

## THE GREAT FIRE OF LONDON 1666 – An introductory drama for Yr2

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### YOU WILL NEED

- A list of the names of some of the real occupants of Pudding Lane before the fire + their jobs, e.g. Thomas Farrinor- Baker/ William Walter – blacksmith / John Wardley – clothmaker / Thomas Knight – glass maker/ William Burgess – hook & eye maker / John Bibie – turner/carpenter / William Burgess – plasterer.
- A simple street plan of Pudding Lane and a few surrounding streets.
- Information- video, paintings, images etc about the Fire and About Samuel Pepys and his diary
- A hall or cleared space for some of the drama activities.
- A plain scarf as a sign of role.
- A4 cards and Postits.

### Preparation for the drama in the classroom

- **THE CONTRACT:** Ask the children if, when the drama starts, they will pretend to be grown up people living a long time ago in London in 1666. The street they live on is called Pudding Lane. Show them the plan of the street and indicate 1666 on a class timeline if one is in use.
- **Preparing for the roles:** Talk briefly about London and show images etc of what their houses and their street would have looked like at that time and what they would be wearing etc.
- Explain the kind of jobs they will have and what they involve. You will need enough jobs for children to work in small groups (choose easily identifiable jobs for Yr1) e.g. bakers, glass makers, weavers, carpenters, plasterers, hook& eye makers. Identify a couple of simple tasks that each would do every day e.g. Bakers need to light the oven and weigh out flour from the sacks.
- Allocate groups to each occupation and give them a family name from the real inhabitants. You may want to suggest first names for them (omit the names for Yr 1 if it is too confusing- just call them by their jobs).
- Ask the children to make role cards for themselves with a picture of them at work and a simple sentence about what they do first thing in the morning: *My name is .. My job is... In the morning I...Here is a picture of what I do... .*
- Make two signs for each occupation – One large one on a folded up A4 card to go over the back of a chair in the drama and another on a Postit.
- Look at the plan of Pudding Lane. Give each family a house on the street by placing their Postit sign on one of the houses.

### THE DRAMA – in a hall or cleared space.

- Place one chair per family around the hall and place one A4 sign on the back of each to indicate their house. Ask each group to sit on the floor in front of their chair.
- **Define the space.** Walk round the edge of the space where the drama will take place and mention any areas that are not in the drama, like wall bars, a piano etc. Ask them to pretend that the space around their chair is where they live and work. But they may need to visit other houses to get things they need like bread from the bakers, or wood from the carpenters etc.
- Explain that the drama will start first thing in the morning when they carry out their first jobs. Make it clear that, although they can talk to each other, they will need to mime the jobs. Demonstrate/ suggest mimes for a couple of jobs and then give groups a few minutes to talk about how and where they will mime their jobs.
- **Teacher in role** – Explain that you would like to be someone who lives in the street called Widow/ Widower Grimes. She/he has hens and will come round exchanging things for eggs. Explain that you will only be that person when you are wearing a scarf.

### Dramatic play/occupational mime

- Ask each group to make a freeze frame of when they are just about to start their work. Ask them to do this a few groups at a time to make sure they understand the freeze idea. When everyone is ready, use the word *Action* to make the street come alive but make it clear they must stop when you say *Freeze*.
- Put on the scarf and visit each group to ask for something in exchange for eggs. Use this to build belief in the drama and encourage those who need it. Let this drama run for a long as the children are engaged but try to visit all groups. Most children will carry out the mimes and the drama will work well but if any children struggle, then give them a job helping you with something or take off the scarf and talk to them privately out of role.
- Stop the drama with a *Freeze* and ask the groups to return to sit in front of their chair signs. Ask half the class to return to their original freeze positions and on the word *Action* come to life again to show the other half what they were doing. Run this for a very short time only. Then ask those watching if they can guess what jobs the people were doing. Repeat with the other half.
- **Spotlighting** Explain that we would like to create a more detailed picture of life in Pudding Lane in 1666. Give the children a few minutes to talk in their groups to decide what a passer-by might notice – see, smell and hear, when they walk past their house. Each child must think of a suitable word or phrase. Give a few examples for each job – passing the bakers they might smell bread, feel heat from the ovens, hear the dough slapped on the tables etc. ( Yr 1 may want to discuss this as a whole class )
- Explain that, in role as Widow/widower Grimes, you will walk down Pudding Lane and stop briefly by each house. As you stop each child must say a word or phrase describing what the widow/widower might see hear or smell. (Yr1 You may want to select more confident children to do this or say what you can see, hear, smell yourself as you go round, based on what they have just discussed). Use the scarf to take on the role and walk around the groups.

### Writing in the classroom

- Children write a short diary entry about their day at work based on the drama (or sentences with pictures about Our Life in Pudding Lane).
- Children write descriptions of where they live on Pudding Lane – in 3 sentences: I can hear...I can see... I can smell... Then add a drawing. Children read out their descriptions if appropriate.

### DRAMA in the classroom

- Place a chair in the middle of the space and ask the children to sit around you so they can see you.
- Tell them that Widow/widower Grimes was lucky enough to have been taught to read and write and wrote a diary every night. Ask them to pretend you are that person again when wearing the scarf but tell them you will be reading them something important from their diary.

**Read something similar to the following but keep it fairly short.**

*Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> September.*

*I woke in the middle of the night. Something wasn't right. It was supposed to be dark but there was a sort of orange glow coming from the window. When I looked out I saw flames leaping out of the window of the bakery down the street. Then I heard the fire crackling and roaring and I could hear the baker's family crying 'Help Help'. The night watchman came along the street and shouting 'London's burning, London's burning'. The fire was spreading all along Pudding Lane. I ran downstairs, took my diary and anything else I could carry and ran away as fast as I could. Lots of other people were running towards the river to get away from the heat. I don't know where I will sleep tomorrow night as the fire has burnt all the houses around Pudding Lane and even further and it is still burning.*

- Take off the scarf and come out of role. Talk about what might have happened and how the fire may have started. Tell them that this event really happened and was called The Great Fire of London. Talk about where the fire started in Pudding Lane and the reasons it spread so quickly. Explain that your diary entry was made up, but it was similar to a real one by an eye witness Samuel Pepys. Explain what an eye witness account is and how eye witnesses' diaries can help us find out what happened in the past.  
Talk about how they had to fight fires in 1666 with buckets of water as there was no fire brigade etc. Tell them about how Samuel Pepys went to see King Charles 2<sup>nd</sup> to ask for help to pull houses down so the fire wouldn't spread. Discuss what they may have tried to save and who they would have rescued. Reflect on how they might feel about this event if they were the people living on Pudding Lane.

#### **Further Information – the facts from eye witnesses and other evidence**

- How do we know about this? Provide further information/ video extracts etc on the Great Fire of London and Samuel Pepys' diary.
- Option - children write a diary entry as an eye witness to the fire.

#### **Reflection**

- Ask – 'How did you feel in the drama when you realised Pudding Lane had caught fire?'
- 'Are there any big fires today? How do we tackle them today?'
- Talk about fire safety in the home and outside etc