**Question set 1**

1. Describe the mind-set or mentality of Londoners in the years before the Reformation.
2. Describe the geography of London and Westminster in about 1500. What was the basic layout of the city? What were its most important landmarks?
3. How did the reign of Henry VIII change life in London? [Don’t tell me what happened; describe its long-term impact.]
4. In what ways was the Royal Exchange an important development in London's economic life?

London from 1500 onwards underwent one of the most transformative developments in its history. In the beginning of the 16th century, London’s population was just about 50,000, whereas just a century later it reached 200,000. This massive growth was unpreceded in London´s history and went along with major difficulties. Due to London’s infrastructure, which was not intended to hold such a massive population growth, the city was very dense and hence rather conductive for infectious diseases. The drastic increase in death rates was balanced by great immigration as London became more of an international city over time. Thus, the migrants were able to provide London with before not well-established labour, such as the glass-making or brewing industries[[1]](#footnote-1). Also, due to the growing population, the city became the key centre for the manufacturing of goods. The diverse population resulted in acute social differentiation, which led to being appealing to many following immigrants. England’s commercial expansion in the 16th century was led by the exportation of cloth, its most crucial exported good at the time. By the beginning of 1500, 70 percent of England´s textile exports were passing through the city[[2]](#footnote-2), due to its optimal placement next to the river Thames. At the time, transportation of goods and man by water was safer, and more importantly, faster than on land. The river Thames and hence London, placed it in good connection with northern Europe´s ports, the Hanseatic league and Antwerp, the leading business city in Europe at the time. The growth, in population and business provided London with growing prosperity and made its citizens affluent.

It is around 1500, London is a rather medium size, very dense city, divided in areas of their present chapels, whose heads were responsible for their belonging citizens[[3]](#footnote-3). The few skylines creating buildings were the Tower of London, St. Paul´s Cathedral, a monumental house of god, and the Palace of Westminster. London´s streets were narrow and buildings sat one very close to another. Water was filthy and not to drink and the Thames the only reason for its survival, as without sufficient hinterland for sustaining constant input of resources, the city would face its imminent ruination[[4]](#footnote-4).

The Tudor monarchs reigned over London from 1485 to 1603, where Henry VIII did from 1509 to 1547. Before the reign of Henry VIII, London was catholic and strongly bound to the catholic, Christian religion. The King was married to Catherine of Aragon from 1509 to 1533, but his marriage was not fulfilling. Due to the religious beliefs of the catholic church, Henry was not permitted to divorce his wife. To solve that problem and fulfil his wish to marry Anne Boleyn, the catholic church had to be abolished, therefore he created the church of England and became its head, introducing the allowance of divorcing his wife[[5]](#footnote-5). Henry VIII started the English reformation in the 1530s, later continued and achieved throughout Europe by Martin Luther´s reformation of Christianity and the introduction of Protestantism. The independence from the catholic church had significant impacts on the long-term development of London.

Hence, before the independence, a Londoner’s mind-set was strongly influenced by their religious beliefs and rather Christian. Christian charity ruled over the businessmen, and the population as a whole of London, observable by the rule of only charging Christian prices opposed to profit maximising prices for their goods and services sold[[6]](#footnote-6). The central role of the church penetrated their cultural and social life in many ways. In fact, The Church was the early modern institution that attempted most consciously to shape *mentalite ́*. [[7]](#footnote-7)

The belief of not disappointing God and hence staying “holy” or falling from grace, was one of the aspects, that changed with the introduction of England´s separation from the church. Instead of trying to not disappoint god, Protestantism made Londoners work for God´s grace and hence a hard-working labour-force was the result. That work-force led London to become a global business centre.

Business in London in the early 1500s consisted of many places, scattered around the city. There was not one epicentre where everyone could come together to discuss and perform business. The Lombard´s, that collected Taxes for the Papacy in London, settled on Lombard´s street and their meetings were troublesome and loud. Thomas Gresham, later Sir Thomas Gresham, expanded his father´s wood transportation business and accumulated his wealth over time. He became sheriff and Lord mayor in 1537 and was the self-made man imaged as the ideal business man, “offering nothing but his name and good reputation for prosperity.” (source). The Royal Exchange was founded by Thomas Gresham as the first specialised commercial building in London. Gresham´s impact on London´s ability to achieve prosperity in business can be defined as rather significant. In June 1566, he made a personal gift to the city of London, which got known as “The Royal Exchange”. “There were the merchant princes and the royal exchange was their palace.”[[8]](#footnote-8) Merchants of all nations gathered midday and late afternoon inside the main quadrangle of the royal exchange to perform their business. The new Royal Exchange dominated the skyline where once St. Paul´s Cathedral “rose above the hubbub of the city”[[9]](#footnote-9). In fact, it was the first renaissance building in the City. The Royal Exchange was more than solely having the purpose of offering the ability to perform money deals, but also functioned for foreigners and visitors as a post collection and recreational place. It was the greatest shopping mall around the city, hosting 150 stalls on three levels. The new Exchange altered the face of London, playing a part of Queen Elizabeth´s plan to place England as a global imperial nation. “Thus was born the modern Londoner from the corridors of Gresham´s Exchange.”[[10]](#footnote-10)

When considering the events of the past and their development as described above, their impact on modern London can be observable. London is the biggest city in the world in terms of population by 1840 with a population of two million. Today around the world, London is known as one of the greatest city for conducting Business. No City is as diverse and religious open as London or is marked with sites that have their influence remaining over centuries. London today may, not certainly must, but may be explained, as being, how it developed to be, by the influences, it experienced several centuries ago.

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1. p.92 Black, J [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. p.87 Black, J [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Hertz, A [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Hertz, A [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Hertz, A [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Hertz, A [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. p. 70 Bucholz, Robert. O [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. p. 74 Hollis, L [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. p. 88 Hollis, L [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. p. 91 Hollis, L [↑](#footnote-ref-10)