

## What is Gentrification?

Similar effects have, moreover, been brought about by a combination of deliberate and incidental developments. The large programme of urban reconstruction and re-building since World War II has had the result of reducing the contrasts between rich and poor districts within the boundary of the present county. Indeed, some of the conventional distinctions have been reversed; the new homes of  
5 working class and lower middle-class people, who are municipal tenants, are frequently superior in design and appearance to the older 'luxury flats' and expensive houses of private tenants or owner-occupiers. Local authority housing and ancillary schemes have so much improved the looks and amenities of several districts that private developers have been prompted to renovate adjacent streets.

**One by one, many of the working-class quarters of London have been invaded by the middle classes  
10 -upper and lower. Shabby, modest mews and cottages – two rooms up and two down – have been taken over, when their leases have expired, and have become elegant, expensive residences.** Larger Victorian houses, downgraded in an earlier or recent period – which were used as lodging houses or were otherwise in multiple occupation – have been upgraded once again. Nowadays, many of these  
15 houses are being sub-divided into costly flats or 'houselets' (in terms of the new real estate snob jargon). The current social status and value of such dwellings are frequently in inverse relation to their size, and in any case enormously inflated by comparison with previous levels in their neighbourhoods. Once this process of 'gentrification' starts in a district, it goes on rapidly until all or most of the original working-class occupiers are displaced, and the whole social character of the district is changed. There  
20 is very little left of the poorer enclaves of Hampstead and Chelsea; in those boroughs, the upper-middle class take-over was consolidated some time ago. The invasion has since spread to Islington, Paddington, North Kensington – even to the 'shady' parts of Notting Hill and Whitechapel – to Battersea, and to several other district, North and South of the river.

**In such circumstances, any district in or near London, however dingy or unfashionable before, is likely  
25 to become expensive; and London may quite soon be a city which illustrate the principle of the survival of the fittest – the financially fittest, who can still afford to work and live there.**

Ruth Glass, *London : Aspects of Change*, 1964