

# Whitechapel c.1870-1900 Revision Guide

## SOCIAL ISSUES

### Poverty

- Poverty caused by low pay and unemployment. Caused poor living standards – overcrowding in slums
- **Great (Long) Depression, 1873** – period of economic recession that caused unemployment and high living costs
- **Charles Booth poverty survey** - found 35.7% East Londoners were living in poverty between 1889 and 1903

### Housing

- **'Rookeries'** - overcrowded slum areas which took up most of Whitechapel. Could be up to 30 people in one apartment and many people shared beds
- **Lodging houses** - Over 200, where more than 8,000 people lived (about a quarter of the population). They sometimes operated three sleeping shifts a day
- **Pollution and sanitation** - Very poor with little healthy drinking water and sewers that ran into the streets
- **Homelessness** - Around 1,000 people out of a population of 30,000
- **Peabody Estate, 1881** – Slum clearance programme resulting in 11 new blocks of flats. Reasonable rent meaning some labourers could live there (Set up by the Artisans' Dwellings Act 1875)

### Employment and workhouses

- **'Sweated' trades** - trades as tailoring, shoe-making, and making matches were common in Whitechapel. Employees worked in poor conditions for long hours and low wages
- **Casual labourers** – A worker hired by day or hour. Work was not guaranteed. This was common in Whitechapel.
- **Workhouses** - public institution in which the destitute of a parish received board and lodging in return for work. Inmates included the old, sick, disabled, orphans and unmarried mothers. Conditions were deliberately bad to discourage people from entering the workhouse
- **Casual Ward** - Those who could not afford a lodging house could go to the workhouse casual ward and work in return for a short stay. Jobs done in the casual ward would have been the worst of the lot, including breaking stones and picking oakum. There were 60 spaces in the Whitechapel workhouse casual ward
- **Dr Thomas Barnardo** - Opened orphanages to help children who would have been sent to the workhouse. By 1905 there were nearly 100 Barnardo's homes nationally, that cared for an average of 85 children each.

### Immigration

- **Irish immigrants** – number increased rapidly from the 1840s due to famine
- **Navvies** – Young Irish men who worked as Dockers on the River Thames or labourers on canals, roads and railways
- **Fenians** - a Catholic group who led the nationalist fight for Irish independence from the UK. Seen as a fanatical, religious terrorist group. Organised a bomb attack on Clerkenwell Prison in 1867, after which there was a huge surge of anti-Irish and anti-Catholic sentiment
  - Special Branch was formed to counter Irish terrorism.
- **Jewish immigration** - Increased in 1880s after a wave of violence and abuse against Jews in Russia, Poland and Germany, backed by the government, known as the pogroms.
- By 1888 the Jewish population in parts of Whitechapel was 95%. They were widely resented by the local population because of cultural linguistic differences and conflicting attitudes to work and business

### Politics

- **Anarchism** - In 1871 anarchists briefly took control of Paris, but when they failed many of the leaders fled to Britain. Some felt that East London was becoming a refuge for other countries' terrorists – anyone with an Eastern European accent or name was seen as a potential terrorist
- **Special Branch 1893** - began undercover operation to monitor Eastern European revolutionaries

### The growth of socialism

- **Social Democratic Federation (SDF), 1881** - represented agricultural and industrial labourers and women and wanted a revolution to bring down the capitalist system
- **Bloody Sunday, 1887** – Demonstration in Trafalgar Square involving the SDF that led to Bloody Sunday
- **London County Council elections, 1889** - it was hoped that Whitechapel would elect an SDF councillor.

## CRIME

Most of the crime was directly linked to poverty and unemployment – people would resort to crime rather than starve or go into the workhouse.

### Prostitution

- **Prostitutes ('unfortunates')** – it was harder for women to find work than men and some turned to prostitution. It was not illegal but was seen as a social problem that needed monitoring.
- In 1888, it was estimated there were 62 brothels and 1,200 prostitutes in Whitechapel.
- **Brothels** – houses where one or more women worked as prostitutes. Some could afford this while others who were homeless walked the streets, vulnerable to assault and rape
- **Abortions** – illegal but common due to lack of contraception. Many women died due to 'backstreet abortions'.

### Alcoholism

- **Alcoholism** – often the only escape from people's terrible lives but often led to violence and crime
- In one mile of Whitechapel Road there were 45 buildings serving as pubs or gin palaces selling affordable gin
- **Gin palaces** - a lavish bar selling gin
- **Opium dens** - a public room where opium was sold and smoked

### Gangs

- **Bessarabian Tigers and the Odessians** – examples of Eastern European immigrant gangs who stirred up violence
- **Protection rackets** - gangs demanded protection money from small business owners – anyone who refused to pay would have their shop or market stall smashed to pieces
- **Criminal gangs** - Many were too afraid to report gangs to the police

## POLICING

- Many cities, towns and counties had separate police forces. The home secretary (based in Westminster) only had control over the Metropolitan Police force in London
- The Metropolitan Police was made up of 13,319 men for a population in London of 5 million.
- **Watch committees** - groups of local politicians or law professionals set up to monitor local police forces.
- **The Criminal Investigation Department (CID)** - After a police corruption scandal in 1877 (the Trial of the Detectives) a barrister called Howard Vincent was appointed to set up the CID, in 1878, with 216 officers
- 15 CID officers worked in Whitechapel alongside H Division
- **Commissioner Charles Warren** - appointed Metropolitan Police Commissioner in 1886, following a series of strikes and demonstrations. Called in the army to control the protesters in Trafalgar Square on Bloody Sunday – criticised for being a bully
- **Police and social class** - People began to see the police in London as representatives of the government, and it was felt that they favoured the middle and upper classes.

### Policing in Whitechapel

- **H Division** - Run by a superintendent, a chief inspector, with the help of 27 inspectors and 37 sergeants, who supervised 500 ordinary officers for a population of 30,000
- **The beat** – the territory and time that a police constable patrolled. They were expected to stop and question people at night and write notes in their diary and were fined or dismissed for missing crimes.
- **Attitudes towards H Division** – In many deprived areas police were seen negatively, as upholders of unpopular government decisions and were attacked by gangs. They had a reputation for violence
- **Difficulties policing Whitechapel** – There was tension between people of different nationalities living in overcrowded rookeries.
- **Committing crimes** - the complex narrow alleys provided confined spaces, poor lighting and multiple entrances and exits for criminals to escape or hide.
- **Duties of the police** - Local authorities thought of constables as a kind of social worker and by the 1870s there were 82 government laws describing what the Metropolitan Police should do
- They had to deal with vagrancy, lunatics, pubs, street traffic, sewage and litter, coinage, children, runaway horses, fires and accidents which caused conflict with Whitechapel residents
- **Police and poor relief** - officers had to send people to the workhouse or children to school which caused hostility

### Case study: The Jack the Ripper murders

In 1888, five women were murdered in and around Whitechapel, thought to be by one person. The murderer was not caught but was nicknamed 'Jack the Ripper'

- Inspector Frederick Abberline and his CID team were assigned to assist H Division
- 300 letters and postcards sent to them/newspapers by men claiming to be the murderer
- The press published stories based on journalists' guesswork and unreliable interviews – the police had to follow up on these stories, wasting police time
- The press frequently portrayed suspects as 'foreign' – relying on negative stereotypes of Jewish immigrants
- Problem of police force rivalry
  - After the murder of Catherine Eddowes, a constable from H Division found a piece of Eddowes's apron half a mile away, and a chalk message saying 'The Juwes are the men that will not be blamed for nothing'
  - Commissioner Warren ordered the message to be washed off, possibly fearing a backlash against the Jewish community – but also possibly because he did not want to be beaten by the City of London Police.
- The police investigation
  - Following up on leads from the public
  - Using evidence from post mortems and coroners reports
  - Following up on direct leads from articles by investigating journalists
  - Following up on clues in the victims' possessions
  - Visiting lunatic asylums
  - Interviewing key witnesses
  - Setting up soup kitchens
  - Investigative methods became increasingly bizarre – including adopting disguises as prostitutes to lure the Ripper into a trap
- Newspapers and the public became increasingly critical of the police's apparent incompetence
- To counter the criticism, Chief Inspector Swanson made public a Home Office report on Metropolitan Police methods
- Obstacles to police success
  - Lack of forensic techniques – No fingerprinting, DNA evidence, blood analysis, no available mug shots, and very early crime scene photography
  - The Vigilance Committee
    - Set up by frustrated Whitechapel businessmen and traders in September 1888
    - Annoyed no reward had been offered – organised their own reward system
    - Took to the streets every night to make as much noise as possible in the vain hope of catching the Ripper in the act of murder
    - May have been SDF supporters who wanted to distract the police and make the government look bad in the run up to the London County Council elections.
- Lessons learnt and improvements to 1900
  - Improvements in technique
    - The Bertillon System, adopted in 1894: Combined physical measurements, photography and record-keeping to identify repeat criminals
  - Improvements in communication
    - In 1888 the police could only communicate from a distance by using a whistle
    - By the end of the century the Met were beginning to use telephone lines
    - H Division did not have a telephone line until 1901
    - H Division introduced bicycles in 1909
  - Improvements in the environment
    - The Whitechapel murders led to a change in thinking about the causes of crime – people saw a link between conditions and crime
    - The authorities began to improve health and housing, and street lighting was improved
    - The Houses of the Working Classes Act (1890) began housing development schemes to replace slums
    - The Public Health Amendment Act (1890) gave more powers to local council to improve sanitary services
- However, murders continued to occur regularly in the 1890s, hooliganism increased, and youths (pretending to be Jack the Ripper) frightened women.

# Whitechapel c.1870-1900 Writing Guide

There are 3 types of questions on the Whitechapel Paper:

- A 4 mark
- An 8 mark
- A 4 mark (follow up question)

## 4 mark questions

Four mark questions will ask you to describe two features of something. You need to have revised in detail in order to be able to answer this question. 4 mark questions are not hard, but if you haven't revised in depth, you won't have the facts to gain these easy marks

**E.g. Describe two features of the Whitechapel workhouses.**

Feature 1

*One feature of the Whitechapel workhouses is that the police were responsible for sending people there. As part of the H divisions duties they would have to deal with homeless people in Whitechapel*

Feature 2

*Another feature of the Whitechapel workhouses is that they were public institutions in which the destitute of a parish received board and lodging in return for work. Inmates included the old, sick, disabled, orphans and unmarried mothers.*

**The answer above would get 4 marks.**

Description	Marks
One simple point- weak evidence or no explanation	1
One developed point with evidence	2
One developed point with evidence and one simple point	3
Two developed points with evidence	4

## 8 mark questions

These questions will ask you to look at two sources and make a judgement on how useful they are for a particular purpose. You need to make sure that you looks at the source and question carefully before continuing.

E.g. Study Source A and Source B.

How useful are Sources A and B for an enquiry attitudes towards immigration in Whitechapel?

Explain your answer, using Sources A and B and your knowledge of the historical context



**Source A:** Cartoon is from 1882, and was published in Punch magazine.

**Source B:** "These Jew foreigners work in our trade at this common work 16 or 18 hours a day, and the consequence is that they make a lot of cheap and nasty stuff that destroys the market and injures us."

**Charles Freak, Secretary of the Shoemaker Society 1888, Said at a Parliamentary Select Committee**



Source A shows a figure named 'the Irish Frankenstein' wearing a mask and threatening someone with a knife. This suggests that Irish people are dangerous and criminal. This is useful to my enquiry as it is clear that people in Whitechapel had negative attitudes towards the Irish. This is supported by my own knowledge because I know that people were worried about Irish Fenians, who wanted Irish independence, and people thought that the Fenians were a fanatical terrorist group, especially after the bombing of Clerkenwell in 1867. The provenance of the source is Punch Magazine in 1882. This makes the source more useful in finding out about attitudes as it was from the time meaning it is more likely to represent the views of the time. Overall the source is valuable to a greater extent as it gives an accurate insight into attitudes towards Irish immigrants.

Source B is a speech from the Secretary of the Shoemaker society in which he says that 'these Jew foreigners' were responsible for the 'nasty stuff which destroys the market and injures us'. This suggests that Jewish workers were harming businesses by making cheaper and poorer quality items. This is useful because it suggests that attitudes towards the Jewish population were very negative. This is useful because by 1888 the Jewish population in parts of Whitechapel was 95%. They were widely resented by the local population because of cultural linguistic differences and conflicting attitudes to work and business. The provenance of the source is from the Secretary of the Shoemaker society. This makes the source less useful because FreaK wants to protect the businesses of the Shoemakers and so would want to criticise any businesses taking trade away from his organisation. As such, the source is valuable to a certain extent as although it shows that attitudes were negative, FreaK's views may not have been shared by everyone.

This answer would receive full marks. You must ensure that you have clearly explain the provenance of the source and own knowledge.

Description	Marks
Simple comments on provenance and/or provenance Some understanding of the source is shown Simple knowledge	1-2
Only 1 source is analysed <u>Or</u> There is analysis of both sources but either specific own knowledge or comments on provenance are missing. <u>Or</u> Lack of clarity - mixing up provenance/ content / order of argument but all the elements are there	3-4
One element from one of the sources is missing – e.g. whilst the analysis of the utility of source A covers both provenance and content, the analysis of source B only covers content and leaves out provenance	5-6
Clear understanding of both sources is shown. Specific own knowledge is used to evaluate the utility of the source An analysis of provenance is given with explanation on how that affects the value of the source	7-8

#### 4 mark follow up question

This 4 mark question requires you to look at one of the sources and to consider how you might find out more about a particular topic. For this question it is crucial that your answer would help a historian find out more about the enquiry in the question. One mark is available for each valid and relevant section.

E.g. How would you follow up Source A to find out more about the effectiveness of the police in Whitechapel in 1888?  
In your answer, you must give the question you would ask and the type of source you could use.  
Complete the table below.

Detail in Source A I would follow up:

*"In order to prevent our working doubly over the same ground I have to suggest that our CID should be in more constant communication with yours about the W[hitechapel] murders. "*

Question I would ask:

*Why weren't the difference branches of the police communicating with each other?*

What type of source I could use:

*Police records from H Division and the City of London Police*

An exact detail is given

A relevant question (see question) is asked.

A source is suggested which would have existed

How this might help answer my question:

*It might tell me how often and in what way the different branches of the police force would work together, which would show me if they are working together effectively or not.*

Clear link to the question and source

#### Source A

Police letter, 9 October 1888. From Charles Warren to Sir James Fraser, suggesting that the two police forces should be in closer communication

9.10.88

Sir J Fraser

My dear Fraser,

In order to prevent our working doubly over the same ground I have to suggest that our CID should be in more constant communication with yours about the W[hitechapel] murders.

Could you send an officer to Ch[ief] Insp[ector] Swanson here every morning to consult or may I send an officer every morning to consult with your officers.

We are inundated with suggestions and names of suspects.

Truly Yours,

C.W. [Charles Warren]

If you are struggling to think of sources from the time, see below:

- **Official statistics** - The records of more than 1.4 million trials held in England and Wales in the 19<sup>th</sup> century have been posted online
- **Police and court records** - records from individual police stations are useful but would not include cases that police officers did not report
- **Freedom licences** - official release papers for prisoners, offer valuable information about convictions and punishments
- **Records from court cases**, such as the archive of records from the **Old Bailey**
- **Memoirs and reports** -Memoirs are written by an individual about their life, so although they may provide valuable insight, they may be written in an overly positive way
- The media
  - Local and national newspapers are easy to use, but were often full of sensationalist that were intended to sell papers
  - Many newspapers were so anti-police that from the 1860s police newspapers, such as the *Police Review*, were produced