

## PRIMARY V. SECONDARY SOURCE ANALYSIS

Goal: Using Claire Tomalin's thoroughly researched biography *Samuel Pepys: The Unequalled Self* and the selection from *The Diary of Samuel Pepys* in your textbook (page 504), identify what information Tomalin pulled from Pepys' primary source and what information she researched elsewhere.

Task: Obtain two writing utensils or highlighters in different colors. Underline or highlight the author's name below to indicate which is which:

PEPYS

TOMALIN

Go through the entirety of the attached section of *Samuel Pepys: The Unequalled Self* and underline/highlight all information that came directly from Pepys' primary source diary using your Pepys color. Then go through a second time and underline/highlight all information that was NOT in Pepys' diary and must have therefore been independently researched and provided by Tomalin.

### 15. The Fire

At three on a Sunday morning, 2 September, Pepys was woken by Jane, who had got up early to cook for a dinner party. From her window she noticed a fire to the south-west, in the region of Billingsgate. It was enough to make her rouse Pepys. He put on his dressing gown and went to her window to see for himself, and, having done so, he decided the fire was not near enough to cause concern and returned to his bed. Jane went downstairs to start her cooking on their own kitchen fire. The great fire had started in Pudding Lane, in the house of a baker who had failed to extinguish the fire under his oven, and from his house the flames spread.

Pepys woke again at seven. This time he looked out of his bedroom window and decided the fire seemed smaller and even further away than he had at first thought – no doubt because it was moving west, away from Seething Lane, blown by a powerful east wind. He went into his closet, the small side room where he kept some of his treasures, pictures and books, intending to rearrange it after the efforts of the cleaners the day before, because he was expecting to show off its contents to one of his dinner guests. Then Jane reappeared and said she had heard that 300 houses had been burnt down and that the fire was now close to London Bridge. At this he decided to dress himself and walk over to the Tower, intending to use one of its high windows as an observation point. The lieutenant of the Tower's small son went up with him. What they saw was enough to start him worrying. His first fears, as he set them down, were for two of the girls he was fond of, Betty Michell, who lived close to the bridge, and his former maid Sarah, who now lived on the bridge.

He realized that there was more at stake than the girls, and without returning home he went down to the river, got himself a boat and had himself taken westwards, passing under the bridge. The Michells' house, he saw, was already burnt, and people along the river bank were bringing out their goods and throwing them into lighters or even into the water. He noticed that some of them were so reluctant

to leave their houses that they put off going until the last possible moment, and that the pigeons behaved in exactly the same way, hovering about their familiar roosting spots until some had their wings burnt – one of his most vivid and telling observations. Looking about him in this way, and thinking over what he saw, he stayed on the water for an hour. He saw that the fire was being driven by the strong easterly wind, and that the dry summer weather had made everything combustible; and he decided to take action. This is when he instructed his boatman to take him to Whitehall, where Sunday service was in progress in the chapel. He went straight up to the king's closet and started telling people about the fire. It seems that no one had yet heard of it, and word was quickly taken to the king, who sent for him. Pepys told him what he had seen and advised him and the duke to order the blowing up of houses to stop it spreading further, telling them that the destruction of houses in the path of the fire was the only way to stop it.

This was his key role in the great fire of London, as the first to inform the king and the giver of sound advice. The king told Pepys to go to the lord mayor with the command to have houses pulled down and the promise of soldiers to help. Pepys set off back towards the fire in a borrowed coach, joined by Creed. They drove as far as St Paul's, then walked on eastwards along Watling Street, meeting crowds of refugees, among them sick people being carried on their beds, and into Canning (i.e., Cannon) Street, where they found the mayor, Sir Thomas Bludworth, in a state of exhaustion: 'he cried, like a fainting woman, "Lord, what can I do? I am spent! People will not obey me. I have been pulling down houses. But the fire overtakes us faster than we can do it."' He had been up all night and now intended to take a rest. Instead of returning to Whitehall for more instructions, Pepys simply walked on, fascinated by the strangeness of everything, seeing what he could see. This became his other great service, as a reporter to posterity. His description of the fire is one of the most famous set pieces in the Diary, and deservedly so. Most of it was written on loose sheets of paper, quite literally in the heat of the moment, and only copied into the journal proper later, and it follows his experience hour by hour.

People were putting their goods into the churches for safety, and the great merchant family, the Houblons, were removing their goods

from their houses; all but one of the brothers lost their homes. By now it was noon, and he remembered he was expecting dinner guests. It did not occur to him to do anything but hurry home to greet them. A newly married couple had been invited, the Woods, Barbara Wood being a friend of Elizabeth and niece of the family in whose house she had lodged at Woolwich during the plague; he was the son of a rich mast-maker. There was also Moone, secretary to Lord Belasyse, whom Pepys knew through his Tangier business; Pepys had been hoping to show him his closet. Now that was put off, and the dinner party was not prolonged; all the same, 'we had an extraordinary good dinner, and as merry as at this time we could be'. Then Pepys walked through the City again with Moone, as far as St Paul's, before taking to the water once more. The king and duke were now on the river in their barge, and Pepys went with them to summon a colonel in the City militia to command him to pull down more houses below the bridge. It was too late. The wind was carrying the fire into the heart of the City.

Elizabeth meanwhile had gone to St James's Park with the Woods and Creed. Pepys went to meet them there and took them on to the river again. The air was hot and full of smoke and 'showers of Firedrops', the wind blowing as hard as ever. When they could endure no more of the heat, they steered for an ale house on Bankside and sat there till it was dark, watching the whole City burning, as far as they could see up the hill, 'a most horrid malicious bloody flame, not like the fine flame of an ordinary fire', and an arch of flame across the bridge. There was a terrible noise too, from the cracking of doomed houses and the sound the flames roaring before the wind. Pepys felt the horror of it – 'It made me weep to see it' – but he was also intent on recording the spectacle.

Back at home, Pepys found Tom Hayter arrived from his burnt-out house, and he invited him to stay at Seething Lane. They soon realized that they too must start salvaging what they could, because although the main movement of the fire was westwards, it was now such a huge conflagration that it was spreading slowly east as well. Hayter helped him drag his iron chests into the cellar and other goods into the garden, and Pepys got his bags of gold and his accounts into the office, ready to carry away. Batten had already most efficiently sent for carts from the country, expected to arrive during the night. Pepys went briefly to bed. He was up again at four on Monday morning, riding in one of Batten's carts in his dressing gown, with a pile of his valuables, to Bethnal Green, where a merchant friend of the Navy Office had agreed to take their possessions into his large house. This is where Pepys took his Diary for safety.