

# The Great Fire of London

## National Curriculum Objectives:

Reading: English Year 5 & Year 6: Provide reasoned justifications for their views. [More resources with this objective.](#)

SPAG: English Year 5 & Year 6: Use the semi-colon, colon and dash to mark the boundary between independent clauses [for example, It's raining; I'm fed up]. [More resources with this objective.](#)

Other: History KS2: A significant turning point in British history, for example, the first railways or the Battle of Britain. [More resources with this objective.](#)

## Level of this pack:

Old National Curriculum (England): 5

New National Curriculum (England): Year 5 Mastery/Year 6 Secure

Book Band: Black

PM Benchmark Level: Free Reading

Reading Recovery Level: Free Reading

Reading Age: 11+

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### Joanna Farynor's diary, Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> September 1666

The sun has finally set in London but the night air is still thick with heat. It is unbearable! As I write this, another hot gale blows through my bedroom window and the dry timber of the house creaks and whines in response. The windows and doors have been open for months, but hot wind does not cool anything down. As if this wasn't enough, every day at 4am, Father lights the downstairs bread oven, and by 5am is baking his first batch of loaves. All day, he stokes that pesky fire and it bellows heat through the entire house. It is hard to remember last winter, when rain fell in incessant sheets over London for months on end. It flooded alleyways (including our own Pudding Lane) and drenched our straw roof completely. I prayed for heat then, to dry out our little wooden house, but now a sudden storm would be very welcome, even if it did cause more leaks in our roof than we have buckets to catch the water in. At least rain like that that washes the sewage into the river! Without it, all sorts of waste lies festering in the narrow London streets, along with the bodies of rats and other animals that have finally succumbed to their thirst. Anyway, I can hear father extinguishing the fire in the bread oven at last, not that it will make any difference! Like every night we will still wake up in a few hours squirming with sweat and discomfort. He will be coming upstairs soon so I need to blow out this candle. Everyone in the city has become so afraid of fire in the past few hot dry months; even father has forbid us from taking candles upstairs. Tomorrow I will go to the millers but I will avoid Fleet Street (that place has the worst smell of all).

### Lord Mayor Bloodworth's diary, Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1666

The smell of this hot, dry, overcrowded, under watered city is driving us mad in this long summer that never seems to end! And now there is a blasted fire blazing down at Pudding Lane. I was forced to view it in the early hours of this morning because the firemen wanted permission to begin demolishing houses in its path. It was nowhere near large enough for that, and I will be personally responsible for the costs of rebuilding. I told them to do their best with water, 'A woman could put it out!' I said. That silenced them, and they got to work. Fires have burned all over the city since June, and the cost to keep rebuilding houses that we demolish is becoming excessive. No, no, no, there is no need for that. Now my sleep is disturbed, being woken up at that time! I will eat some bread and cheese and return to bed for a few hours. Let the fire burn up two streets, it will be out by tomorrow.

### Joanna Farynor's diary, Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1666

I write this sitting in St. Paul's Cathedral, where we have been for all of today. As I predicted we did wake last night, but not due to the heat. Father shook me awake as smoke rose from downstairs. By the time I had got my bearings he had pushed me out onto the roof, where mother was standing, too stunned to move. Father led us both onto next doors roof where the neighbour, who had been watching the scene with horror, suddenly realised her house was next. She woke her husband and before we knew it there were more and more of us scurrying onto our roofs and running to escape the growing inferno. When we reached safety father spent a long time looking down on what had been Pudding Lane with a strange look on his face. We did not come here straight away, but the church we first arrived at has now also been burned to rubble; as have at least three hundred houses. The air is thick with smoke and ashes that burn my throat when I breathe. The water from the Thames will not reach the centre of the blaze and so it continues to spread relentlessly. They are now saying it is approaching St Paul's, and that a fire wall will not stop it. Father has decided we must leave the city walls, saying it is our only hope and that all of London will soon be burned to the ground.

Edward Taylor's Diary, Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> September 1666

It wasn't me! That's what I told them! I think it was that Joanna who told them that it was. Wait until I find her! I went looking for her today but couldn't see anything or get anywhere! There are carts and smoking remains blocking up every road. The streets are full of people shouting and screaming, trying to flee the city and all the time you can hear the fire crackling in the distance. There are gangs of soldiers and people with homemade weapons **stalking** around the city, looking for Catholics and foreigners because everyone thinks they started the fire. Well I'm not Catholic or a foreigner, and me and George might have been messing around in Pudding Lane, but so what?! We always did. A fire ball couldn't start something this huge anyway, it's only a bit of burning fat that's fun to throw around. I told them that, the King's Guards, they believed me eventually and went off to find the real culprit. Then mum got angry and yelled about how stupid I had been. I told her, 'Look, We left Pudding Lane before sunset, and there wasn't any fire burning then!'

Lord Mayor Bloodworth's Diary, Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> September 1666

September is a beautiful time to visit the countryside. I always enjoy spending autumn in Surrey, and I had... well... I had urgent business here that just couldn't wait! The air is so beautifully fresh, and there isn't much good I can do in the city anyway. Plus the King has got involved, so I'm sure the fire is all under control. Now, for tea will we have scones and cream, and for dinner I think I fancy a nice piece of **venison**.

Joanna Farynor's Diary Wednesday September 5<sup>th</sup> 1666

We are no longer in St. Paul's Cathedral. No one is. I thought the worst had happened. Watching your own home blaze and burn is hard enough. But to watch an entire lead roof melt, like candle wax, and pour down the sides of a great Cathedral is **astounding**. The heat was **devastating**. After the roof was gone the fire tore through the great brick walls, causing stones to explode and pieces of rubble to fly through the air at terrifying speed. We ran to escape Ludgate Hill, as liquid lead flowed like a river down the street. Father ran towards the Thames, and we followed, squeezing past carts and horses that reared and kicked out in fear. People and their belongings filled the streets, coughing and spluttering in the smoke. I could have sworn I heard explosions in the distance. When we reached the river, Father bribed our way onto a barge (with more money than he makes in half a year) piled high with people and possessions. As we sailed away past the Tower of London, I saw Guards attempting to dig a trench to save the building. I wondered if that would be the last time I would ever see my home city, with black smoke **pluming** into the sky, the sound of fire crackling **ominously**, and people crying on the banks of the Thames.

Allie Wertell's Diary, Friday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2015

I am sat on the bus on the way back to school and Harriet has fallen asleep, so I am eating her chocolate! Today I went to London with my class to learn more about The Fire of London and see whereabouts in Pudding Lane it started. Miss Traynor told us that one hundred thousand people were made homeless in the fire, and the city took years and years to rebuild. We also found out that if it wasn't for the wind dying down, and the soldiers blowing up houses in the path of the fire, that even more of the city would have been destroyed. Now, there is a monument where the Bakery in Pudding Lane used be and Harriet and I climbed all the way to the top to see a **panoramic** view of the city. I have never been to London before, and I thought from there, it looked amazing! It was full of people and buildings as far as we could see, with the Thames running through the middle. Miss Traynor pointed out all the parts of the city that were destroyed by the fire. It is hard to imagine that one man forgetting to put out a bread oven in his bakery could have done all that damage. He and his family left London during the fire, but they survived and eventually returned. I asked Miss Traynor if he ever found out that it was him who started the fire. She didn't know. On second thoughts, I think maybe it was best that he didn't either.

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The Great Fire of London – Y5m/Y6s (Black) – Text

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## The Great Fire of London – Follow-Up Work

1. List the four characters whose diary entries make up the story?

2. Over how many days in 1666 does the story take place?

3. Do Joanna and Edward know each other? How do we know?

4. Joanna Farynor thinks she heard explosions when running through the city. Do we know if this is true and why she would have heard them? Use quotes from the text.

5. The story is made up completely of diary entries. What effect does this have for a reader?

6. Why are the titles of the different diaries in different fonts. Does this make reading the story easier or harder?

7. Bullet point five events of the fire mentioned in the story in chronological order.

8. What sort of man do you think the Mayor is? Include quotes from the text to support your answer.

9. Do you think Thomas Farynor (Joanna's father) was responsible for the damage caused by the fire? Justify your answer.

10. "*I had... well... I had urgent business*" Explain the use of the ellipses when the Mayor says his work in the country was 'urgent'.

11. Find three adjectives to describe Joanna and explain why you have chosen them with quotes from the text.

12. What do you notice about the sentence length in Joanna's final diary entry. What is the effect of this sentence length on the reader?

13. Find an example of imagery in the text and describe its effect. Is it important to the story?

14. According to Edward Taylor who does everyone think started the fire?

15. Why do you think the author has chosen to use diary entries to tell the story? Think about the time period that the fire was in.

16. Sources online say that only 4 – 9 people (the exact number is not known) were killed in the Great Fire of London. From reading this story do you think that this is a realistic number? Why might this number be wrong?

Write the meaning of each of these words.

pesky	
bellows	
incessant	
festering	
succumb	
extinguish	
excessive	
scurrying	
inferno	
relentlessly	
stalking	
venison	
astounding	
devastating	
pluming	
ominously	
panoramic	

## The Great Fire of London – Vocab 2

Samuel Pepys was a famous diarist who wrote about the Great Fire of London. He was an advisor to King Charles and went to the top of the Tower of London on the third day of the fire. Imagine you are him surveying the fire and write an account of what you see. You must use all of the vocabulary words provided and can use each word more than once. You can use the root of the word only if required e.g. disdain rather than disdainfully. Make it clear that it is a diary entry.



## The Great Fire of London – SPAG

There are two grammatical errors in this extract of Edward Taylor’s diary entry. Highlight them in the passage and re write them in the correct form below.

“It wasn’t me! That’s what I told them! I think it was that Joanna who told them that it was. Wait until I find her! I went looking for her today but couldn’t see anything or get anywhere! There are carts and smoking remains blocking up every road. The streets are full of people shouting and screaming, trying to flee the city and all the time you can hear the fire crackling in the distance. There are gangs of soldiers and people with homemade weapons stalking around the city, looking for Catholics and foreigners because everyone thinks they started the fire. Well I’m not Catholic or a foreigner, and me and George might have been messing around in Pudding Lane, but so what?!”

The following sentences are each missing either commas or semi-colons and one other punctuation mark. Add in the correct punctuation below.

I looked out of the window to see Edward Traynor George Beck and another boy throwing fire balls around

The heat is unbearable the timbers of the house creak and whine

Mother stood too stunned to move the neighbour and people on the street stared at her in amazement

Find and copy two subordinate clauses from the text.

Use conjunctions to complete the sentences below.

\_\_\_\_\_ Joanna ran as fast as she could, her father was still running ahead.

The King is involved now \_\_\_\_\_ there is no reason for me to stay in London.

\_\_\_\_\_ we reached the top of the monument.

1. List the four characters whose diary entries make up the story? **Joanna Farynor, Lord Mayor Bloodsworth, Edward Taylor and Allie Wertell.**
2. Over how many days in 1666 does the story take place? **Five days**
3. Do Joanna and Edward know each other? How do we know? **It is implied in Edward's entry when he states that he believes Joanna told on him.**
4. Joanna Farynor thinks she heard explosions when running through the city. Do we know if this is true and why she would have heard them? Use quotes from the text. **Yes, she could have heard explosions as we learn in Allie's diary that the authorities began blowing up houses to 'stop the fire spreading'.**
5. The story is made up completely of diary entries. What effect does this have for a reader? **Various answers if justified. Reader feels like an observer, more believable as they are people's diaries (possible answers).**
6. Why are the titles of the different diaries in different fonts? Does this make reading the story easier or harder? **To indicate that a new person is talking. The fonts match the characters, so the Mayor's is very posh and Allie's is more modern and recognisable. It makes the story easier to read as it reminds you what time period you are in and who the author of the entry is.**
7. Bullet point five events of the fire mentioned in the story in chronological order. **Any of the following five in chronological order: 1. Edward and George throw fire balls in Pudding Lane. 2. Joanna's father thinks he puts the bread oven out. 3. Joanna and her family flee from the fire in Pudding Lane. 4. The Mayor visits the fire and refuses to let houses be demolished. 5. 300 houses are destroyed by the fire. 6. People begin blaming the Catholic and foreign population for starting the fire. 7. St Pauls Cathedral is burned down. 8. Authorities begin demolishing houses. 9. The wind changes direction and the fire finally dies out. 10. A monument is built on Pudding Lane.**
8. What sort of man do you think the Mayor is? Include quotes from the text to support your answer. **The mayor is pompous and lazy. He does not want to help or be responsible for the re-building. He does not take his responsibility seriously and leaves for the country when his job was to help the people of London.**
9. Do you think Thomas Farynor (Joanna's father) was responsible for the damage caused by the fire? Justify your answer. **Various answers with justification. Yes as he started the fire, or no because the Mayor did not act in time.**
10. "I had... well... I had urgent business" Explain the use of the ellipses when the Mayor says his work in the country was 'urgent'. **This indicates that he is not quite telling the truth and that his work wasn't actually urgent.**
11. Find three adjectives to describe Joanna and explain why you have chosen them with quotes from the text. **Various answers if justified.**
12. What do you notice about the sentence length in Joanna's final diary entry? What is the effect of this sentence length on the reader? **The sentences are short. This adds suspense as it is a tense moment and gives the impression that we are discovering things at the same time as Joanna.**
13. Find an example of imagery in the text and describe its effect. Is it important to the story? **Various examples of imagery. It makes the readers feel more involved in the story and is important as they get a sense of the atmosphere and their surroundings.**
14. According to Edward Taylor who does everyone think started the fire? **The Catholic and foreign population of London.**
15. Why do you think the author has chosen to use diary entries to tell the story? Think about the time period that the fire was in. **The author has used diary entries as diaries provide most of the information we have about the Great Fire of London. Especially one written by Samuel Pepys.**
16. Sources online say that only 4 – 9 people (the exact number is not known) were killed in the Great Fire of London. From reading this story do you think that this is a realistic number? Why might this number be wrong? **There were no ways of keeping records in those days like there is today. This seems like a small number for such a large fire.**

Write the meaning of each of these words.

pesky	irritating, annoying
bellows	producing a strong current of air
incessant	unending, never stopping
festering	to rot and putrefy
succumb	to give up, to surrender
extinguish	to put out
excessive	over the top, too much
scurrying	to move quickly
inferno	another word for fire
relentlessly	never ending
stalking	walking in an aggressive manner
venison	a cut of deer meat
astonishing	surprising, amazing, unbelievable
devastating	shocking, shattering
pluming	a rising section of air containing pollutants
ominously	menacing, threatening
panoramic	an unbroken view of an entire surrounding area

There are two grammatical errors in this extract of Edward Taylor’s diary entry. Highlight them in the passage and re write them in the correct form below.

“It wasn’t me! That’s what I told them! I think it was that Joanna who told them that it was. Wait until I find her! I went looking for her today but couldn’t see anything or get anywhere! There are carts and smoking remains blocking up every road. The streets are full of people shouting and screaming, trying to flee the city and all the time you can hear the fire crackling in the distance. There are gangs of soldiers and people with homemade weapons stalking around the city, looking for Catholics and foreigners because everyone thinks they started the fire. **Well I’m not Catholic or a foreigner**, and **me and George** might have been messing around in Pudding Lane, but so what?!”

**I’m neither Catholic nor a foreigner  
George and I**

The following sentences are each missing either commas or semi-colons and one other punctuation mark. Add in the correct punctuation below.

I looked out of the window to see Edward Traynor, George Beck and another boy throwing fire balls around.

The heat is unbearable; the timbers of the house creak and whine.

Mother stood too stunned to move; the neighbour and people on the street stared at her in amazement.

Find and copy two subordinate clauses from the text.

**But to watch an entire lead roof melt, like candle wax, and pour down the sides  
where the neighbour, who had been watching the scene with horror, suddenly realised**

Use conjunctions to complete the sentences below.

**Although** Joanna ran as fast as she could, her father was still running ahead.

The King is involved now **which means/therefore etc** there is no reason for me to stay in London.

**Finally/ At last etc** we reached the top of the monument.