



THE PLAGUE AND GREAT FIRE OF LONDON

Key Vocabulary	
BILL OF MORTALITY - A weekly list of the causes of death in a particular place.	BUBONIC - One type of plague, named after one of its symptoms - buboes or boils
SYMPTOMS - Signs of illness or disease	SEARCHERS - People who looked for dead bodies or plague victims.

Key Knowledge

- The Black Death killed many people in the 1340s and 1350s. In 1665, another plague outbreak arrived in England. This is often referred to as the 'Great Plague.'
- During the outbreak of 1665 - 1666, 68,596 deaths were recorded in London alone, while thousands more across the country died from the plague.
- The government took some action to limit the spread of plague, though there was still little understanding of how people caught the disease.
- The plague killed people at an incredible rate and victims usually died within days of catching the disease.
- Symptoms included headaches, fever, vomiting, painful swellings on the neck, armpits and groin (known as buboes) blisters, bruises and coughing up blood.
- There was no cure for the plague. People were left in their homes and a large red cross was painted onto the door to warn others that those inside were infected. 'God have mercy on us' was also written on the door.
- Some doctors believe that bad poisonous air was the cause of the plague, infecting anyone who breathed it.
- People did not understand that the plague was a disease found in black rats.
- The disease was spread by fleas who would bite the rats and become infected, and the infected fleas would then spread the disease to humans.
- Rats thrived in towns and cities, especially London, due to the poor living conditions.



What brought the outbreak to an end?
 Many people believe that the Great Fire of London brought the plague epidemic to an end. However, historians have found that case numbers had already dropped significantly by the time of the fire. It is more likely that the cold winter of 1665 - 1666 was responsible for killing off rats, which reduced the number of plague cases.



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Key Vocabulary

Flammable - when something burns easily.

Firebreak - a gap that stops a fire spreading to nearby buildings.

Fire hooks - a giant hook used to pull down houses.

Pudding Lane - the street where the fire started.

Key Knowledge

- The Great Fire of London started at around 1am on **Sunday 2 September 1666**. The fire raged for four days straight, until **Thursday 6 September 1666**.
- The fire started in the home of a baker named Thomas Farynor (Farriner), located on London's Pudding Lane. Thomas King Charles II's baker.
- It's thought the fire started when a spark fell out of the oven after the family had gone to bed. However, Thomas denied this theory until the day he died, claiming his oven was put out properly.
- In 17th century London, not only were buildings made from wood and straw, but they stood very close together, making it easy for fire to spread. Plus, warehouses around Pudding Lane contained flammable materials such as oil and rope which soon caught alight, fuelling the flames. The long, dry summer that year didn't help the situation much either.
- Rather than fight the fire, people's first reaction was to get away from the raging flames as quickly as possible - and who could blame them?! In a state of panic, they collected all the belongings they could carry and fled. Some sprinted to the hills, while others fled to the River Thames, where they boarded boats.
- Back then, there was no fire brigade in London, which meant it was up to local soldiers as well as regular Londoners to fight the fire. They did the best they could with the limited equipment they had - leather buckets filled with water and water squirts.
- They also used metal hooks to pull down buildings and create open spaces so the fire couldn't spread. But strong winds meant the fire crossed these "**fire breaks**", and continued its course of chaos....
- It wasn't until the third night of the blaze, Tuesday 4 September, that the fire was brought under control. Instead of tearing buildings down, the Navy was called upon to blow them up with gunpowder, creating larger fire breaks.
- The wind had finally started to die down, too, which helped to stop the flames from spreading. More buildings were destroyed the following day, and by Thursday the fire was extinguished.



A third of the city had been destroyed - an area the size of around 280 football pitches! About **13,200 houses** and **87 churches** were burned to the ground, as well as famous buildings such as **St Paul's Cathedral** and **The Royal Exchange**. Surprisingly, only six official deaths were recorded...but the actual figure is likely to be much higher.



Map of the City of London - the orange part was the part destroyed by fire. The arrow is the site of Pudding Lane

Key concepts: Knowledge and Understanding - Cause and effect - Significance - Evidence - Sources