
TIME TRAVEL
AT
PUDDLE LANE

Time Travel at Puddle Lane



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BLOOMSBURY EDUCATION

LONDON OXFORD NEW YORK NEW DELHI SYDNEY

BLOOMSBURY EDUCATION
Bloomsbury Publishing Plc
50 Bedford Square, London, WC1B 3DP, UK
29 Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2, Ireland

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First published in Great Britain in 2022 by Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

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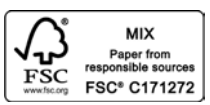
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: PB: 978-1-8019-9139-1; ePDF: 978-1-8019-9137-7; ePub: 978-1-8019-9138-4

2 4 6 8 10 9 7 5 3 1

Text design by Sarah Malley

Printed and bound in the UK by CPI Group Ltd, CR0 4YY



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CHAPTER ONE
THE LIBRARY DOOR

Ariella and Yosef liked their school. They liked that it was called 'Puddle Lane School' because they liked the word 'puddle' and they very much liked puddles. They liked that it was in the heart of London, near the River Thames and Blackfriars Bridge. And they liked that it was a short walk from the sandy, beige dome of St Paul's Cathedral and the shiny Shard that tapers at the tip in a tall, split pyramid of glass.

As Yosef was interested in history, he was proud that his school was near the street

where the Great Fire of London had started in a bakery in 1666. He loved that his school had an old, grand main building with high-ceilinged rooms and long windows, as well as a modern extension block housing classrooms, the gym and the library. And he liked that their teachers were kind (mainly), the lessons were fun (mainly), and there were four hamsters in Classroom 4 that the pupils could take turns to look after in the holidays.

As Ariella was interested in people, she liked that the streets on her way to school were full of adults wearing smart clothes and expensive-looking rucksacks, walking briskly, and holding paper coffee cups. She wondered what they did all day in the offices she could see from her classroom windows, and whether she would do whatever it was too when she was older. She liked learning in the happy, colourful classrooms, and she was especially fond of the portrait of the school's founder, Clara Conway, which hung above the reception desk.



The plaque underneath said that the portrait had been painted in 1846, which was so long ago that Ariella couldn't even imagine what her school or the world would have looked like back then. The portrait was as lifelike as a photograph, and Clara Conway seemed as real as if she were standing there in person. She was young and friendly-looking, with bright eyes full of determination and dark hair tied back in a bun. She leaned on a walking stick and wore a yellow and grey dress with a multitude of folds that Yosef said must have taken hours to paint.

In the 1840s, Clara Conway had established Puddle Lane School to provide an education for the poor boys and girls of the neighbourhood. She'd done it at a time when school education was mainly for the rich, and even then, almost entirely for boys. Although their school was for everyone now, if it weren't for Clara, Ariella and Yosef would have no reason to walk down Puddle Lane every day with their big brother Daniel, past the tall Monument that marked where the Great Fire had started all those years ago.

Every morning, when they walked through the main door into their school, Ariella and Yosef looked up at the portrait. "Thank you, Clara," Ariella often sang with a wave. "If it wasn't for her," she liked to remind Yosef, "this school wouldn't be here." And she was right.

Their favourite place at school was the library. It had reading nooks, beanbags and blankets, and books stacked on old wooden shelves. At the back of the library, a glass cabinet displayed archaeological relics that had been discovered when the builders had excavated the site to build the new block. There were about thirty objects in total, all labelled and roughly dated. The cabinet was always locked and the only person with the key was Miss Richie, the librarian, who was their favourite teacher of all.

Miss Richie used to wear wacky clothes that never seemed to match – a pink t-shirt with yellow checked trousers and a purple

cardigan one day, a blue flowery dress with orange tights and a teal jumper another day – but lately, she had only worn dark colours, ankle-length skirts and long sleeves. Her once light-pink hair was now as brown as the fur on Bruno the hamster in Classroom 4. No one knew why Miss Richie's appearance had changed so drastically, but Ariella and Yosef were relieved that her personality hadn't changed because she was warm and funny, and she always made them feel welcome in the library.

One Monday at break, Yosef was wedged in a beanbag gazing at black-and-white photographs of Hyde Park in the 1880s. Boys in suits and caps walked between men wearing top hats, women in long, full skirts and hats with big ribbons, and girls in white dresses with sashes. Yosef was trying to imagine being there with them, but some Year 6 girls were whispering and giggling, and he glanced at them in annoyance.

A long skirt suddenly blocked his view. "Which era this time?" Miss Richie asked, bending down to peer at him, her smile forming a dimple on her right cheek.

Yosef smiled and showed her the cover. "It's called *A Hundred Years Ago: Britain in the 1880s* but the 1880s aren't a hundred years ago," he frowned.

"Old book," Miss Richie replied, "but the photos are accurate." She glanced at the whispering girls. "Are they disturbing you?"

Yosef nodded.

"Well, we can't have that now, can we?" Miss Richie replied, standing up. She said to the girls in a cheerful tone, "Lovelies, this is the library. If you aren't here to enjoy the calm gift of reading, then please take your conversation to the playground."

The girls apologised and left, leaving the library wonderfully quiet. So quiet in fact that Yosef, who was tired because they'd been

up late the night before celebrating Ariella's bat mitzvah, felt his eyelids droop heavier and heavier until he fell asleep.

He woke up suddenly when he heard a door open, a roar of noise, then silence as the door closed again.

Yosef sat up, rubbing his eyes. The library was empty. Not even Miss Richie was there. He glanced at the clock. Break had finished ten minutes ago – he was late for his lesson!

Suddenly, the door at the back of the library opened and Miss Richie walked in with soot on her dress and her face, and very black fingernails.

Yosef ducked under the blanket. He didn't want her to know he'd fallen asleep because she might not let him come back tomorrow. But he was curious, too, so he peeked out. Miss Richie's cheeks were red and she seemed flustered. She checked the cabinet, then walked over to the toilet, locking the door behind her.

This was his chance. Yosef rushed out of the library just as the teaching assistant, Miss Harrington, arrived looking frantic.

"There you are!" Miss Harrington said, crossly. "We were worried!"

"Sorry," Yosef answered. "I fell asleep."