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Cross-curricular links

Chapter	History SoW	PSHE/Citizenship SoW	Literacy framework	ICT SoW
1	Unit 5		Y2, Term 1: S4 Y2, Term 2: S7 Y2, Term 2: S9	Units 1B, 1C, 2A, 2B,
2	Unit 5		Y2, Term 1: S4	Units 1C, 1E, 2B
3	Unit 5	Units 1 and 2	Y2, Term 1: S4 Y2, Term 2: S7	Units 1B, 2A, 2B
4	Unit 5		Y2, Term 2: S7 Y2, Term 2: S9 Speaking & Listening KS1	Units 1B, 1C

Introduction



One of the most important ways laid down for Key Stage 1 children to be introduced to history is through the study of past events from the history of Britain and the wider world.

Such a study can help them learn the vocabulary of history, highlight the differences between then and now and teach them how we know about what has happened in the past. Furthermore, it challenges them to think about the questions people ask about events in the past and assists them to understand the concepts of chronology and change.

The purpose of this comprehensive resource – one of the Curriculum Focus: History series – is to incorporate all these elements and to inspire teachers, especially the non-specialist, to teach history with confidence.

The four events covered in the book are the Great Fire of London, the Olympic Games, The Gunpowder Plot and Coronation Day. The first of these is featured in the QCA's Scheme of Work for History Unit 5. The others have been specially chosen for the links they have with ancient history and regular modern events (the Olympics), annual seasonal festivals (Bonfire Night) and recent celebrations within the lifetime of Key Stage 1 children (the Golden Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II). The book is also intended to be flexible enough to integrate with any schools' own scheme of work or to be dipped into as and when required.

- Each chapter contains extensive background information about the topic written at the teachers' level and photocopiable resources providing stimulating pictures, maps, diagrams and charts.
- This is followed by three detailed lesson plans on the theme, each based on clear historical objectives. Resources are listed and starting points for the whole class are outlined. Lesson plans are largely organised in a question and answer format to provide essential information and assist with the teaching process.
- The group activities that follow are based on highly practical differentiated photocopiable

tasks at three ability levels that reinforce and develop the content of the lesson. Guidance is given about how children can be prepared for these activities and how they might be organised and supported.

- The main points of the lesson are revisited in plenary sessions that are interactive and often include drama and role play.
- At the end of each chapter there are ideas for support and extension and suggestions are made for linking aspects of ICT into the work.

The Great Fire of London

TEACHERS' NOTES

Background

All large cities like London experienced outbreaks of fire during the seventeenth century but nothing was to prepare England's largest settlement for the disaster that struck in 1666.

It was very much a case of lightning striking in the same place twice, for only the previous year over 68,000 of the capital's population had been wiped out by a virulent attack of bubonic plague.

London at this time had a population of about 460,000 people. In Europe, only the size of Paris was greater. The only route across the River Thames was London Bridge. Regions like Kensington and Chelsea were still regarded as separate villages. Most of those living in the central areas were packed into the decaying wooden houses that crammed the narrow streets. Rubbish thrown out from houses, shops and warehouses was collected by workmen called 'scavengers' but was thrown into the river or piled up outside the city walls. It was the perfect breeding ground for rats and other vermin.

The Plague – spread by fleas that lived on infected rats – began in the winter of 1664. As the spring of the following year developed into summer and the weather became hotter, it began to take its hold on the city. By mid-July 1,000 people were dying each week and still the situation worsened. Whole families who showed symptoms of the disease were boarded up inside their houses and watchmen were appointed to keep them in. The bodies of the dead were transported away during the hours of darkness, many to be buried in mass graves.

Some inhabitants tried to escape the city into the surrounding countryside, but the residents of neighbouring settlements were understandably unwilling to accept them. Others lived on boats anchored in the middle of the River Thames. King Charles II and the court fled to Oxford and did not return until the worst was over. The death rate reached its peak during September when over 26,000 people died. As winter approached the situation began to improve, although it was only towards Christmas that life began to get back to normal.

The fire

Tradition locates the origin of the Great Fire in the bakery run by Thomas Farynor in Pudding Lane some time early in the morning of Sunday 2 September. The likely cause seems to be that the fires that operated the baking ovens had not been properly put out when the baker, his family and the servants retired to bed. Farynor and the immediate members of his family are said to have escaped the burning building by jumping from an upstairs window, but a maid could not be persuaded to get out by using this method and died.

The summer of 1666 had been long and hot, so neighbouring buildings caught fire quickly and the flames were fanned by a keen east wind, which also carried sparks a considerable distance. By 7am some 300 houses had been destroyed and chaos reigned in the streets as people attempted to escape across the river. As the end of the day came, the blaze stretched a distance of over a mile.

By Monday 3 September the fire had reached the centre of the city, particularly the business area around the Royal Exchange. The streets were now jammed with people pushing handcarts and barrows laden with goods as they tried to save what they could of their possessions. Escape across the river became more difficult as London Bridge had become an early victim of the flames. The following day is often known as 'terrible Tuesday' with half the city now ravaged by fire. Cheapside, the capital's main shopping area, was destroyed as well as the Guildhall, the main centre of local government, and Fleet Street. Also to suffer at this point was St Paul's Cathedral, one of the most prominent landmarks in the whole of the city. The blaze had reached the Temple area and Cripplegate by Wednesday, but then it began to abate as the wind dropped and fire-fighting teams began to have some effect. The fire finally stopped its progress at Pye Corner.

After the flames and the smoke gradually died away on Thursday, the city slowly began to return to normal. But it was not until the weekend or early the following week that people began to return from the fields outside the city where they

had set up their temporary and makeshift homes. Many writers commented on the help given to Londoners by those living in neighbouring settlements. Accounts describe how they provided shelter wherever possible and lent out transport – carts, wagons and coaches – that could be used for saving possessions.

Fire fighting

Fire fighting in seventeenth-century London can be described as primitive at best. Hand pumps and squirts were used to put out small flames, or residents formed chains to pass buckets of water obtained from the nearest river or pond. Hooked poles, axes and chains were used for pulling down burning thatch or on occasions demolishing whole houses. A supply of these was kept in each city ward.

The only other method used to stop a major fire was to create a gap too big for the flames to cross by blowing up buildings with a charge of gunpowder. The Tower of London was one of many buildings saved in this way.

With the fire breaking out during the night, few people were alert enough to deal with it quickly. By the time the Lord Mayor, Thomas Bludworth, began to organise teams of fire-fighters the following day, the blaze already had a firm grip. Later, despite being given orders by Pepys from the King, Bludworth was reluctant to blow up houses and this only made the situation worse. The whole fire-fighting operation was plagued by the fact that no one appeared to be willing to take sole responsibility. Attempts to combat the flames were further hampered by the fact that the blazing banks of the River Thames cut off fire-fighters from the city's only plentiful supply of water.

Prominent in the fire-fighting operation was both the King and his brother James, the Duke of York. They stood ankle deep in water on the front line, encouraging teams of soldiers, sailors and parish constables to tackle the flames and smoke as best they could.

Surveying the damage

When the final cost of the fire damage was surveyed, London reeled in horror.

- Over half the total area within the city walls, some 15 hectares, had been totally destroyed.
- Outside the city wall, 25 hectares had also been severely damaged.
- Over 13,000 houses on some 400 streets had gone up in flames.
- Over 80 churches and most of the larger public buildings in the city had disappeared.
- 100,000 people had been made homeless and were forced to spend the winter of 1666 in tents and shelters until their homes were rebuilt.
- The estimated cost of damage to property and goods was put at £10 million – a staggering amount of money for those times.
- At its peak, the fire is said to have produced flames up to 100 metres high and the glow could be seen for miles around.
- Mercifully, because most inhabitants fled rather than staying to fight the fire, only eight people died.

The rebuilding operation

Although some of the worst areas of London remained intact, the Great Fire did help to purify some places of the last remains of the Plague and it did provide the opportunity for large stretches of the capital city to be rebuilt. A number of grandiose plans were put forward for the rebuilding, including those by Evelyn and the architect Sir Christopher Wren, but none was fully adopted.

The building programme started slowly. Despite an influx of skilled building workers, only 150 premises had been completed by 1667. This had risen to about 9,000 by 1671 although many of them remained empty. A special Fire Court set up to handle disputes about property rights and boundaries did not conclude its business until 1673. Some progress was hampered by the fact that many people were resistant to change and wanted to return to houses similar to those they had occupied before the fire. New rules governed the building of houses, streets became wider, squares were created, pavements provided and new drains installed. Brick, stone and tile became the predominant building materials in the place of wood and thatch. The West End of London, close to the palaces and

parks, became the centre for the wealthy while the East End, with its cheap rented accommodation, attracted the poor.

Wren, an Oxford professor from the age of 29 with an interest in mathematics and astronomy, established a reputation for his detailed drawings and precise models. He had survived the Plague by fleeing to Paris and after the Great Fire devoted much of his life to designing London's public buildings including the Royal Hospital, Chelsea and palaces at Kensington and Hampton Court. He became the King's Surveyor of Works in 1667. He was responsible for the rebuilding of St Paul's Cathedral and over 50 parish churches. St Paul's, the biggest cathedral in Europe apart from St Peter's in Rome, took 35 years to complete and remains Wren's greatest monument. He was knighted for his efforts in 1672.

Sources of information

Although a number of contemporary paintings, sketches and engravings of the Great Fire of London exist, most tend to focus on general scenes of the fire engulfing houses, churches and other public buildings and the chaos that ensued. Others show the exodus down the River Thames or the homeless camping in fields outside the city. Most were not genuine eyewitness accounts but were painted sometime afterwards and relied on engravings of what London had looked like before the fire took hold.

The most reliable and detailed accounts of the damage caused by the fire and the human misery it inflicted come in the writings of diarists like Samuel Pepys and John Evelyn and politicians like the Earl of Clarendon. Pepys (1633–1703) was an important government official who was promoted because of his organisational ability. His main responsibility was buying supplies for the Royal Navy. He lived within the city itself and was well placed to describe events as they unfolded. Pepys' own house was spared, although ironically it burned down in another fire seven years later. Pepys' diary – containing over a million words – was first published in 1825. It is highly regarded because of the way in which it combines small detail as well as supplying the whole picture of events. It includes details of how Pepys tried to safeguard his most treasured possessions while the fire was at its height. Initially, some of his goods, money and silverware

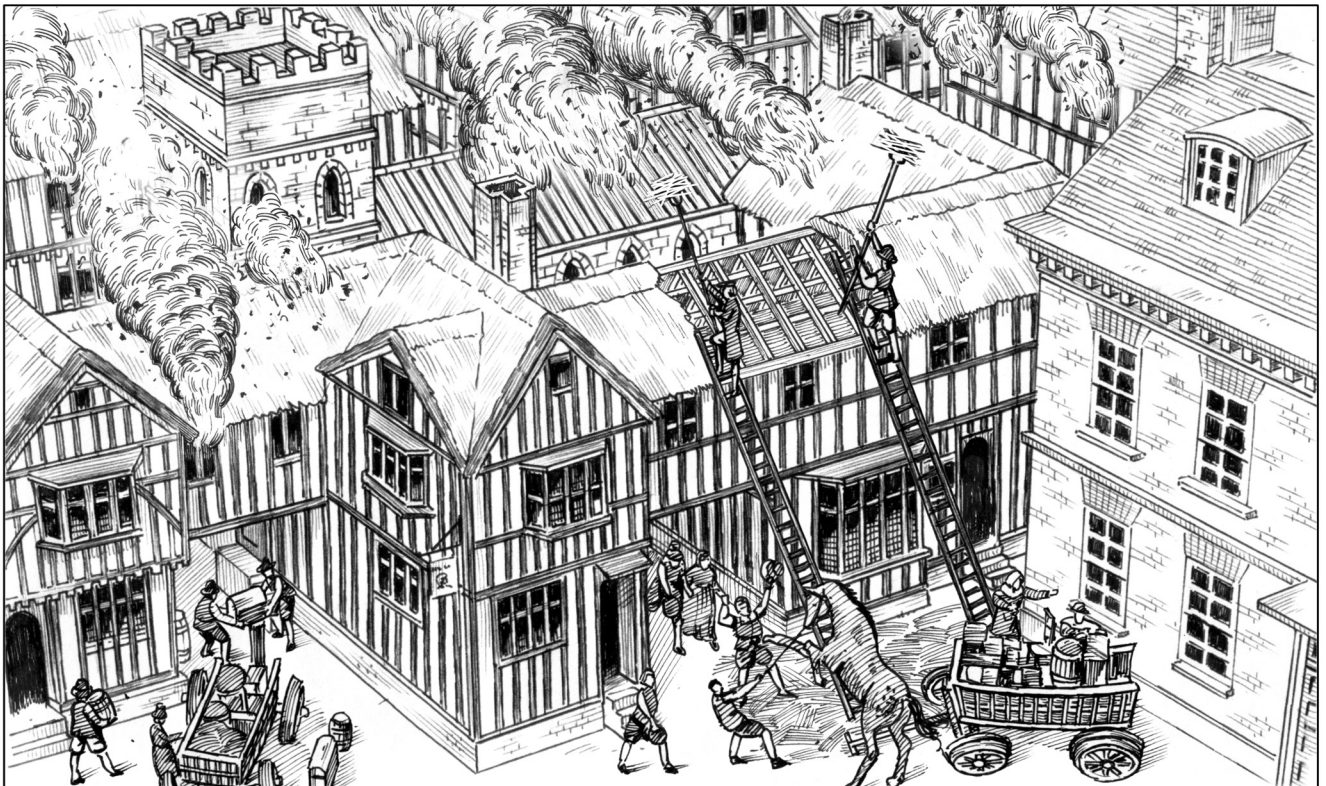
were moved to safety in the village of Bethnal Green – two miles east of London. Later, he took to burying items in deep holes in the ground. The most important of these items appeared to be his supply of wine and Parmesan cheese.

Evelyn (1620–1706), another prominent diarist and a lifelong friend of Pepys, lived in Fetter Lane, Holborn, and was placed in charge of the fire-fighting teams around his home. Evelyn – the author of some 30 books on the arts, forestry and religious topics – started writing his diary at the age of 11 and continued it for the rest of his life. During the Great Fire of London he wrote at some length about the destruction of St Paul's Cathedral and visited the fields outside London that had become the home of many refugees. Later he submitted plans for the rebuilding of London in which he proposed plantations of fragrant trees and shrubs around the city. He also served on several important government commissions.

The Earl of Clarendon was Lord Chancellor (in effect the Prime Minister of the day) at the time of the Great Fire. This put him in a key position to comment on the strategies being used by the city's rulers to fight the blaze. His daughter later married the King's brother, the Duke of York, and he later became the grandfather of two English monarchs, Queen Mary II and Queen Anne. Clarendon fell out of favour in 1667, was dismissed and spent the last part of his life in exile in France. Extracts from the writings of all three of these important characters are given on Generic sheet 3.

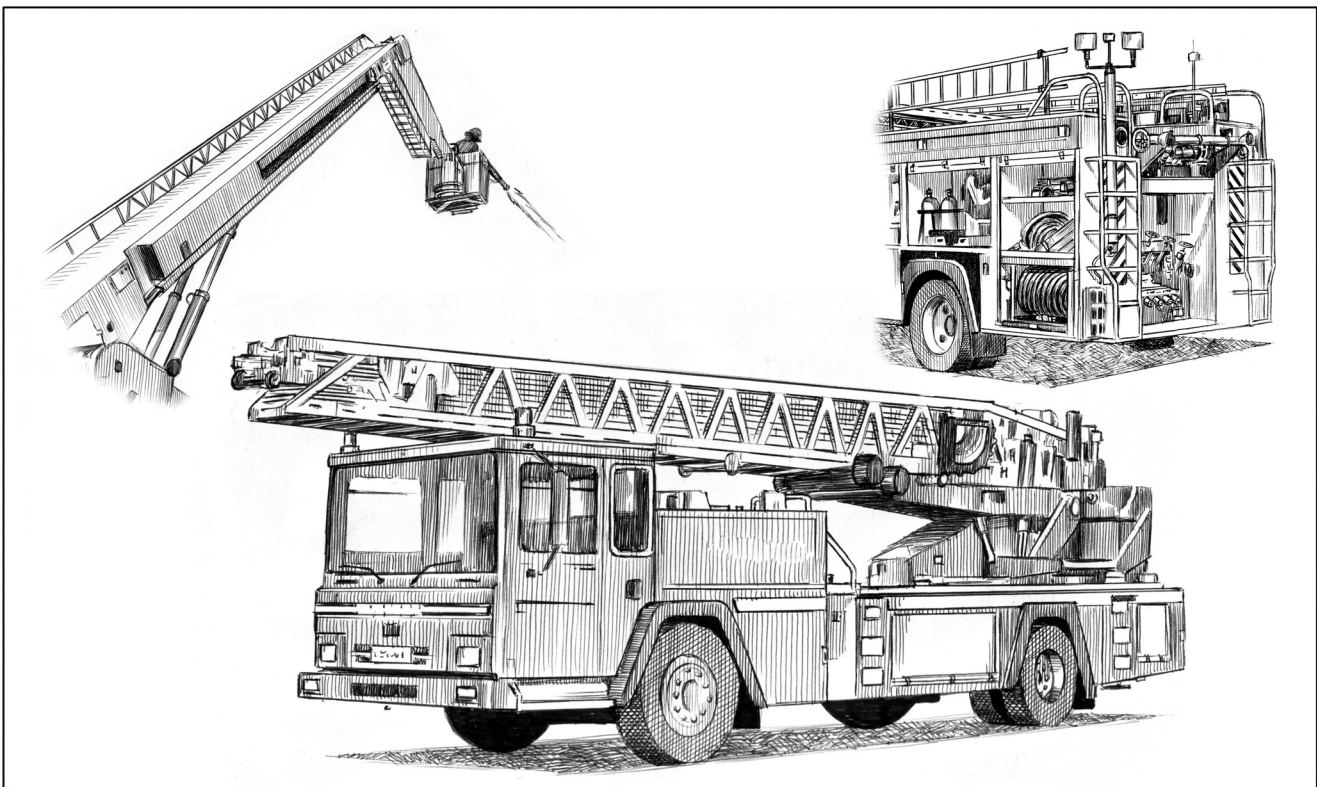
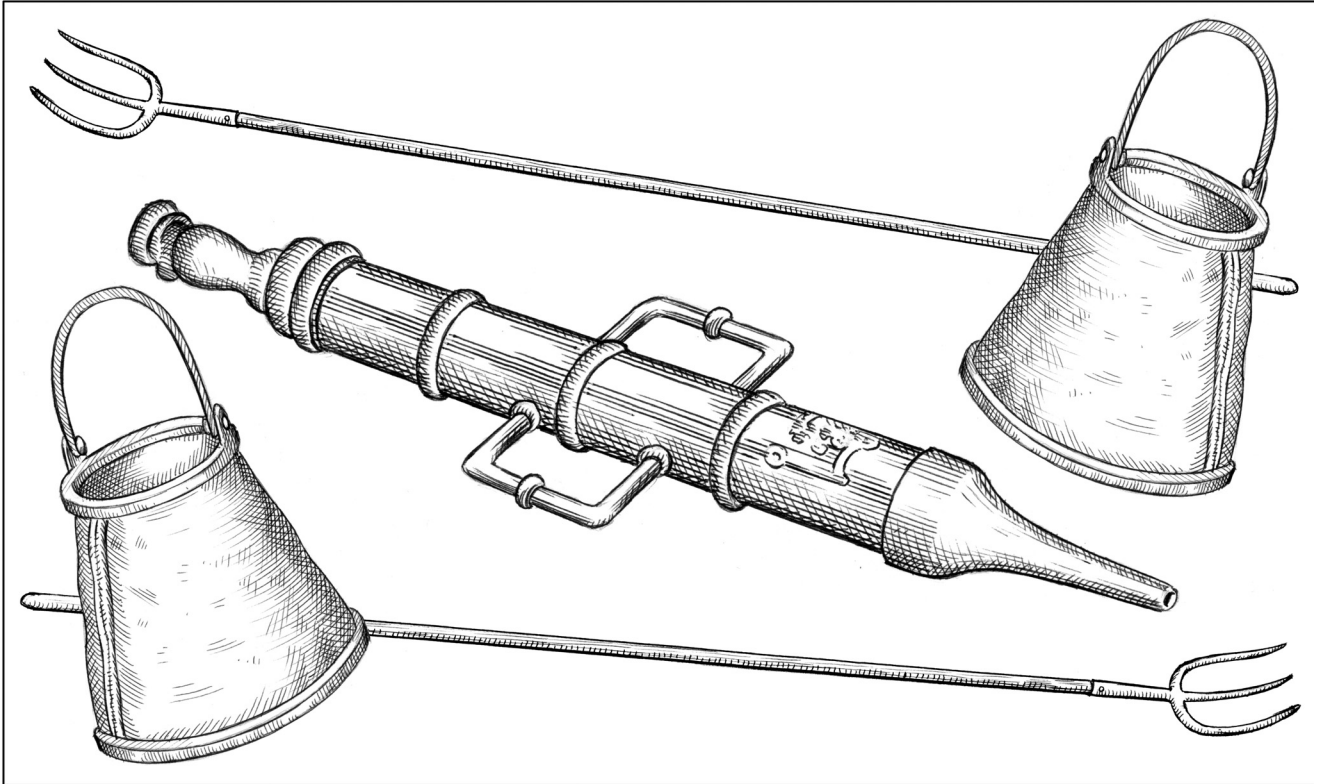
The Great Fire of London

1
GENERIC SHEET



The Great Fire of London

2
GENERIC SHEET



Eyewitness accounts

Samuel Pepys

Soon after the start of the fire looking out of his bedroom window:

'...being unused to such fires as followed, I thought it far enough off; and went to bed again to sleep.'

Later:

'The churches, houses and all on fire and flaming at once; and a horrid noise the flames made and the cracking of houses at their ruin.'

The Earl of Clarendon

'The fire and the wind continued in the same excess all Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday until afternoon and flung and scattered brands burning into all quarters; the nights more terrible than the days, and the light the same, the light of the fire supplying that of the sun.'

John Evelyn

How the fire got out of control:

'The conflagration was so universal and the people so astonished that from the beginning they hardly stirred to quench it, so as there was nothing heard or seen but crying out and running about like distracted creatures... The shrieking of the women and children, the hurry of people, the fall of towers, houses and churches, was like a hideous storm.'

He visits the refugees in the fields outside London:

'I then went towards Islington and Highgate where one might have seen 200,000 people of all ranks and degrees dispersed and lying along by their heaps of what they could save from the fire.'

Sir Thomas Bludworth, Lord Mayor of London

When told to destroy houses to prevent the spread of the fire:

'Lord, what can I do? I am spent; people will not obey me. I have been pulling down houses, but the fire overtakes us faster than we can do it.'

Dr Thomas Vincent, a clergyman

On the destruction of St Paul's:

'...now the lead melts and runs down, as if it had been snow before the sun; and the great beams and massy stones, with a great noise, fall upon the pavement.'

William Taswell, 15-year-old schoolboy

'The ground was so hot as almost to scorch my shoes, and the air so intensely warm that unless I had stopped some time upon Fleet Bridge to rest myself, I must have fainted under the extreme languor of my spirits.'