

Cambridge Experience Readers

Level 2

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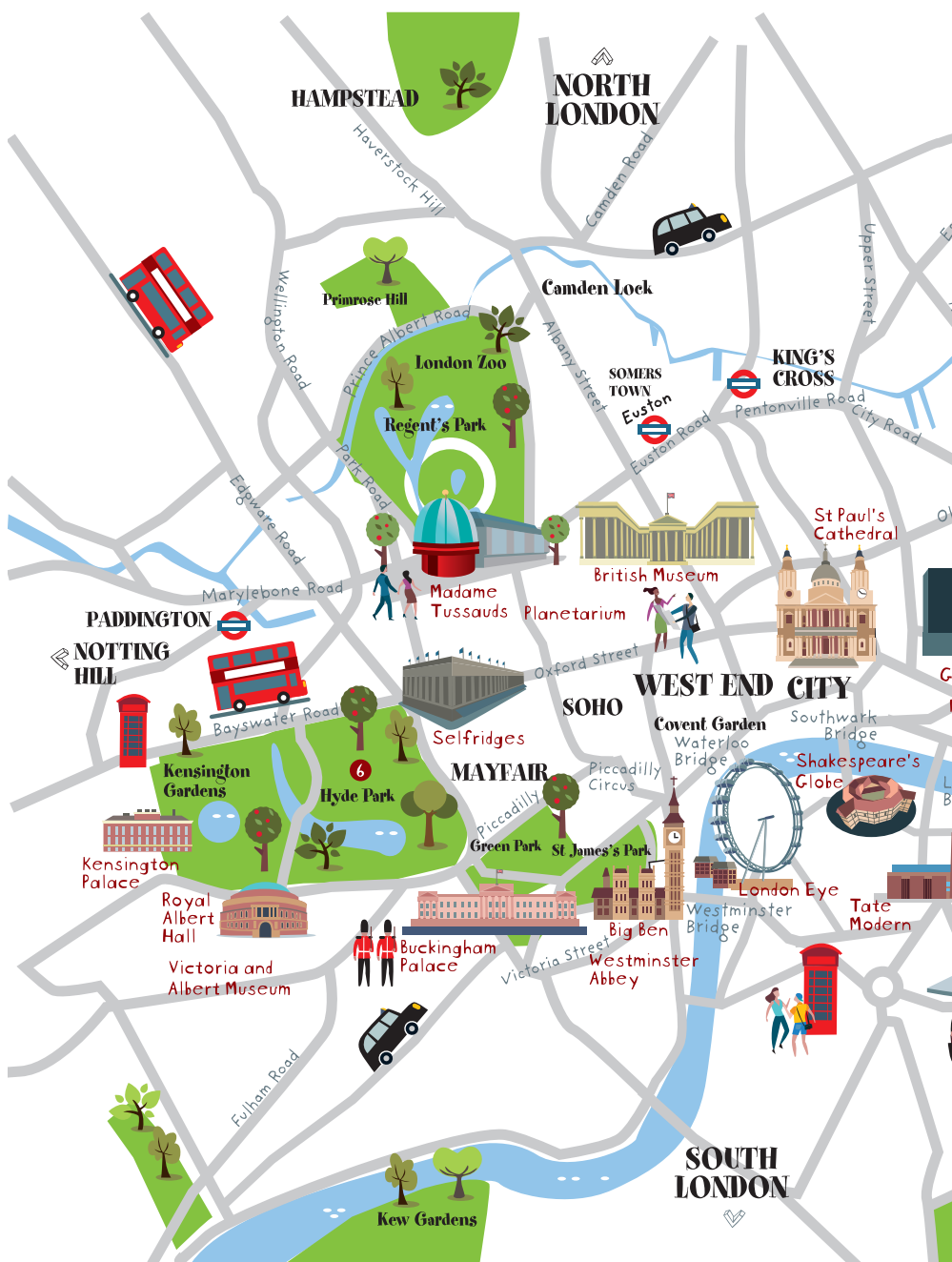
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Introduction

This is London



LONDON



Chapter 1

The river



The Millennium Bridge across the River Thames is for people not cars.

Every big city needs a big river. In London it is the River Thames. For hundreds of years, the river has brought people and trade¹ to London. And people and trade have made London famous, rich and very big.

The Romans came to England in ships in AD 43, and found a wide river. They travelled up the river as far as they could, until they were 80 kilometres from the sea. They had a look around and decided it was a good place. They could build a bridge and get water from the river for drinking and washing. They started to build a city, which they called *Londinium*. They called the river *Tamesis*, which means ‘wide water’.

Fifty years after the Romans arrived, 30,000 people lived in *Londinium*. By 1650 the city’s name was London and there were nearly half a million Londoners. The city traded

with America, Asia and Africa, and it became bigger and bigger. The Thames was much busier in the 1800s than it is today. Then, there were hundreds of boats on the river. A ship sometimes had to wait three or four days before it could get to the docks².



Ships still use the Thames for trade, but today's ships are too big to get to the city. They stop nearer the sea. The London docks began to close in the 1960s and in the 1990s the area became a business centre, with new train and Underground stations, and a small airport. It's called Canary Wharf, and there are lots of restaurants and cafés there, as well as the Museum of London.

Winter Fairs

Between 1500 and 1800, there was a Little Ice Age in northern Europe. The winters were very cold. In those days, the Thames was wider and not as deep, and the river often turned to ice³. Some years, Londoners had big fairs or parties

on the ice, between London Bridge and Blackfriars Bridge, which they called 'Frost Fairs'. It was like a market and you could buy tea, coffee and hot chocolate, and food. You could also play football, skate, ride horses and watch shows on the ice. The last Frost Fair was in 1814, when a man brought an elephant onto the ice.



Today there is a Winter Fair by the river every Christmas and you can also skate *near* the river at Somerset House. No one ever skates on the river today, because the water is too deep to become ice.



Dirty river

Big changes happened in London and the world between 1800 and 1900. This was the time of Queen Victoria, and the Victorian age is famous for new machines and big factories⁴. The factories needed workers, so many more people came to live in London. This was called the Industrial Revolution and it was not good for the Thames. A lot of rubbish⁵ went into the river. People drank the water from the river and many became sick. The fish died and the river smelt like old eggs. One hot summer, in 1858, the smell became so bad that the government⁶ had to leave its buildings by the river. The Victorians liked to find answers to problems, so they put pipes⁷ under the ground to take the rubbish up the river and out into the sea. But the problem didn't go away. The smell wasn't as bad and the government came back, but the sea brought the rubbish back to the city. Over the next hundred years, fish and plants died in the river. They could not live in the dirty water.

In the 1960s, London decided to clean up the Thames and bring it back to life. Today, the river is home to many different fish, as well as birds and other animals. It is now one of the world's cleanest city rivers.

Flood!

The river has flooded the city many times. One of the worst floods was in 1928, after a lot of snow and rain. In the early morning of 7th January, water ran over the river walls and into the streets and buildings.



My story

Sam, 14, and his family lived in a house next to Waterloo Bridge.

One night I woke up suddenly. My parents were shouting. I looked outside and there was water under our window. Was I dreaming? All along the street, people were climbing out of their upstairs windows into boats. A policeman brought his boat under our window. My mum and brothers climbed in first. I was getting into the boat when it suddenly turned. I fell into the water, which was black and icy. I couldn't swim and I went under the water. I could hear my mother's voice every time my head came out of the water. My dad took my arm and pulled me into the boat. I was very cold, but I wasn't dead. We spent the night in Waterloo Station. A month later they pulled our house down. We moved to a new house north of the river. It's nice, but I can't see the river. The river nearly killed me, but I still love it. I've learnt to swim now and next year, I'm going to start working at the docks.

The Thames Barrier

The 1928 flood was London's last big flood. Fourteen people died. Thousands of people lost their homes. Heavy snow started that flood. Heavy rain in the North Sea can be dangerous for London too. The sea can push water very fast up the river. In the 1980s, the city decided to build the Thames Barrier to stop the water getting too high. The Thames Barrier goes across the river in east London and is 520 metres wide. It has stopped more than 80 floods.



ACTIVITIES

1 Underline the correct words to complete the sentences.

- 1 The Romans arrived at Londinium in boats / on horses.
- 2 There were more ships on the Thames in 1814 / 2014.
- 3 Skating on the River Thames today is fun / not possible.
- 4 The government left its offices by the river in 1858 because of floods / the smell.
- 5 In 1960 the River Thames was dead / full of fish.
- 6 London has not flooded for 30 years because of good weather / the Thames Barrier.

2 Match the two parts of the sentences.

- 1 At Londinium, the Romans built a bridge ☒
 - 2 Sometimes ships had to wait three days to get ☐
 - 3 Once an elephant walked ☐
 - 4 In Queen Victoria's time, new train lines went ☐
 - 5 In 1858 the river smelt ☐
 - 6 In 1928 river water came ☐
- a underground.
 - b of old eggs.
 - c across the river.
 - d into Sam's house.
 - e on the Thames.
 - f to the docks.