



THE GREAT FIRE OF LONDON AT KS1

Approach 4

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

Tara attended a Nuffield Primary History and Literacy in-service course in Sunderland, and decided to combine literacy with history using Nuffield approaches. The topic with her Year 2 class was the Great Fire of London. Ofsted was due to visit during the term.

Tara's teaching, over four lessons, is a terrific example of both historical and literacy learning, with the history providing challenging texts (visual and written) to extend the children's literacy. It illustrates perfectly how history can be incorporated into the literacy hour to meet literacy objectives, as well as those for history.

The Ofsted inspectors were impressed!

Year group/class and Teaching time

Year 2, mixed ability and gender, 30 in the class. Four lessons each about one hour.

Learning objectives

History: for the children to:

- learn key facts about the Great Fire and place it within a chronological framework
- understand why the Fire spread so far and for so long
- understand what it would have been like to have been in London during the Fire
- develop research skills.

Literacy: for the children to:

- read challenging texts and identify key information in them
- consolidate work on nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs
- be able to write descriptively about the Great Fire of London.

Key questions

What happened?

When did it happen?

Where did it happen?

Resources

Photographs of present-day London

Sign: 1666, and a set of footprints – for time travel

The London Gazette, September 3–10, 1666: 15 copies (title and very short extract, to introduce the evidence). The relevant issue of the London Gazette is available at: www.exmsft.com/~davidco/History/fire1.htm

Evidence cards containing information selected from the original long *London Gazette* article, differentiated by content and length – 15 sets. (You'd need to produce your own evidence cards, using the London Gazette as a source, and differentiate them to suit the abilities of the children in your class.)

OHT or whiteboard image: picture of the Great Fire. Available via Google images, also in the comprehensive Wikipedia entry for the Great Fire of London.

The following sources are supplied with these teachers' notes:

Resource 1 Short chronological account of the Fire, 15 copies

OHT or whiteboard image of short chronological account of the Fire

Resource 2 Word web, 15 copies

OHT or whiteboard image of word web

Resource 3 Writing frames differentiated according to ability – one per child

OHT or whiteboard image of writing frame

Red, green and blue pens, 15 sets

Note: at the time I did not have a whiteboard in my classroom, so used transparencies (OHTs) on an overhead projector.

The teaching [Lesson 1]

Episode 1

Focus: Identifying present-day London from photographs.

As a class, we looked at a selection of photographs of London today. I asked the children if they recognised any of the photos. Slowly, photo by photo, we pieced the evidence together to identify the mystery city as London.

I explained to the class that they were going to find out about an event that happened in the city around 350 years ago. We would go back in time to be history detectives to try and find out what the event was.

Episode 2

Focus: Going back in time; providing a chronological framework.

To give the children some idea of ‘350 years’, we went out to the courtyard, then stepped through time by following the footprints I’d laid down. There was one step for every 10 years. We stopped to discuss key events and dates, such as Mrs Alderson was born here; this is the time of the Victorians. Eventually we arrived back at the classroom, which had the sign ‘1666’ on the door.

Episode 3

Focus: Posing key questions; scanning a short text for information.

I showed the class the heading and short extract from the *London Gazette*, dated 1666, and explained that they were going to use this piece of evidence about the mystery event to find out three things:

What happened?

Where did it happen?

When did it happen?

I demonstrated how to use three different coloured pens to text-mark information which would help answer the questions. The children were intrigued and excited by the ‘olden day’ writing and spelling.

In mixed-ability pairs the children searched and marked the text.

Episode 4

Focus: Plenary – sharing findings.

For the last 10 minutes, we came back together as a class and discussed what facts/evidence the children had managed to find out. From all the contributions we built up a broad introduction to the topic, knowing that a fire broke out in the City of London during the month of September 1666, and that it lasted for longer than one day.

The teaching [Lesson 2]

Episode 1

Focus: Review and recall; using a picture as evidence and text.

We began by reviewing what the children remembered from the previous lesson about the Fire.

Then I explained that the children were going to see an OHT of a painting, but that they would only see it for a few seconds, so they must look very carefully. They were to look for nouns.

I put the picture on the OHP for a few seconds, then asked individual children to share what they saw (Fire, bridge, buildings, etc.). I asked: What do you think the painting is of?

The children of course were certain it was of the Fire of London. I asked for their evidence, and they did well in coming up with, for example: There is a fire; there is a bridge that could be London Bridge; the river could be the Thames.

I showed the painting again, and collected nouns, modelling how to record them on a word web.

Episode 2

Focus: The painting – close observation and recording; posing questions.

In the same mixed-ability pairs as in Lesson 1, the children looked at their own copies of the painting and identified as many nouns as they could. They recorded them on the word web as modelled. This took just over 5 minutes, then the pairs shared their collections of nouns, and we added them to the class web.

Now I asked the pairs to generate questions about the Great Fire – what would they like to find out about it? After discussing their questions, each pair was to choose their best two questions to write down. I stressed that the best questions may not be the first they came up with.

After the pairs had written their questions, I asked each pair to volunteer just one question, which I recorded on a ‘What we want to find out’ list.

Episode 3

Focus: Searching for evidence to answer questions.

With the children still in their pairs, I gave out the evidence cards, differentiated according to ability. With their partners the children read the cards, underlining information they found that answered any of the questions on the class list.

Episode 4

Focus: Plenary – pooling and recording findings.

As a class, we now shared the children’s findings. Each answer they came up with we wrote down next to the corresponding question on the class list.

Finally, we reviewed everything the children had found out. We also discussed questions they were – and still are – unable to answer. We also discussed facts they had discovered in addition to those that answered their questions.

The teaching [Lesson 3]

Episode 1

Focus: History – reviewing knowledge; literacy – reading; identifying nouns.

We began the lesson by revising what the class knew about the Great Fire.

Then we moved to a literacy focus. I put up the OHT containing the short chronological account of the Fire, and we read it together, identifying unknown vocabulary. I recapped what a noun is, and we reread the first few lines of the text, with me modelling how to highlight nouns by text marking. I gave out the copies of the short chronological account, and in their pairs the children worked on the text, text-marking nouns with red pens as modelled (about 5 minutes).

We shared the children's noun collection and discussed misconceptions.

Episode 2

Focus: Literacy – identifying verbs.

We now moved onto verbs, with me repeating the review and modelling activities I had done for nouns, and the children text-marking verbs, this time using blue pens.

Again we shared the verbs the class had identified, and discussed strong verbs such as 'smouldering', noting where the verb was used in a descriptive way, as in 'smouldering sparks'.

Episode 3

Focus: Literacy – identifying adjectives and adverbs.

We repeated the same pattern as before with adjectives and adverbs. This time I demonstrated how to record interesting adjectives and adverbs on the blank word web.

The pairs then spent 10 minutes reading the text and recording onto their word webs.

Episode 4

Focus: Plenary – reviewing and recording knowledge.

At the plenary we reviewed the children's knowledge of nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. Together each pair now chose and discussed their two favourite describing words. We pooled their words, adding them to the class word web.

For the final five minutes we moved back to history, discussing additional things they had discovered about the Fire from the chronological text. We added their findings to the class list of questions and answers.

The teaching [Lesson 4]

Episode 1

Focus: Words and the historical imagination – using the senses.

As usual, we began with a review of what we had learned in previous lessons, discussing the class collection of nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs.

Now I asked the children to imagine themselves back in 1666, and to think about what they would see, hear, smell and touch if they were at the scene of the Fire. We discussed ideas, e.g. see burning buildings, hear people screaming.

I wrote a sentence on the OHT and asked the class how it could be improved, perhaps by using stronger verbs or adjectives. Taking on board some of their suggestions, I modelled how to write an extended descriptive sentence, using and building upon their collection of words, and their knowledge about the Fire. I also focused on the use of commas in descriptive lists.

Episode 2

Focus: Using sentence frames to demonstrate learning in both literacy and history.

Working individually now, the children used their collection of words to write descriptive sentences about what they would see, hear, smell and touch at the scene of the Fire. For this they used the sentence frames, differentiated by the number of sentences each child was expected to write.

Episode 3

Focus: Plenary – sharing and discussing own learning.

The children shared examples of their best sentences, and offered suggestions about how they could improve upon their own, and each other's, work.

Learning outcomes

I was thrilled by how much the children had learnt. At the end of the four lessons, they had:

- learnt key facts about the Great Fire and placed it within a chronological framework
- understood why the Fire spread so far and for so long
- understood what it would have been like to have been in London during the Fire
- developed research skills
- read challenging texts and identified key information in them
- consolidated work on nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs
- written descriptively about the Great Fire of London.

Nuffield Primary History project

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