

Jack the Ripper

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Jack the Ripper is an unidentified serial killer who was believed to have been active during 1888 in the Whitechapel district of London, England. The murderer has since become a national figurehead, a fascination for criminal investigators, and an idol for those with criminal intent. In today's world, getting away with murder is unfeasible, the latest technology providing advancing techniques in forensic investigation, but the nineteenth century lacked the means necessary to apprehend the killer. The murders may have occurred on the East side of London, but the impact of Jack the Ripper's case did not remain confined to that area. These murders and the person responsible became famous for several reasons, first and foremost being the media coverage. The newspapers provided daily updates on the progression of the case, and Jack the Ripper even requested one of the letters he wrote to be put in the paper. The Whitechapel district was already perceived as a location of squalor and immoral activities; the Ripper cases only reinforced this view. Most prominent and well known is the name, 'Jack the Ripper'. It has become internationally recognizable, striking fear into the general population, if only due to the knowledge of the killer's reputation and not the details of the actual crimes. This case stood out because of the sadistic and brutal nature in which the victims were butchered, and Jack the Ripper was the first modern day serial killer. Serial killing was uncommon in the nineteenth century, making Jack the Ripper an anomaly. Throughout his career, Jack the Ripper murdered several women, and these killings were publicized, causing many conflicts to arise; the lack of compromise only led to the progression of these problems.

Jack the Ripper may have become an eminent figure in London's history, but this activity often served as a reminder for the Whitechapel district's past. The nineteenth century was a time of change, producing turmoil in the standard social order. It gave way to "urbanization,

crowding, and change [which] led to anomie and the creation of the alienated loner”.<sup>1</sup> Given the harsh and inhumane conditions-especially within London’s east end- and undomesticated lifestyle, it was no surprise that it was the ideal environment to initiate an increase in violence and sexual aberrance. The number of serial killers, however, did not begin to rise significantly until the 1900s, where the number of recorded serial murderers reached a peak in the year 2000.<sup>2</sup> Serial killers were an unknown phenomenon in the 1800s, their obscurity was partially due to the media. Unlike today, the media did not provide ideal coverage and, due to the lack of forensic techniques and communication, some crimes went unnoticed or unresolved. This caused people to be less informed, if informed at all, and news of criminal activity was sparsely distributed. The change in Britain’s economy, with the industrialization of England and the growth in population, impacted crime in a significant way.<sup>3</sup> The White Chapel district was one of many slums in the London area, the slums were the result of an increasing population. By the end of the seventeenth century, Whitechapel was moderately prosperous, but that prosperity shifted in the eighteenth century. The “areas began to deteriorate in the mid eighteenth century,” and by the nineteenth century, Whitechapel became overcrowded and crime infested.<sup>4</sup> Most Victorians lived in ignorance, or feigned ignorance, of the slums, but the Whitechapel murders ushered world-wide attention to the area, launching curiosity towards the murderer and his victims.

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<sup>1</sup> “Jack The Ripper.” Jack The Ripper : Center for Geospatial Intelligence and Investigation : Texas State University, Texas State University. Last Modified 14 Dec. 2016. Web. Accessed 9 Dec 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Aamodt, Mike. *Serial Killer Statistics*. *Serial Killer Statistics*. Last Modified 4 Sep. 2016. Web. Accessed 11 Dec 2017.

<sup>3</sup> Culpin, Chris. “Crime and Punishment.” *Home – The National Archives*. Last Modified N.D.. Web. Accessed 21 Dec 2017.

<sup>4</sup> Diniejko, Andrzej. *Slums and Slumming in Late-Victorian London*. *The Victorian Web*. Last Modified 3 Oct. 2013. Web. Accessed 21 Dec 2017.

Since Jack the Ripper was never caught, it is not possible to say the exact number of victims the murderer had. The Whitechapel murder files actually contain information on eleven victims, but not all of them are inarguably victims of the serial killer. London's *Manchester Guardian* newspaper's November 12, 1888 edition names Emma Elizabeth Smith, a woman who was attacked on April 3 by a group of boys, as the first victim of the 'Whitechapel assassin'.<sup>5</sup> The first definite victim of Jack the Ripper was Mary Nichols, one of the so called 'canonical five' (Annie Chapman, Elizabeth Stride, Catherine Eddowes, and Mary Kelly). On August 31, 1888, a woman was found at Buck's Row by three gentlemen, they believe her to either be dead or drunk. Upon leaving, none of the men realized in the darkness "that the woman's throat had been slashed so savagely that her head had almost been cut from her body".<sup>6</sup> Jack the Ripper mutilated the bodies of his victims, slashing their throats and removing their internal organs. Mary Nichols may have been the first victim to be identified as a victim of the Whitechapel murderer, but she was not the only victim. Besides the canonical five, there were more possible early victims, as well as later victims. The last speculated Jack the Ripper victim was murdered on February 13, 1891 in the Whitechapel district. What makes Jack the Ripper a serial killer also makes these murders so memorable, discerned through forensic observation and improved criminology.

Each victim of Jack the Ripper was a prostitute with a reputation for drinking, making them a 'high risk' victim - more likely to be the victim of a violent crime. Jack the Ripper killed the women swiftly, removed internal organs from some of them, and performed post mortem

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<sup>5</sup> "The Terrible Murder in Whitechapel." *The Manchester Guardian*. Last Modified 12 Nov. 1888. Web. Accessed 11 Feb. 2018.

<sup>6</sup> Jones, Richard. "Jack the Ripper." Jack the Ripper - History, Victims, Letters, Suspects., Richard Jones. Accessed 5 May 2006. Accessed 26 Jan. 2018.

mutilation. Removing internal organs suggests anatomical knowledge. This series of murders are categorized as lust murders, but lust murders have no sexual intent other than the genital area being attacked.<sup>7</sup> SSA Douglass claimed that “I have never experienced a female serial lust murderer either in research or in cases received at NCAVC. It is for this reason that Jack the Ripper was male”.<sup>8</sup> He comes from a family where he was raised by a domineering mother and a weak, passive father. The father was absent while the mother drank heavily and enjoyed the company of many men. He lacked consistent care, thus becoming detached socially with a diminished emotional exhibition towards other human beings. He morphed into a psychopath, torturing animals and setting fires when young to let out his pent up anger. As he grew, his fantasy changed into one that was more human-associated, one with the components of cruelty, domineering, and the mutilation of women. Much of his life would be spent alone, preferring the solitude, which most likely stems from a poor self-image due to some psychologically damaging physical abnormality.<sup>9</sup> These elements created the serial killer that evaded arrest, compiling a case that remains unsolved even now.

There were several arrests and suspects during the course of the Whitechapel murders. One of the suspects was brought to light by John M’Carthy. He was suspected to have been involved in the assault and robbery of Michael Hadsburgh and arrested on those charges. It was later revealed that Michael Hadsburgh “went into a publichouse and had some drink, when he saw [John M’Carthy], who said to him "Are you 'Jack the Ripper?'" He replied he was”.<sup>10</sup> John Foster was also arrested a month earlier, but neither cases turned out to have enough

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<sup>7</sup> Douglass, John. “Jack the Ripper.” *FBI*, FBI. Last Modified 6 Dec. 2010. Last Accessed 3 Feb. 2018.

<sup>8</sup> Douglass, John. “Jack the Ripper.” *FBI*.

<sup>9</sup> Douglass, John. “Jack the Ripper.” *FBI*.

<sup>10</sup> “Police.” *The Times*. Last Accessed 17 Nov. 1888. Web. Accessed 12 Feb. 2018.

incriminating evidence to charge either suspect. Foster was arrested on the night of October 12 on suspicion of having been involved in the Whitechapel murders. He was charged after the Constable found a knife and part of a lady's necklace attached to a pocket watch in the room he was renting.<sup>11</sup> Many other people have been arrested, including a group of robbers and assassins, but none of their cases held any positive evidence to incriminate them for the murders. During the time at which Jack the Ripper was at large, several letters were written, all signed Jack the Ripper. Most of them were addressed as "Dear Boss" or "Dear Sir".<sup>12</sup> The most iconic letter was the original letter sent to the Central News Agency. This letter detailed two murders, one that had already happened and one that would happen. It began by mocking police, the author writing "I keep on hearing the police have caught me but they wont fix me yet. I have laughed when they have look so clever and talked about being on the right track".<sup>13</sup> Posters of this letter were created and hung at the police station, which resulted in a flood of letters written by those who claimed to be Jack the Ripper. Some of these letters, and the details from them, were published in newspapers, giving the case a much more authentic and broad media coverage as far as content. These letters are now considered hoaxes, but they still provide useful insight on the time period and mindset about the murders. The Whitechapel murders caused several conflicts to arise, provoking social division and fear.

During the 1800s, social hierarchy played in large role in the lives of humans. It dictated every aspect of day to day life. There was already a gap between the rich and the poor, as well as a gap between gender. The Whitechapel murders took place in the slums of London, and most of

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<sup>11</sup> "The Whitechapel Murders." *Belfast News Letter*. Last Modified 13 Oct. 1888. Web. Accessed 17 Feb 2018.

<sup>12</sup> "Jack the Ripper." *The National Archives*, Learning Curve.

<sup>13</sup> "Dear Boss." Received by Central News Agency. *The National Archives*. Last Modified 25 Sept. 1888. Accessed 12 Feb. 2018.

the victims were female prostitutes, which caused an increase in the social division. According to Margaret Felger's research, "the tensions between middle class and working class extended even further into the realm of gender".<sup>14</sup> The middle class women already believed the working class women were beneath them, and the Jack the Ripper murders furthered the poor reputation of the working class women. The national press reported in great detail the murders, but it also revealed the dire poverty that the Eastern London slums were dealing with. As a result, the London County Council introduced several slum clearance programs.<sup>15</sup> The primary conflict during the Jack the Ripper case was that he became one of the most notorious serial killers England has ever know and, despite centuries of speculation, his identity was never uncovered. In contrast, the compromising factor was that these murders caused the world to realize that the police investigative techniques were lacking, and helped to evolve the modern forensic measures used today.

Forensic science was not used in the investigation because, in 1888, forensic science was not an established part of a criminal investigation.<sup>16</sup> Austrian magistrate Hans Gustav Adolf Gross was the first person to truly understand the importance of scientific evidence in crime scenes. In 1893, he published his book on forensic techniques and his contributions to the field were acknowledged in 1895. Before the Jack the Ripper investigation, law enforcement occasionally hired photographers to take pictures of the victims eyes in hopes that the face of the murderer had been captured in their retinas.<sup>17</sup> By 1888, the Metropolitan Police and the City of London Police had begun to employ local photographer to take pictures of victims for the

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<sup>14</sup> Felger, Margaret. "Jack the Ripper: Class and Gender in Nineteenth Century London." *Crime Scandal Spectacle*, n.d. Web. 21 Dec. 2017.

<sup>15</sup> Diniejko, Andrzej. *Slums and Slumming in Late-Victorian London. The Victorian Web*.

<sup>16</sup> Jones, Richard. "Jack the Ripper." Jack the Ripper - History, Victims, Letters, Suspects.

<sup>17</sup> Jones, Richard. "Jack the Ripper." Jack the Ripper - History, Victims, Letters, Suspects.

purpose of identification. Fingerprinting, which has been a large part of forensic measures in modern day investigations, was first suggested in 1880 by Dr Henry Faulds, a Scottish physician.

<sup>18</sup> The late 1800s was a time of revolutionizing the police force, and the poor results of the Jack the Ripper case helped spur the development of the forensic techniques used to day. The year-long, Jack the Ripper case did not have a satisfying end, but the development of forensic science is a means of compromise for the horrific events that happened due to the conflict caused by the serial killer.

Jack the Ripper revolutionized crime and the way crime scenes are investigated. The Ripper case opened the world's eyes to murder, media captivating the case details and allowing the events to spread throughout the world. Jack the Ripper became the first modern day serial killer, murdering several women and catching the interest of newspaper publishers. These killings caused many conflicts to arise and the lack of compromise, the failure to solve this crime, only led to the progression of these problems. Jack the Ripper has become a national figurehead, the name easily recognizable, and this case led to the development of modern day forensic techniques used today.

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<sup>18</sup> Jones, Richard. "Jack the Ripper." Jack the Ripper - History, Victims, Letters, Suspects.



## Annotated Bibliography

### *Primary Sources*

“Dear Boss.” Received by Central News Agency, *The National Archives*. Last Modified 25 Sept. 1888. Accessed 12 Feb. 2018.

[www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/museum/item.asp?item\\_id=39&sequence=1](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/museum/item.asp?item_id=39&sequence=1).

This is the first letter signed ‘Jack the Ripper’. It was sent to the Central News Agency, addressed on the 25 of September, 1888. It is a very iconic letter, and most people will recognize the beginning phrase “Dear Boss”. This letter was forwarded to Scotland Yard. A few days later, a postcard arrived. It was smeared with blood and appeared to have been written in the same handwriting as the letter. It referred to a double murder and, at the time, the police thought the two items might be genuine.

“Jack the Ripper.” *The National Archives*, Learning Curve. Last Modified N.D. Accessed 12 February, 2018.

[www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/education/jacktheripper.pdf](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/education/jacktheripper.pdf)

This PDF contains authentic letters from the time of the Whitechapel murders. There are letters written by members of the Metropolitan police and other officials, as well as letters from the suspected murderer, signed ‘Jack the Ripper’. Though there is not official author of the compilation, the National Archives did use the official letters, and their authenticity has been stipulated. It is a PDF designed for educational purposes, and contains a lot of useful information tied to the case, how Jack the Ripper’s letters impacted the case, and the general public's attitude towards the murders.

“Police.” *The Times*. Last Modified 17 Nov. 1888. Web. Accessed 12 Feb. 2018.

<https://basic.newspapers.com/image/32660664/?terms=jack+the+ripper>

This newspaper article details the arrest of robbery suspect, John M’Carthy. He ties his robbery and assault to a man who he believed to be Jack the Ripper. It is an authentic article published by the New York Times, then called *The Times*, on November 17, 1888. This article helps to view the progression and thoughts on the case during 1888, when the killings were actually taking place.

“The Terrible Murder in Whitechapel.” *The Manchester Guardian*. Last Modified 12 Nov. 1888. Web. Accessed 11 Feb. 2018.

<https://basic.newspapers.com/image/260435835/?terms=jack+the+ripper>

An authentic newspaper article, this 1888 edition of the Manchester Guardian shares the details of the murders and victims of the Whitechapel killer. It was published on the 12 of November in 1888, the author subjected to cope with the killings and tasked with sharing the horrific accounts. Being a part of London, the writers of the Guardian had first had accounts and fresh information. This article explains some of the victims and provides a list of them, giving readers and look into the crime scenes and occurrences the Metropolitan police had to work off of at that time.

“The Whitechapel Murders.” *Belfast News Letter*. Last Modified 13 Oct. 1888. Web. Accessed 17 Feb 2018.

This article details the arrest of Jack the Ripper suspect, John Foster. It is an authentic newspaper article from the *Belfast News Letter*. The News Letter is one of Ireland’s main daily newspapers, having been founded in 1737. This article was written on October 13, 1888. It is authentic and a good source of information on the suspect as it explains the basis on which he was arrested.

### *Secondary Sources*

Aamodt, Mike. *Serial Killer Statistics*. *Serial Killer Statistics*. Last Modified 4 Sep. 2016. Web. Accessed 11 Dec 2017.  
<http://maamodt.asp.radford.edu/Serial%20Killer%20Information%20Center/Serial%20Killer%20Statistics.pdf>

Even though this source is not directly tied to the Jack the Ripper case, it provides plenty of valid and important information pertaining to serial killers. Basing an essay on a serial murderer, in this instance Jack the Ripper, cannot be done without looking at sources that are not directly tied to the time period or event if one wants to make an accurate use of modern day knowledge and technology to provide the most vivid explanation of the account. This report provides tables of data relating to the number of serial killers operating within the world and specific countries following different criteria. It was a report compiled by Mike Aamodt, an American industrial and organizational psychology professor at Radford University. He has published more than fifty professional journal articles and presented plenty of papers at professional conferences.

Culpin, Chris. “Crime and Punishment.” *Home – The National Archives*, Last Modified N.D. Web. Accessed 21 Dec. 2017. <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/candp/>

This source is a compilation of information defining the industrial revolution and how it impacted crime. The industrial revolution lasted from the 1750s to the 1900s, and was accompanied by remarkable changes. Britain was introduced to a revolutionized society. With an increase in population, urbanization was inevitable, and more and more citizens began to flood the expanded cities. “Crime and Punishment” provides a necessary look into the time period and how it impacted crime, which is particularly relevant to Jack the Ripper’s actions. Chris Culpin, the author, took valid sources, including the Metropolitan Police Museum and the Surrey History Center. Culpin is a history teacher and has written several historical books and textbooks.

Diniejko, Andrzej. *Slums and Slumming in Late-Victorian London. The Victorian Web*. Last Modified 3 Oct. 2013. Web. Accessed 21 Dec 2017.  
<http://www.victorianweb.org/history/slums.html>

“Slums and Slumming in Late-Victorian London” is written by Dr. Andrzej Diniejko, a senior lecturer in English Literature and culture at Warsaw University. He studied in the Department of English Studies at Warsaw University, and obtained his MA degree in 1970. In this article, Diniejko discusses the history of England, specifically centered around London. It focuses on the slums and nature of slumming in late-Victorian London, which is important to consider because this era was when the Jack the Ripper murders occurred. It also provides insight on the conflicts of the less desirable areas of London, England, as well as the social divide between social classes.

Felger, Margaret. “Jack the Ripper: Class and Gender in Nineteenth Century London.” *Crime Scandal Spectacle*. Last Modified N.D. Web. Accessed 21 Dec. 2017.  
<http://crimescandalspectacle.academic.wlu.edu/jack-the-ripper-2/>

“Jack the Ripper: Class and Gender in the Nineteenth Century London” is a brief synopsis, accompanied by a video, detailing the conflicts involving class and gender in the nineteenth century. It is the work of 2016 Washington and Lee University graduate, Margaret Felger, who majored in American History. While the murders were as much as conflict as any, they spurred and intensified a long array of other conflicts that would only later be resolved. Some still remain prominent in modern society. The importance of how historical events affect modern day is as prevalent as how they impacted the historical era they took place in. By studying history, the origin of conflicts can be found, as well as why they remain important and prevailing.

Douglass, John. “Jack the Ripper.” *FBI*, FBI. Last Modified. 6 Dec. 2010. Accessed 3 Feb. 2018.  
[vault.fbi.gov/Jack%20the%20Ripper](http://vault.fbi.gov/Jack%20the%20Ripper)

This case file contains a reevaluation of the Jack the Ripper case during the 1888s. It details potential motives using more modern forensic techniques and is authentic in its make. Since it is a investigation conducted by the FBI, it has reliable and useful information that is unquestionable unless new information comes to light. The criminal investigation was conducted by SSA John E. Douglass.

Oakley, Malcolm. "East London History." *East London History, Facts About The East End*. Last Modified N.D. Web. Accessed 14 Dec. 2017.  
<http://www.eastlondonhistory.co.uk/>

The Eastern side of London, England is commonly known as, simply, "the East End" to Londoners. It is well known in London's history for sporting civilians on the edge of the wrong side of the law, include prostitutes. The infamous Whitechapel district is considered to be a part of the East End, where the Ripper killings took place. Malcolm Oakley, the author, grew up in London's East End and has always been fascinated by the history and ever-changing landscape of London.

Jones, Richard. "Jack the Ripper." *Jack the Ripper - History, Victims, Letters, Suspects.*, Richard Jones. Last Modified 5 May 2006. Accessed 26 Jan. 2018.  
[www.jack-the-ripper.org/](http://www.jack-the-ripper.org/)

Richard Jones is an author, historian, and tour guide who has done extensive research on Jack the Ripper. He has written a book on Jack the Ripper and appeared in documentaries, proving he is a valid and reliable source. His site provides details about every aspect of the case, including victims and possible suspects. It was originally published on May 5, 2006 but it is regularly updated with improved information and new resources.