

Reading Comprehension Worksheet: Analyze Multiple Accounts

Read the short story and answer each question.



The Great Fire of London: Two Accounts of a Disaster

Text 1: From the Diary of Samuel Pepys - September 1666

I awoke just after midnight to the smell of smoke and the orange glow in the sky. The fire had started in a bakery on Pudding Lane, and by dawn it had leapt from house to house. I climbed upon the roof of my house and saw flames racing across the city.

People rushed through the streets with their belongings. I saw men digging up cobblestones and pulling down buildings to stop the fire's path. The air was thick with smoke. I buried my cheese and wine in the garden to save them, unsure what else might burn.

I shall never forget the sight of St. Paul's Cathedral in flames, or the sound of bells melting in the heat.

Text 2: Historical Summary - *Disasters That Changed Cities*

The Great Fire of London broke out on September 2, 1666, in a bakery on Pudding Lane. Fueled by strong winds and dry wooden houses, the fire raged for four days and destroyed over 13,000 homes and 87 churches.

Despite the damage, the fire led to positive changes. Afterward, the city was rebuilt with stone buildings and wider streets to prevent future disasters. London's fire safety rules and building regulations were greatly improved. One of the most famous witnesses to the fire was Samuel Pepys, whose diary provides vivid details of what the city experienced.



Name: _____

The Great Fire of London: Two Accounts of a Disaster

1. What makes the two texts different from each other?

- A. One is a personal, emotional diary entry, and the other is a factual, historical summary.
- B. One describes the fire in Paris, and the other describes a storm.
- C. Both are written as poems about disaster.
- D. Both tell only what happened after the fire ended.

2. How do the two authors present the Great Fire of London?

- A. Pepys describes it from a first-person view as it happened, while the second author explains its causes and effects.
- B. Both authors give scientific facts about fire.
- C. They both describe how to build a fireproof home.
- D. The diary is fictional, while the other is completely made up.

3. Fill in the blank:

The historical account explains the fire's long-term effects, while the diary describes the _____ as it unfolded.

4. How does reading both a personal account and a historical summary help you better understand the Great Fire of London?

5. What is one detail from each account that gives you a unique view of the disaster?



Parent and Teacher Guide

Guide Reading Level: V

Lexile Level: 950L–1100L

Grade Level: 5th Grade, End of the Year

Genre: Informational – History / Personal Narrative

Introducing the Text

“In this text set, students read two different accounts of the Great Fire of London—one from a personal diary written during the fire, and one from a historical summary written centuries later. They will compare the points of view, tone, and focus of each.”

Vocabulary: diary, eyewitness, cathedral, disaster, rebuild

Before Reading Discussion Questions

1. What do you already know about fires in cities or disasters in history?
 2. How might someone who witnessed a fire describe it differently than someone writing about it later?
 3. What kind of feelings or facts might each person focus on?
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During Reading Discussion Questions

1. What emotions does Pepys describe in his diary?
 2. What details does the historical summary include that the diary does not?
 3. How does each text describe the causes or results of the fire?
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After Reading Discussion Questions

1. What are the major differences in the way the two texts describe the fire?
 2. How does reading both texts help you see the event more clearly?
 3. Which text helped you feel more connected to the event—and why?
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Activity Idea

Have students create a two-column chart. In one column, list **facts from the historical text**. In the other, list **sensory or emotional details from the diary**. Then write a paragraph comparing the two types of information and how each adds value to understanding the event.

