

The Great Fire Of London

We will find out what happened through a series of enquiries – the children will become history detectives throughout. We will also look at the human impact of the event and how things were improved as a result of the fire.

Background information

Back in the 1660s, people were not as aware of the dangers of fire as they are today. Buildings were made of timber – covered in a flammable substance called pitch, roofed with thatch – and tightly packed together with little regard for planning. About 350,000 people lived in London just before the Great Fire, it was one of the largest cities in Europe. Homes arched out over the street below, almost touching in places, and the city was buzzing with people. Lots of animals lived London too – there were no cars, buses or lorries back then – so as well as houses, the city was full of sheds and yards packed high with flammable hay and straw. Following a long, dry summer the city was suffering a drought. Water was scarce and the wooden houses had dried out, making them easier to burn... it was a recipe for disaster.

Knowledge and Understanding

In this unit pupils will learn...

- To sequence and recount the main events of the Great Fire of London.
- To know about some of main reasons why the fire spread and was so devastating.
- To know why and how key people from the time are remembered today.
- How we can find out about the past.
- How life was very different in the time of the Great Fire of London.
- To know some ways in which things changed for the better as a result of the Great Fire of London.

Enquiry skills and Key concepts

- To ask questions about and discuss episodes from the past.
- To use sources of information and evidence to help answer questions about the past.
- To make comparisons between the past and the present.
- To suggest reasons why people acted as they did.
- To consider points of view.
- To debate the actions of people involved - were they right or wrong?
- To give at least one reason for who they think was most to blame and an example of how things improved as a result of the Great Fire.

Key Vocabulary:

Monarch: a king or queen

Bakery: A place where bread and cakes are made and sold

Baker: A person who makes bread

River Thames: The river that runs through London.

Blame: Who's fault was it

Thomas Farriner: Owner of the bakery on Pudding Lane.

Flammable: When something burns easily.

St Paul's Cathedral: A famous Christian church burnt down. It was rebuilt and still exists today.

Christopher Wren: The man who designed new buildings and a monument to the fire.

Fire squirt: A pump used to suck up water and squirt at the fire.

Fire break: When buildings are destroyed to stop the fire spreading.

Fire hook: A long metal pole with a hook at the end used to pull down buildings.

Eye witness: Someone who saw something and gave a description.

Diary: a book which a person writes about what they have seen or heard or what they have been doing

Samuel Pepys: a man who wrote a diary which included entries about the fire

<https://www.london-fire.gov.uk/museum/history-and-stories/the-great-fire-of-london/#:~:text=In%201666%2C%20a%20devastating%20fire,Paul's%20Cathedral.>