

Ellie's Historical Enquiry: The Great Fire of London

Learning objective: To understand the causes, events, and consequences of the Great Fire of London in 1666, and to evaluate the reliability of historical evidence.

Ellie the Elephant has been researching the archives to learn about the Great Fire of London. She has found a list of events and statements, but some are factually correct, while others are historical misconceptions. For each statement below, decide if it is 'True' or 'False'. If you choose 'False', you must justify your answer by providing the correct historical fact. Use the word bank to help you construct your explanations.

Word bank: Pudding Lane · 1666 · timber-framed · Samuel Pepys · thatch · flammable · firebreaks · St Paul's Cathedral · bakery

1. True or False: The fire began at a shipyard near the River Thames in 1660. Justify your answer. (2 marks)

2. True or False: Houses in London were made of stone, which stopped the fire from spreading quickly. Justify your answer. (2 marks)

3. True or False: Samuel Pepys kept a diary that provides historians with a first-hand account of the fire. Justify your answer. (2 marks)

4. Explain why the use of firebreaks was a desperate but necessary strategy used by the King's guards to stop the fire. (3 marks)

5. Compare and contrast how London was rebuilt after the fire compared to how it looked before. Why were the new building regulations important? (4 marks)

6. Justify your answer: If you were a citizen in 1666, why might you have blamed foreigners for the fire rather than the dry weather and narrow streets? (3 marks)

Draw: Draw a 'Before and After' split-screen scene. On the left, show the narrow, _____ overhanging timber houses of 1666 London. On the right, show a wider street with the new, brick-built houses that replaced them after the fire.



Extension challenge: What might have happened if the wind had been blowing in the opposite direction on the night of September 2nd? Write a short diary entry from the perspective of an apprentice baker witnessing the sparks flying from the oven. Use descriptive vocabulary to explain the sights, sounds, and smells of the early stages of the disaster.