

Despite the dismal 6am start, the critical thinking, art and drama students were excited for the two days ahead. The coach, now abuzz with singing and lively chatting, arrived in London at midday. After the art and drama students had departed, the critical thinking students were taken to the Old Bailey; the prestige and importance of the building was evident, and was reflected in the quiet, formal and somewhat unsure wait to be granted entrance to the courts. Following security checks and instructions as to courtroom conduct, we learned that the case we intended to see (a particularly gruesome murder) was not sitting. Instead, we were allocated to the summing up of a drugs trial which relied heavily on evidence gathered from social media records. Upon entering the public gallery, the fact that we sat among the relatives of the accused was realised; those in the front row were bent forward in what seemed to be agonising anticipation, while the accused – a middle aged man on trial for conspiracy to smuggle 14kg of cocaine into Britain – looked relatively nonchalant, much to our surprise. The trip's close relevance to CT was consolidated when the defence barrister – a man of exceptional expertise and experience – included articulate counter-arguments and seemingly unanswerable reasons in his summary speech. The ways in which this barrister incorporated evidence, or indeed the lack of it, into his persuasion was masterful and expounded upon our existing knowledge of how to utilise evidence in constructing an argument. During the advice he gave to the jury, the judge's skilled use of analogies made the case startlingly clear and his ability to concisely and eloquently consider both sides of the argument was fantastic to hear. Having the opportunity to see CT in action, especially to such a world-class standard in such a momentous situation, was hugely beneficial to us, especially to those of us hoping to pursue a career in law.

After a night at the theatre and in the hotel, we headed towards Brick Lane and the Whitechapel area of London. There we met a top Ripperologist who guided us through the back-alleys of the area. The grey sky and drizzling rain added a somewhat haunting effect to the day, creating an eerie atmosphere and helping us to experience what life might have been like in 19th century London. The tour included some particularly gruesome photographs of the victims of Jack the Ripper, arguably one of the most infamous murderers in Britain and the World, who still baffles historians today. This tour showed us the frankly appalling conditions of the public at the time, and highlighted just how different our lives are now – for example, we particularly noticed how crime scene investigation has changed. With many of the murders, the bodies were quickly picked up from the streets and disposed in a mortuary, nothing at all like murder cases now. We were shocked to see the anti-Semitism, poor working conditions and the divide between the well-educated upper classes and the lower classes of the time, all of which contributed to the mystery of the case. The Hollywood adaptations of the case – for example, *From Hell* (starring Johnny Depp) which we had previously watched on the coach journey up to London – had led to a plethora of theories as to who the infamous Ripper may have been. Sadly, no new evidence appeared to us and so the case remains unsolved, perhaps giving an opportunity for any aspiring detectives on future trips to London. Following this, we hit the shops on Oxford Street, something that many of us had been looking forward to, especially after the somewhat impatient shouts from the back of the coach of 'Are we nearly there yet?'

Overall, an absolutely fantastic, eye opening trip that provided brilliant opportunities for critical thinking, art and drama students as well as some sightseeing, eating and shopping time for all involved - and perhaps some needed relaxation time for Mr & Mrs Charlwood, Mr Lyden, Mr Smedley and Ms Deller