

## *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>	<del>1712345</del>
--	--------------------

Degree Programme (where applicable)	BSc Adult Nursing
Department (where applicable)	
AKC Year (1, 2 or 3):	Year 3

Essay question number:	2
Essay Title:	Choose any two buildings featured in the series and discuss how they offer different visions of London life
Deadline:	<b>23:59, Sunday 26 April 2020</b>
Date Submitted:	4/04/2020
Word Count (max 1500 words):	1476

### **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.

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

**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.**

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

**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.**

Like many cities in the world, London also has a unique fingerprint with its skyline. Although dominated by massive modern skyscrapers, there are buildings spread across the geographical landscape of the city traceable to the past that tell the city's story. Drawing from the semester's lectures and using Westminster Abbey and the Barbican as reference points, this essay will discuss the place of these buildings in the overall vision of London life.

A city is a place within which interaction occurs and presents a platform on which visions, ideas and experiences are built and shared. Thus, to make this interaction possible, locations that allow for them to take place exist in the form of buildings (Montemaggi and Fletcher 2020). From the magnificence of cathedrals and palaces to the humility of cottages or the apparent weakness of glazed windows to the solidity and near intimidating walls of castles, as much as having a physical significance; buildings also embody vision, culture and meanings that go beyond the external edifice on show. In effect, therefore, buildings signify the physical embodiment of some of the things that really matter to us: values and ideals. So while staying fixed, buildings allow a journey to be embarked on by presenting the space within which experiences take place and thus offer us the opportunities to explore the relationship between space and the meanings behind them (Montemaggi and Fletcher 2020).

Westminster Abbey stands not only as a building that highlights the religious identity of London as a city, but it also embodies a depth of cultural memories. The origins of the Abbey dates back to 960 AD when a religious renewal under the patronage of King Edgar and Dunstan led to the enlargement of a Benedictine Monastery to a large stone church in honour of Saint Peter (Field 1999). This was to be referred to as the West minster to distinguish it from St Paul's cathedral then the east minster already in the city of London. The current Gothic architectural design and rebuild was sanctioned by King Henry III in the 13th century which was the age of the cathedrals, marked also by the building of the Amiens in France and Salisbury in England. The specific functions of the Abbey have evolved over time because besides its use primarily as a place of worship, its design was decreed to be for the coronation of Monarchs as well as serve as their final resting place (Field 1999). To this end, over 3000 people including Henry III, Mary Queen of Scots and Elizabeth I, have been buried in the Abbey with an even greater number commemorated there. The building has also been at the heart of every royal coronation since 1066 and has hosted sixteen Royal weddings including that of Prince William of Wales, Duke of Cambridge and Catherine in 2011 (Wilkinson 2018).

For London, the Abbey presents a vision for cohesion and diversity. While the Abbey has its foundations firmly rooted in Christianity, it has always been a building that has kept its doors open with a degree of

vibrancy and welcome that has transcended the borders of religion. In the Abbey, there are clusters of memorials including one for scientists such as Newton and Faraday and another for poets like Chaucer and Spencer. In addition, above the Great West Door are statues of modern saints including Martin Luther King Jr, a civil rights leader and Wang Zhiming, a pastor killed in the Chinese Cultural Revolution (Wilkinson 2018). Although from different origins, both men who were Christians stood and fought for what they believed was right, and died doing so. That unity in purpose, even in diversity is a vision of London that the Abbey embodies because London is filled with diverse individuals working together to keep the city moving. Also notably, the ashes of Stephen Hawking's, a non-Christian were buried in Westminster Abbey after his death in 2018. This gives us a clue that science which Hawking's believed and religion, in which he did not, need not be in conflict, but coexist (Hawkey 2020). This is to encourage us to work together towards healing and a symphony that moves us to look beyond the things that divide us to those that bind us together

For this purpose, the grave of the unknown warrior has acted as a monument where wreaths have been laid by heads of states for world peace upon their visit to the Abbey. This signifies a response to an invitation to stand together and walk towards healing after dark periods of bloodshed in wars and conflict (Hawkey 2020). Westminster Abbey, therefore, stands at the heart of the city of London as a national memorial that tells a very complex story which has undergone significant re-edits. However, it remains at the very core, a reminder of London's Christian roots, a symbol for unification and healing of humanity.

Unlike the Christian roots behind Westminster Abbey, the Barbican originated from a commercial and financial standpoint. It was borne out of the efforts of the City of London Corporation to establish a financial district in the fifties following the Second World War. With its design, one can associate the Barbican more to a site, than as a single building because it incorporates multiple buildings including a secondary school, a public library and an Arts centre. The plans for redevelopment, which were executed in five stages, stemmed from a desire to attract the upper echelons of society, professionals in the financial sector to occupy residential properties that would seek to fulfil the intentions of the City's plan towards financial advancement (Tsubaki 2012). This inadvertently led to a redefinition of the location and thus the city of London not just as a place for business, but as a location for human habitation. The city of London was therefore consequently opened up for community instead of just commerce and the Barbican's architecture told this story from a unique perspective.

Chamberlin, Powell and Bon, the architects of the Barbican drew their inspiration not just from British architecture but gained perspectives from other European cities such as Milan and Berlin which influenced

their concept for the Barbican. This influence was expressed as a desire to show the existence of a relationship with the rest of Europe and from this emerges another vision for London: 'Participation' (Tsubaki 2012). Considering the two contrasting yet interwoven perspectives of the Barbican into account: one is a place where interaction is fostered through shared culture or the opposing point of view which presents the Barbican as a building built with a specific audience in mind, the one way to ascertain this is to get involved on a personal level (Montemaggi and Fletcher 2020). The spaces within the Barbican such as the Arts centre or its open conservatory are locations best experienced when driven by participation while viewing the Barbican as a theatre set on London as a stage and the city's inhabitants as the characters on set. Therefore, to be part of this theatrical landscape, one must consciously make an effort to participate in the life of the Barbican and by extension, the life of the city of London. The Barbican thus portrays a vision of London that puts it on the map not just as a place for business or site only worth commercial value and set aside for a particular social class; instead, it rebrands its own history in a way that tells a multifaceted story of a city established and driven through connections, integration and participation (Montemaggi and Fletcher 2020)

Nonetheless, while Westminster Abbey and the Barbican have significantly different origin stories and purposes, they were both designed and built to be a part of the history of London as a city. Both buildings serve as a historical reference point as well as beacons of how the stories about a building can be retold to form part of the journey towards a brighter and better future. The added complexity of architecture evident in both structures tell not just of the physical effort, but also a hidden meaning which has been the story of London: a city constantly striving to push boundaries, keeps its doors open to the world and create a community where everyone can feel at home while participating in the life of the city in their own way.

In conclusion, there is clearly more to a building than its external grandeur as established with this brief journey using Westminster Abbey and the Barbican as reference points. It is therefore important that as inhabitants and users of the space within buildings, we learn to look past the exterior to reflect on what other messages lie behind them. These meanings are meant to inspire, encourage and challenge us not just to settle for the things that have been, but to use that information and experience to forge the future that can be.

## Bibliography

Field J. (1999) *Kingdom, Power and Glory. A historical guide to Westminster Abbey* 2nd edition.

History of Westminster, Retrieved from <https://www.westminster-abbey.org/about-the-abbey/history/history-of-westminster-abbey> on 3rd April, 2020

Montemaggi V. and Fletcher M. (2020). *The Barbican: Architecture and Community*. Spring AKC lecture 5.

The Revd Canon, Dr Hawkey J. (2020) *Westminster Abbey: Worship, memory and identity*. Spring AKC lecture 9.

Tsubaki T. (2012) “‘Model for a short-lived future’? Early tribulations of the Barbican redevelopment in the City of London, 1940–1982”, *Planning Perspectives* 27, 525- 548.

Wilkinson J. (2018). *Westminster Abbey. A Souvenir Guide*, revised edition