

The Great Fire of London: An Investigation with Ellie

Learning objective: To analyse the causes, progression, and consequences of the Great Fire of London in 1666, evaluating primary sources and historical change.

Read each question carefully and use your knowledge of the events of 1666 to provide detailed responses. When explaining, refer to the conditions of London at the time.

Ellie the elephant has been studying the archives of 1666. She knows that London was a bustling, crowded city built largely of wood and pitch, suffering from a long, dry summer. When a spark escaped from a bakery on Pudding Lane, the city faced a challenge that would change its architecture and safety regulations forever.

Word bank: Pudding Lane · timber-framed · flammable · conflagration · Samuel Pepys · catastrophe · reconstruction · firebreaks

1. Explain why the Great Fire spread so rapidly across London. Consider both the city's building materials and the weather conditions of 1666. (3 marks)

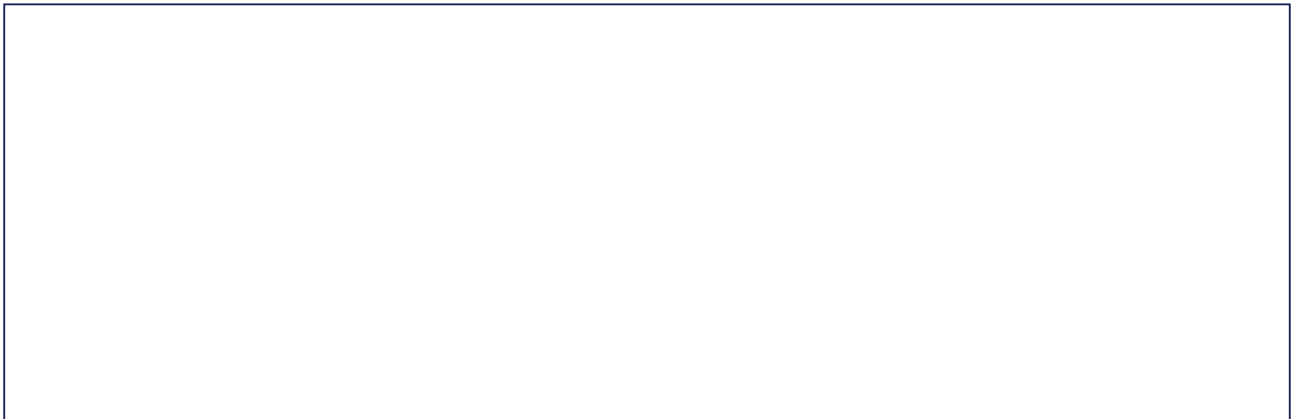
2. Samuel Pepys kept a detailed diary during the fire. Why are his written records considered a valuable primary source for historians today? (2 marks)

3. What were 'firebreaks', and why did the authorities decide to create them by pulling down houses in the path of the flames? (2 marks)

4. Compare and contrast the city of London before the fire and after the fire. How did the reconstruction change the way houses were built? (3 marks)

5. Justify your answer: If the fire had started in the middle of winter instead of during a dry September, do you believe the outcome would have been different? Explain your reasoning. (3 marks)

Draw: Draw a 'Before and After' diagram showing a typical street in London in 1666 compared to a street after the Rebuilding of London Act, highlighting the change from timber-framed houses to brick and stone.



Extension challenge: Imagine you are a city planner in 1667. Write a short persuasive letter to the King suggesting one new rule for the city to ensure a fire of this scale never happens again. Consider the width of the streets, the materials used for roofs, and the placement of water supplies.