London is a major capital city. At night it glows brightly like most modern cities. Before the 1700s, London was much smaller than it is now. On cloudless, moonlit nights people would take advantage of the moonlight and go out to socialize. But night-time in the city could be dangerous. You could trip, fall and injure yourself. If you fell in the river, you could drown. You could be attacked or robbed by criminals who roamed the streets. You could easily get lost. If people wanted to go out at night, they would have to carry a burning torch or lamp or, if they were rich enough, pay someone else to carry it.

There were many link boys who would, for a small fee, hold a burning torch or lamp ahead of people so that they could see the way through the dark streets. Some of these link boys were dishonest and would rob the people who had employed them and then run off and leave them in the dark.

By the early 1700s, busy cities, like London and Paris, had street lamps in some areas. In Paris, which had street lamps before London, the first street lamps were actually lights placed in the windows of houses. The police enforced a law that said every house had to have a lamp burning in the window all night long. If the lamp went out, people would have to get up to relight it or face being fined. Some people started to offer their services as lamplighters. In return for payment, lamplighters would put up a lamp outside the house and make sure it was lit. The street lamps reassured people and made them feel safer. The authorities realized the benefits they brought and took over the installation and maintenance of them. All over Europe, the use of lamp posts grew.

In the 1700s, London grew rapidly and became the world’s centre of trade,
manufacturing and fashion. Business became important and lights were needed to keep the city working and entertaining into the night.

By the late 1700s, London had so many street lamps that visitors to the city were amazed by them. The lamps were fuelled by wax or oil that gave off an unpleasant smell and often dripped. Many people were employed as lamplighters because each lamp had to be lit by hand every evening. One German tourist visiting London in the 1700s wrote in his diary, ‘As it was quite dark, when I came back the first evening, I was astonished at the admirable manner in which the streets are lighted up.’ The bright lamps made the city seem exciting and lively. ‘The lamps ... are so near each other that even on the most ordinary and common nights, the city has the appearance of a festive illumination.’

The lamplighters quickly became an important and valued part of society. This was because they often became a key figure in their communities. They would walk the same route twice a day and, as they checked, cleaned, fixed, lit or put out the lights, they would notice what was going on around them. Many lamplighters helped to make their routes safer. Their job required energy, strength and agility, and reliability. They had to keep the lights clean, make sure the wicks were trimmed to the right length, light tens of lamps in the evening and put them all out again in the morning. Many lamplighters were pleased to be guardians in their communities and often the job would be passed on from parent to child.

The lamp posts of London were designed with a bar sticking out from either side at the top so that the lamplighter could safely rest his ladder on them. Lamplighters moved quickly, carrying their ladder and going up and down it hundreds of times a day. The lamp posts were decorated with the royal crest and were looked after carefully by the lamplighters.
When gas lamps started to be used from 1805 onwards, they changed the work of the lamplighters. The gas lamps were much quicker to light and didn’t require lots of the work of the oil lamps such as changing the smelly oil and replacing and trimming wicks. Some of the lamplighters felt like their job wasn’t the same anymore. Charles Dickens captured this feeling in the story ‘The Lamplighter’ when one character talks about the change from oil to gas lamps, ‘I foresee in this, the breaking up of our profession. There’s no more going the rounds to trim by daylight, no more dribbling down of the oil on the hats and bonnets of ladies and gentlemen when one feels in spirits. Any low fellow can light a gas lamp.’

Gas lamps were better than oil lamps in many ways although a big issue with them was that, every now and again, one would blow up! Over time gas lamps replaced oil lamps. Later, with the invention of electricity, gas lamps were replaced by electric lamps which dominate modern streets.

Today, there are still 1,500 gas lamps in London. Five people are employed to operate them. They light them every evening and put them out every morning. These lights are carefully looked after because they are part of the city’s history. Kensington Palace Gardens is the name of a long avenue in London. It is lined with grand old buildings and is lit entirely by gas lamps. There you can imagine what it would have been like in London during the time of Charles Dickens.

Claire Horsburgh

**WORDS TO KNOW**

- **dishonest** not trustworthy
- **enforce** to make sure something is done
- **wick** a string in oil or in the middle of a candle that is lit for burning

**COMPREHENSION**

1. **Answer the following questions.**
   a. Before street lamps were introduced, what did people do on cloudless, moonlit nights? Why did they need to wait for these weather conditions?
   b. Before street lamps were introduced, what were the dangers that people faced if they went out at night?
   c. Who were link boys and what did they do?
   d. What did the work of a lamplighter involve?
   e. Roughly how many gas lamps are there in London today?
   f. How many people are employed to light the lamps today?
   g. What were some of the unpleasant aspects of the early oil lamps?
h. What was dangerous about the gas lamps that were introduced in the 1800s?

i. What powers modern street lamps?

These questions are more difficult. Discuss them first.

j. What did the German tourist in London say was the effect of the street lamps?

k. How did the introduction of gas lamps change the work of a lamplighter?

2. Copy out the sentences that are true. Change the sentences that are not true so that they are correct and write them out.

a. London had street lamps before Paris.

b. London grew rapidly in the 1700s.

c. Lamplighters work all day.

d. The oil lamps used to give off a pleasant smell.

e. Lamplighters used ladders to climb up and light the oil lamps.

f. Charles Dickens was a lamplighter.

3. Answer the following with reference to context.

a. The authorities realized the benefits they brought and took over the installation and maintenance of them.

i. What is meant by 'the authorities'?

ii. What were the benefits of having street lamps?

b. ‘There’s no more going the rounds to trim by daylight, no more dribbling down of the oil on the hats and bonnets of ladies and gentlemen when one feels in spirits. Any low fellow can light a gas lamp.’

i. Who said this?

ii. The three sections that are underlined are examples of old-fashioned language. Discuss what each one means and write down your answers.

WORKING WITH WORDS

1. Think of suitable adjectives to use with these nouns. You may choose words from the text or use your own.

   a. ............... lamp    b. ............... ladder    c. ............... streets
   d. ............... work    e. ............... city    f. ............... light

2. With the help of a dictionary, and after reading the words again in the passage, give the meaning of each word given below. Also find a very different meaning for each word.

   a. capital    b. trip    c. light    d. crest    e. issue    f. operate
LEARNING ABOUT LANGUAGE

ADVERBS

Do you remember what you read about adverbs in the previous lesson?

1. Pick out the adverbs in the following sentences and say what words they qualify.
   a. London glows brightly.
   b. The lamplighter could safely rest his ladder on them.
   c. Lamplighters would put a lamp outside the house.
   d. You could easily get lost.
   e. They often became a key figure in their communities.
   f. They light them every evening and put them out every morning.
   g. The lamp posts were decorated with the royal crest and were looked after carefully by the lamplighters.

You have learnt that most adverbs end in -ly. However, many words which end in -ly are not adverbs. In the list below there are some words which are normally adjectives; some are adverbs, and others are nouns.

2. Make three columns and sort the words out into groups. Name the three columns ‘Nouns’, ‘Adverbs’ (normally) and ‘Adjectives’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>early</th>
<th>poorly</th>
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<th>actively</th>
<th>friendly</th>
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<td>duly</td>
<td>chilly</td>
<td>barely</td>
<td>bully</td>
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<td>fairly</td>
<td>mainly</td>
<td>hilly</td>
<td>holy</td>
<td>carefully</td>
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<td>curly</td>
<td>gaily</td>
<td>homily</td>
<td>stately</td>
<td>tally</td>
<td>folly</td>
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Do you know what these words mean? Look up the meanings of the words you don’t know. The dictionary will also help you decide whether the words are nouns, adverbs or adjectives.

LISTENING AND SPEAKING

CALL MY BLUFF

You can play this word definition game in two teams of four (or fewer, or more).

Select a difficult and obscure word from the dictionary. Sit with the three other members of your group and each write out a definition for the word. Only one definition must be the correct one; the others should be made up. Make some of the definitions sound as real as possible. Have fun with the false definitions!
Example: Word chosen from the dictionary—tetrad

Definitions
Member 1: tetrad—a wooden stand for drying wet clothes
Member 2: tetrad—a group or series of four things or people
Member 3: tetrad—a creature with a long tail and wings
Member 4: tetrad—a tool used for tightening radiator valves

Members of team A read out each definition in turn. You may give additional information (made up) if you like and some examples of how the word may be used. When all the words have been described, a member of team B has to guess the correct definition. Give one point for every correct answer. Team A wins a point if the correct definition is not given. Each team takes turns to present their word and definition.

By the way, which definition of the word ‘tetrad’ is the correct one?

COMPOSITION

Collect as much information about lamplighters as you can by going through the chapter again and making notes.

Next, copy and complete the timeline below for a typical day in your life.

Then work with a partner to create a timeline of a lamplighter’s typical day. You will need to use your imagination a little.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>12</th>
<th>1</th>
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sleeping