

Skill Focus: Retrieving information

BIG BEN GETS A BATH!

People from all over the world come to London and visit Big Ben but one week this August, they would have seen an unusual sight!

Five highly-trained abseiling experts started cleaning all four clock faces on 18th August. It will be the clock's first scrub for 4 years. Experts think it will take a week to complete the cleaning so long as the weather stays fine.

The Houses of Parliament clock (nicknamed Big Ben), which was built in 1859, will also be checked for damage to the dials. Each clock face is made up of 312 pieces of opal glass, which must be treated carefully. The hands of the clock were made in copper because it is lighter than other metals.

DID YOU KNOW?

Big Ben's real name is the Great Clock of Westminster which is at the top of the Elizabeth Tower (named after the Queen). The Elizabeth Tower is part of the Houses of Parliament.

To keep the climbing cleaners safe, the clock's hands have been frozen in the midday position.

1. Where is Big Ben?
2. What year was Big Ben last cleaned in?
3. Over 250 pieces of glass are used in Big Ben. True or false?
4. What material was chosen to make the hands of the clock and why?
5. How have they made sure the cleaners will not be in danger?
6. How many days will it take to finish the job?
7. What is the correct name for the building the clock is at the top of?

Skill focus: Making inferences

Opening night

Tim took another deep breath. Inside his chest, he could feel his heart pounding like a bass drum. Again, he took slow, deep breaths and picked up his script. Flicking through the pages, he read through his lines quietly to himself, mumbling under his breath. All his hard work over the last few months had been for tonight. Crossing his fingers tightly, he wished for good luck.

"Tim, are you ready? You're on in 2 minutes," said Mr. Smith.

"I think so, Sir," said Tim in a shaky voice.

"Don't worry, you'll be fine, Tim. Break a leg!"

Slowly, Tim stood up and made his way towards the heavy, red velvet curtain. He pulled it to the side and stepped through.

1. How do you think Tim is feeling at the beginning of the text?
2. Explain how you know how he is feeling.
3. What do you think Tim is waiting to do?
4. What clues told you what Tim might be doing?
5. Who do you think Mr. Smith is?
6. Do you think "Opening Night" is a good title? Why?
7. If you had to give this text a different title, what would you call it?

Skill focus: Making inferences

A Busy Morning

"Ouchhhh!" screamed Toby. I ran into the living room to see Toby lying on the hard, wooden floor, tears rolling down his chubby, little cheeks. Behind me, I heard my mum walk into the room.

"What have you been doing to Toby?!" she shouted, her face turning a deep red. "Go upstairs; I haven't got time for this today."

"But-" I started to explain.

"Upstairs. NOW," Mum ordered. "And finish your packing, we need to leave for the airport in 20 minutes."

I stomped up the stairs to my room. It wasn't fair! Angrily, I started throwing things into my suitcase: sunglasses, a swimming costume, shorts, flip-flops.

1. How is Mum feeling when she walks into the room? How can you tell?
2. What does Mum think has happened and why?
3. What do you think the relationship is between Toby and the narrator?
4. Why do you think Mum says "I haven't got time for this today"? What is she getting ready for?
5. Where do you think the family might be going?
6. Explain what clues there are to where the family are going.

Skill focus: Retrieving information

"Ahoy me hearties!"

A man in Suffolk has built a giant pirate ship in his back garden. Tim Jones spent half a year creating the captain's cabin, deck and seven metre mast (more than 3 times the height of a door!)

He then added several humorous finishing touches including a toy parrot called Polly and a Jolly Roger pirate flag. Tim said, "I spent every free hour I had and weekends building it. It was a tiring time but now I know it was all worthwhile."

Tim said the idea for the pirate ship came from his themed birthday party. He gathered and used discarded wood to build the pirate ship at minimum cost. Some trees had to be cut down to fit it in.



The unusual garden feature has become well known by locals as the mast can be seen from the road. "It really makes me chuckle every time I walk past," said a neighbour.

"Everyone loves it," Tim said. "I'd love to make it bigger but I really don't have the room."

1. How many months did it take Tim to build the pirate ship?
2. Did it cost Tim a lot of money to build the pirate ship? How do you know?
3. "The neighbours don't like the pirate ship." True or false? Explain how you know.
4. What does the writer think about the pirate ship? Explain what word gives you a clue.
5. "The pirate ship is large." True or false? Explain how you know.
6. Is Tim pleased with his pirate ship? How do you know?
7. Why do you think the title of the article is "Ahoy me hearties!"?