

Using the board game *Great Fire: London 1666* as a teaching aid for Primary School Children.

By Richard Denning 4th June 2012

Although this board game is intended as a game for children and adults of ages 12+ it could be very useful as a teaching aid for Primary School Children covering the Great Fire of London. Here are some notes for using the game in teaching children about the Great Fire of London.

Details about the game can be found: <http://www.medusagames.co.uk/>

Are you a teacher? Want to buy the game? I can offer a Special price for schools.

Email richard@medusagames.co.uk for details

Tracing the spread of the Fire

Open the box and lay the board on a table. Examine the board with the children, pointing out such locations as the Tower of London, London Bridge, St Pauls Cathedral (often called St Paul's Church then), the Royal Exchange and Guild Hall. You can also point out the old city walls and gates which dates back to Roman times, the rivers Fleet and Thames and London Bridge.

Optional: There are 120 Houses in the game. Assuming you are using the game with a class of 30 give each child 4 houses and ask them to put the houses all over the board. Put at least one house in every space. You might care to tell the children to put a house wherever the board has a small house symbol BUT this is not essential. As the fire spreads later the children can remove the houses to emphasize the destruction caused.

The Fire Breaks out on Sunday 2nd September

Look at the Red shaded area labelled Pudding Lane. Point out the actual location of the bakery as indicated by the little yellow symbol. The Fire started there. The Red Shaded area represents the area the fire spread to (more or less) on Sunday 2nd September 1666. You can talk about the fact that the Mayor of London failed to do much about the fire. Discuss the fact that had the fire been controlled at this point only a few hundred houses would have been lost NOT 13200!

The Fire spreads on Monday 3rd September

Now get out the red cones that we will use to represent the fire. Give out 15 and ask the children to put 1 in each of the following spaces:

Voyners Hall, Tallow Hall, Woodmongers Hall, Bread Street, St Nicholas, Baynard's Castle, S. Benett, S. Mary, Bridgeward, Candlewick Ward, Salters Hall, Royal Exchange and Cornhill, Phillpott Lane and Billingsgate.

This shows the spread on Monday (the 2nd day). As the children place the cones they can remove any house in the space - explain that two hundred houses just burnt down for each house they removed.

Ask the children: how does the area covered by the fire compare with the first day. Is a larger area now burnt?

Ask them which direction the fire is mostly spreading. (north and west). Point out that It has hardly moved east. Comment on the fact the fire has not crossed the Bridge even though that is very close to Pudding Lane.

Ask the children WHY they think this is the case. (It is connected to a strong wind blowing north west)

Talk about the Royal Exchange and Cornhill markets (and many other markets and trade halls) - and how their loss would have mean great damage to the wealth of London.

The Fire at its height: Tuesday 4th September

Get out another 25 of the red fire cones and hand these out around the class. Ask the children to place 1 in each of the following locations (removing any houses in the spaces as they do so).

St Dunstan and Tower Street (near the tower), put a cone in Peyps House but leave the House on.

Pause a moment and point out that the fire was getting near his house and that the diarist evacuated and sent all his valuables away but he was lucky and the fire never reached his house.

Continue to put down cones: Black Friars, Heralds Office, Watling Street, St Austins, Cheapside, Guild Hall, Coleman Street, Brewers Hall, Sion College, Wood Street, Aldersgate, St Annes, Libertine of St Martins.

Pause a moment and point at St Pauls Church (cathedral). You can discuss that it was a HUGE building and that the Londoners could not believe it would catch fire and so many put valuables into it. Even so at about 8pm on Tuesday even it caught fire.

Continue to put down cones: St Pauls, Stationers Hall, Christ Church Cloister,
Pause again and point at the old city walls. These were the Roman and later medieval walls. There was some hope that they would stop the fire. In some places they did but NOT in the west as you will now see.

Continue placing fire cones: New Gate, Fleet Lane, Ludgate.

Pause again and point at the River Fleet. In 1666 this was a thin sliver of water that carried refuse and rubbish into the Thames. Again it provided hope that it might stop the fire. However sparks simply flew through the air and the fire moved on.

Continue to put down cones: George Alley, Harpe Alley, Bridewell. Dorset House

Discussion

Talk with the children about how large an area the fire now covers. Ask them how many fire cones they placed on Tuesday compared with Monday (25 vs 15). Discuss how many houses they removed on Tuesday compared with Monday.

Tuesday was the hardest day of the fire. Yet it was also the day that the tide of battle turned.

Showing How the Fire was defeated.

Discuss what steps the authorities took to control the fire. You can talk about water, buckets chains and fire engines - none of which were very effective. You can also mention:

a) Pulling down houses. Tuesday was the day where Prince James and his troops began pulling down large numbers of houses. Show the children by asking them to take out the houses in:

The Temple, Farrington and Pie Corner in the west as well as Moorgate, Gresham College and Bishop gate in the north. Also point out the City wall in the North and the Grassed areas and how this created gaps and fire breaks that it would be hard for the fire to cross.

b) Gunpowder. If you have not done so stick the gunpowder stickers on the black disks. Give them to some children and ask them to place them in a line between the fire and the tower. Discuss how the soldiers rolled out barrels of gunpowder and blew up houses and so stopped the fire reaching the Tower. Talk about how blowing up houses created a barrier which saved the Tower.

Finally the wind fell on Tuesday night. Although on Wednesday the fires spread just a little further it was nothing compared to Tuesday and by Thursday the Great Fire of London considered under control.

Tell the children to count the houses they took off. They probably removed about 72 houses in all. Tell the children that each model house represents about 180 to 200 real houses, a parish church and maybe five trade halls all destroyed in the fire (there were over 13000 houses 87 churches and 200+ trade halls lost in the real fire).

Playing a simple game to watch the Fire Spread

The full game *Great Fire of London 1666* is designed for children 12+ and adults but primary school children can try this **very simple version** of the game to see where the fire goes. The children are going to take on the roles OF EITHER being the FIRE OR the fire FIGHTERS.

Lay the board on a table. Assuming you are using the game with a class of 30 give each child 4 houses and ask them to put the houses all over the board. Put at least one house in every space. Tell the children to put a house wherever the board has a small house symbol. *EG Guild Hall needs 4 houses.*

Place 40 Fire Cones in the Pudding Lane area.

Now take the 60 fire movement cards. Shuffle them and deal out 40 between 20 children so they each have 2 cards each. These children are the FIRE. They are trying to spread the fire and destroy as much of the city as possible. (put the other 20 back in the box)

This may leave about 10 children without cards. Give each of these a black cone or a black disk with a gunpowder symbol on. These children are the fire FIGHTERS. The black cones represent soldiers with fire

hooks which will be used to PULL down houses and the black disks represent gunpowder which will be used to blow them up.

(Optional Rule: If you want to introduce an element of competition between the FIGHTERS give them each one of the twelve colour cards. Tell the children they are trying protect as many of their coloured houses as possible.)

If you have less or more than 30 children just share the 40 Fire Movement Cards and the 12 Black cones and Black Disks between them. You want roughly 2 Children with Fire Movement cards for each 1 Fire Fighter.

Find one of each of the objective cards showing all the important buildings. Place them next to the board. If ever one burns down the child who burnt it gets to hold that card.

How the game works:

Firstly you ask four FIRE Children to each take a turn playing a card. They take a fire cone from Pudding Lane and move it in the direction shown on their card out of Pudding Lane and into a space with a house in. Remove the house and put it on the score track. (If a child cannot go move onto another FIRE child. The first child can try again next FIRE phase)

From now on you will play a series of turns. **Each turn** consists of a FIGHTER phase and a FIRE phase.

FIGHTER phase

In each FIGHTER phase ask one FIGHTER to place his/her cone or disc on a space OTHER THAN PUDDING LANE (it can be a space on Fire or one NOT on fire). Any houses in the space are removed to the score track and any Fire cones removed from the board and put back in the box. That space is now a FIRE BREAK and fire cannot spread through it or enter it.

FIRE phase

In each FIRE phase ask three FIRE children to play a card and move the fire on into a new space in the direction on their card. If they remove a cone from a space so that it is empty, replace it with a cone from Pudding Lane so that you have a continuous area on fire. Whenever a child moves fire into a space they remove EVERY house from it and put it on the score track. The children discard their played card.

TIP: The FIGHTERS should try to block routes to the big buildings and those spaces with more than 1 house in. The FIRE players should try and find a way through to those same big buildings.

Continue in this manner alternating FIGHTER and FIRE phases until all 12 Black cones and disks and all 36 remaining Fire Movement Cards have been played.

Scoring the Game

You won't use the score tracks to work out the result of the game - it is just a convenient area to put all the burnt houses and burnt objectives.

Add up all the burnt houses and score 1 pt for each burnt house. Add on the points for each objective card burnt (eg St Pauls = 6 pts). Compare the TOTAL to this chart:

Total Points (houses + bonus pts)	
68 or less	The FIGHTERS have done very well. Quite a lot better than in 1666 in fact. You have saved London and the King will reward you.
69 to 73	The FIGHTERS have done a bit better than in 1666. Not bad. Can you do better?
74 to 80	This is the score in 1666. The game was a draw
80 Plus	The FIRE causes more damage than in 1666.
85+	The FIRE has caused great destruction. the King is NOT happy with the FIGHTERS. Report to the Tower.

Hottest FIRE: If the FIRE wins the children who are holding the highest value cards win overall.

Best FIGHTER: If the FIGHTERS win find out which COLOUR card each child was given.

The child/children with the least number of burnt house wins over all.