**History of London**

London was not built as a city in the same way as Paris or New York.

It began life as a Roman fortification at a place where it was possible to cross the River Thames. A wall was built around the town for defence, but during the long period of peace which followed the Norman Conquest, people built outside the walls. In 1665 there was a terrible plague in London, so many people left the city and escaped to the villages in the surrounding countryside. In 1666 the Great Fire of London ended the plague, but it also destroyed much of the city. Although people returned to live in the rebuilt city after the plague and the Great Fire, there were never again so many Londoners living in the city centre.

London does not have just one centre, it has a number of centres, each with a distinct character: the financial and business centre called the City, the shopping and entertainment centre in the West End, the government centre in Westminster. - THE CITY - The City refer to a small area east of the centre, which includes the site of the original Roman town. It is the centre of trade and commerce. COMMERCE AND FINANCE The City of London is one of the major banking centres of the world and you can find the banks of many nations in the famous Threadneedle Street and the surrounding area. Here, too, you will find the Bank of England. Lloyds is the most famous insurance company in the world. THE OLD BAILEY The centre of the country's judicial system is to be found in the western part of the City. The Old Bailey houses many courts and some of Britain's most famous murder trials have taken place here. Many solicitors and barristers have their offices (called `chambers') nearby, particularly in the area known as the `Temple'. All criminal trials in Britain are held before a judge and a jury consisting of twelve ordinary people. It is the jury, not the judge, who decides if a person is guilty or not. An accused person is considered innocent until proved guilty. THE PRESS Fleet Street is famous as the home of the nation's newspapers but, in fact, only two of them - The Daily Express and The Daily Telegraph - are still in Fleet Street. However, people still say `Fleet Street' to mean `the press'. The British are a nation of newspaper readers. ST PAUL'S CATHEDRAL St Paul's Cathedral was designed by the famous architect Sir Christopher Wren, after the Great Fire of London in 1666. Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer were married there in July. When we are a London this Cathedral was closed. TOWER OF LONDON The Tower of London was first built by William the Conqueror more than 900 years ago, and was famous as a prison. Two queens were executed here, and two princes murdered. - THE WEST END - The West End is the name given to the area of central London north from The Mall to Oxford Street. It includes Trafalgar Square, the main shopping areas of Oxford Street, Regent Street and Bond Street, and the entertainment centres of Soho, Piccadilly