

The River Thames



Where Does it Start?



The source of the River Thames (referred to as 'Thames Head') is 3.5 miles south west of Cirencester. It is the longest river entirely in England.

It is marked by a large stone which says:

**'The conservation of the River Thames
1857 - 1974.'**

**This stone was placed here to mark
the source of the River Thames.'**

The source of the Thames is 108.5m above sea level.

River Thames Fact File



Length:

346km

Source:

Cirencester

Mouth:

Thames Estuary

Flows to:

North Sea

Passes through:

Oxford, Reading,
Henley-on-Thames
and Windsor

Uses:

rowing, sailing,
swimming, fishing,
transportation

London Bridge



Often confused with Tower Bridge, the original bridge was built in 1830 and made famous by the song 'London Bridge is Falling Down'.

In 1967 it was dismantled (it was not able to cope with the increasing traffic) and sold to Robert P. McCulloch from London, who had it moved brick by brick and reconstructed in Arizona, USA.

Tower Bridge



Tower Bridge was opened in 1894, and at the time was the largest bascule bridge in the world. The bascules are the two central lower parts that lift up for tall boats and ships to pass under the bridge.

It took 8 years to build, 432 construction workers and 11000 tons of steel. It is an iconic building in London and is known around the world as well as playing host to events such as the London Marathon.

Stink and Stench

For many years, most of the city's rubbish, food and toilet waste was dumped in the river!



In 1858, the smell coming from the river was so disgusting that Parliament (which is on the banks of the Thames) had to be suspended. Consequently, the government decided to find a way to rid the Thames of sewage. Along came Sir Joseph Bazalgette who built a sewerage system for London.

Frozen History



Before the 19th century, cold winter temperatures would sometimes freeze the surface of the Thames. 'Frost Fairs' would be held on the ice, where Londoners could dance, skate and drink. The last fair was in 1814 and it appears unlikely there will ever be another one because the river now flows too quickly for the water to freeze.

Thames Frost Fair, 1683-84, Thomas Wyke

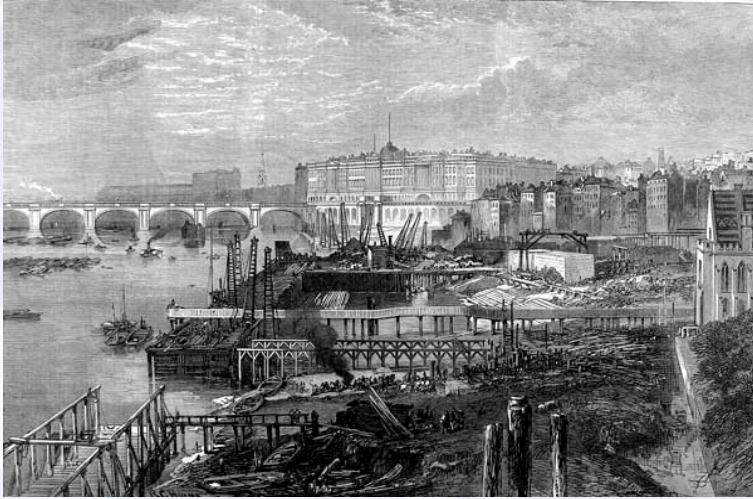
The Tower of London



Since 1066, when William the Conqueror founded it, The Tower of London has stood on the North bank of the Thames. Over its long history, the Tower of London has hosted Kings and Queens as well as being a prison. Today it houses the crown jewels and some beefeaters.

People and goods arrived and left via the River Thames, through a door in the walls called the Sallyport.

Transportation



The Thames had an important role in the transportation of goods and people. During Tudor times, London prospered as a port and a centre of world trade, and in 1510 Henry VIII granted licenses to watermen giving them exclusive rights to carry passengers on the river. Interestingly, it was also the River Thames that hosted Henry VIII's final journey as his body was taken by boat from Whitehall (where he died) to Windsor.

The Thames Tunnel



The Thames Tunnel is an underwater tunnel travelling 23m below the river from Rotherhithe to Wapping.

It is 11m wide, 6m high and 396m long.

It was built by Marc Isambard Brunel and his son Isambard Kingdom Brunel between 1825 and 1843 using the, then newly invented, tunnelling shield.

The tunnel was supposed to be used for horse-drawn carriages, but it never was. Now it is part of the London Overground railway and owned by Transport for London.

The Boat Race



Every Spring, there is a rowing race of 6.8km between Oxford and Cambridge universities along The River Thames from Putney to Mortlake.

The first race was in 1829 for the men in Henley on Thames following a challenge between old school friends. Since the second race in 1836 the contest has taken place in London. The women took part in their first race in 1927.

The record time over the course is 16 minutes 19 seconds, set by Cambridge in 1998.

The Thames Barrier



The Thames Barrier is downstream of central London. It was built in 1982 to prevent high tides flooding Greater London.

When needed, it is closed (raised) during high tide; at low tide it can be opened to allow the river once again to flow towards the sea.



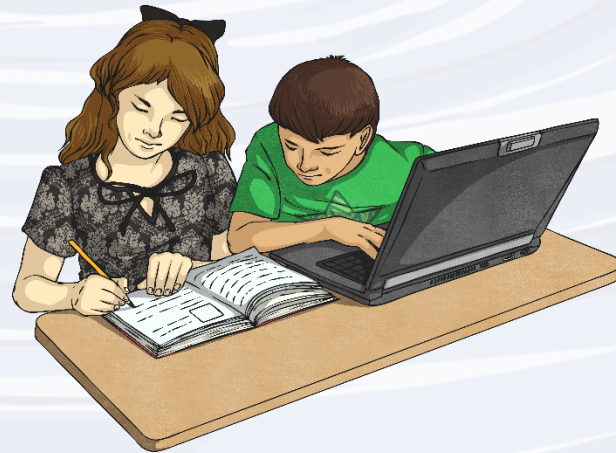
Activities

- Compare the Thames to your nearest river; research your river's history and uses.
- Create a Timeline of The River Thames.
- Draw a map of the river and plot the locations of the bridges
- Choose one of the pages in this presentation, do further research and create your own in-depth presentation.



Activities

- Make a TV, radio or newspaper report on one of the big events in the history of The Thames.
- Imagine you are an entrepreneur. What business would you start using the Thames? Leisure? Environmental? Sales? Entertainment? Where would your business be? Create advertising for your new business.





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