

Jack the ripper –
describe law and
order in london in the
late nineteenth
century...

[People](#)



In the late nineteenth century the methods of policing were still in their infancy. There was not the technology and experience of crime we have today. Because of the under developed methods there was a lot of petty theft, murder and robbery was common. Riots broke quite often; they usually ended up with injuries and distrust towards the police and army. Law and order up keeping was not organised well enough so it had little effect on the crime. There were too few police to arrest enough criminals.

Prostitution was the most common was that poor woman made a living for them and their families in bad times. In the area of Whitechapel there were roughly 8000 prostitutes working in 1888. The east end was one of the poorest communities and London the richest square mile right next to poverty.

The Metropolitan police force was set up to keep order and deter crime in London as well as tackle major disturbances, e. g. riots. They were set up to take over the function of the watchmen and constables. When the police force had to deal with large riots or protest there was frequent deaths as the army backed up the police. When dealing with riots or protest the police often launched a baton charge on the crowd, however public complained that the police didn't follow orders and used violence all too often. The police were armed with only a truncheon. Later the inspectors began to carry revolvers at times. The police force dealt with street crimes, as that happened the number of burglaries went up.

A detective department was set. This led to corruption and 3 out of 4 policemen were found guilty of corruption. Two years later big improvements

were made. As the number of detectives went up and the number of arrests the amount of corruption went down. The methods were basic, value of footprints and following suspicious characters. Detective work progressed slowly; however many arrests were made and crimes solved with detective work. They used such methods as measuring parts of the human body believing that no two humans would have the same measurements, matching materials discovered and fingerprinting.

These methods of detective work weren't very effective. They were too underdeveloped to help the police force investigate crimes well. The significance of evidence was not known. Crime still thrived in the streets in London. The amount of police in London at the time was 13, 319 but at any one time only 1, 383 were available, while the population was 5, 255, 069. Not enough police meant that too many crimes were being committed still. Slowly however improvements were being made.

Question 2

Why did the Whitechapel murders attract so much attention in 1888?

The Whitechapel murders attracted a lot of attention because they were the first serial, sexual murders. The short time between the 5 murders was only 2 months and a week, 70 days. The types of murders, press reports, mystery and injuries also attracted attention to the murders.

The Rippers' victims were all working prostitutes. Prostitutes were just people he picked at random; he didn't plan to kill that specific person.

Prostitutes were seen as the lowest of people by the upper and middle

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classes. The murders thrilled the upper classes and gave them something to talk about.

The injuries he caused to the bodies were a big reason why the murders attracted so much attention. All the victims died instantly from a deep slit across their neck from left to right. The injuries were mainly abdominal; they became increasingly more horrific as the murders went on. The murders were extremely bloody, disturbing and moving. Organs such as the uterus, intestines and kidneys were removed. In the last, most horrific murder the heart was missing, it was never found.

Elizabeth Stride and Catherine Eddowes were both murdered on the same night. Their bodies were found less than a quarter of a mile away from each other; and murdered in less than an hour. The body of Elizabeth Stride was not mutilated, so the Ripper obviously hadn't had enough time to finish. However the body of the other woman was badly mutilated. She had all the stabs and mutilations as the other victims; but she also had multiple cuts on her face; right earlobe was sliced off and V's cut on her cheeks.

The press also over exaggerated about the injuries to the bodies. The press had said that the injuries were more horrific than they really were; and in each report small details were added to keep the public interested. The name 'Jack the Ripper' was a catchy name that would draw attention to the article; it turned him into a celebrity. The murders become a sensation after the name was put forward. Press reports contained information like suspects, injuries and stories from witnesses. The press turned it into stories that lead

the public to buy more newspapers or magazines; it was a series that people just had to find out the ending to.

The murders attracted attention to the area of Whitechapel, the bad conditions and lives. It was a very widely publicized and talked about event. It drew curiosity and interest to the homes of people everywhere. What happened in those few weeks was very new to crime.

Question 3

Why were the police unable to catch Jack the Ripper?

There were many factors about why the police were unable to catch the Ripper. He was the first sexual serial killer. He only focused on murdering prostitutes. He was an opportunist murder. It was common and normal to see men and women go into dark corners and it didn't look suspicious. This made it hard for the police because he didn't follow a pattern or he didn't have any connections between the people he murdered; it was completely at random. The police didn't know how to deal with this situation, as it was the first of its kind. The police couldn't establish anything in particular. The bodies were moved around a lot before they were taken to the mortuary so evidence was destroyed.

There were two main police forces at work at the time of the murders. They were competing against each other for the capture of the Ripper. The Metropolitan police and City Police were heavily guarding information from each other in competition to catch the Ripper and get more publicity. If the two police forces had joined information it would have helped them to

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capture him before anymore murders took place. Because of this they limited the chances of catching the serial murderer.

During the few weeks of the murders there were too many other murders. There were approximately 82 other murders at the same time. It was hard to distinguish who was the murderer for each of the murders.

The press interfered with the investigation; by publishing information about the investigation that the police had gathered. This could give 'tips' to the murder to stay ahead of the investigation and make advances.

The murderer could have been anyone. He could be any normal person who lived in the middle class areas in London who only came on the weekends after his work for a little fun. Or he could have been a street dweller. It could have been an immigrant. This hindered the investigation because it wasn't certain exactly who it could be clues lead to it potentially being either. There were many homeless street dwellers in Whitechapel so it was common for people to be out on the streets late in the night. It could have been anyone who was sleeping on the streets at the time. Or could have come from London for the weekend.

Also different detectives had different points of views of the killer. Most said that he was a professional medic on human anatomy but one or two argued that he hadn't even the skill of a butcher.

Despite that today we have methods such as physiological profiling, which makes it slightly easier to catch serial killers however it's still hard. In 1888 there was no such thing; so they could not focus on specific suspects easily

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and was ever harder for them. There was also a lot of racial argument at the time; figures were being pointed at the foreigners mostly. The skills that investigation used was very basic like the significance of footprints and fingerprints. They believed in old wives tales such as the last image a person sees is preserved on their retina.

The police might not have ever caught the Ripper. Many arrests were made and theories were thought of. The press interfered greatly with the investigation. They drove it for the police basically. Also the low experience of the police in serial killers hindered the chances of capturing him. Catching serial killers is still very difficult despite all out technology, so with none of what we take for granted today; it probably slowed down his capture even more.