

Jack the Ripper Coursework

A six week teaching segment that will cover the main aspects of the three questions in assignment one. There should be four lessons that directly link to each of the questions and homework time should be given to the writing of draft coursework answers.

Assignment One: Objective 1

1. Describe law and order in London in the late nineteenth century. (15)
2. Why did the Whitechapel murders attract so much attention in 1888? (15)
3. Why were the police unable to catch Jack the Ripper? (20)

(Total: 50 marks)

L1: Development/role of the Metropolitan Police Force during the 19th century.

- The growing problems with popular protest movements such as Chartism and the Corn Law League frightened the British government into wanting an organised police force.
- The role of Peel in establishing a preventative police presence in London in 1829 with a Metropolitan Police Bill rather than a punitive one as a deterrent measure against rising crime statistics.

L2: The Role and Reputation of the Metropolitan Police Force in London.

- Crime and disorder in London were to be controlled by preventive patrols.
- Crime prevention was not the only business of the new police force as they inherited many functions of the old watchmen.
- Responsible for lighting lamplights.
- Made to call out the time ("Two in the morning and all's well").
- Watching out for fires.
- Providing other public services.
- "Bobbies" or "Peelers" were not immediately popular, as contemporary accounts show. Most citizens viewed constables as an infringement on English social and political life, and people often jeered the police.
- For a long time detective police officers, working in plain-clothes, were seen as symptomatic of an intrusive system of spies and surveillance that was considered the hallmark of continental, especially French, police forces, and something that had no place in England.

L3: Categories of 19th Century Crimes

- Crimes against the person – murder, manslaughter, violence, garrotting and sexual crimes like rape.
- Crimes against the authority – treason, rebellion, protest and rioting.
- Crimes against the property – pick pocketing and petty theft.

L4: The Penal System in Victorian London and success of the Police.

- First, the primary means of policing was conspicuous patrolling by uniformed police officers.
- The fear of capital punishment – gallows, public execution and the Tyburn Jig.
- The fear of transportation – Australia – often seen as desirable by many convicts wanting to start a new life abroad.
- The purpose and nature of imprisonment – Newgate and Pentonville Prisons.

- There can be no clear way of determining the success of the police but the nineteenth century saw a widespread dispersal of criminals out of London. This shows that they either feared or respected the new Metropolitan Police Force.
- The police were effective against Chartist protests in April 1848.

L5: Whitechapel – Hotbed of Crime and Vice.

- The East End of London was an area that was both economically and socially different to the rest of the Victorian city.
- For the most part the people who lived in this East End were the working poor, those who worked occasionally, those who did not work at all, and criminals.
- Prostitution was one of the only reliable means through which a single woman or widow could maintain herself.
- There were over 200 common lodging houses in Whitechapel, accommodating almost 9,000 people. The sleeping rooms were often infested with vermin and insects. If a woman had not earned enough money that day to pay for a bed for the night, she would have to find someone who would let her sleep with him in return for sexual favours. Otherwise she slept on the street.

L6: Analysis of the 'Ripper' victims and the Modus Operandi.

- We credit 'Jack' with five specific murders of prostitutes but he may have been responsible for more
- Jack the Ripper's MO (Modus Operandi) was to kill prostitutes by cutting their throat from left to right and then he would mutilate the body – his ferocity increased as the murders progressed. The mutilation was thought by doctors (carrying out autopsies on the victims) to have some medical knowledge because the Ripper used his knife swiftly and carried out dissections, although other doctors disagreed.
- Victims in 1888 - Mary Ann Nichols - August 31, Annie Chapman - September 8, Elizabeth Stride - September 30, Catherine Eddowes - September 30, Mary Jane Kelly - November 9.

L7: The police's reaction to the 'Ripper' murders.

- It is important to remember that murdered prostitutes were hardly the news or respectable side of London society so the police gave them a low priority at first.
- The police officers working the case were constantly changed making it difficult for the continuity of investigation.
- Police officers often interfered with evidence - Sir Charles Warren's (Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police) decision to erase all trace of a 'Ripper' message by rubbing it out, at his insistence of it somehow causing "*religious trouble*". His actions were made even more extraordinary in the fact that he had acted out of his jurisdiction, as the crime had occurred in the City of London.

L8: The Press Coverage of the 'Ripper' murders.

- The murders of Jack the Ripper in the autumn of 1888 were confined to a small area of London's East End, but similarly provoked a nation-wide panic whipped up by press sensationalism.
- Violence, especially violence with a sexual frisson, sold newspapers.
- The Press received a 'Dear Boss Letter' but did not believe it. The editors treated the letter as a hoax and did not send it to the police for a couple of days. The night after the police finally received the letter, Liz Stride and Kate Eddowes were murdered.
- It was at this time that the panic was at its height and the notoriety of the murders was becoming truly international, appearing in newspapers from Europe to the Americas. Even at

this early stage the newspapers were carrying theories as to the identity of the killer, including doctors, slaughterers, sailors, and lunatics of every description.

- The murders created major public outcry in its short span, but it wasn't until details of the second murder were released that the media circus started hounding the police and speculating on who the 'Ripper' might be.

L9: Ingenious or Insane – Ripper Character.

- The cleverness of the Ripper – after all he never got caught.
- The fact that he managed to choose different locations for his murders – but they were always very close to both public and police scrutiny.
- The 'Rippers' ability to move quickly around the city in an unobtrusive manner – suggested prosperity and the ownership of transport.
- The 'Ripper' obviously blended in well with the background of Whitechapel.
- Was all of his guile just a co-incidence – was he just a mad lunatic after all.

L10: False starts and Red Herrings in the 'Ripper' Case.

- Hundreds of letters allegedly from the murderer were sent to the police, news agencies and individuals associated with solving the crimes.
- In the blind fear-inspired rage of the local inhabitants, they looked for scapegoats and seized on the growing Jewish community as a target. A few facts careened out of proportion in the minds of a largely unsophisticated Whitechapel populace.

L11: Jack the Ripper Suspects in Victorian London.

- This is a list of the following qualities that the police felt that the 'Ripper' suspect must have:
- a white male;
- average or below average height;
- between 20 – 40 years old;
- did not dress as a labourer or homeless person;
- Had accommodation in the East End of London;
- Possibly had medical connections;
- May have been a foreigner;
- Right handed;
- Had a regular job as murders took place at the weekend;
- Was single so that he could commit the murders.
- Royal Conspiracy;
- Maybrick Diaries;
- Michael Ostrog;
- Kominski;
- Montague Druitt.

L12: The eventual limitations of CID and the failure to catch the murderer.

- Police today have developed elaborate profiling techniques to identify serial killers and have amassed a database of information with which forensic psychologists and psychiatrists can determine the kind of individual perpetrating the crime.
- In 1888, the police were ignorant of sexual psychopaths. They had seen nothing like the Ripper crimes in England in their experience.
- They may have failed, but they failed honourably, having made every effort and inquiry in their power to free London of the unknown terror.