

“How was London?” a seemingly simple question that I was faced with countless times from teachers, peers and family members upon my return from our 6th year trip to London. How can I honestly be expected to summarise quite possibly the best trip of my life in a few mere sentences? What was the best part about London? Was it singing (screaming) ABBA’s “Waterloo” every single time we passed a bus, sign or building with Waterloo written on it? Was it playing the role of Macbeth in the Globe’s Shakespeare workshop? Was it watching the muggle’s priceless reactions to Harry Potter Studios? Was it discussing Jack the Ripper conspiracy theories with qualified Ripperologists? (yes that is a thing). To answer these questions, we must analyse the trip in full- its highs and lows, although there really were no lows. Our first stop on arrival was to a beautiful rooftop terrace where we had stunning views of Saint Paul’s cathedral and the city of London. After this we took part in a similar photo shoot in the beautiful Trafalgar Square. The following day we awoke feeling extremely refreshed and after a true English breakfast of toast and a pain au chocolat we departed for Shakespeare’s Globe theatre. When we arrived we headed straight for the gift shop where the first of the excessive spending began. After this we were greeted by our guide who brought us on the tour of The Globe. She explained how various productions were performed and how the groundlings would pay one penny to stand in the pits during the shows. Then we took part in an educational workshop where we focused on the relationship between text and performance and how language and form shape meaning. We even acted out

different scenes from our single text Macbeth. This workshop was really worthwhile as it allowed us to engage with our text in a way that is not always possible in the classroom. After a quick lunch we walked to The Tower of London. As luck would have it we even met a huge celebrity- Doug The Pug - the internet’s most famous pug with over 3.6 million instagram followers! Inside The Tower of London we were able to see many historical and interesting sights including the Crown Jewels, the Yeoman Warders standing guards, the White Tower, the Torture Tower and even a live re-enactment of an escape attempt. This was followed by dinner at Planet Hollywood. One of the highlights of the trip was The Lion King. To say it was amazing would be the understatement of the century. There were gasps, tears, laughs and moments of silent speechlessness. By the time it was over we had all experienced an emotional rollercoaster that we will never forget. After such an amazing Friday, we started Saturday with a guided tour of the city. We saw many iconic sights including Buckingham Palace, Big Ben (although it was completely covered in scaffolding), Trafalgar Square, the Houses of Parliament, and Westminster Abbey. Following this it was time for another momentous part of our trip - our visit to Buckingham Palace State Rooms. There was something overwhelming in the pure opulence of it all and more than a few of us were astonished to see the Irish harp decorating the ceiling of one of the state rooms. We had two hours to explore the palace with the help of our trusty audio guides. Next we were given the option of three museums- The Science Museum, The Natural History Museum and The Victoria and Albert Museum. On Oxford Street

we were spoiled for choice, we spent hours shopping for shoes, clothes and everything in between. After some down time in Pizza Express we went on a Jack The Ripper Tour, where we were led down dark streets and side alley’s describing his crimes in gruesome detail. Sunday started with a trip to Harry Potter Studios. Without doubt this was the highlight of the trip for many of us. We spent A LOT of money in here. From wands to chocolate frogs, scarves, notebooks, badges and much more, but it was Ms Thornton who showed us all up by purchasing actual Gryffindor robes. On the tour, we were ushered into The Great Hall. There were tears in my eyes. We were shown costumes and props used

in the movies. Midway through the tour we even had the opportunity to buy the famous butter beer. At the end of the tour we were greeted with the actual Hogwarts. Ms. Thornton kindly played "The Circle of Life" and "Hakuna Matata" in what surely was a performance by the students and teachers that would move any crowd to tears on the trip home. As the bus pulled into our faithful Mercy Mounthawk we all felt a tinge -correction A LOT- of sadness that the trip of a lifetime was over. A huge thank you must be given to all the teachers who came with us and made the trip so enjoyable: Ms. Buckley, Ms. McKenna, Ms. Condon, Mr. Fell, Mr. O'Roarke and, of course, Ms. Thornton who not only made this trip possible but also made it the most enjoyable trip ever with her endless enthusiasm and energy.