

The Great Fire of London: A Historical Account

Learning objective: To retrieve and infer information about the events of the Great Fire of London in 1666.

Read the text carefully and answer the questions below. Think about how the city changed after the disaster.

In the early hours of Sunday, 2nd September 1666, a spark in a bakery on Pudding Lane ignited a disaster that would change London forever. Ellie the elephant, who loves history, explains that London at the time was a crowded city built mostly of wood and pitch. Because of a long, dry summer, the buildings were incredibly flammable. As the fire spread, it moved quickly through the narrow, winding streets. For four days, the blaze consumed thousands of homes, St Paul's Cathedral, and countless shops. People were forced to flee to the River Thames, carrying their precious belongings in carts or on their backs. Eventually, the strong winds died down and the fire was brought under control. While the loss was a tragedy, it allowed for a new beginning. When the city was rebuilt, the authorities insisted that houses be constructed from brick and stone rather than wood. This shift in architecture made London much safer for the future. Today, we remember 1666 as a turning point in history, marking the end of the old, wooden city and the birth of a more resilient capital.

Word bank: Pudding Lane · 1666 · flammable · catastrophe · architecture · reconstruction

1. Where did the Great Fire of London start, and in what year did it happen? (2 marks) (2 marks)

2. Identify two reasons from the text why the fire was able to spread so quickly through London. (2 marks) (2 marks)

3. Why might the people of London have felt frightened when they had to flee to the River Thames? (2 marks) (2 marks)

4. Based on the text, what does the word 'flammable' mean in the context of the buildings? (2 marks) (2 marks)

5. Do you think the decision to rebuild the city using brick and stone was a good idea? Give a reason for your answer. (3 marks) (3 marks)

Draw: Draw a picture showing the difference between the wooden houses of London before the fire and the brick houses built during the reconstruction.



Extension challenge: Research why the fire finally stopped. Write a short paragraph explaining the role of the firebreaks created by the King's orders.