

The Monument to the Great Fire of London

Key Stage 1 self-guided visit resources

The Monument is the perfect starting point for learning about the Great Fire and its aftermath.

Built to commemorate the Fire and the rebuilding of the City, it is situated just metres from the Fire's starting point in Pudding Lane and offers views across the city showing the extent of the Fire's reach.

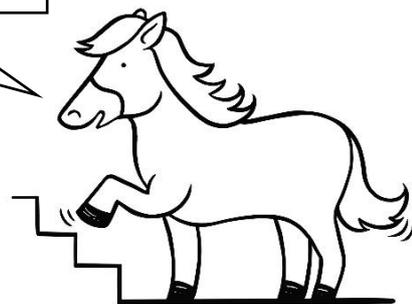
A visit to The Monument puts pupils right in the heart of where history happened, bringing this significant event in London's history to life.

Pupils will exercise their historical enquiry skills, explore the use of symbolism, and experience a unique view of London's skyline.

This resource contains information about The Monument and the individuals who created it, pupil worksheets and related teacher notes to enrich your visit to the site.

We hope you and your pupils enjoy your visit. If you would like to share any feedback, please email monumentlearning@cityoflondon.gov.uk

Did you know...a pony climbed The Monument in 1814. It belonged to a fishmonger, who thought that, being located on Fish Street Hill, it would be a great publicity stunt. The animal was led 'to the gallery...round the same, and down again, without a slip or a stumble...'



The Great Fire of London

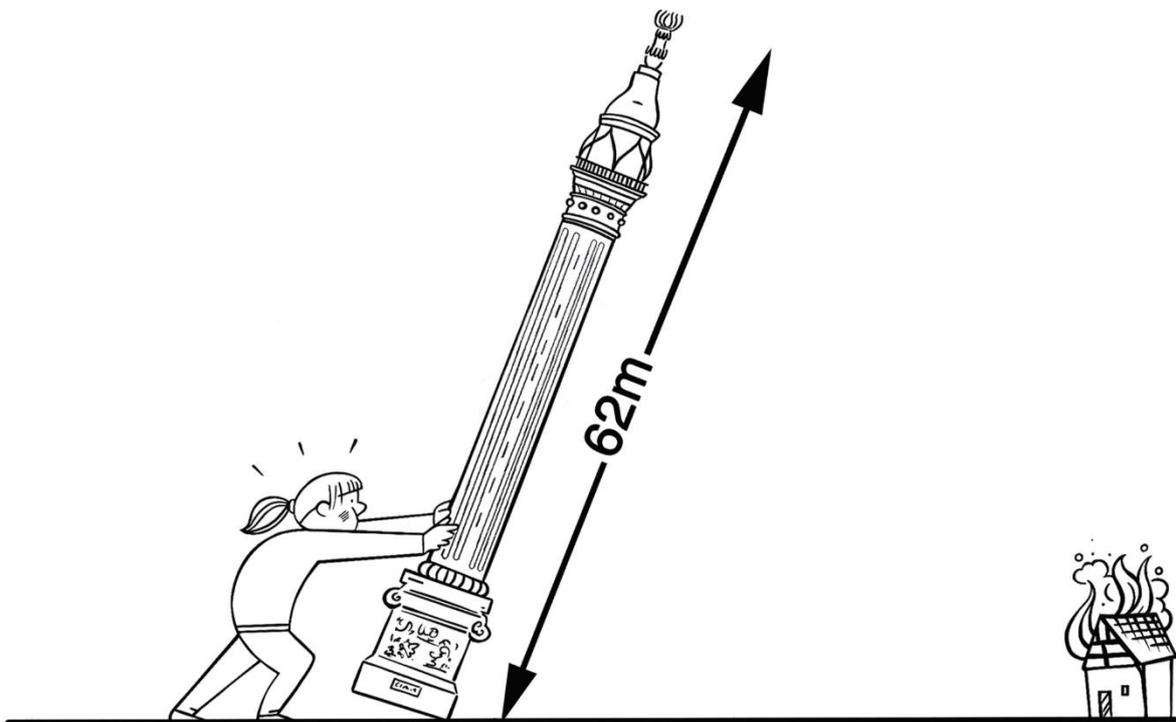
The Great Fire began in the bakery of Thomas Farriner on Pudding Lane, 62m (202ft) from the site of The Monument, during the early hours of the 2nd September 1666. Over the next four days, fire spread to the very edges of the City of London. Six people are recorded to have perished in the blaze, though it is likely that the death toll was higher than this. 85 churches, 13,000 houses and the Medieval cathedral of St Paul's were destroyed: about one third of the City of London. With destruction on this scale, both Parliament and the King agreed that the Fire should never be forgotten and so in 1671 the building of 'The Monument to the Great Fire of London' was begun.

The Monument to the Great Fire of London

The Monument was designed by Sir Christopher Wren and Dr. Robert Hooke. It is constructed mainly from Portland stone with 311 steps to the top. It took six years to build (1671-1677).

At least three alternative designs were proposed for The Monument including one which proposed a statue of King Charles II at the summit, instead of the flaming orb which adorns it today. The structure cost £13,450 11s 9d (about £1m pounds today). It stands on the site of St Margaret's, the first church destroyed in the Fire.

If you laid The Monument down horizontally (and in the correct direction!) it would reach to the spot on Pudding Lane where the Fire started.



A scientific secret

Hidden within The Monument is a fascinating scientific surprise. The basement houses an astronomical observatory, with the column forming a zenith telescope. Zenith telescopes record the position – and movement – of stars. Hooke and Wren hoped to use the telescope to prove the then still controversial theory that the Earth orbited the Sun, rather than the other way around. Whilst the structure failed as an accurate telescope (it vibrated too much), it still had its scientific uses. Robert Hooke used the column in his development of the wheel barometer, measuring changes in pressure at different heights, and to observe the scientific properties of pendulums and what that could tell us about the rotation of the Earth.

Who were Wren and Hooke?



Sir Christopher Wren

Sir Christopher Wren, most famous for designing St. Paul's Cathedral, was Surveyor of the King's Works, which means that he oversaw all royal building projects. He worked closely with King Charles II, and was appointed to design The Monument by him. The scale of rebuilding needed following the Great Fire of the City means that a huge number of buildings in the City were designed by Wren – including 55 churches!

Dr. Robert Hooke

Whilst Sir Christopher Wren may be more famous than his friend and colleague, it was actually Robert Hooke who led the design and construction of The Monument, with Wren signing off on designs in his role as Surveyor of the King's Works.

Hooke is responsible for many scientific innovations and discoveries, including astronomy, gravitational theory and microscopy.

He was appointed as City Surveyor in March 1667. In this role, he helped to map the fire damage done to the City.



Teacher notes - activities

Activities 1a and 1b: Symbolism

Activities 1a and 1b focus on the sculpture which is on the west face of The Monument. The sculpture was created by Caius Gabriel Cibber, and depicts both the destruction caused by the Fire and the rebuilding of the City. Symbolism is used strongly within the sculpture, and these activities introduce pupils to some of these symbols, encouraging them to think about how symbols can be used to represent places, ideas and personalities. As preparation, you may like to think about what symbols pupils notice day to day. For instance, you may like to encourage pupils to look for symbols during their journey to The Monument, such as traffic lights, flags, Underground signs, road markings etc.

1a: Symbolism

This activity looks at the sculpture as a whole, encouraging students to look for clues within it which show how the sculptor is telling the story of the Great Fire and its aftermath.

How can you tell which half of the sculpture is which?

Encourage pupils to look for evidence of fire and of construction. If necessary, draw pupils' attention to the upper left and upper right corners of the sculpture. In the upper left, you can see smoke billowing – the Fire is in progress. In the upper right you can see scaffolding – the city is being rebuilt.

There are other clues too. Looking at the people depicted in the image, on the left, there is a slumped figure, being comforted and supported. On the right, the figures are active and commanding.

1b: Symbolism

This activity looks more closely at some of the symbols that the sculptor has chosen.

First image – female figure, slumped

How do you think she is feeling?

Think about her posture. If pupils are struggling, ask them to mimic the pose, which may help them to put themselves in her shoes. They may come up with answers like 'tired' or 'sad'. This should help them in answering the next question. You can extend the activity by asking pupils to think of further adjectives to describe her mood.

What place do you think she might represent?

This lady represents the City of London, appearing injured and exhausted by the Fire. Draw attention to the sword in the figure's hand. The sword appears in the crest of the City of London. The artist is using the sword to show that the figure represents the City – symbolism which would have been more obvious to 17th century viewers than modern ones.

Second image – King Charles II

Charles II is depicted as authoritative and in control. The sculptor has shown this in a number of ways. He is elevated, standing tall and upright, with his hand on his hip, pointing down to his subjects. He is shown wearing Roman clothing and a laurel wreath. The Romans' reputation as powerful, capable rulers and builders of cities, helping to emphasise the King's command of the recovery of the city.

Ask pupils to mimic how the King is standing. How do they feel? What adjectives can they think of to describe this? How does standing this pose contrast with the pose of the City?

Ask pupils what the King might be saying to his citizens. Perhaps they can think about some commands the King might be making, and to whom. For example, what instructions or commands might he be giving to the builders that can be seen on the scaffolding? Perhaps he is giving reassurance to the citizens – what reassuring things might he be saying?

Third image - lion

Pupils may like to work in pairs to come up with adjectives to describe a lion. Encourage pupils to think about what character traits a lion may have – ideas may include strong, fierce, brave, scary. These are all helpful, as the lion is included on the sculpture to represent fortitude, or endurance – which the citizens of London would need to show a great deal of in order to rebuild the City.

Activity 2: The London skyline

This activity is designed to draw pupils focus to interesting landmarks visible from The Monument's viewing platform, and help to understand their position i.e. north, south, east or west. You may like to do some preparatory activities in school before visiting in which pupils use the compass points.

South-West

Cranes are an ever-present sight on the London skyline – symbolising the constant growth of the city. You may like to encourage pupils to think about the connection with the rebuilding of the City after the Great Fire, and the scaffolding depicted in the sculpture. Can they see any scaffolding? (Buildings develop very quickly in the city, so there may or may not be some visible on the day of your visit).

North-West

The building is St. Paul's Cathedral – which Hooke also helped Wren to build, and in which they also carried out scientific experiments.

North-East

This is the financial district of London, and new skyscrapers are being built all the time. Some of the buildings which pupils may notice here are: the Gherkin, the Walkie Talkie, the Scalpel, and the Cheesegrater. And to the south, there is the Shard.

South-East

The Tower of London is visible from here. It is very lucky that the Great Fire didn't reach it, as at that time one of its uses was to store explosives! Kings and queens including Henry VIII have lived – and in the case of Anne Boleyn, been imprisoned – here.

Tower Bridge was built to look similar to the Tower of London, but it is much younger – whilst the Tower is nearly 1000 years old, Tower Bridge was first opened in 1894.

Pupils may also notice City Hall, workplace of the Mayor of London; HMS Belfast; and the Shard.

Finally, don't forget to collect your certificates when you leave!

1a: Symbolism



This sculpture shows the rebuilding of the City of London just after the Great Fire

One half shows the City just days after the Fire, and the other shows it a few years after. How can you tell which half is which?



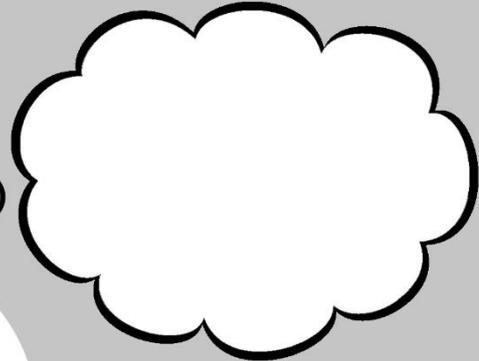
Meet Sir Christopher Wren and Dr. Robert Hooke. Together they designed The Monument to the Great Fire of London.

1b: Symbolism

This lady is being used as a symbol to represent a place.

How do you think she is feeling?
Write your ideas in the thought bubble.

What place do you think she might represent?



This is King Charles II.

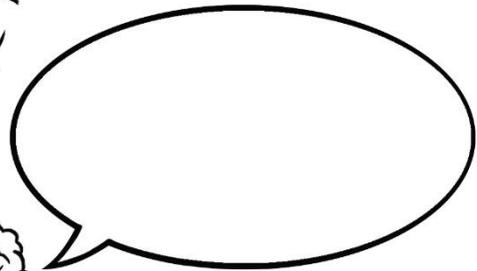
He was King when the Fire broke out and afterwards.

He ordered the building of the Monument to remember the Great Fire.

Can you stand like the King?

What do you think he might be saying?

Write your ideas in the speech bubble.



This is a lion. Can you find it on the sculpture?

What adjectives could you use to describe a lion?

Why do you think the artist might have included a lion in this scene?



2: The London skyline

Look for the sky scrapers.
Can you stretch up to the sky like them?

These buildings have nicknames because of how they look, like the Gherkin and the Walkie Talkie. Can you see them?

Can you think of new nicknames for them?

Can you see this building?
It's very lucky that the wind was blowing away from it during the Fire, as explosives used to be stored here!

Who do you think might have lived here in the past? Clue :



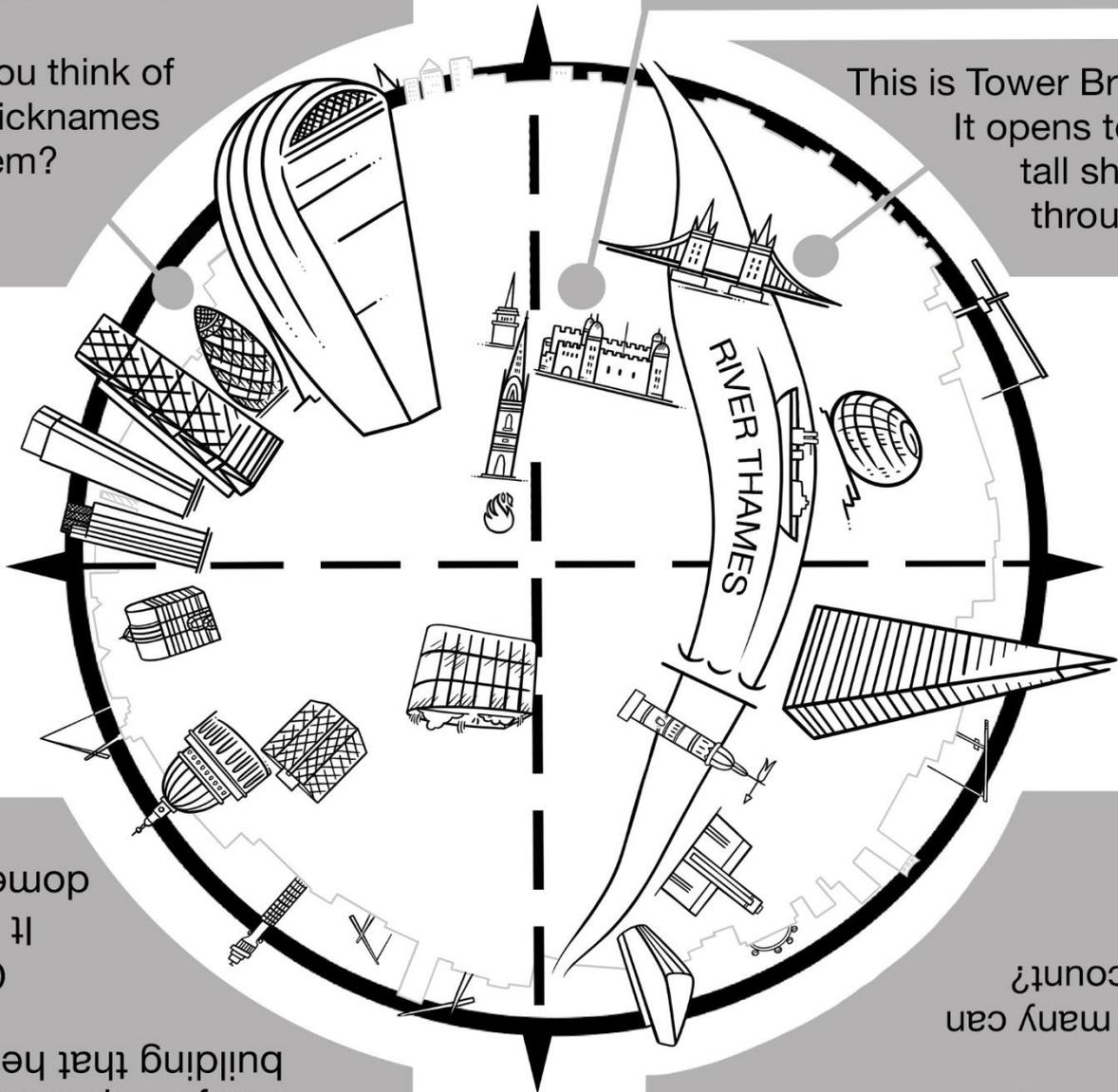
This is Tower Bridge.
It opens to let tall ships through!

NORTH

SOUTH

EAST

WEST



Clue :
It has a domed top

One of the people who built the Monument was Sir Christopher Wren. Can you spot another building that he built?

There are always new buildings being built in London. Can you see the cranes that are helping to build them? How many can you count?