

The Great Fire of London Story Sheet

1. The Great Fire of London, which destroyed four fifths of medieval London, started on Sunday 2 September 1666. In the early hours of the morning, Thomas Farrinor, the king's baker, was awakened by his maid: the bakery downstairs on Pudding Lane was on fire!



3. However the fire spread quickly due to a number of factors:
The weather – it was a very hot and dry summer so the area was parched.
There was a strong wind.
The buildings were built very close together and were made from timber making them convenient fuel for the fire.

2. Due to the early hour, few people were awake. At first the Lord Mayor dismissed the fire and **Samuel Pepys** wrote:

'I thought it far off, and so went to bed and to sleep.'

4. By Tuesday, 4th September, the fire had reached St. Paul's Cathedral. Booksellers whose businesses were near to the Cathedral had put their books inside the crypt believing that it would be safe inside the stone building. It was not.



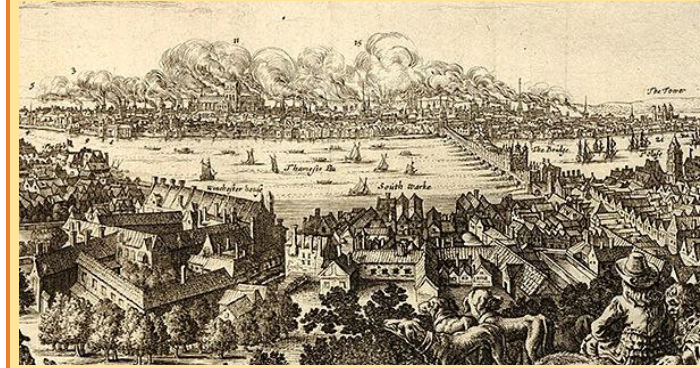
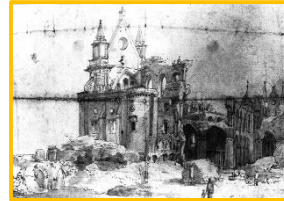
5. Diarist **John Evelyn** wrote that *'the stones of St. Paul's flew like granados'* as they exploded in the intense heat of the flames.



6. The lead roof melted and flowed down Ludgate Hill, and monuments to the dead buried in the crypt were destroyed. Only one statue remained virtually untouched by the flames: that of the poet and former Dean of the Cathedral, **John Donne**.



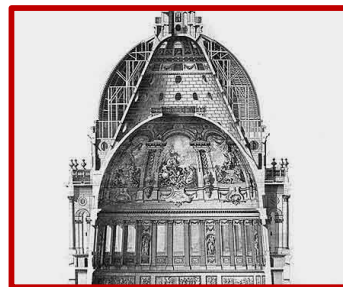
7. By Wednesday evening the wind had dropped, and on Thursday the fire was finally out and the people of London could survey the damage. St Paul's Cathedral was a ruin, along with eighty-seven churches, thirteen thousand houses and many prestigious buildings.



8. King Charles II asked **Sir Christopher Wren** to help rebuild London after the fire including designing the new St. Paul's Cathedral. He wanted to build

a modern Cathedral, which would be beautiful, strong, and useful, and which would bring hope to all Londoners.

9. The dome of St Paul's Cathedral would rise out of the ashes of the Great Fire of London just like a phoenix. It would be a symbol of **resilience**, and **hope**, and of **resurrection**.



10. Wren designed and built this new modern St Paul's in 35 years, completing it in 1710. It still sits at the heart of London today.

