

# The Reconstruction of St. Paul's after the fire - Unterrichtseinheit für die 11 - 13 Klasse

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## 2.2. Didactic Folio

A folio of eight 50 cm by 65 cm pictures serves to support Worksheet 1-4 with illustrations and offers further in depth information about London between 1666 and 1747.

The pictures show the destruction of Old St. Paul's, architectural plans to rebuild London after the fire of 1666, plans, design and architectural features of St. Paul's Cathedral, as well as a view of London 80 years after the great fire and 37 years after the completion of St. Paul's Cathedral.

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The Didactic Folio is meant to initiate a discussion between teacher and students on the base of the information previously provided by Worksheets 1-4. The students should describe the pictures of the folio and speculate on its depicted scenes. The original Didactic Folio consists of eight individual 50 cm by 65 cm pictures with no further text on the front.

A description of the individual scenes is given on the back of each picture, together with some didactic remarks concerning possible student's comments. In this case, the scene descriptions of the following eight folio pictures together with the didactic remarks are given above each picture. The pictures are numbered 1 to 8.



Picture 1  
shows The Panorama of London of 1616 by Claes Jansz. Visscher (1586/87-1652)

(cf. Porter 1996, 4,5), a Dutch etcher, editor and owner of an Amsterdam publishing company (cf. Großes Duden Lexikon 1967, Band 6, 444).

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#### Possible student comments

With the help of the provided information in the Worksheets, the students should be able to identify Old St. Paul's in London, shown on the extreme left of the picture.

By comparing the shape of Old St. Paul's with the dome-covered structure of St. Paul's Cathedral, discussed in Worksheet 4, the students should conclude that the picture dates back into the time before the fire of 1666. They may also recognize that St. Paul's on Visscher's picture is identical with Old St. Paul's, which Evelyn describes in his diary excerpts of 1666.

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#### Teacher comment

The teacher may then point out some further details on the picture, just as the fashion of displaying the heads of dead criminals at the gate of London Bridge (cf. Ackroyd 2000, 65,291). He may also refer to the then popular game of "shooting the bridge", in which daring Londoners shot through the turbulent waters of the narrow bridge arches of London Bridge. (cf. Nowel 1987, 41).

He could further mention that the Thames frequently froze up in wintertime, due to the damming effect of the narrow arches of the bridge, which considerably slowed the flow of the river (cf. Nowel 1987, 41). In reference to John Evelyn the teacher could also quote from Evelyn's diary of 9 Jan. 1684, in which he describes the crossing of the frozen Thames on foot (cf. De Beer 1955, vol. 4, 360).



Picture 2

shows a water colour scene, drawn by myself, that corresponds closely in perspective with Visscher's view of London, depicted in picture 1. My scene shows London immediately after the fire of Sept. 2-5 1666. It shows London in ruins with the burned remains of Old St. Paul's towering over the town, under a still smoke-filled sky.

In front of this scene the Thames is depicted with a lonely row boat on it, working its way across.

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#### Possible student comments

Here the students should describe the scene and speculate on the damage caused by the fire. They should further guess on who it might be in the boat crossing the river.

From Evelyn's diary excerpts on the Worksheets the students know that Evelyn surveyed the condition of Old St. Paul's shortly before and after the fire. He probably crossed the Thames frequently, and it might be him and maybe Sir Christopher Wren in the boat on their way to assess the extent of the damage of St. Paul's.



Picture 3

shows a water colour painting of mine. It depicts an insight view of the ruinous and burned remains of Old St. Paul's church, its pillars and arches still standing and the entire roof missing. Burned roof beams dangle down from above and are strewn over the church's floor.

To the right, three small, black-clad figures can be perceived standing in the right aisle.

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#### Possible student comments

Looking at the scene, the students should comment in more detail on the extent of the damage to the church.

Evelyn's diary excerpts should enable them to give a detailed account on how the fire raved in the church, how it made stones explode like grenades and let the lead roof melt and flow through the building in a fiery mass.

The students should also comment on the three figures in the church and speculate on who they might be. With picture 2 still in mind, they should recognize them as Evelyn and Wren assessing the extent of the fire's damage to the church.



Picture 4  
shows two plans for a new London.

The top one designed by Sir Christopher Wren, and the bottom one by John Evelyn.

The original plans were drawn by Wren and Evelyn immediately after the fire in 1666, and then submitted to the King for his approval. The plans on picture 4 show two 19th century redrawings of the original plans (cf. Porter 1996, 99,100).

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#### Possible student comments

The students should be able to mention that both, Wren and Evelyn, submitted plans for a completely redesigned modern London. However, none of these plans were realized. Their theoretical and hypothetical city had no chance against the twin forces of tradition and commerce. Soon after the fire the citizens reclaimed their properties, cleaned away the debris and obstinately recreated London in its former image (cf. Ackroyd 2000, 227).



Picture 5

shows a watercolour painting of mine, depicting St. Paul's Cathedral as Sir Christopher Wren finished it in 1711. This picture should serve as an introductory to the more detailed architectural consideration of the cathedral features in picture 6 and 7.

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#### Possible student comments

The students should give a description of the outward appearance of the church to get a feeling for its features. Useful technical vocabulary can be taken from Worksheet 4 that deals with the architectural features of St. Paul's Cathedral.



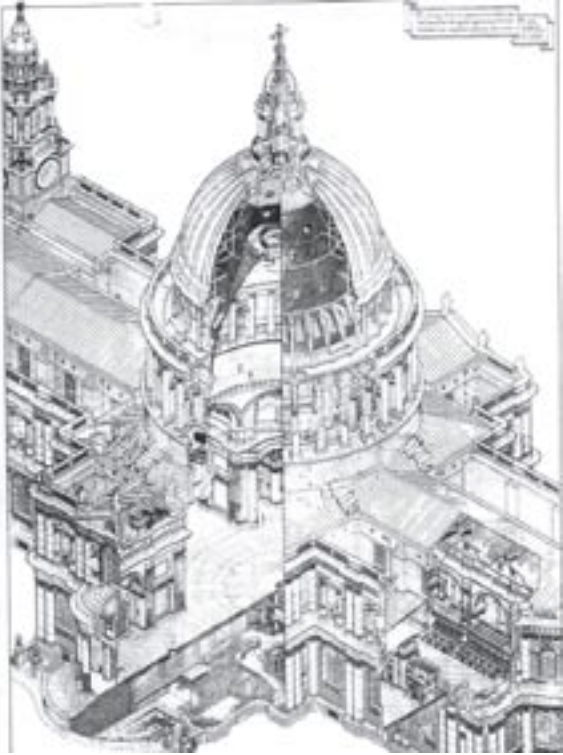
Picture 6

is an architectural drawing of mine that shows two of the three alternative models of St. Paul's Cathedral that were designed by Wren before the actual building phase of the church.

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#### Possible student comments

The students should identify the two displayed drawings as the "Great Model", which is shown on the left of the picture, and the "Warrant Design", shown on the right. They should mention that the "Great Model", favoured by Wren, was not accepted by the King. They should point out that Wren's unloved compromise, the "Warrant Design", was instead accepted by the King. Furthermore the students should comment on the fact that the cathedral in its finished form only bears slight resemblance to the King's favoured "Warrant Design". Here the teacher could show picture 5 and let the students comment on the similarities and differences of St. Paul's Cathedral with the two models shown in picture 6. The students should mention that Wren was able to deviate from the plans with the help of a clause in the building contract that allowed him to carry out artistic and ornamental modifications that deviated from the original design.



Picture 7  
shows an architectural drawing of St. Paul's Cathedral (cf. Nowel 1987, 88).

It offers an outside- as well as an inside view of the building and clarifies the principle of its architectural design.

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#### Possible student comments

With the architectural information on St. Paul's Cathedral, provided in Worksheet 4, the students should be able to comment on the building plan and its measurements.

Also they should be able to describe the design of the dome of the cathedral, which is of an intricate threefold design. It consists of a brick dome and a brick cone that is set on top of it, with a brick lantern on the cone's tip. Proportioned around the exterior of the cone is a lead-covered timber dome.



Canaletto:  
„The Thames and the City of London from Richmond  
House“

Picture 8  
shows an oil painting by Canaletto: The Thames and the City of London from Richmond House (cf. Baetjer/Links 1989, 234).

It depicts a panorama of London of 1747 and shows a view from a terrace over the Thames towards the city. It clearly shows St. Paul's Cathedral and a score of other churches.

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#### Possible student comments

The students should describe the scenery and mention the fact that the entire churches seen on the painting were all designed by Sir Christopher Wren.

The students may then speculate on how London has changed since the last fire, and may describe the features of the buildings in more detail.

### 3. Teaching Aims

This teaching unit aims at letting the students read and process historic data from authentic text excerpts of the 17th century and from modern scientific and historic texts offered in Worksheet 1-4.

In a further step, the students ought to describe, interpret and discuss a 17th century etching, four watercolour paintings, two 19th and 20th century architectural drawings, and an 18th century oil painting presented to them in a Didactic Folio.

These eight pictures correspond and support the textual sources in Worksheet 1-4, and are meant to enhance the imagination of the students and to further motivate them to discuss the theme at hand in greater depth

#### 4. Lesson Design Time: 90 min.

##### 4.1 Introductory

To make the students get a picture of London of the time between 1666 and 1711, the teacher should provide some historical background information. Ideally, he should mention the Great Plague of 1665 and the tenth of thousands who died in its course. He may arise the students' interest by mentioning the deserted streets of London of that time, the hot summer of this year, and the almost continuous ringing of the churches' death bells. The teacher may mention the "Dead Carts" which were used to carry the dead to their mass graves. Usually dug out pits, into which the blanket-clad bodies were thrown. The teacher may then mention the Great Fire of London of 1666 that occurred only one year after the plague. It might be of interest to point out that the fire destroyed 4/5th of the entire town in three days, and was fanned by a strong easterly wind. The teacher should mention that there was nothing for the citizens to do but to flee from it and to await its end. He may depict scenes of Londoners who took to the safety of the river in boats to await the end of the fire. A good aid for the teacher to refresh his memory on this historic time is Peter Ackroyd's London The Biography, Ch. 20, 21, 23. The introductory speech of the teacher may take up about 5 min.

## 4.2 Group Work

The class is divided into small groups of five or six students each.

Each student is then provided with Worksheet 1-4 dealing with the destruction of Old St. Paul's and the construction of St. Paul's Cathedral after the Fire of London (Worksheet 1-4 described and offered in section 2.1). The students read and discuss the Worksheets in their individual groups. The teacher offers assistance if any is needed. This phase should take about 30 min.

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## 4.3 Discussion

The teacher prepares the eight pictures of the Didactic Folio and successively presents pictures 1-8 to the students (The Didactic Folio is described and offered in section 2.2.).

Each of the pictures should then be extensively described, interpreted and discussed by the students with the background knowledge of Worksheets 1-4 (section 2.1).

(Possible student answers are offered in the descriptions of picture 1-8 in section 2.2) This phase may take about 45 min.

## Bibliography

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De Beer, E.S. (ed.) (1955). The Diary of John Evelyn. Vol. 1-6. Oxford: OUP.

Nowel, J. (1987). London. Köln: Du Mont.

“Evelyn, John“ Brockhaus (1988). 18. Aufl. Band 6. Leipzig/Mannheim: FA Brockhaus.

“Piscator/Visscher, Nicolas Claes Jansz.“ Großes Duden Lexikon (1967). 2. Aufl. Band 6. Mannheim: Lexikon Verlag.

“St. Paul’s Cathedral“ Collier’s Encyclopaedia (1982). Vol. 20. New York: Macmillan.

“St. Paul’s Cathedral“ Encyclopaedia Britannica/Micropaedia (1998). 15th Ed. Vol 10. Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc.

“Wren, Sir Christopher“ Encyclopaedia Britannica/Micropaedia (1989). 15th Ed. Vol 12. Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc.

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## Pictures:

Picture 1: by Visscher, N. Claes Jansz. “Panorama of London“. In: Porter, Stephen (1996). The Great Fire of London. Sutton Publishing.

Picture 2: by author

Picture 3: by author

Picture 4: “19th cent. redrawings of the proposed plans of the city by Wren and Evelyn“ In: Porter, Stephen (1996). The Great Fire of London. Sutton Publishing.

Picture 5: by author

Picture 6: by author

Picture 7: “architectural drawing of St. Paul’s Cathedral“. In: Nowel, Ingrid (1987). London. Köln: Du Mont.

Picture 8: by Canaletto “London: The Thames and the City of London from Richmond House“. In: Baetjer, Katharine/Links, J.G. (1989).

Canaletto. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.