

The Great Fire of London: Historical Assessment

Learning objective: To evaluate understanding of the causes, events, and consequences of the Great Fire of London (1666).

Read each question carefully. Answer in full sentences where appropriate. Ensure your responses are historically accurate and reflect your knowledge of 17th-century London.

In September 1666, London was a city of narrow streets and wooden houses. After a long, dry summer, a small spark in a bakery on Pudding Lane ignited a disaster that would change the city forever. Over four days, the flames consumed the heart of the capital, testing the resilience of its citizens and forcing a total rethink of how cities should be built.

Word bank: Pudding Lane · Thomas Farriner · St Paul's Cathedral · Samuel Pepys · Timber-framed · The Monument · Bakers · Firebreaks

1. Identify the specific date (month and year) the fire began and name the street where it originated. (2 marks)

2. Explain why the fire spread so rapidly through the city. Mention at least two factors related to the construction of houses or weather conditions. (3 marks)

3. Who was Samuel Pepys, and why is his diary considered a vital primary source for historians studying this event? (3 marks)

4. Describe the method used to try and stop the fire from spreading further. Was this method effective in the early stages? Justify your answer. (4 marks)

5. Compare and contrast the city of London before the fire to the city after the fire. What significant changes were made to the building regulations? (4 marks)

6. Explain why the destruction of St Paul's Cathedral was such a devastating blow to the people of London. (4 marks)

7. Imagine you are a citizen of London in 1666. Write a short diary entry (approx. 50-75 words) describing the scene as you flee toward the River Thames. Include sensory details about what you see, hear, and feel. (5 marks)

Draw: Draw a diagram showing the difference between a 17th-century timber-framed house and the new brick houses built after the Great Fire. Label the materials used.



Extension challenge: Total: /25. Greater Depth Challenge: What might have happened if the Mayor of London had acted more decisively in the first few hours? Construct an argument justifying why the fire could have been contained earlier.