
Can you believe it?

WORKSHEET A

Exercise 1

Below are three news items: two are genuine and one has been made up. Can you identify which is not genuine?

1. An unusual way of getting rid of stress is becoming popular in Shanghai, China: hitting strangers with a pillow. Around 600 young people recently got together for a mass pillow fight in a large nightclub – not the first time such an event has taken place in the city. Upon entry, everyone received a large pillow and was encouraged to write on it the name of the boss, teacher, exam subject, or whatever it was that was causing them most stress. Then, while a rock band played loudly on stage, everyone started whacking each other with their pillows. The event certainly seemed to have the intended effect, as most of the participants were clearly having a great time. The organizers plan to stage similar events in other Chinese cities and to have them take place simultaneously, with live video linkups.

2. There was surprise in the UK recently when it was announced that the clock tower of the Palace of Westminster – the famous parliament building by the Thames River in London – is leaning to one side. The tower, popularly known as “Big Ben,” is perhaps the UK’s most famous landmark. (A little-known fact is that Big Ben is the name of the huge bell in the tower, which rings every hour, not of the whole tower.) People with a fertile imagination immediately pictured Big Ben crashing into the Thames, leaving London without one of its biggest tourist attractions. Experts insist, however, that it is not abnormal for a tower as old as Big Ben (built in 1858) to begin leaning slightly, and that it is strong enough to remain standing for many centuries to come. Some people thought the announcement was not really news at all: they said that for many years it has been possible to see with the naked eye, looking carefully, that Big Ben is not quite at a right angle to the ground.

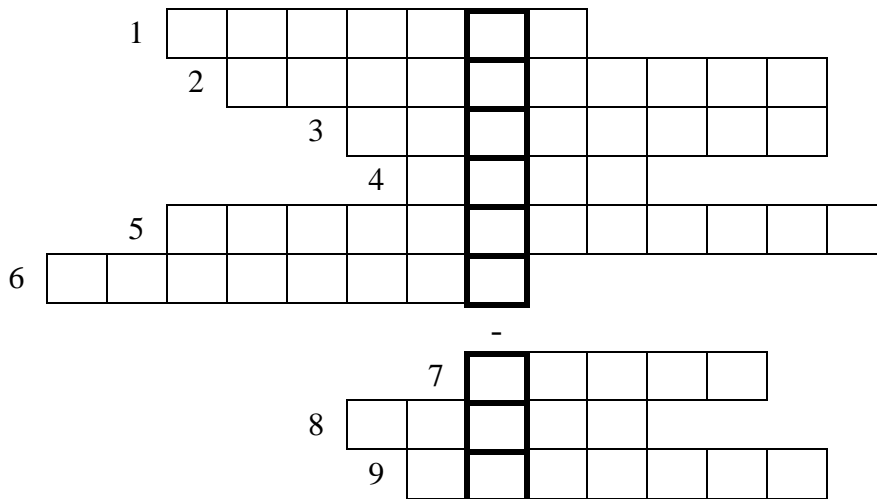
3. A new amusement park in Chicago in the United States has come up with an unusual way of cheering up unhappy teenagers: by showing them that life is more fun than it would have been in centuries gone by. Parents whose teenaged children complain of feeling bored or depressed can send them there for a stay (anything from four to forty-eight hours) at the park, which aims to recreate the typical living conditions of young people in the United States in the early nineteenth century. Available activities include sewing, planting vegetables, digging wells, and chopping wood: there isn’t a TV, computer, or cell phone to be found anywhere. Feedback so far suggests that most young visitors to the park are very grateful to return to the twenty-first century when their time is up.

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WORKSHEET B

Exercise 2

Complete the crossword below. If all the words are correct, the height in meters of the clock tower that contains Big Ben will read from top to bottom.



1. A pillow fight involves two or more people _____ each other with pillows in a way that is supposed to be fun for all of them.
2. The British _____ meets at the Palace of Westminster in London.
3. The clock tower containing Big Ben is a very well-known _____.
4. Not many people know that Big Ben is really the name of a _____, not of the clock tower.
5. There are plans to show _____ live pillow fights in different Chinese cities.
6. Big Ben is only leaning _____.
7. There is a _____ in the nightclub in Shanghai where live bands play.
8. The participants in the Shanghai pillow fights are supposed to _____ something on their pillow.
9. The _____ certainly don't think that the clock tower is going to fall into the Thames River in the near future.

Can you believe it?

WORKSHEET C

Exercise 3

Most of the text from Worksheet A has been copied below, but now contains some mistakes. Twenty of the words in bold are incorrect, and five are correct. Decide which are incorrect, and correct them.

An unusual way of getting (1) **bid** of stress is becoming popular in Shanghai, China: hitting (2) **stranges** with a pillow. Around 600 young people recently (3) **got** together for a (4) **mess** pillow fight in a large nightclub – not the first time such an event has (5) **took** place in the city. Upon entry, everyone received a large pillow and was (6) **couraged** to write on it the name of the (7) **moss**, teacher, exam subject, or whatever it was that was (8) **cause** them most stress. Then, while a rock band played loudly on stage, everyone started (9) **waking** each other with their pillows. The event certainly seemed to have the (10) **tended** effect, as most of the (11) **participates** were clearly having a great time. The organizers plan to (12) **sage** similar events in other Chinese cities and to have them take place simultaneously, with (13) **live** video linkups.

There was surprise in the UK recently when it was (14) **announce** that the clock tower of the Palace of Westminster – the famous parliament building (15) **by** the Thames River in London – is leaning to one side. The tower, (16) **popular** known as “Big Ben,” is perhaps the UK’s most famous landmark. (A (17) **little**-known fact is that Big Ben is the name of the huge bell in the tower, which rings every hour, not of the whole tower.) People with a (18) **furtille** imagination immediately (19) **pictured** Big Ben (20) **cashing** into the Thames, leaving London without one of its biggest tourist (21) **attracts**. Experts (22) **onsist**, however, that it is not (23) **upnormal** for a tower as old as Big Ben (built in 1858) to begin leaning slightly, and that it is strong enough to remain standing for many centuries to come. Some people thought the (24) **announce** was not really news at all: they said that for many years it has been possible to see with the (25) **baked** eye, looking carefully, that Big Ben is not quite at a right angle to the ground.