

Activity
6

WE CAN BUILD HISTORICAL HOUSES

About this activity

- Preparation time: 20 mins (experience-dependent)
- Activity duration: 2 x 40 min sessions

Summary

In this activity, the children use their knowledge of the Great Fire of London and living conditions in 17th-century London to design and construct a London house as part of a collaborative project to recreate Pudding Lane. They will gain an understanding of the impact of events at that time and how they contributed to improvements in building design.

Outcome

By the end of this activity, the children will have created a Minecraft reconstruction of Pudding Lane in 17th-century London.



Curriculum links

History PoS

- Study an aspect or theme in British history that extends pupils' chronological knowledge beyond 1066.

Maths PoS

- Recall and use multiplication and division facts for the 2, 5 and 10 multiplication tables. (Y2)
- Solve problems involving multiplication and division. (Y3)

Learning expectations

This activity will enable children to:

- develop historical empathy; what was it like to live in 17th-century London?
- understand how significant historical events contribute to our understanding of the modern world
- use historical evidence to help inform their thinking
- solve multiplication problems in the context of taxes.

Getting ready

- Familiarise yourself with the lesson plans (pages 46–47).
- Think about how this session can be adapted for use with other topics, e.g. the children could recreate an area of your home town based on a significant historic local event.
- Watch the Minecraft walkthroughs to familiarise yourself with how to:
 - use the **inventory**

- Create and save a **flat** new Minecraft world in **creative mode**, or continue using a class world you have already worked in (recommended).
- Print out the photocopy master on page 45 for groups of children.

Variations to try

This activity can be adapted for use with other subject areas:

- In history, the children could recreate other buildings of historical interest from their local area or from another part of the world.
- In literacy, the children could write and upload a short recount of the Great Fire of London. This could be created in a class Minecraft blog, the link for which could be placed within the Minecraft environment.

Useful links

- 3-D animated representation of 17th-century London before the Great Fire: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SPY-hr-8-M0>
- Images of 17th-century London: <http://tinyurl.com/zb2ggou>
- Timeline of events and images from the Great Fire of London: <http://www.theschoolrun.com/homework-help/great-fire-london>
- National archives activity on hearth tax: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/fire-of-london/source-1/>

WE CAN BUILD HISTORICAL HOUSES

Plan your house.

How much hearth tax will you pay to King Charles II per year? (1 hearth = 5 shillings per month)

Tips

- Use what you know about London in 1666 to plan your house.
- Remember: your family will need somewhere to cook and a way to keep warm.
- Use appropriate materials for building.
- Use inventory items to show how people lived.

Checklist

- We have designed our house.
- We have worked out how much hearth tax to pay the King.
- We have built an historically accurate house.
- We have added extra information and items to show how people lived.

LESSON 1

40 mins



1 Explain that the children are going to retell the story of the Great Fire of London using Minecraft and need to think about what London looked like in 1666. Watch the animated representation of how 17th-century London looked before the fire (see *Useful links*) or look at images of contemporary London houses or streets on the IWB. Discuss the materials used for building, and size and spacing of houses. Point out that sometimes the upstairs areas were overhanging to create more living space, making the streets dark and narrow.



Q What do you notice about the houses and street? How are they different from your street today?

2 As a class, look more closely at a 17th-century London house. Discuss its features and think about the family that might have lived there. Talk about the types of jobs they might have had (see National Archives information in *Useful links*). Ask the children to think about the things the family might have had in their home.



Q How did people keep warm or cook food?

3 Ask the children to organise themselves into pairs. Make sure any Minecraft experts are evenly distributed. If you wish, display the photocopy master on the IWB. Explain that the children can use this to record their ideas and plans if they wish. Talk through each section so the children understand what they need to do. Ask the children to plan what their house will look like, both inside and out, based on the evidence they have seen.



Q How can we represent family life?

4 Talk about life in London in the 17th century. Explain to the children that every household would have to pay a hearth tax to King Charles II every year. Each fireplace would cost the householder five shillings a month. Ask each pair to work out the hearth tax they would have to pay for their house each year.

How much hearth tax will King Charles II have to pay for your family's house each year?

Number of fireplaces: _____
 Cost per fireplace: 5 shillings per month
 Total cost: _____

How many animals will your family need somewhere to keep them?
 Why? _____

What materials will you use for building?
 How will you show how people lived in 17th-century London?

Q How can you ensure you understand your plan for the next lesson?

LESSON 2

40 mins



1 Remind the children about the work they did in the previous session planning their 1666 London house. Load your pre-built world and support the children to join. Remind them that the streets of London were tightly packed so they will need to build their houses close together. This will require good communication with other pairs to ensure there are no large gaps between builds.



2 Join the world and support the children as they build their houses. Ask the children to leave some clues that tell visitors something about the family, e.g. items related to their job, living conditions or family size. Encourage them to use inventory items to represent mid-17th-century life.



Q What materials are you using for your build? Why?

3 Remind the children of the hearth tax that needs to be paid to King Charles II each year. Ask them to use a sign to show how much hearth tax they need to pay.



Q Is the amount of hearth tax you need to pay the same as in your original plans? If not, why?

4 Encourage the children to explore other houses created by other pairs and to give feedback on other builds. Allow them time to make changes to their builds in response to feedback or from additional ideas they have gathered. If time allows, ask the children to think about other authentic things they could add to their build to make it more realistic, e.g. the addition of animals.



Q Were there any animals in 17th-century London? Why did people keep animals? Where were they kept?

Extension

- The children can use their knowledge of the era to expand the project to other buildings and structures.
- Using a screen capture device such as Screencast-O-Matic, record the children acting in their London homes or walking through the sequence of events – start a fire in the bakery and turn it into a movie using iMovie or Movie Maker.