

Big Ben Goes Silent A2



Look how big the clock face is! These workers used mountain climbing techniques to repair Big Ben. They abseiled down the clock face on cords.

Big Ben is the symbol of London. But the famous clock needs major repairs.

People call the clock on the British Houses of Parliament "Big Ben". It is a famous landmark. "Big Ben" is really the name of the gigantic bell in the clock tower. Every hour, the bell rings to tell the time.

The clock dates from 1856. Now the clock, and the tower, need repairs. The repairs will last from 2017 to 2020. Then Big Ben can continue working for 150 years!

Four people at the Houses of Parliament have a very special job:



Four people at the Houses of Parliament work to ensure that Big Ben works perfectly.



Help

mountain climbing (n) Climbers use *mountain-climbing* techniques to get to the summit of Mount Everest.

abseil (v, pronounced *ab-sale*) when you are suspended on cords and go down a building etc. Also called *rappelling*.

repair (n/v) work to return something to good condition

landmark (n) an important monument, building or natural feature that is specific to one place. The Statue of Liberty is a New York *landmark*.

bell (n) metal musical instrument. See photo next page.

tower (n) a tall building or monument. The Eiffel Tower symbolises Paris.

work (v) here, function



12,000 people normally visit Big Ben every year. See how big the bell is in comparison with the people! The bell is 2.7m in diameter, 2.2m in height, and weighs 13.7 tonnes.

they are clockmakers and they ensure that 2,000 clocks in Parliament work perfectly. The biggest clock is Big Ben.

The clock's mechanism has three parts. Each part gets its energy from an enormous weight, which slowly descends inside the tower. The three weights must be returned to the top of the tower every two days. The clockmakers must turn a giant handle to return one of the weights to the top. The other two weights have an electric motor.

Time for Repairs

The work started in April 2017. One clock face at a time will be removed for renovation.

The Big Ben bell will stop ringing for part of the time. But for important occasions, Londoners will hear the sound of Big Ben as usual. ■



The metal-and-glass clock faces need repairs.

Help

weight (n, pronounced wate) here, a heavy object

one at a time (exp) in a series, first one face is removed, then when it comes back, another face is removed, etc.

The clock is very precise: it is a maximum of one second fast or slow. To make small adjustments, the clockmakers place coins – old pennies – on the pendulum. One penny accelerates the clock by 0.4 of a second in 24 hours.

