

Name _____

Big Ben

Deep in the heart of London, near the River Thames, stands one of the most famous clock towers in the world-Big Ben! While many people call the whole tower Big Ben, the name actually refers to the giant bell inside. The tower itself is officially called Elizabeth Tower, renamed in 2012 to honor Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee. Let's take a closer look at this incredible piece of history and architecture.

Big Ben was completed in 1859 and has been ticking away for over 160 years! The tower was designed by the architect Augustus Pugin, who loved creating intricate Gothic Revival buildings. The structure stands an impressive 316 feet tall-about the height of a 32-story building! At the top of the tower are four giant clock faces, each over 20 feet wide. Can you imagine a clock face that big? The hands of the clock are as long as a bus, and they tell the time for all of London to see.

The heart of Big Ben is its massive bell. Weighing over 13 tons, it's as heavy as two African elephants! Every hour, the bell chimes, sending its deep and resonant sound across the city. This famous "bong" has become a symbol of London itself. Even though the bell cracked shortly after being installed, engineers figured out a way to make it work without replacing it. That crack is still there today and gives Big Ben its unique sound.

Big Ben is more than just a clock. It has become a symbol of British culture and resilience. During World War II, when much of London was damaged by bombs, the clock kept ticking and chiming, giving hope to the people. To this day, Big Ben represents strength and endurance to people around the world.

While Big Ben is steeped in history, it's also keeping up with modern times. In recent years, the tower underwent renovations to repair damage and update its technology. Special care was taken to preserve its original charm while ensuring it can last for future generations. Today, Big Ben remains one of London's most visited landmarks, attracting millions of tourists every year.

Big Ben is not just a beloved feature of London's skyline-it's known around the world. It often appears in movies, TV shows, and photographs, making it a symbol of England and British culture. Whether you're hearing its chimes on New Year's Eve or seeing it light up at night, Big Ben is a timeless treasure that continues to captivate the world.

