

Welcome to Cockney London

1 Reading

Read the text about Cockney London. What do Pearly Kings and Queens raise money for?

Are you thinking of visiting the U.K.? Don't just go to the obvious tourist attractions. Why not explore Cockney London!

KINGS AND QUEENS

People born in the East End of London are called Cockneys. The East End of London is one of the poorest parts of London, but it has a rich history. The writer Charles Dickens set his novel *Oliver Twist* in the East End, and Conan Doyle's detective Sherlock Holmes investigated lots of murders there, too.

But in the East End you will also find lots of Kings and Queens! They are the Pearly Kings and Queens of the East End. These men and women wear suits covered with tiny pearl buttons. It is a tradition that started in 1875 with a young orphan called Henry Croft who worked in the local market. He liked the clothes that the fruit and vegetable sellers wore – all their clothes had little pearl buttons as decoration. They were also very kind, and if anyone was in trouble or needed money, they helped them. Henry decided to raise money for his orphanage. He covered his whole suit in pearl buttons and people gave him money. Later, many hospitals and churches asked Henry to help them raise money and he did. He raised the equivalent of \$8,000, which was a lot of money in those days.

Today, the tradition continues, and each part of London has a Pearly King and Queen who raise money for charity. If you visit London on the first Sunday in October or the third Sunday in May and go to Trafalgar Square, you will see all the Pearly Kings and Queens together.

2 Comprehension

Are the sentences true or false? Correct the false sentences.

- 1 Cockneys are people who are born anywhere in London.

- 2 There are many rich people in the East End of London.

- 3 The first Pearly King was a little boy called Henry Croft.

- 4 Fruit and vegetable sellers in the market wore clothes covered with tiny pearl buttons.

- 5 Henry raised a lot of money for charity.

- 6 You can see all the Pearly Kings and Queens in Trafalgar Square in October and May.



3 Vocabulary

Read the information about Cockney rhyming slang.

What did you say?

There is a special language in the East End of London called Cockney rhyming slang. Many people think it started in the local markets when thieves and pickpockets wanted to talk to each other in a secret code.

This is how it works:

Use phrases that rhyme with the word you want to say. For example:

fish hook = *book*

apples and pears = *stairs*

Mickey Mouse = *house*

When you speak, you only use the first word of the phrase:

I like this *fish*. = I like this *book*.

Walk up the *apples*. = Walk up the *stairs*.

Is that your *Mickey*? = is that your *house*?

Match these phrases with their meaning.

| | |
|-----------------|---------|
| April showers | money |
| plates of meat | head |
| Britney Spears | flowers |
| rabbit and pork | tears |
| dog and bone | feet |
| loaf of bread | phone |
| teapot lids | kids |
| bread and honey | talk |

Can you work out what this person is saying?

*I was at my Mickey when the dog rang.
It was my teapots. They wanted some bread
so they could buy their mom some Aprils.*

4 Speaking and writing

Work in teams. Read the instructions and play the game.

Quiz

In your team, write down three sentences using Cockney rhyming slang, e.g. "You have big plates." (You have big feet.). Now, test your classmates! Stand up at the front of the class and read your sentences aloud. The first team to "translate" your sentence wins a point. Good luck!