

## Welcome to Cockney London

### 1 Reading

*Are you thinking of visiting London? 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 more than £5000 (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.

#### **True or False? Correct the false answers.**

- 1 There are many rich people in the East End of London.
- 2 Cockneys are people who are born anywhere in London.
- 3 The first Pearly King was a little boy called Henry Croft.
- 4 Pearly Kings and Queens are very rich and give money to charity.
- 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.

# culture

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### 2 Vocabulary

#### 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 two words that have a meaning, for example *fish hook* or *apples and pears* or *Mickey Mouse*. The second word should rhyme with the word you want to say:

*fish hook* = *book*

*apples and pears* = *stairs*

*Mickey Mouse* = *house*

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

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

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

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

Easy?! Try matching these rhyming slang pairs with their meaning.

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

Can you work out what this person is saying?

*I'm at my Mickey when the dog rings. It is my teapots. They want some bread so they can buy their mum some Aprils.*

### 3 Speaking and writing

#### 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 out your sentences. The first team to 'translate' your sentence wins a point. Good luck!