

London is burning, 1666

Two accounts of one fire. Ask who made each, when and why.



NAME _____ CLASS _____ DATE _____

LEARNING GOAL

I can judge how useful a source is by weighing what it says against who made it, when and why.

SUCCESS CRITERIA

- ☐ I can describe the origin and purpose of a source.
- ☐ I can use my own knowledge to test what a source says.
- ☐ I can explain a strength **and** a limitation, not just call a source biased.

ENQUIRY QUESTION

How useful are Sources A and B for finding out how well the fire was handled by those in charge?

A

PRIVATE DIARY

Lord's Day, 2nd September 1666

Jane called us up about three in the morning, to tell us of a great fire they saw in the City. I thought it far enough off, and so went to bed again.

Later I saw from the Tower the end of the bridge all on fire. Everybody was flinging their goods into the river or into boats. Nobody, as far as I could see, was trying to put it out.

I went by water to Whitehall and told the King and the Duke of York what I had seen: that unless His Majesty commanded houses to be pulled down, nothing could stop the fire. The King ordered me to tell the Lord Mayor to spare no houses. I found the Lord Mayor in Cannon Street, worn out. He cried, "Lord, what can I do? People will not obey me. I have been pulling down houses, but the fire overtakes us faster than we can do it."

Who: Samuel Pepys, a senior Navy Office official. **When:** 2 September 1666. **Type:** private diary in shorthand, first published in 1825.

Adapted: shortened, spelling modernised.

B

OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER

The London Gazette

PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY

3 TO 10 SEPTEMBER 1666

Whitehall, September 8.

On the second of this month, about one o'clock in the morning, a sad and deplorable fire broke out in a baker's house in Pudding Lane, near Fish Street. Starting at that hour of the night, in a part of town so closely built with wooden houses, it spread far before day, and a violent east wind drove it on.

His Majesty and His Royal Highness the Duke of

York, by their personal presence and labour, gave orders and encouraged the people, and by the favour of God the fire was at last stopped.

Several strangers, Dutch and French, were arrested during the fire on suspicion of starting it. Yet nothing has been found to argue it to be other than **the hand of God** upon us, a great wind, and the season so very dry.

Who: the government's official newspaper. **When:** the week after the fire. **Type:** printed public report, approved by royal officials.

Adapted: shortened, spelling modernised.

CONTEXT TO USE

- Fire starts in Pudding Lane, Sunday 2 September 1666; burns for about four days.
- England is at war with the Dutch and French; rumours blame foreigners and Catholics.
- Over 13,000 houses, 87 parish churches and St Paul's Cathedral are destroyed.
- Charles II has been king for only six years, after the Civil War and the Plague of 1665.

Question the sources

**1 Interrogate each source** Work across each row. Row 1 is started for you.

12 marks

ASK	A PEPYS'S DIARY	B LONDON GAZETTE
Origin <i>Who, when, type?</i>	<i>An eyewitness diary written by Samuel Pepys on the day the fire began, kept private.</i>	
Purpose <i>Why made? For whom?</i>		
Content <i>What does it say about leaders?</i>		
Context <i>Does my knowledge fit?</i>		
+ Value <i>What can it show?</i>		
-Limits <i>What can it not show?</i>		

2 How far do the sources agree?

4 marks

= BOTH SOURCES SAY

≠ THEY DIFFER BECAUSE

3 Your verdict

4 marks

Write A and B on the scale for the enquiry question.

JUSTIFY: THE MORE USEFUL SOURCE IS ... BECAUSE ...



EXAM-STYLE STARTERS

Source A is useful because, as an eyewitness, ...

The purpose of Source B was to ..., so ...

This fits my knowledge that ...

However, it cannot tell us ...

Even though it is one-sided, it shows ...



GO FURTHER

Why might the government blame *the hand of God*, and what does that choice tell a historian?