The Great Fire of London: History Investigation

Learning objective: To understand the causes, timeline, and impact of the Great Fire of London in 1666.

Read the questions carefully and use your historical knowledge about the Great Fire of London to answer them. Think about how the city was built and why the fire spread so quickly.

Ellie the elephant has been reading her history books! She knows that in 1666, London was a very different place. Most houses were made of wood and had straw roofs. They were built very close together in narrow streets. When a fire started in a small shop on Pudding Lane, it didn't take long for the whole city to change forever.

Word bank: Pudding Lane · 1666 · Timber · Thatch · Samuel Pepys · Bakery · Firebreak

1. In what year did the Great Fire of London start, and in which specific street did the fire begin? (2 marks)

2. Explain two reasons why the fire was able to spread so quickly across London. (2 marks)

3. Who kept a famous diary during this time that helps historians learn about the fire today? (1 mark)

4. What is a 'firebreak', and how did people try to use this method to stop the fire from spreading? (2 marks)

5. After the fire, many buildings were rebuilt using brick instead of wood. Why do you think this change was important for the future of London? (2 marks)

Draw: Draw a picture of what a street in London looked like in 1666, showing the wooden houses with overhanging upper floors, and add a small fire starting in a bakery window.

Extension challenge: Imagine you are a reporter in 1666. Write three sentences for a newspaper explaining what you see happening to the city of London.