



THE GREAT FIRE OF LONDON AT KS1

Approach 3

This is one of series of alternative approaches to the Great Fire of London which you can download from www.primaryhistory.org.

The purpose of the term's history work was to find out about the Great Fire of London. Rather than giving information, we felt that we wanted to develop the children's ability to investigate independently, and to be able to draw their own conclusions and construct an account of past events. This approach was taken as a result of attending a Nuffield Primary History and Literacy in-service course.

The structure of the lessons was slightly different from usual, as we decided to give the children a selection of information and get them to tell us what they found out, so there was no initial discussion. The children were told they were the detectives!

We used four sessions to carry out the chosen work, then carried on with the topic for the rest of the term. We had tried one or two of the investigative activities during our previous term's focus on George Stephenson, and were pleased with the results.

Speaking and listening (especially discussion), reading (both visual and written texts) and writing, were integral to all four lessons. The important point is that the history provided an exciting context for practising and extending literacy.

Year group/class and Teaching time

Year 2, mixed ability and gender, 31 in the class.

Four lessons of approximately one hour each.

Learning objectives

These covered both history and literacy, and were for the children to be able to:

- use inquiry skills to gain information from photographs and written text
- offer opinions and suggestions about why things happened
- describe key features of 17th century houses
- retell the story of the Great Fire of London in a report style.

Key question/s

What can you find out from this evidence?

Why do you think this?

Resources

Four typed extracts about the Great Fire of London, taken from books. Each extract was stuck onto a sheet of A4, and we made enough copies for each pair of children to share one extract

Extracts from Samuel Pepys' diary. You can find relevant extracts at:

www.pepys.info/

Pictures of the Great Fire of London, Samuel Pepys and the monument commemorating the Great Fire. Wikipedia has the pictures, together with excellent, detailed information

Topic books about the Great Fire, containing pictures of 17th century houses.

Books: some suggestions

Christopher Wright & David Salariya: *A Children's History of Britain and Ireland* (Visual Factfinders)

Redvers Brandling: *Fire! Fire!*

Tony D. Triggs: *People in British History*

Rhoda Nottridge: *Plague and Fire* (Beginning History)

The teaching [Lesson 1]

Focus: Using inquiry skills to gain information and offering suggestions about what happened. Locating events on a timeline.

The children worked in pairs (mixed ability) looking at photographs of London burning, Charles II, Samuel Pepys, and the monument commemorating the Great Fire of London.

The children wrote down anything they could see from the pictures. Their lists were mainly obvious nouns (such as people, water, fire, roof, door), though one or two recognised St Paul's and Andrew recorded details such as ruffles and wigs.

We now asked the pairs to discuss what they thought the event was all about.

The whole class then shared their findings and discussed when they thought it took place in relation to other historical events. For this discussion we used a timeline.

They were not told whether their suggestions were accurate.

The teaching [Lesson 2]

Focus: Discussing a story from history and giving reasons for their opinions.

Using information to extract facts.

In pairs, the children read typed extracts from the story of the Great Fire and also extracts from Samuel Pepys' diary.

They discussed the events with their partners, then on their A4 sheets drew pictures of what they interpreted the information to mean.

Then each pair shared their information with the whole class to try and piece together the main events from their different sources. Finally they wrote down the facts they had learnt about the fire.

The teaching [Lesson 3]

Focus: Describing key features of houses and streets in the 17th century.

Giving reasons for the fire spreading and why and where people went to safety.

The children worked in mixed ability groups looking at pictures of 17th century houses and street scenes and discussing what they observed. These pictures came from topic books.

The children were encouraged to think about why the fire spread so quickly and to list the reasons for this, illustrated by drawings of 17th century houses.

We then discussed why and where people took refuge.

The teaching [Lesson 4]

Focus: Recalling events.

Retelling the story of the Great Fire of London using a newspaper report style.

The whole class listened as I told them the full story of the Great Fire of London. Together we discussed the main events.

We also discussed how to write in a report style, and the children came up with appropriate phrases. I reminded them that they were to pretend to be reporters from the 17th century.

The children then wrote their newspaper reports.

Learning outcomes

The children were able to:

- use inquiry skills to gain information from photographs and written text
- offer opinions and suggestions about why things happened
- describe key features of 17th century houses
- retell the story of the Great Fire of London in a report style.

Nuffield Primary History project

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