

4Bs goes to London

School Year 2006-2007
Liceo Scientifico "N.Copernico"



A week's study in London

"una settimana di soggiorno studio a Londra"

A project of Mrs Zampiga, our English teacher, and Mr Fronzoni, our PE teacher.



A general idea of our experience

Our Plan

We can find a “structure” of the week, even if in all the seven days we did different things. We usually woke up at 8.00 in the morning, we had breakfast and then the true day started. During the day we usually had a tour of a museum, a workshop in a theatre, a guided tour, we met some students... The days were full of things to do, to discover, to admire, always paying attention to the weather that fortunately was good for all the week.

At the beginning, we were scared of the plan of the week: it seemed so heavy! We tried to follow the plan during the week, but we decided to change something: for example, we decided to visit Harrods after a day spent in a museum. As a matter of fact, we realized very soon that that days wouldn't be so much tiring: we often had free time in which we could do shopping, have a moment's rest, eat something or simply sit down on a bench. The museums were huge places in which we spent large part of our time exploring different sections, we also went to a lot of bookshops looking for books by authors that we studied, we saw typical buildings or parks of the town (Buckingham Palace, Trafalgar Square, Hyde Park, London Bridge...), we could know the different organisation of school and way of studying that English students have. In the evenings we usually had dinner in foreign restaurants like Japanese, Turkish or Indian restaurants or in pubs. Dinner time was an important time for us in which we could have a rest and eat but also discover new dishes and new traditions.

The hardest parts of the week were the first day, because we didn't know how to behave and we had to fit in the new place, and the last day, because we didn't want to leave that wonderful place.

Our accommodation

Differently from other classes, we stayed in a hostel. It is situated in a residential area in a central but quiet place of London not far from the underground station and other facilities. From the hostel we could have a quaint, pleasant view of the typical buildings and houses of London and a view of the daily and ordinary life of the city.

The accommodation in the hostel was very good and comfortable: it was furnished of a variety of facilities, like a large garden where we could stay until 10.00 p.m., a living room with a big television and three sofas



where we could relax after a tiring day, a game room where we could enjoy ourselves until midnight, a bar and finally a computer room where we could go on the Internet and send emails to friends or parents. The staff was helpful, kind and cordial and were at the reception at all the time.

We stayed in rooms of four, six or seven people. They were clean, spacious with large windows and bunk beds. We didn't stay there a lot of time because we usually spent all the day out.

07.03.07 Ready to start!

The first day in London was the most pleasantly surprising day of the week. Tired and still excited because of the flight from Pisa to London, we arrived at the airport. There we discovered a “new world”: a lot of people who queued up, and no noise at all! Straight after we got the bus and then the underground that took us to West-Kensington, where we saw our hostel and our rooms for the first time. After laying out our luggages, we left the hostel and we started our tour in London.

Westminster area

The first stage was Westminster. It is one of the most beautiful areas of London. Then we saw Westminster bridge. Opened on May 1750 Westminster bridge crosses the river Thames by the Houses of Parliament, and it is the second oldest bridge in the central area of London. There is an important poem about Westminster Bridge, called “Upon Westminster bridge” and it was written by William Wordsworth, a defining member of the English Romantic Movement. The main focus of the poem is the beauty and the power of Nature, according to the poet, up to the moment that he pauses on the bridge. Indeed it is still one of the finest views of London city! Over the course of the fourteen lines of this poem, Wordsworth says that in the light of the dawn, while everyone is sleeping, “*EARTH has not anything to show more fair*”: London seems to be better than nature, even if Wordsworth himself loves nature.



After that we saw the Palace of Westminster, which is almost always referred to the name of Houses of Parliament. It consists of the House of Commons (the lower house-elected at least every 5 years) and the House of Lords (not elected, hereditary and nominated) which takes sittings there.

Then we went seeing Westminster Abbey. It is a Gothic church, on the scale of a cathedral, just to the west of the Palace of Westminster. It is one of the most famous churches in Britain. It was the traditional place of coronation, marriages of monarchs, like William the Conqueror in 1066. The abbey also serves as the burial ground for numerous politicians, sovereigns and artists. Some of the most famous are Charles Darwin, Sir Isaac Newton and David Livingstone, and many other poets and writers like Chaucer, Shakespeare, Jane Austin, the Bronte sisters, T.S. Eliot and Burns, just to name a few.

St.James park, Buckingham Palace and The Royal Mile

The next stage of our first-day-tour was St.James park. With its royal, political and literary associations, St James's Park is at the very heart of London and is also home to the Mall, the setting for many ceremonial parades and events of national celebrations. St James's Park is the oldest Royal Park in London and is surrounded by three palaces. The most ancient is Westminster, St James's Palace and of course, the best known, Buckingham Palace.

Buckingham Palace has served as the official London residence of Britain's sovereigns since 1837. Today it is The Queen's official residence, with 775 rooms. The Changing of the Guard takes place in the forecourt of Buckingham Palace both in summer and in winter, and lasts about 45 minutes.

The last stage of the day was the Royal Mile, then we had a nice dinner with typical “fish and chips”! The day was long and hard but our tiredness didn't stop us from enjoying our day and appreciating the part of the city that we saw.

08.03.07 Our first impressions

The National Gallery

The second day we went to the National Gallery. It was a bit strange to see that there was no queue – if you want to visit the Uffizi Gallery, for example, you have to wait for a long time- but the difference is that at the entrance you don't have to pay any ticket.

First we had two hours free to see on our own the things we liked most; in those hours some of us saw paintings, made by Turner, Constable and Blake which our Art teacher suggested us seeing. But the paintings we liked most were the Impressionists, especially the ones painted by Monet, above all because of the wonderful landscapes and colours.

Then we did a guided tour with an English guide who, moving through different rooms, explained to us five paintings. Following the guide's lesson was very interesting: he didn't speak very slowly, but we could understand what he was saying because he tried to involve us with a lot of questions. We did a sort of interactive lesson: he asked us who, in our opinion, the characters were and what they represented.



We really liked this lesson: it was very interesting because we could learn some aspects of painting we didn't know. Moreover, we could expand our itinerary started in class: with our English and French teachers we had analyzed some aspects of love from literary texts, songs and films. For this reason, the guide chose some paintings which dealt with the theme of love, for example *Bacchus and Ariadne*. It was very interesting to continue our study in a different way, in a museum face to face with paintings, instead of in class.

About public transports...

During our trip in London we used public transport many times to visit the city. We especially used the underground (or the Tube as it is known to Londoners) and we found it very comfortable and useful; there are 12 lines which can get you to most places in the centre of the city quickly. We used an Oyster card to pay, which we found very useful because with it you don't have to queue for tickets as you can pay in advance. We also saw King's Cross St. Pancras, the underground station that on the 7 July 2007 was hit by a series of coordinated terrorist bomb blasts.

One day we also took the bus, called red double decker; a lot of services are operated with this iconic bus, although virtually people now use modern low-floor accessible vehicles rather than the traditional open-platform Routemaster vehicles.

09.03.07 From Science to modern art

The Science Museum

On Friday 9th we visited the Science Museum and the Tate Modern Gallery. The morning was totally dedicated to the Science Museum, where, first of all, we saw the film "The Human Body", projected on a screen "taller than four double-decker buses"! The film is a journey in the wonderful "human machine", and it highlighted especially the changes that occur in the various phases of formation of an embryo, and those of puberty (in which we are a bit more interested, at the time). With the journey, the film showed us all different functions of the various apparatus of the body, clarifying the reasons why some reactions happen daily in our organism, such as sweating and eating. After the film, we began our visit: divided into small groups, based on which sections captured our attention more.

The Science Museum of London is huge, located on five floors with a great number of expositions, experiments and instalments. On the ground floor, we found very interesting the "Space" section, with its models and photos of various space missions, and the first ever Steam engine, in the Energy Hall.

On the first floor we were able to see the "Time measurement" and "Who Am I?" sections; the latter, related to genetics, offered the possibility to visitors to have their own attitude profile or to see how they would look in a few decades, or if they were of the opposite sex, thanks to specific machinery.

The Museum offered a great variety of cars, aeroplanes, and motorbikes from different periods, along with a motion ride simulator, and, on the fourth floor, a section dedicated to psychology called "Mind your Head".

Finally, on the fifth floor in the "Science and Art of Medicine", we saw an instalment which reconstructed the most important moments of medical progress, from Stone Age to modern days. It was all an amusing and interesting experience, mainly thanks to the attractive and clear exhibitions, which also contribute to making the museum also a place where to take younger visitors.

The Tate Modern Gallery

The second stop of the day was the Tate Modern Gallery, one the most important of the world, together with Moma and Guggenheim. We appreciated the suggestiveness of it being located inside a used to be-thermoelectric facility, capable of mixing Industrial Revolution with modern and contemporary art.

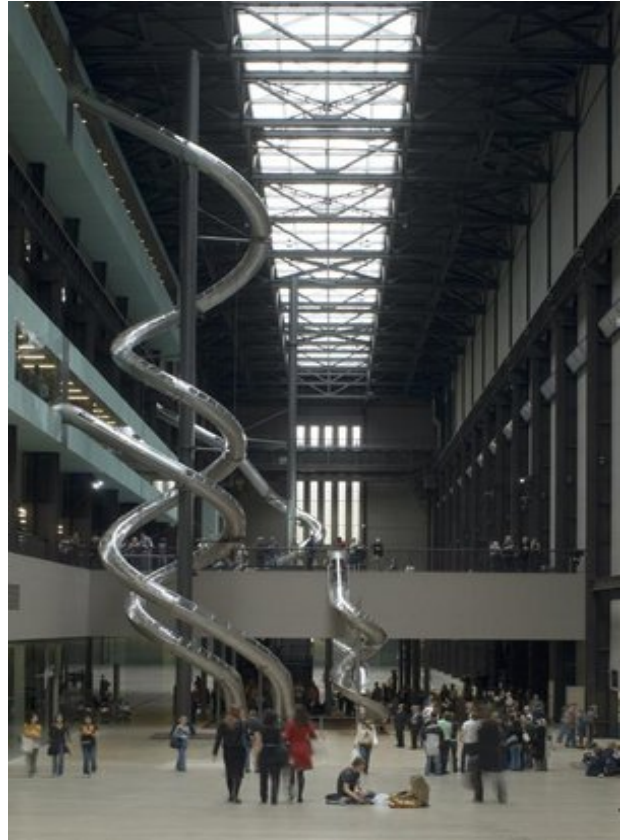
Tate Modern has a huge collection of permanent exhibitions, which gathers works of world-famous artists, but not only. Our visit here was different from the others, as it was “individual”, so that everyone could appreciate and examine by him/herself the works that he/she preferred.

The two big collections on the third floor, named “Poetry and Dream” and “Material Gestures”, collect major works from Surrealism, Metaphysicism and Contemporary currents. Very suggestive works such as Dalí’s “*Metamorphosis of Narcissus*” an “*Lobster Telephone*”, Magritte’s “*L’homme au journal*”, Miro’s “*Femmes, oiseau au claire de lune*” and we were very intrigued by Francis Bacon’s “*Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion*” and Jannis Kounellis’ “*Untitled*”. All this section, actually, had such an intimate and surreal atmosphere that it left us suspended in a state of Dream and Wonder.

In the fifth floor’s galleries, the works were divided into “Idea and Object” and “States of Flux”, paintings like Kandinsky’s “*Swinging*” or Lichtenstein’s “*WHAAM!*”, but also world-famous “*Fountain*”, by Marcel Duchamp.

One of the best exhibitions was, though, Carsten Höller’s “*Test site*”: three spiral slides, connecting each floor, and that should help with psychological health.

The Tate Modern experience was definitely a great chance to enrich ourselves culturally, but not only.



10.03.07 Something different from tourism

The workshop at the Royal Court Theatre



The program of the day provided the visit to the Royal Court Theatre which was divided into two different activities: firstly in the morning we did a workshop. We played some simple games whose aim was to increase the feeling among us in the class. At the beginning it seemed to be a game for children so we felt a bit stupid and awkward in the simplest movements like throwing a ball saying our names. However, while we were playing this game we started feeling more confident and of course we enjoyed ourselves. Then we played another game, “the

chairs game”, where everybody had an important role and we had to play as a team.

After these games we moved to analyse some parts of the text of the play we would see in the afternoon. We were divided into three different groups and each group had one scene to work on. The first thing we did was reading the text, some speeches for each person, then we stopped and we tried to understand the meaning also checking the key-words we didn't know. At the beginning we were helped by the women of the workshop, then we continued on our own. Afterwards we put the groups' works all together so that we could have a general and clearer idea of the story.

The show

After a lunch-break we went to see the play called “the Eleventh Capital”, by Alexandra Wood, one of the writers who won the Young Writers Festival, a festival only for young “play writers”. The theatre where the play was acted was very strange, it was very different from the theatres we usually know. The thing which surprised us was the fact that there weren't any seats and the floor was dirty with a lot of mould. Firstly we felt lost and surprised also because when the play started we realized that we were on the stage with the actors. It was quite strange because we had never seen such a play.

It dealt with the story of a country whose capital was moved because of dictatorship. It was divided into six scenes and every time we moved to another scene, some soldiers, whistling, came and changed scene with a lot of noise. Each of these scenes was concentrated especially on the consequences of the moving on the life of some people. It was worrying when these soldiers came to put barbed wire to limit the actors' space. We had a lot of difficulties to follow and understand the dialogues we hadn't analysed in the morning. Despite these difficulties we liked the particular atmosphere and the closeness to the actors which made the approach to the story very personal and intimate.

After the play there was a conference where anyone could make questions to the actors, the writer and the director (Natalie, a wonderful girl who helped us during the workshop): we felt so embarrassed when everybody laughed and some of us didn't understand why, but our teacher tried to make us understand.

11.03.07 Parks, museums and the “real London”

On Sunday 11th we went to Hyde Park, Camden Town Market, the Museum of London and the Whitechapel area. That was a very interesting and amazing day at the same time: we learnt a lot of things about English culture in a different way from studying at school!

Green London: Hyde Park

As for Hyde Park, we saw a lot of interesting things: for example the Speaker's Corner, where people can go to show their opinions (amongst others, it was used also by feminists who could express their voices). We split into some groups: some of us had a boat trip on the Serpentine, the lake in the middle of the park; others had a walk in the park and saw Diana's fountain and Peter Pan's



statue. Afterwards, we had the possibility to see some contemporary pictures at the Serpentine gallery. Nowadays the park is a place of events like rock concerts or demonstrations. We liked this experience a lot because of the contact that we had with English culture: on Sunday people usually walk along the streets of the park, read in a peaceful place, go cycling or rollerblading... We found very interesting also the fact that in a crowded and chaotic city like London it's simple to find green areas where you can relax yourself and breath fresh air.



A sight on the Moon: Camden Town Market

Afterwards, we moved to Camden Town Market: this place surprised us a lot because in Italy it's very difficult to find a similar market. Instead there there are a lot of shops where you can find dark clothes, gothic objects and alternative things in general. There you can find also a lot of food counters: Indian, Pakistani, Turkish... You can also meet very strange people, dressed with coloured and fluorescent clothes, with strange hair-styles or made up oddly. For example, we saw a boy and a girl at "Cyber Dog", a shop which you must visit if you go to Camden Town, who seemed to come from the Moon! This market seemed to us like a picture of many cultures and life styles: we learnt to open our eyes to different attitudes to life, which especially young people can have.

A jump in the past

In the afternoon, we went to visit the Museum of London. It's the biggest museum of urban history of the world and contains materials and information about the English capital from the Palaeolithic to the present day. Unfortunately, a big part of the most recent galleries was closed for reorganization. However, we could visit the galleries "London before London", "Roman and Medieval London" and the period of Tudor and Stuart: we had the possibility to enter a reconstruction of a prehistoric log-cabin, to answer the interactive questions about the Roman period and to watch the Roman London wall just outside the museum. We could also enter the Shakespearian period, characterized by the transformation of London into a truly world-class city, the execution of King Charles I and finally the Great Fire: in a room you can hear the story of the disaster that befell London in September 1666. The fact that part of the Museum was closed was the only inconvenient we had in our trip. However, we learnt a lot of things about London and its history and we especially liked the organization of the museum, which is based on a modern idea of what a museum should be, so there are a lot of interactive elements, many of them suitable also for young people.



A walk in Jack the Ripper's streets

At the end of this day we went to the Whitechapel area, a quarter where a lot of immigrants and poor people live: it is very different from West London, which contains the major tourist attractions of the city and business and administrative headquarters. Whitechapel is also famous because of Jack Ripper's murders. Moreover, we were surprised to see a lot of Bangladeshis trying to invite us to their restaurants, but we had already booked a restaurant, which was a very big surprise for us.

Food, a multicultural experience

One of the things that we liked a lot of this trip was the food: at the beginning we were scared of trying different tastes, like Japanese, Turkish or Indian, and the strange names of the dishes frightened us; we had a lot of prejudices because we thought that only Italian food was good. After this experience, instead, we admitted that we were wrong because we ate very good dishes in all these restaurants: we especially liked Japanese and Turkish cooking. To sum up, this experience has helped us to open our minds to different cultures and traditions.



12.03.07 Expanding our knowledge on literature

Shakesperian London

On Monday we took the Shakespeare's London walk. We woke up earlier because at nine o'clock we had to meet a tourist guide at the underground station and we had to start our way.

First of all we went to the City; after the presentation of Shakespeare's life by the guide, we went to Blackfriars. After that we passed past Saint Paul's cathedral, we went through the Millennium Bridge and we arrived in Southwark, another district of London. The City is the oldest and the most important area of London, so the presence of theatres, prisons, brothels... However, all of these buildings had been expelled from the City and moved to Southwark.



Southwark was characterised as a repository for the undesirable but entirely natural elements that any urban area generates. Those wishing to escape the regulations of the City established themselves here. In front of the Millennium Bridge we could see the Globe Theatre. In Southwark there wasn't only the Globe Theatre, but also the Rose, the Swan and the Hope, which were other important play houses. Theatres were soon banned from performing on Thursdays, the traditional day for bear baiting; indeed during this day there were the combat between bears or

dogs in the theatres. Near these play houses, our guide showed us probably the most famous prison: The Clink. Today here there is a strange museum but it seems a bit scaring! After that we saw the rebuilding of an old ship, which now is used for children's parties. Before seeing the Southwark cathedral, we passed across a big fruit and vegetable market near the house where Bridget Jones was filmed! It had been one of the most curious and original things that we'd seen, because we didn't think that this house really existed. Here our Shakespeare's London walk finished but we spoke also of another person associated with this area: Geoffrey Chaucer (the writer of "The Canterbury Tales").

The London Bridge

When we got to the bridge we looked for some space to present the place, as we generally did, even if it was not so easy to speak and make the audience understand with hundreds of cars, which ran next to us, in the 1pm London crowd. We made a circle and said something related to the history of the bridge, but we were especially curious to know what really is the song "*London Bridge is falling down*"... this Nursery rhyme stayed with us for all our trip; we continuously sang it! And our teacher corrected our pronunciation of *London*: we said "Landon", she told us "Landon"!

Then we spoke of T.S.Eliot, who lived in London and worked in one of the numerous banks of the City. In a segment of his poem "THE WASTE LAND", the author describes the crowd of commuters who, anonymous, alienated, flows over the Bridge towards the "Unreal City": "*Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled, And each man fixed his eyes before his feet*"...

It's 9 o'clock of a winter day and it's time to go to offices and start working: commuters look at the ground and feel their bodies which walk rapidly, so as to run away from their shadow...speed of gestures kills time for thinking! Eliot tries to paint the boring, mechanical, obsessive, repetitive, sterile life of those people, who communicate a huge and terrible sense of death. "*I had no thought death had undone so many*": these particular verses disclose one of the sources which the author got from: "*sì lunga tratta/di gente ch'io non avrei mai creduto,/che morte tanta n'avesse disfatta.*" (Dante's Inferno, Canto III, 55-7); in fact both commuters and Dante's Ignavi are an endless train of unhappy people, who just suffer their condition with no reactions.

The Royal Observatory

In the earlier afternoon we took the underground to move from London to Greenwich, which is a close village selected by UNESCO in 1997 as world heritage site.

We started walking upon the hill and we finally arrived at the Royal Observatory. The landscape of London was wonderful, but the thing which took our attention most was the line of the Prime Meridian; a steel sculpture points out where it is and we had lots of fun in



jumping from the east to the west of the world! The Royal Observatory was founded by King Charles II in 1676 to provide accurate charts of the stars to improve navigation. The Royal Observatory is home of the GMT (Greenwich Mean Time) and the John Harrison marine time keepers.

The National Maritime House

After the Royal Observatory we went down to the Queen's House and the National Maritime House. The Queen's House is now at the heart of the National Maritime Museum where we saw a lot of curious things: the uniform of some important people as Nelson, several portraits, images and scale models of old and more recent crafts. We all were impressed by the section on the liners of XIXth century, because of the evident different lodgings between poor and rich people. We also enjoyed the "All Hands" gallery, hands-on for kids where we spoke by telegraph and flags, we played naval battle and we made waves and vortexes.

The City

In the evening, after the visit of Greenwich, we went to the City, which is the historic core of London from which the conurbation grew. It's now a major business and commercial centre of global finance; it sustains the Square Mile's role as the world's leading international centre for finance and related business services. We can say that it's at the heart of the world's financial markets.

The population fell rapidly in the 19th century and today the City of London has a resident population of under 10,000 but a daily working population of 300,000. During the Imperial Age the City represented the nerve centre of all the world; while, in the period of colonies it had an essential role for the exchange of goods and in foreign trade. The City has always been able to hold her own autonomy and the Crown respected it; nevertheless, during a ceremony which is celebrated every year, the Queen came into possession of the City's keys to reassert her supremacy.

Fleet Street

We also visited Fleet Street, which is a famous street in London, named after River Fleet. It was traditionally the home of the British press, up until the 1980s. Fleet Street links the City of London to the City of Westminster.

Publishing started in Fleet Street around 1500 when a printing shop set up near Shoe Lane. More printers and publishers followed, mainly supplying the legal trade in the four Law Inns around the area. In March 1702, the first daily newspaper of the world, *The Daily Courant*, was published in Fleet Street from premises above the White Hart Inn.

At the end of the day we decided to have dinner in the City, in a very characteristic and historical pub, rebuilt in 1667, the "Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese". It was delicious! We liked its welcoming atmosphere and the food a lot!



11.03.07 Learning in a different and enjoyable way

Islington 6th Form College

On Tuesday 14th March, we went to Islington 6th Form College. In this school students do the last two years before going to university; each student chooses three or four subjects and studies only these ones.

We were and we are also today very fascinated by this school system, overall because of the fact that students choose the subjects that they want to study and because they have a large variety of subjects to choose: from art to English, from fashion to maths, from graphic to science and others like foreign languages or more “artistic subjects”. English schools are so different also for the environment, for the organisation and for the strict security control.

When we arrived we met the class which studies Italian which is composed of 6 students who are all girls. We were surprised to see that in a class of six people all of them represented different cultures and came from a different country; this is a characteristic of all the school, in fact in it at least 40 different languages are spoken.

When we were in class, we spoke with them about everything, in particular about the differences between our school and theirs. Another very good thing is the relationship between the teacher and the students: they call each other with their first name and they are like friends!

After that we went to visit the school all together; we saw a lot of different laboratories and classes specialised in a specific subject like art, photograph, chemistry, fashion; there is also a huge library where there are a lot of books, computers and DVDs, there are rooms to play instruments, to record songs and to see films on your own.

The British Museum



One of the most interesting and beautiful experiences that we ever had in our trip is the visit to the British Museum. After the meeting with the English students at the *Islington 6th form College*, we went to the British Museum in Bloomsbury. We spent most of the day there: we had four hours to see the museum and to relax at the end. The British Museum is one of the world's greatest museums of human history and culture. Its collections illustrate and document the history of human culture from its beginning to the present.

First of all we saw the *Department of Ancient Egypt* which is particularly good for the presence of very old statues such as the huge Statue of Ramesses II. Then we saw some of the highlights of the British museum collections: for example, the *Rosetta Stone* is very important for the understanding of the Egyptian hieroglyphics. Afterwards, we could see the marble sculpture from the Parthenon of Athens. With our regret The Old Reading Room was closed so we didn't see this beautiful room, where famous and important people like Marx, Lenin and Gandhi studied.

We liked especially the Egyptian and Greek galleries: it was very interesting to see the second world's largest and most comprehensive collection of Egyptian antiquities and such a big collection of antiquities from the Classical world.

Bloomsbury

On Tuesday afternoon we went to Bloomsbury, a district of central London especially notable for its literary connections, indeed it has long been associated with London intellectualism; besides this area gives its name to the Bloomsbury group of artists, a literary group with Virginia Woolf as its most widely known exponent.

Here we visited the British Museum, we saw the University of London and the houses of some Bloomsbury group's members (included Virginia Woolf). We spent an amazing and interesting afternoon in Bloomsbury, relaxing and visiting the district, in search of the plaques posted on the houses inhabited by famous people (apart from Virginia Woolf lots of other artists lived here: Vanessa Bell, Charles Dickens, Bob Marley).

We really liked the experience of Bloomsbury because we enjoyed ourselves but we also learnt lots of things about English literature, with the possibility of seeing the places connected with what we had studied. Lots of people in the class liked the afternoon in Bloomsbury, they remember the Starbucks cappuccino and the "maw worm" who tried to convince Lorenzo to speak with God.



Something about Virginia Woolf

We spoke a lot about Virginia Woolf, a significant English novelist and essay writer, member of the Bloomsbury Group. The great innovation she introduced in narrative technique was the stream-of-consciousness: she shifts the point of view inside the characters' minds, who express their sensations and impressions. In this random associations of thoughts she fractures narrative and chronology.

An example of this narrative technique is her most famous novel: "Mrs Dalloway": here Woolf, using the interior perspective of the novel, moves back and forth in time, and in and out of the various characters' minds.

Virginia was also deeply interested in feminist themes; discrimination against women is examined in "A Room of One's Own". In this essay she invented a fictional "Shakespeare's Sister", Judith, to illustrate that a woman with Shakespeare's gifts would have been denied the same opportunities to develop them because of the doors that were closed to women. Indeed this imaginary sister, unlike the brother, couldn't study or act ("no woman could possibly be an actress" says the manager at the theatre); besides Judith had to married a man chosen by his father. She tried to fight against these discriminations (she escaped from her house and went to London) but when the manager abused her, and Judith got pregnant, she killed herself.

14.03.07 Coming back home...

The British Library



The last day in the morning we went to visit the British Library, which was presented to us as one of the greatest libraries in the world and as the biggest research centre of Europe. After a look at the outside, which appears old, like a factory, we saw the modern and roomy inside.

We were guided by a woman who explained to us the meaning and the real importance of a library, also in the internet age. With her we understood what “to research” means and we admired the great number of books collected by George III. We did

also some games to “break the ice” and to understand the role of communication: for example, we played a game, “il telefono senza fili”, which was useful for us to reflect on the importance of writing. As a matter of fact, something written is permanent, while oral information isn’t and can change.

Moreover, we really appreciated the museum inside the library: we were allowed to see the original copy of a lot of poems like *Beowulf* or *Alice in Wonderland* and *The Holy Bible* printed By Gutenberg (who didn’t invent print, as we think). Our interest was taken also by the original copies of some Beatles songs like *Yesterday* or *Help*. The fact that really surprised us was that one of those songs was written on a napkin!

Freedom and Autonomy

During this trip teachers gave us a lot of freedom: when we were in a museum where we hadn’t a guide, they trusted us, gave us two or three hours to visit it, even if they knew that we could have gone in another place instead of doing what they said.

Nevertheless, we visited all the museums, sometimes for a short time, but we saw all things that there were inside, because they were interesting, but also because it is important for us to know new things: we liked the fact that we could see with our own eyes places and things we studied at school and we appreciated the guides of the museums, who explained to us new things and added some information about what we already knew.

We had also a lot of time to go shopping, particularly in Covent Garden, Camden Town Market (where there were strange things and people!), Harrods and Oxford Street, a long street with a lot of nice shops. We did also a different experience of shopping: “intellectual shopping”, because in Charing Cross Road teachers gave us time to visit bookshops, which makes the road famous, to know how they are organised and to buy some books. It was a very good experience!

Tired but satisfied

When the teacher gave us the programme of the trip, we were aghast, because there were so many places to visit so that a week couldn't be enough! Moreover, the other class which went to London before us told us to forget to go out in the evening, because in their experience they went back to the hostel so tired that their wish was having a shower and going to bed.

Sincerely, in the evening we were a bit tired because during the day we walked a lot, and in the different places and museums we visited we had to stand up for a long time, but at the end of the day we were very satisfied and happy. We enjoyed ourselves a lot because we had a lot of freedom, but also because the weather was so good that we could enjoy the city. In addition, we think that this experience helped us as a class: we had to stay all together for a week and this is not very simple for a group of teenagers. Indeed, sometimes we argued with each other, but we tried to solve our problems and to involve everyone in our activities.

Moreover, we think that this was a very good experience: we had the possibility to learn in a different way, not only visiting places and museums, but also going to the theatre and to libraries... as Francis Bacon suggests!



Assembling and editing by Martina Mazzanti,
Caterina Corsi, Veronica Rafanelli