

Spotlight on London

Last November, students in Alissa Mears' (ASL 2015-present) British Literature class withstood the late autumnal chill and misty conditions and spent a productive day "mudlarking"* on the foreshore of the Thames.

In the classroom, they had been studying the history of London's celebrated waterway and how it has been portrayed in literature across the centuries. The students' knowledge of famous mudlarkers, and the reasons

behind their pursuits, served them well as they collected objects left after the tidal ebb. They were eager to analyze their finds and attribute them to various periods from history. Artifacts from the medieval, Tudor, Georgian and Victorian eras were in evidence on their "finds table." A walk to a preserved Anglo-Saxon pier topped off a perfect day on the river.

Back in the warmth of ASL, and inspired by their time foraging for history along with the notes they made

in their journals during the trip, the students set about writing essays that portrayed an imaginary walk around "their London." The pieces transcended time and space and students dug deep into their imaginations to bring a great deal of creativity to the assignment. ■

* The concept of "mudlarking" emerged in the 18th century, to describe the activities of various groups and individuals, who combed the river at low tide looking for items to sell.

*"The river glideth at
his own sweet will."*

William Wordsworth, Composed upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802