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An Unsolved Case:

Who Was Jack the Ripper?

It's night in the East of London. A prostitute is walking down an unlit alleyway going along with her business, having not a clue that she will soon be murdered. "Gruesome", "horrific", and "disgusting", are but a few words to describe the crime scenes Jack the Ripper has created. This unidentified serial killer was said to have killed five women, possibly more, in the most sickening way. The five murders took place in the East End of London in 1888, in the community of Whitechapel, to be specific. This was one of London's worst slums, a place the middle class tended to ignore. It was overcrowded and ranked as having of the highest death rates in England. Whitechapel was also a city which inhabited a large population of criminals, as well as a refuge for Jewish immigrants who lived in extreme poverty. The East End was a place of industrial work, with limited earnings and harsh living conditions where women would often turn to prostitution to survive. Jack the Ripper came along and became the embodiment of the East End's grim and dangerous conditions. The notorious serial killer had a huge impact on the people in the 19th century because of his mysterious identity and all the unsolved murders. Jack the Ripper was one of the most clever and intriguing criminals of the eighteenth century, because of his letters, his choice of victims and his secretive identity.

JACK THE RIPPER'S LETTERS

Jack the Ripper was the first serial killer ever to commit a heinous crime in a metropolitan area. It brought on many mixed emotions to everyone in not only the East End but

the world. Before any of the letters Jack the Ripper was known as “Red Fiend”, 'The Whitechapel Murderer,’ and “Leather Apron”. It wasn’t until the “Dear Boss” letter that the media and society became captivated by the infamous serial killer. The letter was sent to London News Agency the 27th of September, 1888 and was then signed “Jack the Ripper”. The letter was first believed to be a sham and was questioned if it actually came from the real murderer. It wasn’t until the double murder of Elizabeth Stride and Catherine Eddows, that the local law enforcement officers began taking Jack the Ripper’s threats seriously. In his “Dear Boss” letter, he indicated that he would eventually cut off a woman’s ear. Police discovered that he had followed through with it a few weeks later. This was when police believed him to be a genuine criminal; however some still believed it could have been the work of a journalist.

He would continuously send letters such as his first, to taunt the police of his identity and crimes. To see if anyone could identify the handwriting faster the police decided to release the letter. It was even said in the papers that, “their [the police] investigation was rapidly losing both momentum and direction, and they were in desperate need of a breakthrough.” (jack-the-ripper-tour.com) When the release of the letter was published, the police wondered if it was a mistake. All it did was inspire Jack the Ripper imitators and forced the police to investigate all the letters, in case they were real. This wasted a huge amount of time and the police were so overwhelmed that “the police investigation came close to melt down with this veritable avalanche of Jack the Ripper correspondence.” (www.jack-the-ripper.org). The police had such a hard time finding the killer; people were starting to lose trust in the officials. While the detective and officers continued investigating multiple letters, more women were murdered.

JACK THE RIPPER'S VICTIMS

Jack the Ripper had five, possibly six, proven victims although detectives and police officers believe there to be more. The “canonical five” as they are called were, Mary Anne Nichols (murdered August 31st 1888), Annie Chapman (murdered September 8th 1888), Elizabeth Stride (murdered September 30th 1888), Catherine Eddows (murdered September 30th 1888), Mary Jane Kelly (murdered November 9th 1888). It was possible that Martha Tabram (murdered August 7th 1888) could have been a Jack the Ripper victim. For instance, the five women’s bodies were mutilated once discovered; however, Martha Tabram’s body was stabbed multiple times. The women’s throats were slit and had their organs extracted from their bodies. Instantly, the murders caused uproar around the world, more specifically Whitechapel, triggering terror to the residents.

The famous serial killer had murdered these women leaving no evidence behind. Reporters would even write that, “...both murders were the work of the same hand - that fiendishly cunning hand...” (casebook.org) Detectives were left clueless and the police dumbfounded. He was quick and clever. Due to those two qualities he was never found. The fact that these women had absolutely no connection to the killer made him a lot harder to find, because there was no reasonable motive behind the murders. The police were in deep water trying to find out who the perpetrator was, even after the double murder the press were a lot harder on the officers saying, “It is impossible to avoid the depressing conviction that the Police are about to fail once more, as they have failed with CHAPMAN, as they have failed with NICHOLLS, as they have failed with TABRAM, as they have failed with SMITH, as they are failing with the unknown victim whose limbs apparently are being scattered broadcast over the metropolis, from Pimlico to Newington.” (casebook.org)

JACK THE RIPPER'S IDENTITY

Talk of the identity of Jack the Ripper even traveled across the seas capturing more people's attention. Jack the Ripper's case is still one of "the greatest murder mystery of all time". (cai.ucdavis.edu) However, there were many men that were suspected to have been Jack the Ripper even a woman named Mrs. Mary Pearcey, known as Jill the Ripper was a suspect. Yet, the mysterious killer was described to be of "...medium height and stocky build, he also featured a moustache." (opyaps.com). The unknown murder went from being multiple suspects to being a lone suspect.



"Aron Kosinski, was a Polish Immigrant, Montague John Druitt, a barrister and Michael Ostrog, a Russian Doctor, who were all maniacs and against women prostitutes." (topyaps.com) These men were some of the main suspect for the murders.

Jack the Ripper was thought to be a doctor or someone with anatomical knowledge. He was also thought to be a butcher or slaughter man. The police officials would check all over Whitechapel to find this murderer. They had even inspected medical students and butchers but

came back empty handed. Xenophobia and anti-Semitism, were brought up and the English would blame the foreigners, as well as, the Jews for the killings. Moreover, the police did believe Jack the Ripper to be a misogynist with the way he disfigured and killed the women. Nevertheless, the general public were so taken with all the mystery surrounding his identity, even to this day after 126 years, “Jack the Ripper remains the only serial killer in history that represents an entire era.” (blogs.independent.co.uk)

CONCLUSION

People were enthralled by this dark mysterious serial killer. He was a cunning killer during the Victorian Era and escaped getting caught. Even after sending letters to the police, Jack the Ripper still wasn't found; the police struggled with finding out his true identity. He had gotten away with murdering these women a couple of times and yet the police still could not find him. There was a long list of suspects, from rich doctors to poor Jewish men. The Scotland Yard looked everywhere for this terrible murderer yet couldn't find a clue. It wasn't until after the slaughter of Mary Kelly, the murders came to an abrupt halt. People have always wondered if he actually did get caught, if he was one of the suspects and just never said anything. For all we know Jack the Ripper could have walked away a free man. Or woman.

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