

# The Great Fire of London

In the 1600s in the city of London, some people expected there to be a fire because:

- houses were built very close together;
- buildings were made from timber;
- it had been a long hot summer so water reserves were low and everything was very dry.

At that time, there was also a terrible disease called the plague. This was a disease that very few people survived. In fact, in the two years before the fire, around 68 000 people had died from it.

## Sunday 2nd September 1666

The fire began in a bakery on Pudding Lane. The bakery belonged to Thomas Farriner, who was the king's baker. The bakery was near London Bridge. This bridge was the only one across the River Thames in London. The bakery workmen woke to the smell of smoke at 2 o'clock in the morning. Everyone in the house escaped except a maid, who was too scared to move. She sadly died in the fire.

The fire took hold very quickly, and spread very fast through the city (just as some people had predicted).

Here are some of the reasons why the fire spread so quickly:

- buildings were too close together;
- buildings were made from timber and tar;
- everything was dry after the hot summer;
- there was a strong wind that fanned the flames along the rows of buildings.



### Samuel Pepys

Samuel Pepys, a man famous for writing newspaper articles and diaries, lived near the Tower of London. He saw the fire heading west and went to see King Charles to warn him of the dangers. Charles ordered the Mayor to destroy as many houses as possible before the fire got there.

They decided to create firebreaks. This meant pulling down buildings before the fire got to them so that there would be less for the fire to burn. It would eventually 'burn itself out' if there was nothing to fuel it. This would mean there would be a gap in the path of the fire.

### **Panic in London!**

By the Monday morning, people began to panic! The fire didn't seem to be stopping. The streets were jammed with people trying to escape with everything they owned in carts pulled by horses.

Samuel Pepys packed his bag. He also dug a pit in his garden and buried a cheese, some wine and other important goods.

Then he and his wife went to The Anchor pub and waited to see what would happen.

The fire was finally over on Thursday 6th September 1666.

### **Damage caused by the fire**

The fire caused huge devastation:

- 373 acres of the city were destroyed.
- 13 200 homes were burnt down.
- 87 churches were destroyed.
- St Paul's Cathedral collapsed.
- 4 people were officially recorded dead.



### **A lesson learned?**

After the fire, things changed. Laws were changed in the city. Insurance companies and volunteer groups began to form firefighting groups to avoid such an awful event happening again.

A monument stands at the junction of Monument Street and Fish Street Hill in the City of London. It was built between 1671 and 1677 to remember the Great Fire of London and to celebrate the rebuilding of the city.

# The Great Fire of London

Read the text carefully then answer the questions in full sentences and in as much detail as you can.

1. Give one reason why fires were expected in the City of London during the 1600s.

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2. What other problem did people living in London have to deal with at that time?

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3. Where did the Great Fire begin?

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4. What was the name and the job of the man that lived there?

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5. Give two reasons why the fire spread so quickly.

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6. Which sentence or phrase explains how people were feeling by Monday morning?

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7. Which word does the author use that means everything was destroyed?

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8. How many churches were destroyed?

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9. Name something good that happened because of the fire.

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10. Why was a monument built?

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# The Great Fire of London

1. Give one reason why fires were expected in the City of London during the 1600s.

**Pupil's own response that needs to include one of the following: houses were built very close together, buildings were made from timber and sometimes thatch, it had been a long hot summer so water reserves were low and everything was very dry.**

2. What other problem did people living in London have to deal with at that time?

**The other problem that people living in London at that time had to deal with was the plague.**

3. Where did the Great Fire begin?

**The Great Fire began in a bakery on Pudding Lane.**

4. What was the name and the job of the man that lived there?

**The man who lived there was called Thomas Farriner and he was the king's baker.**

5. Give two reasons why the fire spread so quickly.

**Pupil's own response that needs to include two of the following reasons: buildings were too close together, buildings were made from timber and tar, everything was dry after the hot summer and/or there was a strong wind that fanned the flames.**

6. Which sentence or phrase explains how people were feeling by Monday morning?

**The sentence or phrase that explains how people were feeling is 'by Monday morning' people began to panic'.**

7. Which word does the author use that means everything was destroyed?

**The word the author uses that means everything was destroyed is 'devastation' or 'destruction'.**

8. How many churches were destroyed?

**87 churches were destroyed.**

9. Name something good that happened because of the fire.

**Pupil's own response, firefighters were trained.**

10. Why was a monument built?

**The monument was built to remember the Great Fire of London and celebrate the rebuilding of the city.**

# The Great Fire of London

In some ways a huge fire was expected in the city of London during the 1600s. In fact, in 1559, a man named Daniel Baker predicted London's destruction by 'a consuming fire'.

## Why was a fire expected?

- Houses were built very close together.
- Buildings were made from timber and sometimes thatch.
- It had been a long hot summer so water reserves were low and everything was very dry.

Because of the plague, which was a terrible disease that was spreading through the city that very few people survived, the risk of a fire was not taken very seriously as people were too busy worrying about other things. In the two years before the fire, around 68 000 people had died from having the plague.

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The Plague was a disease passed on through the bite of an infected flea from a rat.

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## Sunday 2nd September 1666

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The bakery workmen woke to the smell of smoke at 2 o'clock in the morning. They woke the rest of the household, who all escaped from their bedroom windows and across the rooftops. All except a maid, who was too shocked to move. Sadly, she died in the fire.

The fire took hold very quickly and spread very fast. Here are some of the reasons why the fire spread so quickly:

- buildings were too close together;
- buildings were made from timber and tar;
- everything was dry after the hot summer;
- there was a strong wind that made the fire spread more quickly.





### **Samuel Pepys**

Samuel Pepys, who was a man famous for writing newspaper articles and diaries, lived near the Tower of London. He saw the fire heading west and went to see King Charles to warn him of the dangers. Charles ordered the Mayor to destroy as many houses as possible before the fire got there.

### **Panic in the streets of London!**

By the Monday morning people began to panic! The fire didn't seem to be stopping. By the evening, the streets were jammed with people trying to escape with their belongings and families in carts pulled by horses.

Samuel Pepys packed his bag. He also dug a pit in his garden and buried a cheese, some wine and other important goods. Then he and his wife went to The Anchor pub and waited to see what would happen.

The fire was finally declared over on Thursday 6th September 1666.

### **Damage caused by the fire**

The fire caused huge devastation:

- 373 acres of the city were destroyed.
- 13 200 homes were burnt down.
- 87 churches were destroyed.
- St Paul's Cathedral collapsed.
- 4 people were officially recorded dead.

They decided to create firebreaks. This was pulling down buildings before the fire got to them so that there would be less for the fire to burn. It would eventually 'burn itself out' if there was nothing to fuel it. This would mean there would be a gap in the path of the fire.

### **A lesson learned?**

After the fire, many things changed. Insurance companies, volunteer groups and parish authorities began to train as firefighters to avoid such a disaster happening again.

A special monument stands at the junction of Monument Street and Fish Street Hill in the City of London. It was built between 1671 and 1677 to remember the Great Fire of London and to celebrate the rebuilding of the City.

# The Great Fire of London

Read the text carefully then answer the questions in full sentences and in as much detail as you can.

1. What does the author mean when they say that Daniel Baker 'predicted London's destruction by a consuming fire?'

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2. Name two reasons why the fire was expected.

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3. What was the plague and how was it passed on?

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4. Why was a strong wind a factor in how quickly the fire spread?

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5. What word does the author use to explain to us that people were very worried about the fire?

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6. Describe three things Samuel Pepys did when he realised the fire was spreading.

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7. Explain in your own words what you understand a 'firebreak' to be and why they were used.

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8. For how many days did the Great Fire last?

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9. What changed as a result of the Great Fire?

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10. Do think a monument is necessary? Explain your thoughts.

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# The Great Fire of London

1. What does the author mean when they say that Daniel Baker 'predicted London's destruction by a consuming fire?'

**When the author says that Daniel Baker "predicted London's destruction by a consuming fire', the author means that he had said that London would be destroyed by a fire sometime in the future because he had noticed some of the dangerous things that were happening.**

2. Name two reasons why the fire was expected.

**Pupils own response that needs to include two of the following reasons: houses were built very close together, buildings were made from timber and sometimes thatch, it had been a long hot summer so water reserves were low and everything was very dry.**

3. What was the plague and how was it spreading so quickly?

**The plague was a disease that was spread quickly by fleas on infected rats that then bit people.**

4. Why do you think the wind was a factor in how quickly the fire spread?

**The wind made the fire spread quicker because it fanned the fire along the rows of houses.**

5. What word does the author use to explain to us that people were very worried about the fire?

**The author uses the word 'panic' to explain that people were very worried about the fire.**

6. Describe three things Samuel Pepys did when he realised the fire was spreading.

**Pupil's own response that needs to include three of the following: he went to the king to warn him of the dangers, he packed a bag, he dug a pit in the garden to bury a cheese, wine and other goods or/ and he went to the pub wife his wife and waited to see what would happen in the city.**

7. Explain in your own words what you understand a 'firebreak' to be and why they were used.

**Pupil's own explanation based on buildings being pulled down before the fire got to them so there was nothing for the fire to burn off, which would create a gap in the fire's path and hopefully burn out.**

8. For how many days did the Great Fire last?

**The Great Fire lasted for four days.**

9. What changed as a result of the Great Fire?

**After the fire, firefighters were trained to avoid a similar disaster.**

10. Do think a monument is necessary? Explain your thoughts.

**Pupil's own response based on whether they think the people that died and this event should be remembered.**

# The Great Fire of London

Around six years before the fire, the English monarchy had been in turmoil.

In 1660, Charles II was finally crowned King Charles II. His brother, James, was the Duke of York.

In some ways a huge fire was expected in the city. In fact, in 1559, a man named Daniel Baker predicted London's destruction by 'a consuming fire'.

## Why was a fire expected?

- Houses were built very close together.
- Buildings were made from timber.
- It had been a long hot summer so water reserves were low and everything was very dry.

Important people like the Lord Mayor of London, Sir Thomas Bloodworth, took no notice of any predictions or concerns. The city already had the plague to deal with and in the previous two years before the fire, around 68 000 people had died from the disease.

- King Charles was a Protestant, which made the Catholic people angry.
- In 1666, England was at war with the French and the Dutch.
- These two factors meant there was a lot of suspicion around. No one trusted anyone.

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## Sunday 2nd September 1666

The Great Fire began in a bakery on Pudding Lane. The bakery belonged to Thomas Farriner, who was the king's baker. The bakery was near London Bridge, which was the only one across the River Thames in London.

The bakery workmen woke to the smell of smoke at 2 o'clock in the morning. They woke the rest of the household, who all escaped from their bedroom windows and across the rooftops. All except a maid, who was too shocked to move. Unfortunately, she died in the fire.



The fire took hold very quickly, and spread very fast.

Here are some of the reasons why the fire spread so quickly:

- buildings were too close together;
- buildings were made from timber and tar;
- everything was dry after the hot summer;
- there was a strong wind that made the fire spread more quickly.

Within the hour, the Lord Mayor of London was woken and told about the fire. He was not impressed and promptly went back to sleep! When he did get up and realised he needed to do something, he was very indecisive and this caused delays with dealing with the problem.

Samuel Pepys, a man famous for writing newspaper articles and diaries, lived near the Tower of London. He saw the fire heading west and went to see King Charles to warn him of the dangers.

### **What could be done?**

Charles ordered the Mayor to destroy as many houses as possible before the fire got there. He also put his brother James, Duke of York, in charge of the situation.

They decided to create firebreaks. This meant pulling down buildings before the fire got to them so that there would be less for the fire to burn. It would eventually 'burn itself out' if there was nothing to fuel it. This would mean there would be a gap in the path of the fire.

### **Panic in the streets of London!**

By the Monday morning, people began to panic! The fire didn't seem to be stopping. The Duke ordered the militia in nearby counties to help. By evening, the streets were jammed with people trying to escape with their belongings and families in carts pulled by horses.

### **St Paul's Cathedral**

St Paul's Cathedral was thought to be a safe place of refuge so people stored important things there. However, the outside of the cathedral was covered in wooden scaffolding as it was being improved.



The timber caught fire and the lead on the roof melted down the road. The building was completely destroyed.

Samuel Pepys packed his bag. He also dug a pit in his garden and buried a parmesan cheese, some wine and other important goods. Then he and his wife went to The Anchor pub and waited to see what would happen. The fire was finally declared over on Thursday 6th September 1666.

### **Who was to blame?**

Over the next few days, people wanted to blame someone. Many citizens suspected the French or the Dutch had set the fire and there were a number of violent attacks carried out in the streets.

Charles travelled to Moorfields where there were 100 000 people now homeless because of the fire. He declared that no one was to blame and that the fire had been 'an act of God'.

One French watchmaker confessed to starting the fire but his story kept changing in detail. It was decided it wasn't him, he was probably unstable and he was eventually sentenced to hang.

It was decided the Catholics were to blame and for 150 years this was commonly believed in England. However, it is now decided that even though Thomas Farriner was so definite he had dampened down his stove fires in his bakery, the fire more than likely started in Pudding Lane after all.

### **A lesson learned?**

After the fire, things changed. As a result of the fire, insurance companies, volunteer groups and parish authorities all trained people to be firefighters to avoid such a catastrophe happening again.

A memorial monument stands at the junction of Monument Street and Fish Street Hill in the City of London. It was built between 1671 and 1677 to commemorate the Great Fire of London and to celebrate the rebuilding of the city.

# The Great Fire of London

Read the text carefully then answer the questions in full sentences and in as much detail as you can.

1. In your own words, explain why a fire was expected in London during the 1600s.

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2. Why did important people, like the Mayor, take no notice of the fear of a fire starting?

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3. What adjective does the author use to tell us that the Mayor was unable to make quick decisions?

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4. Why do you think the King ordered the Mayor to destroy houses that were not already on fire?

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5. What does the author describe the people of London as doing, which tells us they were panicking?

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6. Why did Samuel Pepys bury things in his garden?

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7. What factors caused St Paul's Cathedral to be destroyed by the fire?

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8. Apart from the French watchmaker, explain who people wanted to blame for starting the fire, and why they suspected them.

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9. Do you think a monument is necessary? Explain your reasons.

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10. The Great Fire caused huge devastation in the city of London. Did anything good come of it?

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# The Great Fire of London

1. In your own words, explain why a fire was expected in London during the 1600s.  
**The pupil's own response, which could include: houses were built very close together, buildings were made from timber and sometimes thatch, it had been a long hot summer so water reserves were low and everything was very dry.**
2. Why did important people, like the Mayor, take no notice of the fear of a fire starting?  
**The Mayor and other important people had enough to deal with as so many people were dying from the plague.**
3. What adjective does the author use to tell us that the Mayor was unable to make quick decisions?  
**The adjective the author uses to tell us that the Mayor was unable to make quick decisions is 'indecisive'.**
4. Why do you think the King ordered the Mayor to destroy houses that were not already on fire?  
**Pupil's own response, which could include: that there would be less for the fire to burn and that it would eventually 'burn itself out' if there was nothing to fuel it.**
5. What does the author describe the people of London as doing, which tells us they were panicking?  
**The author tells us that the people were panicking by jamming the roads trying to escape with their families and belongings in carts pulled by horses.**
6. Why did Samuel Pepys bury things in his garden?  
**Samuel Pepys buried things in his garden to keep them safe from the fire and stop them getting burned, so that he could collect them later after the fire had ended.**
7. What factors caused St Paul's Cathedral to be destroyed by the fire?  
**Factors that caused St Paul's Cathedral being destroyed by the fire are that the roof was made of lead and the outside was covered in wooden scaffolding.**
8. Apart from the French watchmaker, explain who people wanted to blame for starting the fire, and why they suspected them.  
**People wanted to blame the Catholics because they were angry that the King was a Protestant. Many also thought that the French and the Dutch were suspects because England was at war with those countries.**
9. Do you think a monument is necessary? Explain your reasons.  
**Pupil's own response based on whether they think people and the event should be remembered.**
10. The Great Fire caused huge devastation in the city of London. Did anything good come of it?  
**Pupil's own response, which could include: firefighters were trained and that the fire resulted in the end of the plague.**