The Great Fire of London: A Story from the Past

Learning objective: To understand the key events and causes of the Great Fire of London in 1666.

Read the text carefully and answer the questions below. Use full sentences for your answers.

In September 1666, London was a busy city filled with narrow streets and wooden houses. Ellie the elephant, who loves history, explains that life back then was very different. Late one Saturday night, a small fire started in a bakery on Pudding Lane. Because the houses were built closely together out of dry timber and straw, the fire spread rapidly. A strong wind blew the sparks from roof to roof, and soon, the sky glowed orange. The fire raged for four days, destroying thousands of homes and the famous St Paul's Cathedral. Many people had to flee to the River Thames to stay safe. After the fire, the city had to be rebuilt. Laws were passed to ensure new houses were made of brick or stone instead of wood, to stop such a disaster from happening again. Ellie reminds us that while the fire was a tragedy, it allowed London to become a safer and more modern city for everyone to live in.

Word bank: Pudding Lane · bakery · timber · 1666 · catastrophe · flames

1. In what year did the Great Fire of London begin? (1 mark)

2. Where did the fire first start? (1 mark)

3. Why did the fire spread so quickly across the city? (2 marks)

4. How did the city change after the fire was put out? (2 marks)

5. Do you think it was a good idea to change the building materials from wood to brick? Explain why. (2 marks)

Draw: Draw a picture of a house from 1666 using brick instead of wood, and label two features that make it safer than the old wooden houses.

Extension challenge: Imagine you are living in London in 1666. Write a short diary entry of three sentences describing what you see and feel on the first night of the fire.