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Time stands still in London

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29 May, 2005

THE ARTICLE

Time stands still in London

BNE: Time stood still in London on May 27. Big Ben, the 147-year-old clock that is famous around the world, mysteriously stopped for 90 minutes. The clock's minute hand froze at 10.20 PM and then started moving again at 11.50 PM. Engineers are baffled and cannot explain why the clock stopped. It is usually very reliable and rarely loses even one second.

Big Ben is well known for both its accuracy and its hourly chimes. It miraculously survived the bombing attacks on London during World War II. It even managed to keep time to within one and a half seconds of GMT (Greenwich Mean Time). However, it hasn't always been so reliable: snow caused the clock to ring in the New Year ten minutes late in 1962.

Many people mistakenly believe Big Ben is either the name of the clock itself or of the clock tower. In fact, it is neither. Big Ben is the name of the 13-ton bell that strikes on every hour. It was named after Sir Benjamin Hall, who ordered the clock's construction. The official name for the tower that houses Big Ben 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. Talk about your feelings towards it. What functions does it have? What would your life be like 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 = perfect). Are there any landmarks you think should 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. I wish there were 48 hours in one day.
- 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 cannot explain why the clock stopped. | T / F |
| d. Big Ben usually loses one second every day. | T / F |
| e. Big Ben was half-destroyed during World War II. | T / F |
| f. Snow caused the clock to be 10 minutes 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. stood still | trustworthy |
| b. mysteriously | incorrectly |
| c. baffled | rings |
| d. reliable | unexplainably |
| e. accuracy | accommodates |
| f. chimes | stopped |
| g. late | building |
| h. mistakenly | precision |
| i. construction | slow |
| j. houses | puzzled |

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

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| a. minute | baffled |
| b. Engineers are | one and a half seconds of GMT |
| c. rarely loses even | the New Year |
| d. well known for | on every hour |
| e. miraculously | hand |
| f. keep time to within | both its accuracy and its hourly chimes |
| g. hasn't always been | believe |
| h. ring in | one second |
| i. mistakenly | so reliable |
| j. strikes | survived |

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. Big Ben, the 147-year-old clock that is famous around the world, _____ stopped for 90 minutes. The clock's minute hand _____ at 10.20 PM and then started moving again at 11.50 PM. Engineers are _____ and cannot explain why the clock stopped. It is usually very reliable and rarely loses even one second.

froze
stood
mysteriously
baffled

Big Ben is well known for both its _____ and its hourly chimes. It miraculously _____ the bombing attacks on London during World War II. It even _____ to keep time to within one and a half seconds of GMT (Greenwich Mean Time). However, it hasn't always been so _____: snow caused the clock to ring in the New Year ten minutes late in 1962.

survived
reliable
accuracy
managed

Many people _____ believe Big Ben is either the name of the clock itself or of the clock tower. In fact, it is _____. Big Ben is the name of the 13-ton bell that _____ on every hour. It was named after Sir Benjamin Hall, who ordered the clock's construction. The official name for the tower that _____ Big Ben is St. Stephen's Tower.

houses
mistakenly
strikes
neither

AFTER READING

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 | • keep |
| • around | • snow |
| • baffled | • mistakenly |
| • rarely | • bell |
| • hourly | • named |
| • survived | • houses |

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. Is Big Ben England's most famous landmark?
- 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. Do you prefer digital or analogue watches?
- h. Would you like a Rolex watch?
- i. What would you do if you had more time?
- 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. Do you always have to be on time?
- e. Do you think being punctual is important?
- f. Do you ever put off doing things until a later time?
- g. Do you manage your time well?
- h. What do you think people who are always late?
- i. Do you ever wish the second hand on the clock would go move 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: Think about these simple routines: cleaning your teeth, making a cup of coffee, sending an e-mail. Give a second-by-second explanation of one of these routines to your partner or group. Make sure you don't skip any steps. Describing and explaining every tiny movement of your arms, hands, body etc. Your partner(s) will tell you if you miss anything. Which person can describe the most steps?

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 and where you would like to squeeze more time into. Your partner(s) will give you advice on how to make more time. 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 find more time to _____.
- I need to devote more time to _____.
- I spend too much time _____.
- I should invest more time in _____.
- I kill time _____.
- I waste too much time _____.
- I could save more time by _____.

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Time stands still in London

BNE: Time _____ in London on May 27. Big Ben, the 147-year-old clock that is famous around the world, _____ for 90 minutes. The clock's minute hand froze at 10.20 PM and then started moving again at 11.50 PM. Engineers _____ and cannot explain why the clock stopped. It is usually _____ and rarely loses even one second.

Big Ben is well known for _____ and its hourly chimes. It miraculously survived the bombing attacks on London during World War II. It _____ to keep time to within one and a half seconds of GMT (Greenwich Mean Time). However, it hasn't always _____: snow caused the clock to ring in the New Year ten minutes late in 1962.

Many people _____ Big Ben is either the name of _____ or of the clock tower. In fact, it is neither. Big Ben is the name of the 13-ton _____ on every hour. It was named after Sir Benjamin Hall, who ordered the clock's construction. The official name for the _____ Big Ben 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 meaning 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. stood still	stopped
b. mysteriously	unexplainably
c. baffled	puzzled
d. reliable	trustworthy
e. accuracy	precision
f. chimes	rings
g. late	slow
h. mistakenly	incorrectly
i. construction	building
j. houses	accommodates

PHRASE MATCH:

a. minute	hand
b. Engineers are	baffled
c. rarely loses even	one second
d. well known for	both its accuracy and its hourly chimes
e. miraculously	survived
f. keep time to within	one and a half seconds of GMT
g. hasn't always been	so reliable
h. ring in	the New Year
i. mistakenly	believe
j. strikes	on every hour

GAP FILL:

Time stands still in London

BNE: Time **stood** still in London on May 27. Big Ben, the 147-year-old clock that is famous around the world, **mysteriously** stopped for 90 minutes. The clock's minute hand **froze** at 10.20 PM and then started moving again at 11.50 PM. Engineers are **baffled** and cannot explain why the clock stopped. It is usually very reliable and rarely loses even one second.

Big Ben is well known for both its **accuracy** and its hourly chimes. It miraculously **survived** the bombing attacks on London during World War II. It even **managed** to keep time to within one and a half seconds of GMT (Greenwich Mean Time). However, it hasn't always been so **reliable**: snow caused the clock to ring in the New Year ten minutes late in 1962.

Many people **mistakenly** believe Big Ben is either the name of the clock itself or of the clock tower. In fact, it is **neither**. Big Ben is the name of the 13-ton bell that **strikes** on every hour. It was named after Sir Benjamin Hall, who ordered the clock's construction. The official name for the tower that **houses** Big Ben is St. Stephen's Tower.