

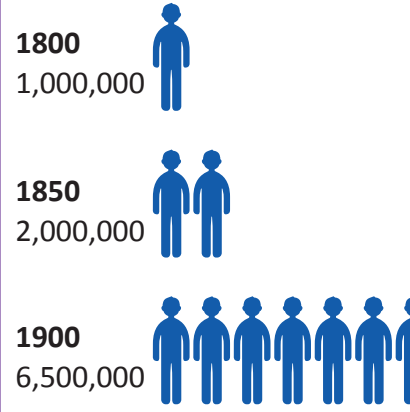
Mystery: London's deadly disease

Between 1832 and 1866 there were over 35,000 unexplained deaths from diseases across London. The best scientists and doctors of the time could not understand why so many Londoners were dying. It was many years before they worked out that London's polluted water supply was the cause of the problem.

Let's look at the clues...

Clue #1

What happened to London's population?



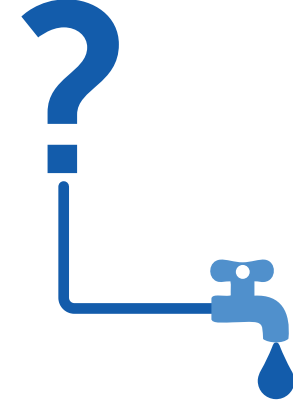
Clue #2

Where did their poo go?



Clue #3

Where did they get their drinking water?



London's water and sewage story

1000 AD

London's water is collected from wells, springs, rivers and streams. These rivers and streams were also used as open sewers

1582

London Bridge Waterworks Company is the first in the world to pump water directly to people's homes

1713

Savery's steam-driven pump is used to pump water for the first time

1778

First flushing toilets developed by Alexander Cummings and Joseph Bramah

1811

Grand Junction Water Works (GJWW) company is formed using the canal as source

1820

Canal water in Paddington is contaminated by waste from local industries. GJWW moves to Chelsea

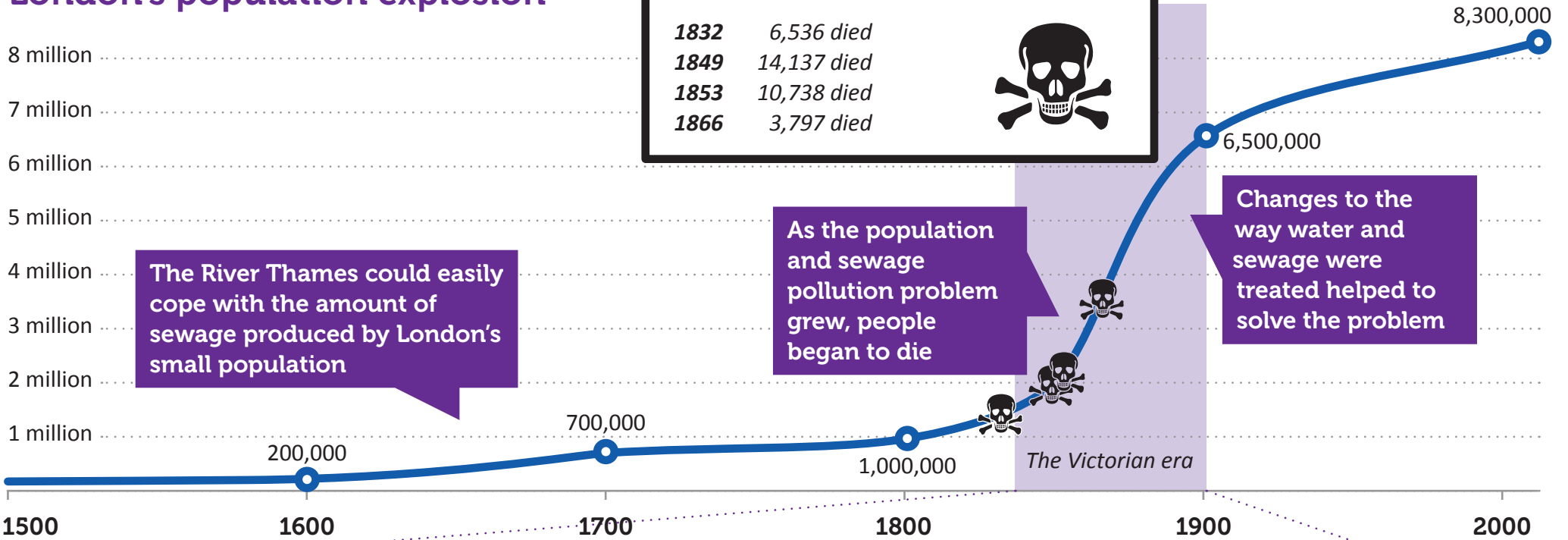
1827

The river water at Chelsea soon becomes polluted. A Royal enquiry criticises GJWW for supplying dirty water

1829

James Simpson invents the sand filtration process, improving water quality for parts of London

London's population explosion



1838

GJWW move to Kew Bridge due to sewage pollution

1848

Londoners must discharge all sewage into street sewers. These sewers flow into the Thames, polluting the water used for drinking

1852

New laws force water supply companies to filter river water before supply

1854

John Snow's experiments identify the water supply as the source of London's cholera deaths

1855

Joseph Bazalgette begins construction of a new sewer network for London

1857

The Thames Conservancy is set up to tackle the growing sewage problem

1858

Summer of the 'Great Stink' when the smell of sewerage was so unbearable that parliament had to be closed

1876

New law ensures raw sewage is treated before being put into rivers

1885

Routine testing for bacteria in water supplies begins

1897

First use of chlorine to disinfect the water supply

2014

London Museum of Water and Steam opens