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Time stands still in London

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Today's contents

The Article	2
Warm-ups	3
Before Reading / Listening	4
While Reading / Listening	5
After Reading	6
Discussion	7
Speaking	8
Listening Gap Fill	9
Homework	10
Answers	11

29 May, 2005

THE ARTICLE

Time stands still in London

BNE: Time stood still in London on May 27 for one of the world's most recognizable landmarks. Big Ben, the famous 147-year-old clock that rises above Britain's Houses of Parliament, mysteriously stopped ticking and chiming for 90 minutes. The clock's minute hand stopped at 10.20 PM and then started moving again at 11.50 PM.

Engineers are baffled as to why the clock's usually reliable mechanism failed and cannot explain the glitch. Speculation that London's unseasonably hot weather was too much for the clock's workings has been ruled out. Temperatures in London reached a high of 31.8C on Saturday, making it England's hottest day in May since 1953.

The elegant timepiece is renowned for both its accuracy and chimes. It survived the bombing attacks on London during World War II and kept time to within one and a half seconds of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT). It has been known to be late on the odd occasion: snow caused the clock to ring in the New Year ten minutes late in 1962.

Many people erroneously believe Big Ben is either the name of the clock itself or of the tower that houses it. The name actually refers to the 13-ton main bell. Big Ben was named after Sir Benjamin Hall, who commissioned the clock's construction. The official name for the majestic tower in which Big Ben resides is St. Stephen's Tower.

WARM-UPS

1. MY WATCH: Talk to different partners about your watch (or anything else that you use to tell the time, such as your mobile phone). Explain everything you know about it and your feelings towards it. What functions does it have? Would you be lost without it? Would you have that naked feeling if you left home without it?

2. BIG BEN: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with Big Ben. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them.

3. LANDMARKS: Talk about the following world landmarks. Which are your favorites? What is great about them? Which have you been to? Which would like to visit most? Which one is the most beautiful? Give each landmark a score of 1 to 10 (10 = perfection). Are there any landmarks you feel must be added to this list?

- Big Ben (London, UK)
- Sydney Opera House (Sydney, Australia)
- Eiffel Tower (Paris, France)
- The Kremlin (Moscow, Russia)
- Statue of Christ the Redeemer (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil)
- The Pyramids (Giza, Egypt)
- The Empire State Building (New York)
- Oriental Pearl Tower (Shanghai, China)
- Taj Mahal (Agra, India)
- Sagrada Familia (Barcelona, Spain)

4. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

Time / London / clocks / Big Ben / GMT / New Year / being late / bells

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

5. TIME: In pairs/groups, talk about how much you agree with these statements:

- a. I'm never late.
- b. Time is precious.
- c. I don't need a watch.
- d. Analogue watches are better than digital ones.
- e. My life is ruled by my watch.
- f. I have lots of time to do the things I want.
- g. Time flies.
- h. Time is money.
- i. Time is on my side.
- j. I'd love a Rolex watch.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| a. The staff of <i>Time</i> magazine in London has gone on strike. | T / F |
| b. The London landmark Big Ben stopped working for a while. | T / F |
| c. Big Ben's engineers are baffled and cannot explain the glitch. | T / F |
| d. Big Ben stopped working because of record hot temperatures. | T / F |
| e. Big Ben was half-destroyed during World War II. | T / F |
| f. Big Ben rang in the New Year 10 minutes too late in 1962. | T / F |
| g. Big Ben is the name of a famous London clock. | T / F |
| h. The tower that houses Big Ben is called Big Ben Tower. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------|
| a. still | malfunction |
| b. mysteriously | accommodates |
| c. baffled | occasional |
| d. glitch | motionless |
| e. renowned | grandiose |
| f. accuracy | flummoxed |
| g. odd | mistakenly |
| h. erroneously | unfathomably |
| i. houses | precision |
| j. majestic | illustrious |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| a. stopped | timepiece |
| b. The clock's minute | as to why |
| c. baffled | one and a half seconds of GMT |
| d. cannot explain | believe |
| e. unseasonably | ticking and chiming |
| f. elegant | in which Big Ben resides |
| g. kept time to within | hot weather |
| h. be late | hand stopped at 10.20 PM |
| i. erroneously | on the odd occasion |
| j. the majestic tower | the glitch |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words in the column on the right into the correct spaces.

Time stands still in London

BNE: Time _____ still in London on May 27 for one of the world's most recognizable landmarks. Big Ben, the famous 147-year-old clock that rises above Britain's Houses of Parliament, mysteriously stopped _____ and _____ for 90 minutes. The clock's minute _____ stopped at 10.20 PM and then started moving again at 11.50 PM.

Engineers are _____ as to why the clock's usually reliable _____ failed and cannot explain the _____. Speculation that London's unseasonably hot weather was too much for the clock's workings has been _____ out. Temperatures in London reached a high of 31.8C on Saturday, making it England's hottest day in May since 1953.

The _____ timepiece is renowned for both its accuracy and _____. It survived the bombing attacks on London during World War II and _____ time to within one and a half seconds of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT). It has been known to be late on the _____ occasion: snow caused the clock to ring in the New Year ten minutes late in 1962.

Many people _____ believe Big Ben is either the name of the clock itself or of the tower that _____ it. The name actually refers to the 13-ton main bell. Big Ben was named after Sir Benjamin Hall, who _____ the clock's construction. The official name for the majestic tower in which Big Ben _____ is St. Stephen's Tower.

hand
ticking
chiming
stood

glitch
ruled
baffled
mechanism

elegant
kept
chimes
odd

resides
houses
commissioned
erroneously

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words **'minute'** and **'hand'**.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words in the gap fill. Which were new, interesting, unusual, difficult...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT TIME SURVEY: In pairs / groups write down questions about time.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make a mini-presentation to another group / the class on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- | | |
|---------------|---------------|
| • still | • renowned |
| • rises | • within |
| • hand | • 1962 |
| • baffled | • erroneously |
| • speculation | • refers |
| • high | • resides |

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. What did you think the article would be about when you read the headline?
- b. What do you think of Big Ben?
- c. What does Big Ben represent (if anything)?
- d. Are there any famous clocks in your country?
- e. What kinds of clocks are there in your house?
- f. Do you have a favorite clock?
- g. Are you happier sporting a digital or analogue watch on your wrist?
- h. Would you like a Rolex or other similarly expensive brand watch?
- i. Do you ever wish there were 48 hours in a day?
- j. Do you like your alarm clock?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading the article?
- b. What did you think of this news?
- c. Do you think Big Ben is one of the world's greatest landmarks?
- d. Are you a stickler for time?
- e. Do you think being punctual is important?
- f. Do you ever procrastinate?
- g. How is your time management?
- h. What do you think of tardiness in other people?
- i. Do you ever wish the second hand would go round faster?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What question would you like to ask about this topic?
- b. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- c. Was there a question you didn't like?
- d. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- e. What did you like talking about?
- f. Do you want to know how anyone else answered the questions?
- g. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

1. SECOND BY SECOND: Give a second-by-second account of a simple routine to your partner or group. The routines could be simple things like cleaning your teeth or making a cup of coffee. Make sure you don't skip any steps in describing and explaining every tiny action. Your partner(s) will visualize your every step and tell you if you miss anything. Which person can describe the most actions?

2. SQUEEZING TIME: Most people are very busy and need to squeeze more time into their days. Talk with your partner / group about your lifestyle. In which part of the day you could use more time? Your partner(s) will give you advice on how to be more time efficient. Use this table to help you:

	Breakfast	Morning	Lunch	Afternoon	Dinner	Night
Monday						
Tuesday						
Wednesday						
Thursday						
Friday						
Saturday						
Sunday						

3. TIME VERBS: Complete the following statements and talk about them with your partner(s):

- I need to allocate more time _____.
- I need to devote more time to _____.
- I fritter away too much time _____.
- I should invest more time in _____.
- I kill time _____.
- I waste too much time _____.
- I like to while away time _____.

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Time stands still in London

BNE: Time stood still in London on May 27 for one of the world's _____ . Big Ben, the famous 147-year-old clock that rises above Britain's Houses of Parliament, mysteriously stopped _____ for 90 minutes. The clock's minute hand stopped at 10.20 PM and then started moving again at 11.50 PM.

Engineers are baffled as to why the clock's _____ failed and cannot _____. Speculation that London's unseasonably hot weather was too much for the clock's workings has been ruled out. Temperatures in London reached a high of 31.8C on Saturday, making it England's hottest day in May since 1953.

The elegant timepiece is _____ accuracy and chimes. It survived the bombing attacks on London during World War II and _____ one and a half seconds of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT). It has been known to be late on _____: snow caused the clock to ring in the New Year ten minutes late in 1962.

Many people erroneously believe Big Ben is either the name of the clock itself or of _____. The name actually refers to the 13-ton main bell. Big Ben was named after Sir Benjamin Hall, who commissioned the clock's construction. The official name for the majestic tower _____ is St. Stephen's Tower.

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information on Big Ben. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson.

3. TIME: Write an essay about time. Choose any sense of the word as the theme of your essay. Read it to your classmates in your next lesson.

4. MY WATCH: Create an imaginary presentation to sell your watch. Make sure you describe all of its wonderful qualities and uses. You must try and win the "Best Watch Presentation" award in your next class.

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

a. F b. T c. T d. F e. F f. T g. F h. F

SYNONYM MATCH:

a. still	motionless
b. mysteriously	unfathomably
c. baffled	flummoxed
d. glitch	malfunction
e. renowned	illustrious
f. accuracy	precision
g. odd	occasional
h. erroneously	mistakenly
i. houses	accommodates
j. majestic	grandiose

PHRASE MATCH:

a. stopped	ticking and chiming
b. The clock's minute	hand stopped at 10.20 PM
c. baffled	as to why
d. cannot explain	the glitch
e. unseasonably	hot weather
f. elegant	timepiece
g. kept time to within	one and a half seconds of GMT
h. be late	on the odd occasion
i. erroneously	believe
j. the majestic tower	in which Big Ben resides

GAP FILL:

Time stands still in London

BNE: Time **stood** still in London on May 27 for one of the world's most recognizable landmarks. Big Ben, the famous 147-year-old clock that rises above Britain's Houses of Parliament, mysteriously stopped **ticking** and **chiming** for 90 minutes. The clock's minute **hand** stopped at 10.20 PM and then started moving again at 11.50 PM.

Engineers are **baffled** as to why the clock's usually reliable **mechanism** failed and cannot explain the **glitch**. Speculation that London's unseasonably hot weather was too much for the clock's workings has been **ruled** out. Temperatures in London reached a high of 31.8C on Saturday, making it England's hottest day in May since 1953.

The **elegant** timepiece is renowned for both its accuracy and **chimes**. It survived the bombing attacks on London during World War II and **kept** time to within one and a half seconds of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT). It has been known to be late on the **odd** occasion: snow caused the clock to ring in the New Year ten minutes late in 1962.

Many people **erroneously** believe Big Ben is either the name of the clock itself or of the tower that **houses** it. The name actually refers to the 13-ton main bell. Big Ben was named after Sir Benjamin Hall, who **commissioned** the clock's construction. The official name for the majestic tower in which Big Ben **resides** is St. Stephen's Tower.