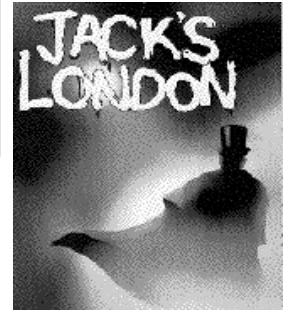


## What can the Whitechapel murders tell us about the problems of Victorian society?



This is a photograph of Bucks Row, Whitechapel. It was taken in the 1960s but little has changed since 1888.



The arrow points to the spot where PC John Neil discovered the body of Mary Anne Nichols (above), known as “Polly” in the early hours of Friday, 31<sup>st</sup> August 1888. She was the first victim of the Whitechapel murderer, also known as “Leather Apron” or, most famously, as “**Jack the Ripper**”.

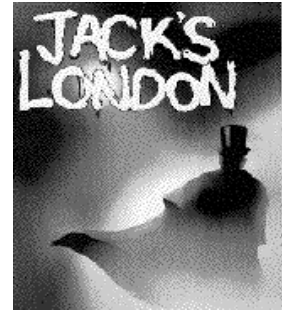
The identity of Jack the Ripper remains a mystery to this day.

In this study unit, each of you will build up your own profile of the murderer based on the evidence that survives. You will then use this profile to decide for yourself who exactly the murderer was from a list of the 15 most popular suspects.

**Why is the Ripper so famous? (Discuss as a group and write your answers below).**

## 1. WHAT WAS LIFE LIKE IN THE EAST END IN 1888?

London in 1888 was a divided city. Just like today, the West End was the most wealthy area, and the East End was much poorer. Jack the Ripper operated in the East End, for a variety of reasons.



Activity 1: How did social conditions in the East End help Jack the Ripper?  
Using the details below, fill in the right-hand column of the given table.

Fact about East London in 1888	How this helped Jack the Ripper
The smoke and stinking gas fumes choked the streets so badly that at times it was not even possible to see your own hand in front of your face – these smogs were called “Pea Soupers” because of their greenish colour.	
Housing was disgusting. There was no sanitation and sewage ran openly through the overcrowded, maze-like streets.	
There was little work available for women, and no social security for those women who were unemployed. Many were forced to become prostitutes to survive.	
For many such women, their only escape from their terrible lives was drink, and they quickly became helpless alcoholics.	

### Discussion Point:

Throughout history, the East End of towns across Europe have always been poorer than the West. Have you any ideas why this might be the case?

### Activity 2: More about the squalor of East London

Read the information on p104/105 of the “Societies in Change” textbook and answer q1 in your exercise books.