

# Samuel Pepys Artefacts (HI00173, HI0028)

Step into the shoes of Samuel Pepys and discover what it was like to live at the time and write a diary of everything you did for nine years, from 1660-1669. His diary describes two important events in English history, The Plague in 1665 and The Great Fire of London in 1666. The replica artefacts are designed to help children to develop a sense of the period.



The collection consists of items such as a neck frill, parchment paper, quill and ink pots. These artefacts are replicas. The first time that children encounter a replica, ensure that you explain that these are replicas rather than originals and discuss why this is so. Talk about the materials/fragility/value/age of originals and explain that old objects are getting rarer, and they must be preserved for others to use in the future.

## Samuel Pepys Diary

Samuel Pepys kept a diary and recorded the things he did and who he saw. He started to write these things down around 1660 when he was 26. His diary tells us ordinary things that went on. In his diary he writes about the weather and about the people he met.

Samual lived through two dramatic and terrible events in London's history which he describes in his diary. They are:

- **The Plague of 1665.** The plague killed thousands of people. Samuel wrote, "How sad a sight it is to see the streets so empty of people."
- **The Great Fire of London in 1666.** Pepys watched the fire from a boat on the river on the first day and observed how hot the air was, full of smoke and "showers of fire drops". He describes the noise from the cracking of houses and the roaring of the flames. "It made me weep to see it" he wrote. He records seeing the flames spreading and people throwing their belongings into the river

to save them. Find out how Samuel Pepys saved his own precious items such as his cheese and wine in the Great Fire of London.

He wrote his diary for 9 years, stopping because he thought he was losing his eyesight. The things he did write about helps us to understand everyday life at the time and what it was like living through these two historic events.

## Using the Artefacts

### **What would it have been like for Samuel Pepys writing his diary?**

Hundreds of years ago there were no smart phones, cameras or computers to record events. In Samuel Pepys time he would have used a quill pen, ink and parchment paper. What was it like writing with a quill or 'dip-pen'? and using a sand shaker as blotting paper? Samuel would have been to work every day. He was a civil servant in the Royal Navy. So, when would he write? Remember there wouldn't have been any electricity.

Ask the children to imagine writing like this, how easy do they think it might be to compose and write using ink on parchment? If you have some old dip-pens and ink, you can get the pupils to write a diary entry of their own. Make sure you have some blotting paper to dry the ink with! How similar and different is writing today compared to writing in Samuel Pepys' time?

### **Neck frill and Wig**

The neck frill was a fashion item in the 1650s and 60s. It was fashionable to wear a lace neck frill and wealthy men like Samuel Pepys would also wear a wig. He writes in his diary how men had to learn 'wig behaviour', tossing the wig aside when bowing to stop it from falling over your face. He also records how once he set one wig alight while he was sealing a letter!

Look closely at the objects and draw them. How was it made and what would it have been made of? Consider who would have worn it? Were they rich or poor? Where was it used? What was it like to wear and what was the purpose of it? Describe the artefacts and think about other things you can find out about them.

Study the portrait of Samuel Pepys and discuss what we can learn from it. What does it tell us about him and about the trendy fashions for men in the past.

Artefacts provide a fascinating insight into the past and allow us to develop a deeper historical understanding. They are a great way to engage children's interest and attention, encouraging curiosity and helping pupils to make links between periods of history.

Here is an example of a record sheet you can use when exploring artefacts. Please use and adapt to suit your purpose.

## Observe & Investigate

Image or drawing of artefact:

Describe using your senses:

- What does it look and feel like?
- Does it make a noise?
- What is it made from?
- How big is it?
- Has it got any detail on it? Markings? Writing? What do they mean?
- Does the object remind you of anything?

# Explore & Discover

What material(s) is it made of? Why might these have been chosen? (If this is a replica what were the originals made from?)

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What condition is it in? \_\_\_\_\_

Where do you think it was found? \_\_\_\_\_

What do you think it is called? \_\_\_\_\_

What do you think the object was used for? \_\_\_\_\_

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Tick the box/boxes to best describe the item

A luxury item	A useful item	An ordinary item	A valuable item

Who might have used it? \_\_\_\_\_

What difference did the object make to people's lives? \_\_\_\_\_

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What can this object tell us about life in.....? \_\_\_\_\_

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