

ERIC 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?