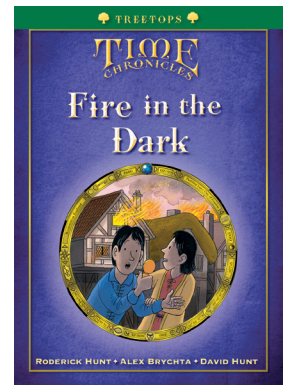


Stage 12+

# Fire in the Dark

Written by David Hunt and illustrated by Alex Brychta  
Teaching notes written by Gill Howell



## Historical background

- The story is set in London, in September 1666 at the start of the Great Fire of London. Nadim and Neena find themselves in Pudding Lane near the baker's shop run by Thomas Farriner. He was a real historical figure, and was baker to the Royal Navy. It was in his shop that the actual fire started.
- The cramped and still over-crowded conditions of post-plague London are brought to life in the story as Nadim and Neena try to prevent the Viran changing the course of history.

## Group/Guided reading

### Introducing the book

- Look together at the illustration on the front cover and read the title. Ask the children to suggest where Nadim and Neena are and when the story is set.
- Turn to the back cover and read the blurb. Were their suggestions correct? Ask them what they already know about the Great Fire of London. Turn to pages 46 and 47 to familiarise them with the historical background to the story.
- Ask the children to predict what they think might happen in the story and what part a Viran might play in the fire.
- Before beginning to read the story, ask the children to turn to page 44 and read the glossary together to help fluent reading

### Reading the book

- Ask the children to read the story independently, pausing occasionally to discuss what they have read.
- At the end of Chapter 1, invite the children to speculate on what the Viran's intentions might be. Talk about their ideas and how they fit in with the Great Fire of London.
- At the end of Chapter 4, ask the children what they think Neena and Nadim should do to put right their mistake. Ask: *Should they re-light the fire?*
- On page 24, ask the children why the rats are called 'Plague' rats.

### Returning to the book

- Ask the children to describe what happened in Chapters 4 and 5. Ask them why the Viran didn't destroy Nadim and Neena's minds when he had the chance. Ask them to give an opinion of this Viran. *How is he the same as, or different from, other Virans in the Time Runner stories?*
- Ask the children to find page 36. Ask them to suggest what the Viran was doing by the river.
- Turn to page 43. Ask the children to describe how the story ended. Ask: *What does 'take form again' mean? What do you think the Viran will do now?*

## Speaking, listening and drama

- Read *A voice from history* on page 48 with the children. Ask the children to work with a partner and plan a short talk about the Great Fire of London in a similar style. Invite some of the children to perform their talk for the class.
- Ask a volunteer to sit in the hot seat as the Viran from the story. Ask the other children to interrogate the Viran to find out about him, why he explained what he was doing to Neena and what he intends to do now.
- Invite the children to work in groups of three. Tell them to imagine they are Neena, Nadim and Tyler and role play the conversation they might have when they return to the vault, explaining to Tyler why their mission wasn't successful.

## Writing

- Ask the children to suggest what the Viran will do after the end of the story, and make notes of their suggestions on the board. Choose one of their ideas and model how to plan a sequel to the story with an opening, middle and ending. Encourage the children to think of historical details they could use to describe the setting and create imaginative dialogue. Write key ideas on the board to which they can refer.
- Ask the children in pairs first to plan their own stories using a storyboard and then write their own sequel to the story independently.

## Links to the wider curriculum

### History

- Research information about the Plague of 1665, where it began, where it spread to in the country and how long it lasted. Ask the children to create a timeline of events.

### Geography

- Use maps to compare London in the 17th century with London today.

### Art and design

- Use hot-coloured paints or crayons to create a picture of the Great Fire of London.

### Music

- Sing *London's Burning* as a round with the children.
- Ask the children to find out about the origins of a song about the Plague: *Ring a Ring of Roses*.

### PSHE and Citizenship

- In the story, Nadim ran into the bakery to put out a fire. Discuss what actions children should take if they see something burning.



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