

Weekly Concept Witnesses



Essential Question

How do we learn about historical events?



Go Digital!



GATEWAYS ^{TO} — HISTORY —

Everyone asks about my hat. But that's good. I can use my tricorne to begin telling them about life in eighteenth-century Philadelphia.

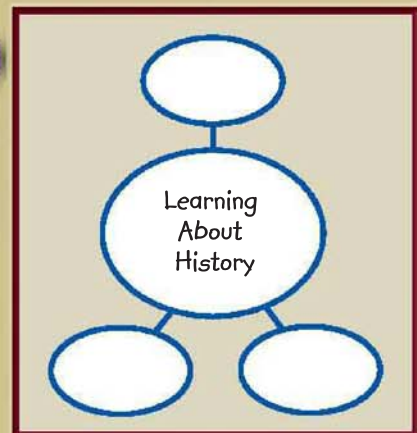
- ▶ "The tricorne's shape is very practical," I say. "The upturned brims act like gutters to channel rain water. So my head stays dry!"
- ▶ Soon they're asking me about the rest of my gear. Before they realize it, they're learning all about militias during the crucial years of the War of Independence.

Making history come alive for people is what makes being a reenactor so much fun.

Talk About It



Write words you have learned about understanding history. Then talk with a partner about a time you learned about the past in a unique or unexpected way.



Vocabulary

Use the picture and the sentences to talk with a partner about each word.



agitated

The customers became **agitated** when the line took too long to move.

Describe a situation that makes you agitated.



crucial

Getting enough sleep is a **crucial** part of a healthy lifestyle.

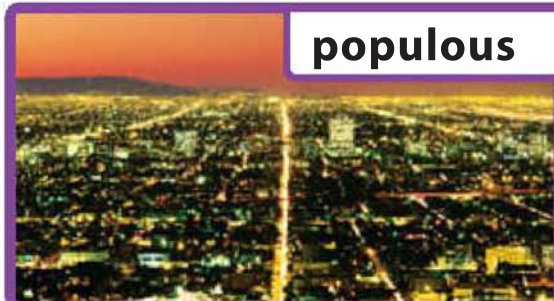
What other habits are crucial to staying healthy?



futile

It was **futile** to try moving the boulder, which was simply too heavy.

What is an antonym of futile?



populous

With more than 37 million residents, California is the most **populous** state.

Which U.S. cities are very populous?



presumed

Since they had arrived early to the ticket line, Jess **presumed** they would get a seat.

How are the meanings of presumed and concluded related?



smoldering

The **smoldering** coals in the barbecue were still giving off a lot of heat.

What else could you describe as smoldering?



undiminished

Despite the threat of rain, their hopes for having fun at the picnic were **undiminished**.

What is a synonym for undiminished?



urgency

Lifeguards learn to respond with **urgency** to swimmers who are in trouble.

Describe a time when you did something with urgency.

Your Turn

COLLABORATE



Pick three words. Write three questions for your partner to answer.

Go Digital! Use the online visual glossary



THE GREAT FIRE OF LONDON



Essential Question

How do we learn about historical events?

Read how a fire that nearly destroyed the city of London in 1666 was recorded for history by those who witnessed the event.



London in 1666

London was by far the most **populous** city in England in 1666. And it was growing fast. Nearly 500,000 people crowded into its wooden buildings, some of which were hundreds of years old. The top floors of many houses overhung the narrow streets. Most had roofs waterproofed with tar pitch. Storerooms were brimming with flammable goods, such as oil and tallow for producing soap and candles. Open-hearth fires burned day and night for cooking, making pottery and metal goods, and providing heat.

Accidental fires were common. Some people feared that fire would someday destroy London. "Forewarned is forearmed," they said, hoping the government would take action to improve safety. Many Londoners, however, were more worried about the plague, a dreadful sickness that had killed nearly 68,000 people during the previous two years. But the summer of 1666 had been unusually hot and dry, so a single spark was all that was needed to cause disaster.

A seventeenth-century painting depicts the Great Fire of London, 1666

Fire Erupts

The spark occurred early on Sunday morning, September 2. Officially, the fire was **presumed** to have started in the King's bakery on Pudding Street. The baker later claimed that he had checked every room before going to bed at midnight and had diligently "raked up in embers" a fire he found in one fireplace.

Samuel Pepys, a Royal Navy administrator living in London, recorded his observations of the fire in a diary. He wrote that the baker's family had woken up choking on smoke rising from downstairs. He noted they were "in absolute ignorance how this fire should come." A strong wind then fanned the flames, sending sparks from the bakery to ignite other buildings. Fire quickly spread to surrounding streets.

In the 1600s, London had no fire department. People began throwing water on the fire from leather buckets and beat it with brooms, but these efforts were a case of "too little too late." The flames soon reached the banks of the River Thames, burning



**St. Paul's Cathedral in flames (above);
a fire syringe used to spray water (left)**

warehouses and half of London Bridge. Pepys went to the river and “there saw a lamentable fire.” He described people flinging goods into the water and leaping into boats to try to escape the flames. Others pulled heavily laden carts with great **urgency** to save the few belongings they could.

London Is Burning

Pepys alerted King Charles II, who sent him to the Lord Mayor with the command to pull down houses to create a firebreak. The greatly **agitated** mayor told Pepys he had already directed men to do just what the king ordered, but their

efforts had been **futile**. He said the fire “overtakes us faster than we can do it.” Wind spread the fire across firebreaks as wide as 20 houses. Sparks even ignited the rubble from torn-down houses, so flames were soon sent in new directions. Panic enveloped the city.

John Evelyn, a well-known writer who also kept a diary about the fire, described fighting the flames on Fetter Lane. The ground under his feet was so hot, he noted, that it “even burnt the soles of my shoes.” When the fire reached St. Paul’s Cathedral, Evelyn documented how the heat melted the lead roof, causing molten metal to “run down the streets in a stream” and stones from the walls to explode outward.

The incessant fire raged **undiminished** for four days. The

London Gazette reported that “all attempts for quenching it however industriously pursued seemed insufficient.” Finally, **crucial** relief came when the fire reached a brick wall near a law school and the winds changed direction. But by that time, four-fifths of the city had become a **smoldering** ruin. In all, 13,200 houses, 87 churches, and many government buildings were destroyed. Although few deaths were recorded, thousands were homeless.

The City Rebuilds

After the fire, people wanted someone to blame. A French watchmaker named Robert Hubert became a scapegoat when he said he had set the fire. Few people believed Hubert’s confession. The Earl of Clarendon called him a “poor distracted wretch.” Still, he was

hanged. By 1667, Parliament had formally declared the fire an accident, as “nothing hath yet been found to argue it to have been other than . . . a great wind, and the season so very dry.”

Where there is life there is hope, and people began to rebuild while living in nearby fields. For safety, many new buildings were constructed of stone rather than wood. The need for businesses to recover quickly even took priority over King Charles’s plans for a new city design. People could also count their blessings that the fire had destroyed the city’s rats and their plague-infected fleas. The plague’s devastation was finally halted.



Make Connections

Talk about the ways in which personal and official records help us understand what happened during London’s Great Fire. **ESSENTIAL QUESTION**

Describe an event that you and others witnessed. Tell what each of your accounts added to the overall understanding of what happened. **TEXT TO SELF**