

<b>Agrégation interne d'anglais</b>
<b>Session 2025</b>
<b>Épreuve EPC</b>
<b>Exposé de la préparation d'un cours</b>

<b>EPC</b> <b>351</b>
--------------------------

Ce sujet comprend 3 documents :

- Document 1 : Katherine Howells, "Remembering the Crystal Palace fire of 1936", The National Archives, Wednesday 30 November 2022.
- Document 2 : Professor Thomas Leslie, University of Illinois," 'Some Very ordinary Algebra:' Ruskin's Critique of the Crystal Palace and the Aura of Architecture", ResearchGate.net,2019.
- Document 3 :
- Document 3A: The Royal Parks, "Virtual Tour of the Great Exhibition", London, April 27, 2017.
- Document 3B : "The Queen and Prince Albert's visit to the Machinery Department of the Great Exhibition",*The Illustrated Exhibitor, Tribute to the World's industrial Jubilee*, published by John Cassell, London. 1851.

Compte tenu des caractéristiques de ce dossier et des différentes possibilités d'exploitation qu'il offre, vous indiquerez à quel niveau d'apprentissage vous pourriez le destiner et quels objectifs vous vous fixeriez. Vous présenterez et justifierez votre démarche pour atteindre ces objectifs.

**Document 1 :** Katherine Howells, "Remembering the Crystal Palace fire of 1936", *The National Archives*, Wednesday 30 November 2022.

On the evening of 30 November 1936, a fire was discovered within the Crystal Palace, an enormous plate glass and cast-iron building located in the Sydenham area of south London. Multiple fire brigades attended, but the fire grew until it could be seen for miles around. Crowds flocked to the scene, which the Guardian described the next morning as 'like a cup final day'. There was shock and awe as local people came to terms with the utter destruction of this iconic landmark.

The Crystal Palace was famous for being the home of the 1851 Great Exhibition in Hyde Park, visited by over six million people. After the exhibition ended, the Palace was taken apart and reconstructed on Sydenham Hill in South London, opening in 1854. Over the next eight decades, the Crystal Palace experienced a new life attracting crowds to exhibitions, festivals and concerts. Its newly designed gardens were also popular and hosted regular fireworks displays hosted by Brock's Fireworks. The Palace's iconic name began to be used for the area in which it stood.

In 1911, the Palace hosted the Festival of Empire Exhibition, the largest single event ever held at the Palace. The exhibition was an attempt to strengthen the British Empire and encourage emigration, by displaying exhibits focused on different colonies and dominions around the world. While the event was generally well-received at the time, it marked the beginning of a period of financial decline for the Palace. [...]

Fires had broken out in the Crystal Palace before, notably in 1866 and 1923, when parts of the building were severely damaged. However, the fire of 1936 was something different, burning quickly and completely destroying the central transept. [...].'

A poem titled 'Ave atque vale' ('Hail and farewell') penned by 'Algol' was published in *The Morning Post* to mourn the loss of the Palace. Its final stanza reads:

O Crystal Palace, now a smouldering mass,  
All beauty perishes, and you, alas,  
No more, a stately pleasure house of glass,  
Will charm all comers,  
You've had your innings-it was none too bad,  
And I, although this parting leaves me sad,

35        Recall the joys you held for one small lad  
          In bygone summers.

          [...] In files held at The National Archives, there are documents relating to the fire and its aftermath. One contains a booklet called 'Dismantling Crystal Palace' produced by site clearance company Thomas W Ward Ltd, a  
40        company employed to clear the site. It contains shocking photographs of the extent of the damage and information about the building and its fate. The booklet states 'Demolition of this famous edifice removes a Victorian monument of structural engineering, the central transept was one of the largest enclosed areas in England.'

45        On 23 December 1936 an inspection was carried out by Messrs. Cowley and Davies and they reported:

          'Confirmation of the extreme vulnerability of unprotected structural steel. As far as could be seen failure took place generally by the breaking of the cast iron supporting columns as a result of the bending stresses  
50        induced in them by the deflection of the girders... the transformation of the gravel aggregate to a pink and white colour and the presence of molten glass suggested that considerable temperatures had been attained in the vicinity.'

          Visiting Crystal Palace Park today, you can still see remnants of the old  
55        building in the shape of the land and the statues and stonework that still exist.

**Document 2** : Professor Thomas Leslie, University of Illinois, " 'Some Very ordinary Algebra': Ruskin's Critique of the Crystal Palace and the Aura of Architecture", ResearchGate.net, 2019.

*John Ruskin, (8 February 1819 – 20 January 1900), was an English writer, lecturer, art historian, art critic, draughtsman and philanthropist of the Victorian era.*

The first volume of John Ruskin's *Stones of Venice* was published in March, 1851, just weeks before the official opening of the 21-acre Crystal Palace in Hyde Park, designed by Joseph Paxton and realized, in large part, by Derby ironmaker Charles Fox. Publication of Ruskin's book was delayed by several weeks, allowing him time to insert an appendix that confronted the gigantic structure then rising in London. "Before I altogether leave the question of the influence of labor on architectural effect," Ruskin wrote, "the reader may expect from me a word or two respecting the subject which this year must be interesting to all—the applicability, namely, of glass and iron to architecture in general, as in some sort exemplified by the Crystal Palace."

In this, he was taking on a structure that fascinated the world for its scale and its nine month construction—but one that also gave some critics pause. Was the new building a harbinger of "transparent roofs" and "walls combining warmth, durability, cheapness, and strength," as the London Times hoped? Or did it portend darker forces? A strike by glaziers during the final weeks of construction over pay, working conditions, and the building's rapid schedule made it clear that the achievements of such an industrialized building would bring many of the issues then wracking factories throughout the country's industrial belt.

Ruskin returned to his critique of the Crystal Palace in a dedicated pamphlet, written in 1854, when the structure re-opened after being dismantled and rebuilt, with additions, in south London.

Here, Ruskin noted the coincidence of the original Palace's closing with the death of J.M.W. Turner in December, 1851 and the campaign of Gothic reconstruction by Viollet-le-Duc in France, in particular that of Notre-Dame de Paris, which had begun in 1845. For Ruskin, these temporally-linked events cast into sharp focus changing ideals of art and architecture; in particular, he found troubling the industrialized nature of the Crystal Palace and Viollet-le-Duc's "mathematically exact" but—in his view—spiritually impoverished restoration of Notre-Dame.

In these two essays, with the Crystal Palace serving as an illustration and as a rhetorical fulcrum, Ruskin expounded on the deadening mechanization of the building arts inherent in industrial production and reproduction. This extended beyond the repetitive assembly inherent in the Crystal Palace,

however—for Ruskin the very choices of materials by Paxton represented a move away from authentic craft, work, and experience; they portended a capitulation to sensational emphasis on size and insubstantiality. Could an industrially produced structure provide the emotional sustenance of a cathedral? Could workers find fulfillment in the manufacture of such a building? And, could the sublime sensibility that Ruskin so admired in Gothic architecture be instantiated in a secular structure by effect alone, or was it only achievable by the trace of human activity?

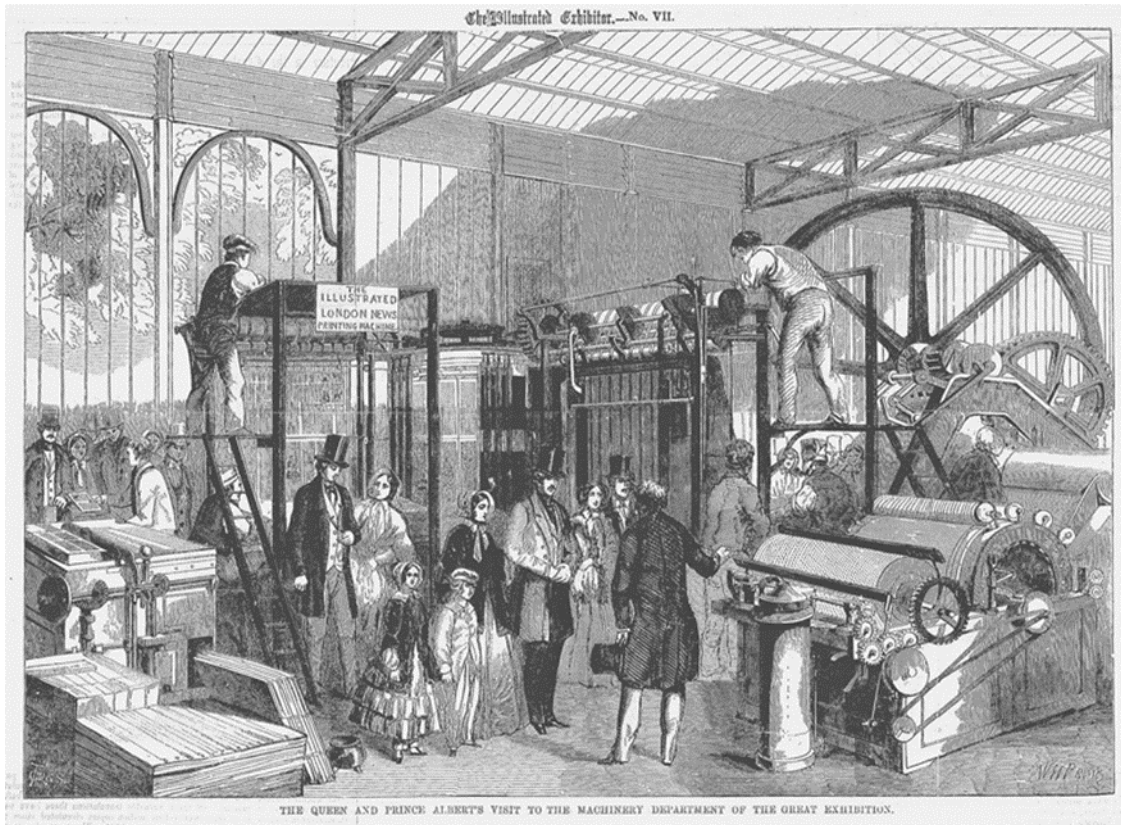
These questions were, in Ruskin's view, all provoked by Paxton and Fox's structure in Hyde Park; in his writings on the Crystal Palace, Ruskin sought to separate the intellectual and productive aspects of building, just as they had been split in the Palace's conception. Ruskin's conclusions would foreshadow many of the next century's most passionate debates in art and architecture, and they suggest reconsideration of the role of morality in design and construction for the present day.

**Document 3 :**

**Document 3A :** The Royal Parks, "Virtual Tour of the 1851 Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations", London, April 27, 2017.

Document vidéo (3'01") à consulter sur la tablette multimédia fournie.

**Document 3B :** "The Queen and Prince Albert's visit to the Machinery Department of the Great Exhibition" *The Illustrated Exhibitor, Tribute to the World's industrial Jubilee*, published by John Cassell, London, 1851.



Document iconographique également consultable sur la tablette multimédia fournie.