

Lesson Plan: Firefighter

Summary

In this lesson, students explore the history and evolution of firefighting as discussed in the episode transcript. The discussion traces firefighting from the Roman Vigiles through the Great Fires of London and Chicago to modern professional training and building codes. Students learn how firefighting practices developed, why fire codes matter, and how firefighters continue to protect communities today.

<https://www.youtube.com/live/7hHYovc93U4?si=Brqd3YdgM0cyWXay>

Objective

Students will understand the historical development of firefighting, the role of fire brigades in public safety, and how building codes and training evolved to reduce fire hazards.

Standards

- NGSS MS-ESS3-3: Apply scientific principles to design methods for monitoring and minimizing human impact on the environment.
- C3 D2.His.2.6-8: Classify series of historical events and developments as examples of change and continuity.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6.3: Analyze in detail how a key individual, event, or idea is introduced, illustrated, and elaborated in a text.

Materials

- 9 Fun Facts: Firefighter
- Worksheet (provided below)
- Paper and pencils for note-taking (optional)
- Whiteboard for group discussion (optional)

Introduction

Begin by asking students what they know about firefighting today. Discuss how firefighters protect people and property, and introduce the concept that firefighting is an ancient profession. Explain that the class will trace firefighting’s evolution from the Roman Empire to modern times.

Activity

- 1. Review the 9 Fun Facts together, discussing how firefighting techniques and materials changed over time.
- 2. Have students map the historical timeline of firefighting, marking key points such as the Roman Vigiles, the Great Fire of London, and the Great Chicago Fire.
- 3. Discuss modern firefighting training and the importance of building codes.
- 4. In small groups, students design a simple public safety poster explaining one major fire prevention innovation or historical lesson learned.

Assessment

Students complete the worksheet to demonstrate comprehension of historical facts and their connection to modern fire safety practices. Participation in discussion and the quality of their poster will also be assessed.

Rubric

Criteria	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Fair (2)	Poor (1)
Content Understanding	Explains firefighting origins and changes over time with clarity and accuracy	Explains main points with minor gaps	Shows partial understanding with notable gaps	Shows limited understanding or significant inaccuracies
Discussion Participation	Actively contributes, listens, and advances group thinking	Participates but inconsistently advances discussion	Limited participation, minimal contribution	Off-task or disrupts discussion
Worksheet Completion	All answers correct and complete	Most answers correct and complete	Some answers correct or incomplete	Few answers correct or largely incomplete
Technology Connections	Accurately connects history to modern firefighting, codes, or training	Makes partial or general connections	Connections are vague or inaccurate	No meaningful connection shown

9 Fun Facts

1. The first organized fire brigade The Roman Vigiles, formed in AD 6 under Emperor Augustus, are considered the first public fire brigade. They used buckets, hooks, axes, and hand-pumped siphons to fight fires across Rome.

<https://www.worldhistory.org/Vigiles/>

2. Early firefighting transport The Vigiles traveled mostly on foot, carrying gear through the city's narrow streets. They drew water from wells, cisterns, and aqueducts, passing buckets in chains or using force pumps to project water.

<https://www.merrimacknh.gov/about-fire-rescue/pages/the-history-of-firefighting>

3. How the idea spread Rome's model faded after the empire fell, but the concept re-emerged in medieval Europe through civic watchmen and bucket brigades. After the Great Fire of London in 1666, organized fire departments spread rapidly across Europe and later the world.

https://www.fforce.com/blogs/articles/the-history-of-firefighting-from-ancient-egypt-to-modern-times?srsId=AfmB0or5K8cVyc0n9MUYZ8Ov1174DbQHI14k5SCaHCgMSFcIF_vfID7

4. Building codes after major fires The Great Fire of London in 1666 led to strict new laws requiring brick and stone construction, wider streets, and firebreaks. After the Great Chicago Fire of 1871, U.S. cities followed suit with stronger building codes, fire limits, and the first modern fire inspections.

<https://www.britannica.com/event/Great-Fire-of-London>

5. A difference in materials Londoners are often surprised that many American homes are still built from wood. The tradition stuck because U.S. timber was cheap and plentiful, while European cities rebuilt in brick after centuries of devastating fires.

<https://www.tenmat.com/fire-safety-and-building-codes-around-the-world/>

6. The rise of firefighter training Formal firefighter training began in the 19th century as cities professionalized their brigades. Schools like the New York Fire Academy and London's Fire Service College now teach everything from rescue operations to hazardous materials response.

<https://www.fireservicecollege.ac.uk/about-us/history-heritage/>

7. Firefighter physical qualifications Recruits for the New York Fire Academy must pass the Candidate Physical Ability Test, which includes stair climbs, hose drags, equipment carries, and rescue drags. Strength, stamina, and mental focus are tested as much as speed.

<https://www.joinfdny.com/firefighter-eligibility-requirements/>

8. Annual home fires in the U.S. Firefighters in the United States respond to roughly 350,000 home fires each year. Most are caused by cooking accidents, heating equipment, or faulty electrical wiring.

<https://www.nfpa.org/education-and-research/research/nfpa-research/fire-statistical-reports/home-structure-fires>

9. Cities with the most fires Detroit often tops the list for accidental structure fires due to aging buildings and vacant homes. For intentional fires, or arson, Los Angeles and Chicago report the highest numbers, reflecting their size and dense urban populations.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/world/us/as-detroit-breaks-down-scourge-of-arson-burns-out-of-control-idUSBRE96C06F>

Worksheet

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Review

1. Who were the first organized firefighters in history?
2. What tools did the Roman Vigiles use to fight fires?
3. How did the Great Fire of London change building construction?

Discussion

4. What advantages and disadvantages come from building homes out of wood instead of brick?

Data Analysis

5. About how many home fires occur in the U.S. each year?
6. What are the leading causes of these fires?
7. Which city experiences the most accidental fires, and which have the most arson?

Reflection

8. What qualities do you think make someone a good firefighter?
9. How can communities help prevent fires and support those who fight them?