

# Life in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century

## London in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century

- In the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, rich people began to build houses along the Thames. In the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, many grand houses were built to the west of London while working class houses were built to the east.
- 17<sup>th</sup> century houses were very unclean. People threw dirty water and waste into the narrow streets. At night there was little light which made it very dangerous.
- People walked from one street to another to get around. Rich people travelled by boat along the Thames. Rich people also hired a horse-drawn carriage called a Hackney to get around.

## Rich People's Homes

- In the early 17<sup>th</sup> century the furniture was heavy, plain and usually made of oak. It improved throughout the 1600s to be more comfortable and more elaborately decorated.
- In the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century chest of drawers, grandfather clocks and bookcases became popular and many rich people had these items in their homes.

## Poor People's Homes

- In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, many poor people's houses in London were made of wood. They were draughty, cold and damp.
- Most of the poor lived in huts of 2 or 3 rooms, quite a few families only had 1 room. They were very cramped and crowded.
- Poor people didn't have windows until the very end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. They made do with linen soaked in linseed oil.

## Food

- In the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, people began eating with forks.
- New foods for the rich were introduced to England such as pineapples and bananas and hot drinks such as tea, coffee and hot chocolate.
- However, food in the 17<sup>th</sup> century remained plain and simple. Many families ate bread, cheese and onions as a staple diet.
- Working class families ate pottage, a stew made by boiling grain in water to make porridge and adding in vegetables. More wealthy people added meat or fish.

## Clothes

- At the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, men wore knee length trouser garments called breeches and starched collars called ruffs. They also wore stockings and boots. Men preferred to keep their hair long and had beards.
- Women wore frames of wood under their dresses called farthingales. Their dresses came in two parts; a bodice and a skirt. Sometimes they wore two skirts.

## Medicine

- During the 17<sup>th</sup> century barber-surgeons performed operations as their knowledge of human anatomy and medicines improved.
- Toothbrushes were invented by the Chinese and arrived in Europe during the 17<sup>th</sup> century, improving dental hygiene. These were popular amongst the rich.
- The plague broke out three times in London in the 1600s and was carried by fleas living on rats. Unfortunately at the time, nobody knew where it came from or how to cure it.