

7.19 London in the Age of Industry (DBQ)

Sources: <https://www.londoncitybreak.com/history>; <http://www.localhistories.org/london.html>; <https://spartacus-educational.com/ITlondon.htm>

Background: London is located on the banks of the Thames River and is the seat of the Government of the United Kingdom. The Romans founded London about 50 AD. Its name comes from a Celtic word, Londinios, the place of the bold one. By the end of the 2nd century a 20-foot stone wall was erected around the town which served as the Roman capital of the province of Britannia. Rome abandoned London about 400 AD as the empire contracted. During the fourteenth century, London became a European trading hub and in the fifteenth century the center of a textile industry using wool. Its role continued to expand as the sixteenth century voyages of discovery in the Americas, colonization, the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and trade with Africa and East Asia, made London and Great Britain the center of a global political and financial empire. The changes were reflected in the rapidly expanding size of the city's population. In 1665, the boundaries of the city remained inside its ancient walls as it suffered through epidemic diseases and serious fires. Over the next one hundred years the city was rebuilt and expanded in area. In the first half of the 19th century the Industrial Revolution drew millions of people to London and created new problems including slums, poverty, a cholera epidemic in 1832, and the failure of its sanitation system in 1858.

Instructions: Answer the guiding questions and use the background information, photographs, maps, charts, and readings to write a 500-word history of the city of London from Roman times through the start of the 20th century.

A. London Population Chart

1500	50–100,000	█
1550	120,000	█
1600	200,000	█
1650	350,000–400,000	█
1700	550,000–600,000	█
1750	700,000	█
1801	959,300	█
1831	1,655,000	█
1851	2,363,000	█
1891	5,572,012	█
1901	6,506,954	█

Questions

1. Why was the population of London prior to 1750 often shown as a range?
2. What was the estimated population of London in 1500?
3. What was the population of London in 1901?
4. In which time span on the chart did London's population grow the most?

B. The Tower of London remains a symbol of the British monarchy. The original White Tower was built by William the Conqueror in 1078 as a royal residence. It was used as a prison, mostly for high ranking officials who fell into disfavor, from 1100 until 1952. The British Crown Jewels have been housed there since the reign of Henry III (1216–1272).

Question: How do buildings like the Tower of London serve as a symbol of the monarchy and the nation?



A 15th century manuscript depicts the Tower of London behind a fortified wall.



A photo of the Tower of London today. The surrounding walls were built in the 13th century.

C. London in Maps (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_London)

Question: As viewed on these maps, how did London change between 1561 and 1741?

	London (1561)
	London (1741)

D. Working-class Poverty. Question: What was life like in the industrial era slums of London?

Charles Dickens described London slums in newspaper essays published as *Sketches By Boz* (1836).



The stranger who finds himself in 'The Dials' for the first time . . . will see enough around him to keep his curiosity and attention awake for no inconsiderable time. From the irregular square into which he has plunged, the streets and courts dart in all directions, until they are lost in the unwholesome vapour which hangs over the house-tops, and renders the dirty perspective uncertain and confined; and lounging at every corner, as if they came there to take a few gasps of such fresh air as has found its way so far, but is too much exhausted already, to be enabled to force itself into the narrow alleys around, are groups of people, whose appearance and dwellings would fill any mind but a regular Londoner's with astonishment.

On one side, a little crowd has collected round a couple of ladies, who having imbibed the contents of various 'three-outs' of gin and bitters in the course of the morning, have at length differed on some point of domestic arrangement, and are on the eve of settling the quarrel satisfactorily, by an appeal to blows, greatly to the interest of other ladies who live in the same house, and tenements adjoining, and who are all partisans on one side or other.

George Sims described a poor London family, *How the Poor Live* (1889): I was the other day in a room occupied by a widow women, her daughters of seventeen and sixteen, her sons of fourteen and thirteen, and two younger children. Her wretched apartment was on the street level, and behind it was a common yard of the tenement. For this room, the widow paid four and sixpence a week; the walls were mildewed and steaming with damp; the boards as you trod upon them made the slushing noise of a plant spread across a mud puddle in a brickfield. Of all the evils arising from this one room system there is perhaps none greater than the utter destruction of innocence in the young. A moment's thought will enable the reader to appreciate the evils of it. But if it is bad in the case of a respectable family, how much more terrible is it when the children are familiarised with actually immorality. It is my shutting our eyes to evils that we allow them to continue unreformed for so long. I maintain that such cases as these are fit ones for legislative protection. The State should have the power of rescuing its future citizens from such surroundings, and the law which protects young children from practical hurt should also be so framed as to protect them from moral destruction. It is better that the ratepayers should bear a portion of the burden of new homes for the respectable poor than that they should have to pay twice as much in the long-run for prisons, lunatic asylums and workhouses.

E. 19th Century London in Photographs



Question: How was 19th century London “two cities”?