**London Bridge - Script**

Hi. Thanks for coming this morning. Today, I want to talk to you for ten minutes about London Bridge. I'm sorry I couldn’t make a video last week. I was on my summer vacation. Now I'm back, so hopefully I'll get back into the swing of things. Don't forget, as always, if you click on the link below here in the description, you can find the script for this talk, you can also find questions, multiple choice and essay type, and you can find sample answers. Many people that watch this video, they don't actually click on the link down there. They don't go and look at those questions. You should. They’ll help you understand this talk more, but also, they’ll help you practice your English. I'm convinced, if you practice your English, you will get better. Please try.

OK. Today, I'm going to talk to you about London Bridge for ten minutes. Here we go. Three two one go.

OK. I'm sure most of you, many of you, maybe even all of you, know of London Bridge. Maybe you've seen pictures, or at least heard about it. You probably know this song: “London Bridge is falling down falling down.” Maybe you know the tune. Anyway, many people that know of London Bridge think that this is London Bridge. But, in fact, it's not. That's actually a bridge called Tower Bridge. This is London Bridge. It's not nearly as impressive in stature … instruct … in stature, but it is much more impressive when we look at its history, which we're going to do a little bit today.

Now, London Bridge, of course, crosses a river called the River Thames. It's spelled T H A M E S, but it's actually pronounced “tems”. The word Thames comes from Brittonic Celtic, which is the language that was spoken by the Britons, the people that lived on the island of Great Britain, thousands of years ago before the Romans came. And the word comes from Tamesas, which means dark. The river of course is quite fast, it's quite dirty, it carries a lot of mud, so it's quite a dark river.

Now, in the beginning, there was no bridge where London is now. There was a small farm, a small settlement. People didn’t actually cross the river there, they crossed a little bit further up at a ford. They forded the river. Actually, ford f-o-r-d comes from where a river is low, and you can walk across. The city of Oxford in England is a place where oxes forded a river. Many places that end with ford come from a place where the river was quite low. … Ah! We're running out of time already.

So, in the beginning, there was only a small settlement there. And then, of course, the Romans invaded England. In the beginning, about AD55 Julius Caesar came over and after that the Emperor Claudius in AD43 he invaded and started to colonize England. Back then London didn't exist. London is going to start to become important soon, but, in the beginning, the Romans based their center of power, their capital city at a city they called Camulodunum, which is modern day Colchester. This is about 150km north of where London is now. So, why does London Bridge come into this? Because the easiest way to get to that city is not to sail round England but is to sail up the estuary to where London is, get off your boat, and then walk across land from there. So, what the Romans would do is they would sail across from Europe, they would go up the estuary, they would leave their boats, they would come ashore, they would cross the river Thames and they would go up towards Camulodunum. So, of course, they had to make a bridge. So, in the beginning, the Romans made a very simple pontoon bridge. A pontoon bridge is a bridge built on boats. They put wooden boats across and they put wooden boards across the boats and they make a bridge. But, of course, once you have a bridge, civilizations are going to start springing up. Anywhere you have a bridge, a place where people cross the river, you're going to get shops, you're going to get hotels. You’re going to start getting people that supply the people crossing the bridge, the armies there. So, a settlement starts to grow.

Now, once this place begins to grow, and once the Romans decide that this is where they're going to cross the river all the time, they built an actual wooden bridge. A very strong wooden bridge and London begins to grow. Then 410 A.D. the Romans suddenly leave England. Why? That's a story for another talk, but the Romans suddenly leave England. England breaks up then into about seven different kingdoms. These kingdoms fight amongst each other and the Danes from northern Europe start to invade, and England is basically in a period of darkness, a period of war. Finally, a king called King Alfred, he's quite famous, he starts to unite some of the Kingdoms together. He unites Wessex and Sussex and he starts to fight against the Danes. He's known as the first king of England, although it's probably his grandson, Aethelstan who was more successful in his fighting against the Danes, who captured and unionized more of England. So, his son … his grandson Athelstan is probably really the first king of England. Anyway, at this point, England is divided into the English and the Danish. The Danish live in a place called the Danelaw and this boundary was the River Thames. Where these two civilizations, where these two peoples were separated was the River Thames. And now you need a bridge. The city of London is starting to expand because it's a very useful defensive position, it's a place where the Danes have to cross if they want to invade Southern England. So, King Alfred and the people after him they start to build a better bridge, a stronger bridge. They build a nice wooden bridge. It looks quite nice. Look. Now, that's pretty good, but as with any wooden bridge of course, it's susceptible to fire and other disasters. 1091, it's knocked down by a tornado. In 1136 it's destroyed by a fire. At this point, London is starting to fall into disarray because the people living there they don't really build anything. They live in the old Roman settlements and they basically adapt and change those by using bits of wood, but they don't really make anything. But, towards 1100, well, after 1066 when England is invaded by the French, things start to get built. And, in 1209 King Stephen … same as me … King Stephen, he decides to build a stone bridge across the river. So, in 1209 the first stone bridge is built.

Now, this bridge is quite wide, it's very sturdy and it's very good. But, once it's built, people start to build on the bridge. They put shops, they put houses, they put hotels, they put taverns, restaurants and the bridge becomes extremely congested because you have these giant buildings appear over such a small area. They actually are supported on the side of the bridge, so they can build outwards as well. But, there's a very small, dark passage through the middle of them, so the bridge becomes extremely congested. They also use the bridge to display heads of people that have been executed in London. People who've been convicted of traitorism, or things like that, their heads are displayed on the bridge as well. So, when you enter London, you go across the bridge, you can see these heads too.

Of course,1666, the Great Fire of London takes off. At this point, some of the houses on the bridge have actually been pulled down because it's so congested, so it makes a nice break. The Great Fire of London only reaches half way across London Bridge. After that, they rebuilt. There are more houses. 1762, finally they realize that this is just insane. You can't use the bridge. So, they pass a law that says nothing can be built on London Bridge and they tear down all of these buildings. So, London Bridge is usable. Finally. However, by 1831, London is becoming a huge city, a very industrial city, and a lot of traffic is going in and out of this bridge. Of course, not cars yet. Horse drawn carts. And the new bridge … well, the bridge is so congested that by 1831 they realize we have to build a new wider bridge, so they do. They knock down the old bridge and they build new London Bridge. The old bridge had been standing for 622 years. From 1209 ‘til 1831. That's a pretty long time.

So, they build this new bridge. It's a wonderful new bridge. However, of course, again it gets congested. We have the invention of the automobile. We start to get traffic from cars and trucks and lorries and buses and this bridge becomes extremely congested again. One statistic I found quite interesting: every hour, 8000 people and 900 vehicles cross this bridge. Every hour! That's insane! And now, if it was just congestion, we would probably still have that bridge. But, that's not the only problem. The bridge was actually also sinking. You can have a congested bridge, but you cannot have a bridge that’s sinking because if it sinks too far, you won't be able to use it. So, they have to make a new one.

1973, Parliament provides the money and they build the new London Bridge next to where the old London Bridge is. Interestingly enough, the old London Bridge was sold to an American A man called Robert P. McCulloch who was, I think, he got rich from oil. He bought the bridge and he shipped it brick by brick to Arizona. If you go to Arizona you can actually see old London Bridge. There is a myth that he thought he was buying Tower Bridge, but that's not actually true. He knew what he was buying. Anyway, so, the new London Bridge, 1973, is the London Bridge we have today. It's wide, it's strong. We also have many other bridges across the Thames, of course, because you cannot just have one bridge now London is such a huge international city. So, there has been a bridge over the River Thames in that area for about two thousand years. I told you the history of London Bridge is actually very interesting.

This bridge, Tower Bridge, that was built in 1894. Nowhere near as old. Nowhere near as interesting.

OK. I managed it! I finally managed to finish a talk inside ten minutes! Thank you. OK. That was London Bridge. Next week, I'm going to talk about the seven wonders of the ancient world. Should be interesting. Thank you. Don't forget, if you look at the link down here, you can find questions, answers, the script and the MP3 for this talk. Please practice your English. You will get better. Also, if you liked this click LIKE. If you want to share it with people that want to study English, share it. If you want to subscribe, please subscribe. I try and make these talks every week. If you have any ideas for topics or anything you want me to talk about, please put them in the comments section below here. Thank you. Have a nice day. Talk to you later. Bye.

**London Bridge – Questions**

1. What do people quite often confuse with London Bridge?

A: The River Thames

B: Tower Bridge

C: London Bridge

D: The Tamesas

2. Going by what Steven says, what do you think the “ford” in Stratford means?

A: A place where the Romans settled.

B: A place where Shakespeare lived.

C: A place where there is a bridge.

D: A place where you can cross a river.

3. Why did the Romans need to build a bridge at London?

A: Because they wanted to put their center of power there.

B: Because they disembarked their boats there and went overland.

C: Because they needed to start a settlement.

D: Because they didn’t want to sail up the estuary.

4. Why do settlements spring up near a bridge?

A: Because they need to buy the materials to build the bridge.

B: Because the Romans didn’t want to buy anything British.

C: Because there is a shallow place where people can cross the river.

D: Because someone needs to supply the armies crossing there.

5. What did King Athelstan do?

A: He was the son of King Alfred the Great.

B: He was conquered by the Danes.

C: He built a bridge.

D: He united England.

6. Steven says, “At this point, London is starting to fall into disarray because the people living there they don't really build anything.” Which of these words is closest in meaning to “disarray”?

A: Harmony

B: Chaos

C: Order

D: System

7. What was the catalyst for things to be built in London again?

A: Fire and tornados destroying the old bridge.

B: The battle against the Danes.

C: King Alfred uniting England.

D: The invasion of the French.

8. Why one of these statements about the bridge built in 1209 is not true.

A: The heads of executed criminals were displayed there.

B: The passage was very narrow because there were many buildings on the bridge.

C: The Great Fire of London destroyed the whole bridge.

D: It was started by King Stephen.

9. What was the main problem with the bridge built in 1831?

A: It was sinking.

B: It was congested.

C: It wasn’t wide enough.

D: It wasn’t high enough.

10. What happened to the bridge built in 1831?

A: It was bought by an American.

B: It was dismantled.

C: It is still standing next to the new bridge.

D: It sank into the Thames.

11. England has been invaded by many countries over its history. Most countries have been invaded at some point. Even in this day and age some countries are invaded by others. Do you think the act of invading other countries will ever end?

12. Some people, such as King Alfred, rise up and lead. What makes a leader?

13. There are 33 bridges across the River Thames in London. Will the adoption of the driverless car reduce the need for bridges?

14. Do you think it was a strange decision for the British government to sell old London Bridge?

**London Bridge – Answers**

1. B 2. D 3. B 4. D 5. D 6. B 7. D 8. C 9. A 10. A

11. England has been invaded by many countries over its history. Most countries have been invaded at some point. Even in this day and age some countries are invaded by others. Do you think the act of invading other countries will ever end?

I do think the act of physically invading countries will end and, for the most part, has pretty much already finished. However, I do believe that countries will continue to amalgamate through their own choices.

Recently Russia annexed the Crimea, some smaller Eastern European countries have invaded each other, some African nations have invaded their neighbors and China seems dead set on invading Taiwan. This number is far lower than it was at the beginning of the last century when countries were vying for empires. Most of the world seems to have peacefully settled with the borders where they are. And, the impact of international sanctions and the use of the international court has made actions such as this more difficult. The world is gradually becoming more peaceful.

Nonetheless, countries will continue to connect and amalgamate. This will be caused by the ongoing onslaught of globalization. Countries protect their culture and their individuality but, over time, all people end up wanting the same kinds of things. These things erode national identity and, at some point in the future, countries will come together.

If you look through history, you can see a path of small groups of people continuously coming together with like minded people to form tribes, villages, towns, cities, states, countries, federations. The next logical step is for blocks of countries to join together. This will happen. Culturally and economically it makes logical sense.

12. Some people, such as King Alfred, rise up and lead. What makes a leader?

That is a very difficult question because there are many different types of leader and many different things that make them unique. King Alfred was born and raised a king, meaning he had education and advantages not given to regular people. This doesn’t automatically mean he will become a great king, but it does help. What else did he have? He had conviction. He saw a path and knew he had to follow it, no matter what. He also had God. He believed that God was on his side, aiding his conviction. He had the ability to not panic and consider all of his plans and ideas carefully. He took risks. He made mistakes. He learned from his mistakes and improved. Overall he followed the adage, “If not me, then who and if not now, then when?”

So, can you or I become leaders? Possibly. If give the right circumstances. If our backs are against the wall and we have no choice.

13. There are 33 bridges across the River Thames in London. Will the adoption of the driverless car reduce the need for bridges?

Yes, it will. The driverless car will change the entire layout of our cities, including our need for bridges. London has 33 bridges because they become congested. Driverless cars would communicate with other and road congestion would be a thing of the past. They would use algorithms to analyze what cars were going where and they would constantly update their route information. Cars would flow smoothly. There would be no concertina effect that causes most of the traffic jams on roads at the moment. The concertina effect is when a car on a road brakes for whatever reason. The car behind has to brake to avoid hitting them. The next car has to brake for slightly longer, the next car has to brake for slightly longer and so on. As the chain of braking goes down the road, the cars start to reduce their speed as the cars in front slow down, until you have a road of stationary traffic. This is the main cause of traffic jams. With driverless cars, this would not happen. If one car braked, all other cars would automatically know about it and would adjust for it. The flow would carry on as normal.

Driverless cars would also be able to drive more accurately, with less space between cars and less need for wide roads, so they would be able to utilize the bridges more economically. It would be sufficient to have a quarter of the bridges we have now.

Driverless cars would change our cities in other ways as well. When you are driving a car, you need somewhere to put it when you finish driving. Over the last century our cities have been reshaped by parking lots and driveways. Cars spend 95% of their time parked. Parking lots cover 40,000km2 in the USA. That works out as 0.4% of the land area. But, when you consider that all of the urban areas in the USA only add up to 2% of the land area, then 25% of every city is for parking! Nothing has shaped our cities like the car. If you have automatic cars, then you don’t need such wide roads because they can drive more accurately. The cars could constantly move, and people could summon one when necessary, eliminating the need for parking lots. More gardens. More park space. More trees. It’s coming.

14. Do you think it was a strange decision for the British government to sell old London Bridge?

It was a strange decision, but it did make sense economically. A new bridge is expensive, and the money usually comes from taxes. If the money can be partly raised by the sale of the old bridge, then that can’t be a bad thing. However, I would have expected the government to try to ensure that the bridge stayed within the UK. Possibly they couldn’t find a British buyer, but, it would have been nice to keep such a historical icon on the island, rather than having it as a tourist attraction in America. Still, business is business.