**Big Ben & houses of Parliament**

We are going to tell you something about the Big Ben and the houses of Parliament.

***Big Ben***

First you see the Big Ben. The Palace of Westminster was destroyed by fire in 1834. In 1844, they decided that there had to be a new building for the houses of Parliament. It should include a tower and a clock.

The Big Ben is one of the most famous buildings in London. The big ben is 320 feet high which is about 98 meter. It is a famous clock tower, built in 1959. A lot of people think that the tower is the Big Ben, but it is not the tower but the bell inside which is called the Big Ben. It charms every hour of every day in London.The huge bell is named after Sir Benjamin Hall because his nickname was Big Ben. The first bell cracked during a test ringing, according to experts the bell was too heavy. After that the Big Ben was out of order for 3 years.

Big Ben is the largest clock in Britain and has kept the exact time for the nation since May 1859. In England you can hear Big Ben chiming daily the nation over, either on television news or radio. The first BBC radio broadcast of the Big Ben chimes was on New Year's Eve, 1923. Later, permanent microphones were placed in the tower, and the sound of Big Ben became a familiar one to listeners, assuming great significance during WWII, when the chimes became a symbol of hope and home to BBC listeners around the world.The clock became the symbol of the United Kingdom.

The big ben - the bell not the building - rings only at the whole ours for example at one o’clock. There are also four smaller bells, they ring every quarter.

***The Houses of Parliament:***

The Houses of Parliament, is the government building of Great Britain, also known as The Palace of Westminster. It lies on the bank of the river Thames and is the heart of the British politics.It’s since 1987 on the world heritage list of UNESCO.
It has been split up in the two Houses of Parliament: the House of Lords and the House of Commons.
The Commons is made up of elected Members of Parliament (MP's) from different political parties (Labor, Liberal Democrats, Conservative, etc). The party with the most Members of parliament forms the Government of England, with its leader becoming Prime Minister of England. Members of parliament from other parties make up the Opposition.

The house was originally built for Edward the Confessor in 1042 and has more than 1000 rooms, 100 stairs and 2 miles of hallways. In 1512 a fire broke out and the palace stopped being a royal residence, but the Lords continued to meet there. The Palace of Westminster has been home to the English Parliament ever since.

Another fire raged through the palace in 1834 destroying much of it, except the Jewel Tower and Westminster Hall which dates from 1097 and its hammer beam roof dating from the 14th century. This part of the palace was saved by Lord Melbourne, the Prime Minister at the time who saved the great hall by arranging for the fire engines to be brought right into the hall and then he personally supervised the fire fighting.
The tower on the right is Big Ben, and the tower on the left is Victoria Tower. If you want you can join a debate at stranger’s galleries in both the houses.