war; I filmed it. Cut.

I held the Marchioness.
My salmon fed apprentices
until I choked on sewage; my foul breath
shut Parliament.
There was lament
at every stroke of every oar
which dragged the virgin's barge downstream.
Always bells. Their timed sound, somewhen,
in my tamed tides, deep.
Caesar named me.
I taste the drowned.
A Queen sails now into the sun, flotilla
a thousand proud;
my dazzled surface gargling the crown.

Courtesy of Faber & Faber.

LESSON 4: LIQUID HISTORY

RESOURCE 4.3



THE RIVER THAMES: EVENTS AND IMAGES

A



RECONSTRUCTION DRAWING
OF LONDINIUM, C 200AD,
Alan Sorrell © Museum of London

The Romans founded London. Julius Caesar called the river Tamesa – ‘the flowing one’.

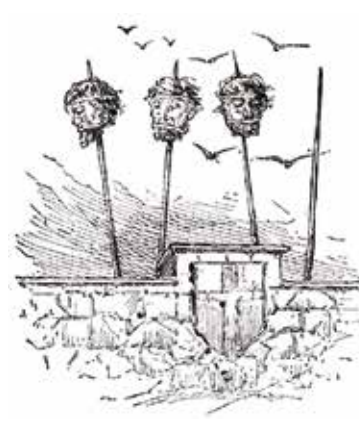
B



FROST FAIR, 1814
Luke Clennell © Museum of London

In the past the Thames froze solid in very cold winters. Frost fairs brought feasts, entertainers and even coffee houses onto the ice.

C



HEADS ON SPIKES ON LONDON
BRIDGE, *THE PRINCE AND THE
PAUPER*, 1882

Published by James R Osgood
& Company, Boston

The heads of prisoners executed at the Tower of London were displayed on spikes by London Bridge. In 1598 a German visitor to the city counted more than 30!

D



THE GREAT FIRE OF LONDON, 1666
Anonymous © Museum of London

During the Great Fire of London in 1666, burning birds fell from the sky into the waters of the river.

LESSON 4: LIQUID HISTORY

RESOURCE 4.3 CONTINUED

THE RIVER THAMES: EVENTS AND IMAGES



E



THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT,
c 1900-1909

Alvin Langdon Coburn
© Museum of London

In Victorian times smoke and fog mixed to create thick smog across the river and city.

F



THE 'SILENT HIGHWAY' - MAN
YOUR MONEY OR YOUR LIFE, 1858

John Leech © Museum of London

The sewage of Victorian London went straight into the river. Thousands of Londoners died because drinking water became poisoned.

G



DOCKLANDS ON FIRE AFTER A
HEAVY NIGHT'S BOMBING, 1940

Unknown © PLA collection/Museum
of London

During the Blitz of World War II the docks on the river were heavily bombed.

H



THE QUEEN ELIZABETH II DIAMOND
JUBILEE RIVER PAGEANT, 2012

© Steve Mann

The River Thames carried the largest procession of boats ever during the Diamond Jubilee River Pageant on 3 June 2012.

EXPLORE

Students will visit a section of the River Thames, using all their senses (sight, sound, taste, touch and smell) to absorb the atmosphere of the Thames. They will have the opportunity to see some of the iconic landmarks by the river and experience contrasting views up and down the river from the rivers' bridges. A number of related cultural destinations are suggested.

Students are encouraged to take photographs and/or video footage for use in their later work.



EXPLORE A RIVER VISIT



THE BIG IDEA

Students will absorb the sights, sounds and smells of the River Thames and nearby landmarks to inspire their own creative responses.



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

All students will be able to describe the Thames and its surroundings and draw on a range of appropriate vocabulary to support a creative piece of descriptive writing.

Most students will be able to recognise aspects of the imagery used in the selected texts.

Some students will find additional features of the Thames and its surroundings to extend the imagery used by the authors.



RESOURCES

- ♦ **Resource E1** (one per student)

YOU WILL ALSO NEED:

- ♦ Each student will need a notebook to jot down notes and sketch
- ♦ Cameras
- ♦ River map, ideally printed out at A3 size (one per student) if you are travelling to one of the suggested stretches of the Thames
- ♦ If you are going to a different location devise a list of landmarks students will be able to see up and down the Thames from their viewpoint in preparation.

EXPLORE

A RIVER VISIT

The activities could work on any stretch of the river, however a number of suggested destinations are set out below; areas which are linked to the texts or offer a range of relevant cultural opportunities.

Students will identify a variety of buildings and bridges, and will have the opportunity to cross some of these and look at the contrasting views up and down the river. They will look at the relationship between the river and the surrounding city.

Students will complete Resource E1 (page 54) to capture the atmosphere, focusing on what they can see, hear, feel, taste and smell. Using their trip to the Thames, they should take notes and photographs to help them recall their feelings when writing later on. These should be exploratory and draft, not final in any way. Photographs can be used alongside their written work, or simply to help them remember what they have seen.

In addition to the photographs, any items that are collected along the way can add to their creative writing.

By the end of the visit, students should have developed the initial vocabulary and ideas that will allow them in the next lesson to produce the planned outcome.



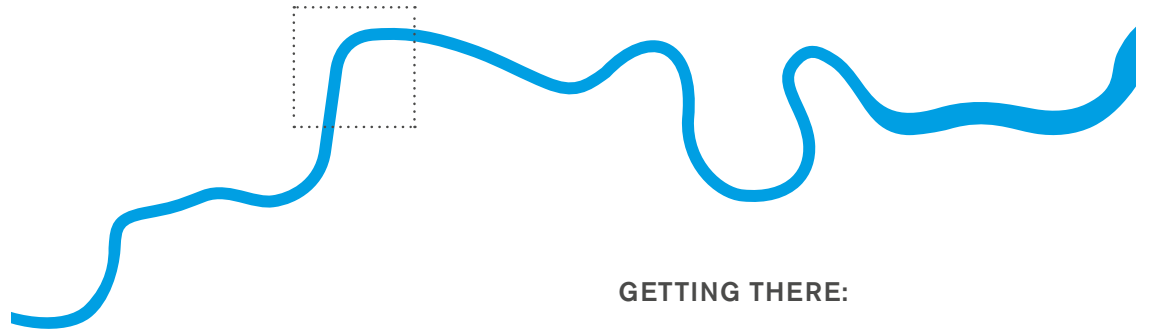
A RIVER VISIT

SUGGESTED DESTINATIONS FOR A RIVER VISIT

WESTMINSTER BRIDGE TO BLACKFRIARS BRIDGE



Wordsworth's viewpoint, Dickens' burial place and home to the UK's largest collection of contemporary poetry; this stretch of the river certainly has its literary connections. It is also the site of Parliament – students can imagine Duffy's river flooding Westminster and bringing Government to a halt with its 'foul breath', before its waters were finally 'tamed'.



GETTING THERE:



Westminster
Embankment
Temple
Waterloo



London Blackfriars
Waterloo

WESTMINSTER BRIDGE TO BLACKFRIARS BRIDGE



NORTH BANK LANDMARKS

1

PALACE OF WESTMINSTER (HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT)



The Palace that Wordsworth would have seen was largely destroyed in a fire in 1834 (although the medieval Westminster Hall survived).

2

WESTMINSTER BRIDGE



Today's bridge was built 60 years after Wordsworth enjoyed the view. It is painted green to match the chairs in the House of Commons, in Parliament (Lambeth Bridge is painted red, to match the chairs in the House of Lords.)

3

WESTMINSTER ABBEY



Charles Dickens' grave and Wordsworth's statue can be found in Poets' Corner. Many other writers, playwrights and poets are buried or commemorated here.

4

THE LOCATION OF HUNGERFORD STAIRS



HUNGERFORD STAIRS, 1820
George Harley
© Museum of London

Charles Dickens worked 10-hour days at Hungerford Stairs, a site nearby today's Charing Cross Station.

5

CLEOPATRA'S NEEDLE



© Cedric Weber

The ancient Egyptian obelisk has survived 3,500 years. It was presented to Britain in 1819 by the Viceroy of Egypt. The Sphinxes that guard it still bear visible bomb damage from the Blitz of the Second World War.

6

SAVOY HOTEL



© George Green

Monet spent many months staying at the Savoy and painting the River Thames between 1899 and 1901. (One of Monet's paintings of the River Thames is included in the Riverscape London Curriculum unit.)

7

THE COURTAULD GALLERY



SOMERSET HOUSE, 1825
John Paul © Museum of London

The art gallery is located at Somerset House which, before the building of the Embankment, stood directly on the river. The collection ranges from the early Renaissance to the 20th century.

10

THE LONDON EYE



Built to celebrate the turn of the Millennium, the wheel symbolises the passing of time, from one Millennium into the next.

9

THE SOUTHBANK



Regenerated after the Second World War as part of the 1951 Festival of Britain, the Southbank is now an important arts centre. It includes the Saison Poetry Library, which contains the largest collection of modern and contemporary poetry in the UK.

8

SITE OF THE LAST FROST FAIR



FROST FAIR, 1814
Luke Clennell © Museum of London

The last frost fair took place in 1814 on this stretch of the Thames. The ice was so thick an elephant was led across the frozen Thames by Blackfriars Bridge!

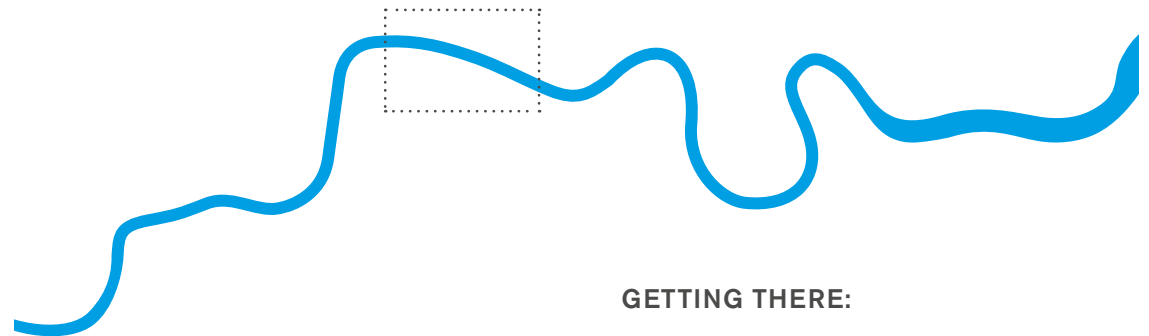
A RIVER VISIT

SUGGESTED DESTINATIONS FOR A RIVER VISIT

MILLENNIUM BRIDGE TO TOWER BRIDGE



The famous dome of St Paul's Cathedral, Wilde's 'bubble o'er the town' stands as the symbolic heart of the City. This stretch of the river has witnessed London's long history, the Romans, imagined by Conrad, settled here. This is Shakespeare's London, the site of the Globe Theatre.



GETTING THERE:



Cannon Street
Monument
Tower Hill
Southwark
London Bridge



Blackfriars
London Bridge

MILLENNIUM BRIDGE TO TOWER BRIDGE



NORTH BANK LANDMARKS

10

MILLENNIUM BRIDGE



The bridge was designed to look like a 'blade of light' across the river when it is illuminated. It opened in 2000 but shut two days later because it wobbled when people walked across it! It reopened two years later.

9

ST PAUL'S CATHEDRAL



Today's cathedral was completed in 1710, after the old cathedral burnt down in the Great Fire of London. It was designed by Sir Christopher Wren. The dome is one of the largest cathedral domes in the world.

8

THE MONUMENT



The Great Fire of London started not far from London Bridge. The Monument designed by Sir Christopher Wren, and built in 1677 commemorates it. The Golden orb at the top symbolises the flames of the fire.

7

TOWER OF LONDON



The White Tower, the central building, was built by William the Conqueror. The Tower has been a fortress, a palace, an astronomical observatory and a zoo! It was a place of execution and still is the home of the Crown Jewels.

SOUTH BANK LANDMARKS

1

TATE MODERN



Housed in a former power station, Tate holds the national collection of British art from 1500 to the present day and international modern and contemporary art.

2

SHAKESPEARE'S GLOBE



The reconstruction of Shakespeare's theatre opened a few hundred metres from the theatre's original site.

3

FROST FAIR POETRY



The frost fairs are celebrated in pictures and poetry carved on slate panels on the walls of the Southwark Bridge underpass.

4

SOUTHWARK CATHEDRAL



The cathedral was visited by Shakespeare. Scenes from his plays are shown in the stained-glass windows.

5

THE SPIKE



The spike commemorates the executed criminals and traitors whose heads were displayed on spikes at the south end of London Bridge.

6

TOWER BRIDGE

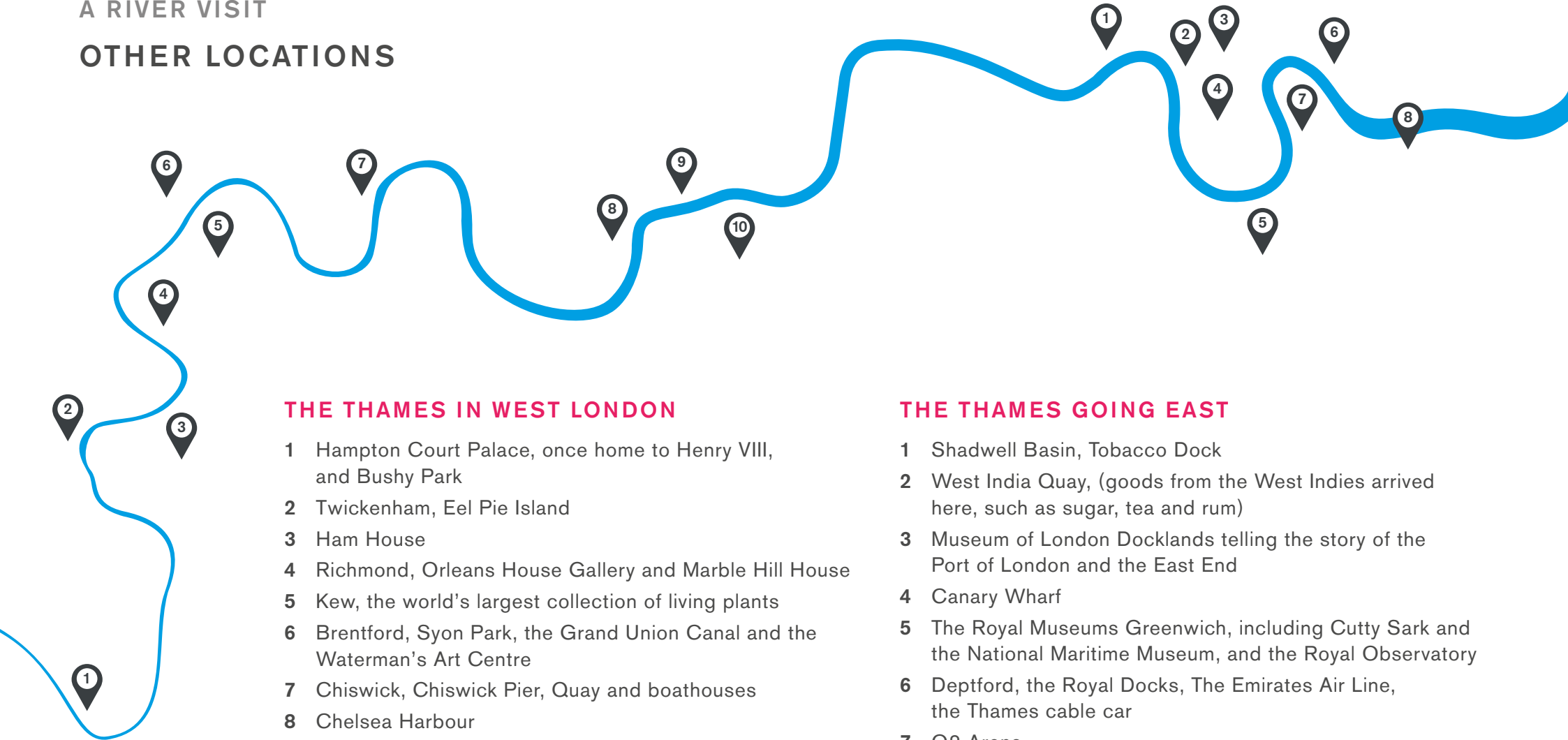


© Daryl Rozario

Tower Bridge was finished in 1894 and is the only bridge across the Thames that opens in the middle, to let tall ships pass.

A RIVER VISIT

OTHER LOCATIONS



THE THAMES IN WEST LONDON

- 1 Hampton Court Palace, once home to Henry VIII, and Bushy Park
- 2 Twickenham, Eel Pie Island
- 3 Ham House
- 4 Richmond, Orleans House Gallery and Marble Hill House
- 5 Kew, the world's largest collection of living plants
- 6 Brentford, Syon Park, the Grand Union Canal and the Waterman's Art Centre
- 7 Chiswick, Chiswick Pier, Quay and boathouses
- 8 Chelsea Harbour
- 9 Chelsea Physic Garden
- 10 Battersea Park

THE THAMES GOING EAST

- 1 Shadwell Basin, Tobacco Dock
- 2 West India Quay, (goods from the West Indies arrived here, such as sugar, tea and rum)
- 3 Museum of London Docklands telling the story of the Port of London and the East End
- 4 Canary Wharf
- 5 The Royal Museums Greenwich, including Cutty Sark and the National Maritime Museum, and the Royal Observatory
- 6 Deptford, the Royal Docks, The Emirates Air Line, the Thames cable car
- 7 O2 Arena
- 8 Thames Barrier

A RIVER VISIT

USEFUL INFORMATION



MAPS

A series of leaflets and maps covering the Thames Path Walk

www.walklondon.org.uk/leaflets.asp?Route=6

Self-guided walks and tours near the river

www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/visiting-the-city/walks-tours-and-architecture/Pages/default.aspx

The Discover London Trails, including a self-guided walk of the docklands

www.culture24.org.uk/places-to-go/london/tra46697

Self-guided walks including the Pool of London

www.walklondon.com



OTHER USEFUL LINKS

www.westminster-abbey.org/visit-us/highlights/poets-corner

www.courtauld.ac.uk/gallery/index.shtml

www.poetrylibrary.org.uk/learning/learningresourcesandvisits

www.stpauls.co.uk/Learning-Education

www.themonument.info

www.tate.org.uk/visit/tate-modern

www.hrp.org.uk/TowerOfLondon

www.museumoflondon.org.uk/docklands

A RIVER VISIT

RESOURCE E1



MY EXPERIENCE OF THE THAMES

Imagine you are a writer, like Dickens or Wordsworth, and you are seeking inspiration for your next piece of writing. You are fascinated by the Thames, which in your mind is like a living and breathing being. Use the questions below to help you record your experience of the Thames. You will need this information to help you with your creative writing in the next classroom lesson. Don't forget to take photographs or draw sketches of what you can see!

- 1 Where are you looking out?
- 2 What time of day is it?
- 3 What buildings can you see? Describe them in a short sentence.
- 4 What effect is the weather having on the Thames or buildings surrounding the river?
- 5 How is the river moving? Describe it as if it were an animal!
- 6 Can you see anything reflected in the water? What effect do the ripples of the water have on the image?

A RIVER VISIT

RESOURCE E1 CONTINUED



7 Are there any people around?
How are they moving and where do you think they are going?

8 What colours can you see and what do they make
you think of?

9 What can you hear? Does this remind you of anything?

10 What can you smell? Does this remind you of anything?

11 How do you feel?

12 Which author do you feel like and why?

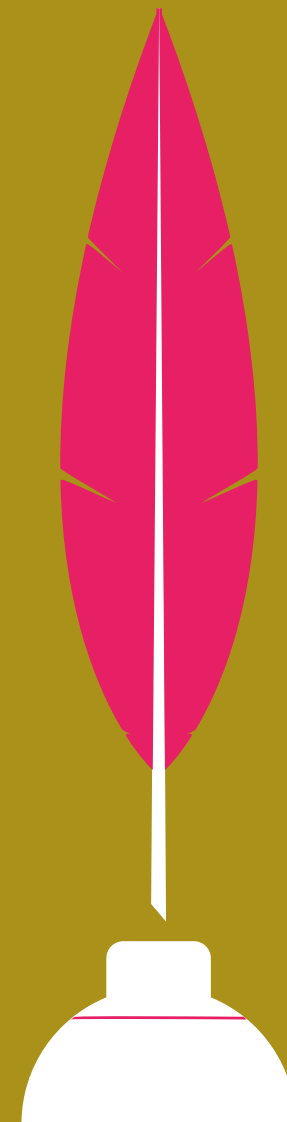
13 Can you see parts of their imagery from where you
are standing?

14 Can you imagine the view in front of you a hundred years ago?
Or a thousand years ago? What would be different?
What would be the same?

CONNECT

In this section, students will revisit some of the stimuli, vocabulary and ideas collected during their visit to the Thames. Students will then plan for and produce a piece of imaginative writing. In doing so, they will consider the effect they are attempting to create for their reader, and the atmosphere they are trying to evoke.

Students can choose to present their work in a couple of different ways: as a reading to the class or simply as a displayed piece of writing.



LESSON 5 RIVER WRITING



BIG IDEA

The purpose of this lesson is for students to create a description of their own experience of visiting the Thames, using the techniques they have studied in the works of Wordsworth, Wilde, Dickens, Conrad, Selvon and Duffy.



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

All students will create a piece of descriptive writing that presents an image of their Thames.

Most students will understand how their choice of vocabulary creates a desired effect on their readers.

Some students will be able to create their own metaphors as part of their descriptive writing.



RESOURCES

- ♦ Students will need the worksheets they completed as part of their visit to the Thames.
- ♦ **Worksheet 5.1** (for differentiation – one each)

LESSON 5: RIVER WRITING

ACTIVITIES

STARTER

Begin with a class discussion of the visit – what did students find most interesting, surprising, impressive, unpleasant, and so forth?

Revisit the texts to compare with their own experiences, drawing out what has been learnt from studying the poems and prose extracts.

MAIN

Using their worksheets from the day, including any photographs or items they collected, students should plan their pieces of descriptive writing. Encourage them to think from the point of view of their reader – what effect are they trying to create, what atmosphere are they trying to evoke?

Students will need to plan, draft, edit and produce a final piece. This should take the duration of the rest of the lesson and a final version could be written up for homework.

Differentiation

A creative writing rubric is included in the teaching resources pack to support students organise their ideas and word choice.

PLENARY

Give students an opportunity to read some of their work aloud to the class. Encourage others to give some feedback. What images did they particularly enjoy? Is it similar to their writing?

Homework idea

Ask students to complete their creative writing for homework. It should be presented neatly, so that it can be displayed. Alternatively, students could practice reading it aloud so that they can read it to the class.

Assessment questions

Mark to school's own creative writing rubric.

Suggested follow-up

Teachers and/or parents/carers could extend this sequence of lessons to incorporate visits to a range of sections of the River Thames and its immediate environs and/or the Thames' tributaries. This will enhance pupils' understanding of the River Thames and its importance in the development of the City of London.

Students could undertake a sequence of related activities exploring different sections of the river – for example, the Docklands, the Thames Barrier, the City, River landmarks, churches and palaces on the Thames, etc.

Students could visit a related museum or gallery, including: National Maritime Museum, Museum of London Docklands/Museum of London. Additionally, students could search for related artworks, including: paintings of the Thames in the National Gallery by Canaletto and in the Tate Britain by Turner and Whistler.

Students could listen to music composed to evoke watery landscapes, including Handel's *Water Music*. Additionally there are online resources that enable students to listen to poems read aloud, including readings of the *Fire Sermon* from *The Wasteland* by T.S. Eliot.

Students can experiment with the nature of representation in a wide variety of media – for example, story, poetry, film, art photo-montage, factual writing, travel writing, etc.

Parents/carers might also wish to take their children on one of the 'mud-larking' activities available.

LESSON 5: RIVER WRITING

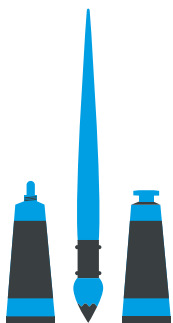
RESOURCE 5.1



CREATIVE WRITING RUBRIC

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DESCRIBE?	WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT WORDS YOU WANT TO INCLUDE IN YOUR DESCRIPTION?	HOW DID IT MAKE YOU FEEL?	HAVE A GO AT WRITING A SENTENCE ABOUT IT!
Water	Flow Ripple (they looked like the scales of a fish) Bright blue	Cool Refreshed	The bright blue river flowed beneath my two feet. Covered in scales, the ripples cooled my toes and refreshed my dry mouth.

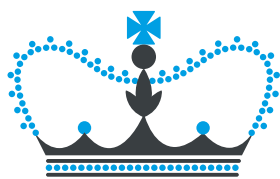
LINKS TO OTHER LONDON CURRICULUM SUBJECTS



ART AND DESIGN

Riverscape explores the history of the River Thames as an inspiration for artists. Comparisons can be drawn between the art and literature of the Romantic period. The unit also includes a trip to the river which could be planned jointly.

The art of walking features architecture and public art in five areas of London, including the river, so again offers the opportunity for a cross-curricular visit.



HISTORY

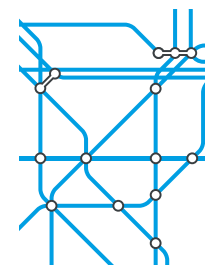
Social reform in Victorian London explores life in Victorian London so supports student understanding about the lives of a number of the writers featured in this unit. Charles Dickens' contribution to city life is explored in some depth and the unit suggests a visit to the Charles Dickens Museum.



MUSIC

Sounds of the city features a number of compositions that take the River Thames as a focus, including Handel's Music for the Royal Fireworks and The Kinks' *Waterloo Sunset*.

Global city explores the musical impact of London's maritime heritage.



GEOGRAPHY

Mapping London explores the role of the Thames in the human geography of the city, from London's Roman roots to today's flood defences.

REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READING

**Peter Ackroyd, *Thames: Sacred River*,
Vintage Books, 2008**

An exploration of the River Thames and its history from prehistoric times to the present day, the boats and bridges, docks and palaces, culture and legends. Chapter 12 provides an overview of art, writing and songs inspired by the river.

**Ed Glinert, *Literary London*,
Penguin Books, 2007**

A street-by-street exploration of London's literary heritage with a section covering the literary connections of the River Thames.

Jonathan Schneer, *The Thames*, Abacus, 2005

The story of the Thames and its role at the heart of English history.

**David Long, *A History of London in 100 Places*,
Oneworld, 2014**

From Roman London to the modern metropolis, a journey through the history of the city through its landmarks and little known locations. A helpful read if looking for places to visit as part of a trip to the river in central London.

USEFUL LINKS

The Thames Explorer Trust

The Thames Explorer Trust is an educational charity which promotes access to the Thames from source to sea. The charity runs education programmes, family activities, foreshore walks and training for teachers.

www.thames-explorer.org.uk

The Thames Discovery Programme

The Thames Discovery Programme aims to communicate an understanding and informed enjoyment of the historic Thames to the widest possible audience. The website provides a photographs and films, historical and research resources and information about events.

www.thamesdiscovery.org

Totally Thames

Delivered by the Thames Festival Trust, Totally Thames is an exciting new, month-long celebration of the river across its 42 London miles.

www.totallythames.org

Rivers of the World

Rivers of the World is the Thames Festival Trust's flagship, year-round, international education programme, delivered in partnership with the British Council's Connecting Classrooms.

www.totallythames.org/get-involved/project/rivers-of-the-world

Walk London

Funded by Transport for London (TfL) Walk London has worked with the local authorities to develop a network of walking routes. The Thames Path and the Jubilee Walkway are both relevant.

A free archive of circa 70 poems about the Thames:

www.thames.me.uk/thamespoems.htm

CREDITS

The GLA would like to thank the following organisations for their contribution:

Our collaborators on
The London Curriculum



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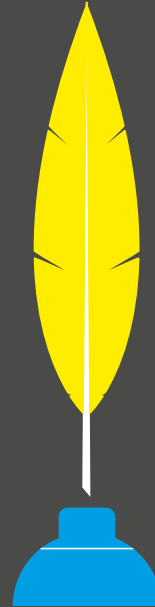
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“We’re learning about London in English and History
and it makes me feel proud to be a Londoner”

key stage 3 student

“The level is appropriate for KS3 students and will
match the levels expected from the new national curriculum too”

key stage 3 teacher

“The idea of using London as a teaching resource has never been explored
much before, so both students and teachers are excited about it”

key stage 3 teacher