

## *AKC Essay Competition - Coversheet*

- Complete all sections of this form and ensure it is the first page of the document you submit (either copy and paste this page into the front of your work, or begin your work on subsequent pages of this form).
- DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME ON YOUR WORK.
- Pages should be clearly numbered.

Student ID number (e.g. 1712345) <b>NOT your K number</b>	<b>██████████</b>
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Degree Programme (where applicable)	Philosophy BA
Department (where applicable)	Philosophy Department, Arts & Humanities
AKC Year (1, 2 or 3):	Year 3

Essay question <u>number</u> :	1
Essay Title:	If there was a tenth lecture for this AKC series, which building would you choose and why?
Deadline:	<b>23:59, Sunday 26 April 2020</b>
Date Submitted:	03/04/2020
Word Count (max 1500 words):	1381

### **DECLARATION BY STUDENT**

By submitting this essay, I declare the following:

This assignment is entirely my own work. Quotations from secondary literature are indicated by the use of inverted commas around ALL such quotations AND by reference in the text or notes to the author concerned.

ALL primary and secondary literature used in this piece of work is indicated in the bibliography placed at the end, and dependence upon ANY source used is indicated at the appropriate point in the text.

I confirm that no sources have been used other than those stated.

**X I understand what is meant by plagiarism, including self-plagiarism.**

**X I understand that plagiarism is a serious academic offence that will result in disciplinary action being taken and may result in my withdrawal from the AKC programme.**

**X I understand that essays which do not include references and a bibliography will not be read.**

**X My word count is accurately stated above and I understand that essays which are more than 10% over the word limit may not be considered by the AKC Steering Committee.**

**If there was a tenth lecture for this AKC series, which building would you choose and why?**

Perhaps the most ill-treated and underappreciated service London has to offer to its inhabitants and those who visit it is the Underground system. The TfL receives complaints on a day to day basis concerning every bit of its existence. In this essay, I would like to reverse our gloomy sentiments towards the Underground system by shedding some light onto its history and importance which will, I hope, make us appreciate and treasure our Underground system more than we do so at this time. The building I choose to represent the Underground system is Baker Street Station which is located in, lo and behold, Baker Street in Central London. Before I proceed with the history and importance of the Underground System, I shall explain why I chose this building to represent it. It may come as a surprise to some of us, but the first Underground of the world was built by the Metropolitan Railway in London in 1863 and ran from Praed Street, Paddington, (then called: Bishop's Road) to Farringdon Street<sup>1</sup>. Along this line, the Underground would stop at several stations, including Baker Street station. Now, unlike all the other stations that were part of the first Underground line of the world, today, Baker Street station is the only station that recognizes and honours this heritage in various ways.<sup>2</sup> For example, there are various plaques which tell the history of the early days of the world's first Underground line, a popular one of which tells the following: 'Beneath this roadway runs the world's first passenger railway. It was opened for public traffic by the Metropolitan Railway company on 10 January 1863'. Another sign memorializes the restoration of Baker Street station which occurred in 1983 to create a great deal of the original feeling the station had upon its inception. For example, the restoration included uncovering the original sandstone bricks with which the station was built at

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<sup>1</sup> Transport for London. 2020. *A brief history of the Underground*.

<sup>2</sup> Wolmar, C. 2009. Chapter: Introduction: The Phantom Railway. *Subterranean Railway: How the London Underground Was Built and How It Changed the City Forever*. (Note: I have acquired the book on Amazon Kindle and, unfortunately, it did not have any page numbers as it has recently been added and is not yet finalised. As such, I will only refer to the chapter in which the information is mentioned.)

the beginning.<sup>3</sup> Now, there are two reasons why I chose Baker Street station as the tenth building to be included as part of the Spring Lecture Series 'Inside London: The Life-Story of a City in Nine Buildings' to represent London's Underground system. The first being the profound significance of the effects the Underground system had in constructing London as we know it today. The second reason is one I have alluded to before, namely the sheer underappreciation, that Londoners especially exhibit, of the Underground system. The inclusion of a building that represents the Underground system is intended to alleviate this impression.

Why should we pay attention to and appreciate the Underground system some may ask? And what were the consequences of the Underground system for London?

To begin with, the Underground system was what can be described as a revolutionary project, so much so that it took 37 years for other cities to follow suit (Paris in 1900, New York in 1904).<sup>4</sup> Two things were advantageous to the Underground system: First and foremost, it is the fact that it ran underneath the surface of the earth so that it did not unsettle the cosmetic of the city and secondly, the fact that it was designed for short distance travel. For example, the train between King's Cross and Hatfield had only 4 stops within 18 miles.<sup>5</sup> Buses, on the other hand, were too expensive and took too long, so that at that time, walking was actually Londoner's most preferred method of transport. The Underground, however, changed that. It was the same price of a bus fare and got from point A to point B much quicker. In fact, on the first day the Underground opened, more than 30,000 Londoners used it, which was an extremely unexpected outcome.<sup>6</sup> The Times even referred to it as "the great engineering triumph of the day".<sup>7</sup>

Besides the Underground being an engineering triumph of London, it should also be appreciated for facilitating working classes to work and live in London.<sup>8</sup> The Underground started out as being 'class-conscious' in that it had carriages for first,

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. Chapter: Midwife to the Underground.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Martin, Andrew. 2012. *Underground, Overground : A Passenger's History of the Tube*. p.34-35.

<sup>7</sup> Lin, Luna. 2014. *A short history of world metro systems – in pictures*. The Guardian.

<sup>8</sup> Martin, A. p. 47.

second and third classes.<sup>9</sup> Third-class fares were significantly cheaper, allowing the working classes to make use of the Underground (although this meant a reduction in standards of the journey). Charles Pearson, former Liberal MP, is seen as the instigator of the Underground as he helped raise funds and lobby for its construction even though he only had a few shares in the enterprise.<sup>10</sup> However, he is very well known for campaigning for the poorer classes which is why he insisted on the train fares to be cheap so that workers could easily commute from areas where housing was cheaper and standards of living higher.

Another admirable mark of the Underground is that it took an impressive 18 months until a fatality occurred on the platform.<sup>11</sup> But even then, this fatality was caused by drunkenness instead of faulty functioning on the part of the Metropolitan Railway.

So bearing in mind that the Underground was an astonishing engineering project for its time, that it facilitated the working classes to live and work in and around Central London and that it was quite a safe method of transport considering it was a completely novel way of transport, I think we ought to appreciate it.

But what effect did the Underground have on the life-story of the city of London? Surprising to many, but London as it is today would not have existed without the Underground. Mind you, London has always been a popular city that attracted many workers and tourists. It had a lot of work opportunities for the lower and upper classes alike, but living comfortably in London was mostly reserved for those in the upper classes. Working classes could also live in London but it was very expensive and if they did, they lived in small, crowded spaces. The Underground, however, allowed the working classes to live around central London in unprecedented ways. The Metropolitan Railway started building Underground lines that ran through unpopulated areas around central London (especially North-West London), such as Golders Green. Golders Green, for example, was just a farm in 1907.<sup>12</sup> When the Metropolitan Railway built the Northern Line and a station there, nearly 500 homes were built in Golders Green. In fact, the Metropolitan Railway was allowed to retain

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<sup>9</sup> Martin, A. p.46.

<sup>10</sup> Wolmar, C. 2009. Chapter: Midwife to the Underground.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. Chapter: London goes Underground.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. Chapter: Metroland, The Suburban Paradox.

the surplus land around its stations and what they did was built homes and advertised these areas as 'Metro-land' where they promoted attractive, spacious homes in the countryside, away from the congestion and polluted air of Central London (but with a fast train service to Central London).<sup>13</sup> Housing, namely, translates to more ticket sales. But even if the intentions were not the most altruistic, building these homes allowed the common people to live comfortably and in larger spaces. The same applies to the North-West areas of Kingsbury and Pinner that both owe their existence to the Underground.<sup>14</sup>

Another way in which the Underground has changed London is by smoothing the path for a multicultural Britain. Between 1956 and 1965, London Transport was looking for cheap labour as there was a labour deficit due to the war (as there was almost full employment after) and it started recruiting from the Caribbean. This was, surprising to many, even encouraged by the Conservative government. Equally, the Barbadian government also incentivized its citizens to work for London Transport (by giving them an interest free loan for the plane tickets). During those times, London Transport recruited 4000 workers from Barbados alone.<sup>15</sup> As a result, many West Indians remained in London for the remainder of their lives. By recruiting so many West Indians, London Transport made a substantial contribution to the formation of a multicultural London. Not only that, but London Transport was one of the first British corporations to minimise the barrier for black people to climb the social ladder as they promoted a lot of its West Indian staff members to supervisors.<sup>16</sup>

As Baker Street station is amongst the first stations of the Underground, and as it is the only station to recognize and honour the history of the Underground, I would choose it to be considered as a tenth lecture for the AKC. The Underground system has a very rich history and it made an enormous impact on our London and I think it would be very regretful if we remained in the dark about it.

*(1381 words)*

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. Chapter: Decline - and Revival?

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

## Bibliography

Lin, Luna. 2014. *A short history of world metro systems – in pictures*. The Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/gallery/2014/sep/10/-sp-history-metro-pictures-london-underground-new-york-beijing-seoul>. (Accessed: 03/04/2020)

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