

Source Analysis Skills

Using content, origin, purpose and context to evaluate sources on the Great Fire of London.

Name _____ Date _____ Class _____

Learning objective: I can analyse sources using content, origin, purpose and context, and judge how useful they are.

✓ I can use COPPC ✓ I can judge reliability ✓ I can compare sources

Use **COPPC**: **C**ontent – what does it say? **O**origin – who made it and when? **P**urpose – why? **C**ontext – what was happening? **C**onclusion – what is it useful for?

Source A: the diary of Samuel Pepys, 2 September 1666

Some of our maids sitting up late last night to get things ready against our feast today, Jane called us up about three in the morning, to tell us of a great fire they saw in the City. So I rose and slipped on my nightgown, and went to her window, and thought it to be on the back side of Mark Lane at the farthest; but, being unused to such fires as followed, I thought it far enough off; and so went to bed again and to sleep.

Samuel Pepys was a government official at the Navy Office who kept a private diary from 1660 to 1669. Extract; spelling modernised.

1 Analyse Source A

1 **Content:** What does Source A tell us about how the Great Fire began to be noticed? [2 marks]

2 **Origin:** Who wrote it and when? Why does this matter? [2 marks]

3 **Purpose:** Pepys wrote a private diary. Does this make it more or less reliable? Explain. [2 marks]

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Source B: an imagined letter from a London baker, 1666

The flames came down Pudding Lane so fast that we saved nothing but our lives and the bread in our arms. Some say the fire was started by foreigners, but I believe it was an accident. The houses are built of wood and so close together that the fire leapt from roof to roof.

This source was written for The Teacher Vault to practise source skills. It is not a real historical document.

2 Compare the sources

- 4 Give **one** way Source B agrees with what you know about the Great Fire. [2 marks]

- 5 Source B mentions rumours about foreigners. What does this reveal about attitudes in 1666? [2 marks]

- 6 Which source is more useful for finding out how people **first reacted** to the fire? Explain, using content and origin. [3 marks]

- 7 Name **two** other types of source a historian could use to study the Great Fire. [2 marks]

3 Evaluate

How useful is Source A for an enquiry into the Great Fire of London? Use the content, origin and your own knowledge. [6 marks]

Answer Key

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Question	Answers
1 Analyse Source A	1. It was seen at about 3 a.m. by servants who were up late; Pepys thought it was far away and went back to bed – people did not realise how serious it was at first. 2. Samuel Pepys, on the day the fire began (2 September 1666); an eyewitness writing at the time, so it gives first-hand detail. 3. Possibly more reliable – he was not trying to persuade a public audience; but it shows only his own view and what he saw in one part of London.
2 Compare the sources	4. It started near Pudding Lane in a bakery area; wooden houses built close together helped it spread. 5. People looked for someone to blame; there was suspicion of foreigners and Catholics (England was at war with the Dutch and French). 6. Source A – a real eyewitness diary written that day, showing that even an official thought it was not serious at first; Source B is invented and describes a later stage. 7. Any two: other diaries (e.g. John Evelyn), paintings/maps of London, official records/the London Gazette, the Monument inscription, archaeological evidence.
3 Evaluate	Look for: • Content: first-hand detail of the start and how little concern there was at first • Origin: eyewitness, written the same day by an educated official – but only one viewpoint, early stage only • Own knowledge: the fire burned for about four days and destroyed much of the City; a judgement on usefulness

Teaching note: Source A is a short extract from Pepys's diary, which is out of copyright; spelling has been modernised. Source B is clearly labelled as imagined. Usefulness depends on the question being asked.