

The Great Fire of London: A Historical Investigation

Learning objective: To understand the causes, key events, and consequences of the Great Fire of London in 1666, and to evaluate why the fire spread so rapidly.

Read each question carefully. Use your historical knowledge to provide detailed answers. Remember to explain your reasoning where asked.

Ellie the elephant has been visiting the archives to learn about the events of September 1666. She discovered that London was a very different place then, with narrow streets and houses made of wood. Use your knowledge of this historical event to answer the questions below.

Word bank: Pudding Lane · 1666 · timber-framed · stagnant · flammable · catastrophe · reconstruction · Samuel Pepys

1. Identify the exact location where the fire started and explain why the building materials used in 17th-century London made the fire so difficult to control. (2 marks)

2. Describe one reason why the fire spread so quickly across the city. Think about the weather conditions and the way the houses were built. (2 marks)

3. Who was the famous diarist that provided historians with a first-hand account of the fire? Why are his writings considered so valuable to historians today? (2 marks)

4. The fire caused a huge amount of damage. If a baker's shop today cost £250,000 to rebuild, but the fire destroyed 13,200 houses, explain why the total economic impact on the city was considered a national disaster. (2 marks)

5. After the fire, new laws were introduced for building houses. Name one change that was made to ensure London would be safer in the future. (1 mark)

Draw: Draw a 'before and after' split-screen image. On one side, draw the narrow, overhanging timber houses of 1666. On the other side, draw the new, wider streets and brick buildings that were built during the reconstruction.



Extension challenge: Imagine you are a reporter in 1666. Write a short, formal news bulletin (no more than 100 words) describing the scene at the River Thames as people tried to escape the flames.