

The Great Fire of London: A Blazing Social Studies / History

Step into the past with Ellie the Elephant! Can you uncover the secrets of the inferno that reshaped our capital?

- The fire began in the early hours of 2nd September 1666 inside a small bakery on Pudding Lane. Because the summer had been exceptionally dry, the wooden buildings were as flammable as kindling.
- London's houses were built very close together with jettied upper floors. This narrow street design allowed the fire to jump easily from one house to the next, making it impossible to contain.
- The fire raged for four days and nights. Strong easterly winds fanned the flames, driving the fire across the city and destroying thousands of homes, including the medieval St Paul's Cathedral.
- To stop the fire, King Charles II ordered the creation of 'firebreaks'. Soldiers used gunpowder to blow up houses in the path of the flames, creating gaps that the fire could not cross.
- After the disaster, new building regulations were introduced. Houses had to be built from brick or stone rather than wood, and streets were widened to prevent such a catastrophe from ever happening again.

Did you know? Did you know? Samuel Pepys, a famous historical figure, buried his favourite Parmesan cheese in his garden to protect it from the encroaching flames! His detailed diary remains one of our most important primary sources for understanding the fire today.

Key vocabulary: Pudding Lane · Bakery · Combustible · Timber-framed · St Paul's Cathedral · Diary · Samuel Pepys · Reconstruction