Name: _____ Date: _____

The Great Stink and London's Sewers

Circle group

In the summer of 1858, London had a terrible smell. People called it the Great Stink. It came from the River Thames. For years, homes and factories had sent their waste into the river. The city was so big that the water could not carry it all away. Then the weather turned hot, and the smell filled the city.

The smell even bothered the lawmakers. Their Parliament building was right beside the river. People also knew that dirty water could make them sick. Soon Parliament agreed to pay for a new plan.

A man named Joseph Bazalgette had made the plan. He was an engineer. His plan was to catch the waste in brick sewers. The tunnels sloped downhill. They carried the waste east, past the city, and let it out into the river there. Where the land was flat, steam pumps lifted the waste.

The work took years. When it was done, the river in the city got cleaner. Fewer people got badly sick. Many of the sewers are still used in London today.

Questions

1. What was the Great Stink?

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_____

2. Why could the river not carry the waste away?

_____

_____

3. Why did Parliament act fast?

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4. Where did the new sewers carry the waste?

_____

_____

5. What did the steam pumps do?

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_____

6. Why did the tunnels slope downhill?

_____

_____

Words to know

lawmakers: people who make the laws for a country
engineer: a person who plans and designs big building projects
sewers: underground pipes or tunnels that carry away waste water

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

The Great Stink and London's Sewers

Triangle group

In the summer of 1858, the city of London was hit by a smell so awful that people called it the Great Stink. The cause was the River Thames. For years, homes and factories had sent their waste into the river, and the city had grown so large that the water could no longer carry it all away. When a long spell of hot weather arrived, the stench rose over the whole city.

The smell was bad enough to trouble the lawmakers, because the Parliament building stood right beside the river. Many people also knew that dirty water could spread sickness, so the problem could not wait any longer. Within weeks, Parliament agreed to pay for a new plan.

An engineer named Joseph Bazalgette had already designed it. Instead of letting waste flow into the Thames in the middle of the city, his system caught it in a network of brick sewers. These tunnels sloped gently downhill and carried the waste east, past the built-up streets, before releasing it into the river where the tide could sweep it out to sea. In places where the land was too flat, steam-powered pumps lifted the waste and sent it on its way.

The work took years, and the crews laid enormous numbers of bricks. When the job was done, the river in the city grew cleaner, and serious outbreaks of disease became less common. Many of Bazalgette's sewers still serve London today.

Questions

1. What was the Great Stink?

_____

_____

2. Why could the river no longer carry the waste away?

_____

_____

3. Why did Parliament act quickly?

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_____

4. Where did Bazalgette's sewers carry the waste?

_____

_____

5. What job did the steam-powered pumps do?

_____

_____

6. Why were the sewer tunnels built to slope downhill?

_____

_____

Words to know

stench: a very strong and unpleasant smell
lawmakers: people who make the laws for a country
engineer: a person who plans and designs big building projects
network: a group of connected parts that work together
sewers: underground pipes or tunnels that carry away waste water

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

The Great Stink and London's Sewers

Square group

During the summer of 1858, the great city of London was overwhelmed by a smell so dreadful that people named it the Great Stink. Its source was the River Thames. For many years, households and factories had poured their waste into the river, and the city had expanded so enormously that the water could no longer carry all of it away. When an extended spell of hot weather settled over the region, the stench drifted across the entire city.

The odor was powerful enough to disturb the lawmakers, since the Parliament building stood directly beside the river. Many citizens also understood that contaminated water could spread illness, so the problem could not be postponed any longer. Within weeks, Parliament approved the money for a new plan.

An engineer named Joseph Bazalgette had already designed it. Rather than allowing waste to enter the Thames in the center of the city, his system intercepted it in an extensive network of brick sewers. These tunnels sloped gently downhill and conveyed the waste eastward, beyond the crowded streets, before releasing it into the river where the tide could sweep it out to sea. In places where the ground was too level, steam-powered pumps raised the waste and sent it onward.

The project lasted for years, and the crews laid staggering numbers of bricks. When it was finally complete, the river within the city became cleaner, and serious outbreaks of disease grew less common. Many of Bazalgette's sewers continue to serve London today.

Questions

1. What was the Great Stink, and when did it happen?

_____

_____

2. Why was the river unable to carry all of the waste away?

_____

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3. What two reasons pushed Parliament to act quickly?

_____

_____

4. Where did Bazalgette's sewers deliver the waste?

_____

_____

5. What was the purpose of the steam-powered pumps?

_____

_____

6. Why were the sewer tunnels designed with a gentle downhill slope?

_____

_____

Words to know

stench: a very strong and unpleasant smell
lawmakers: people who make the laws for a country
engineer: a person who plans and designs big building projects
network: a group of connected parts that work together
sewers: underground pipes or tunnels that carry away waste water

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

For the teacher: The Great Stink and London's Sewers

Each student sheet carries a shape, not a level. The same topic and facts, written three ways.

Circle: The Great Stink and London's Sewers

Easier · 174 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 3.7

1. A terrible smell from the River Thames in the summer of 1858.
2. The city was so big that there was too much waste.
3. The smell bothered the lawmakers, and dirty water could make people sick.
4. East, past the city.
5. They lifted waste where the land was flat.
6. So the waste would flow along by itself.

Triangle: The Great Stink and London's Sewers

This passage · 241 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 7.4

1. A terrible smell that rose from the River Thames in the summer of 1858.
2. The city had grown so large that there was too much waste for the water.
3. The smell bothered the lawmakers, and people knew dirty water could spread sickness.
4. East, past the city, before releasing it into the river.
5. They lifted waste where the land was too flat for it to flow downhill.
6. So the waste would keep flowing along without help.

Square: The Great Stink and London's Sewers

Harder · 248 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 9.5

1. A dreadful smell from the River Thames in the summer of 1858.
2. The city had grown so large that there was far too much waste for the water.
3. The smell disturbed the lawmakers, and contaminated water could spread illness.
4. Eastward, beyond the crowded streets, before releasing it into the river.
5. They raised waste in places where the ground was too level for it to flow.
6. So that the waste would keep moving along without any help.