

# Adventure in London

A Reading A-Z Level U Leveled Book  
Word Count: 1,394

## Connections

### Writing

Pretend you are Erik. Write a letter to your mom describing your adventure in London. Use information from the book and outside resources to include details about the sites you visited.

### Social Studies and Art

Research to learn about another landmark in London. Create a brochure that informs readers about the landmark and persuades them to visit.

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LEVELED BOOK • U

# Adventure in LONDON



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**Focus Question**

What does Erik learn about London?

## Words to Know

- |               |                |
|---------------|----------------|
| chime         | Parliament     |
| clockwork     | prime minister |
| coincidences  | tourists       |
| double-decker | trinket        |
| energetic     | turnstile      |
| monarch       | turrets        |

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Level U Leveled Book  
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### Correlation

#### LEVEL U

Fountas & Pinnell	Q
Reading Recovery	40
DRA	40





Erik's mom was never late. But after the last bell at Gatlinburg Middle School had rung, Erik and his cousin Sasha were still waiting to be picked up.

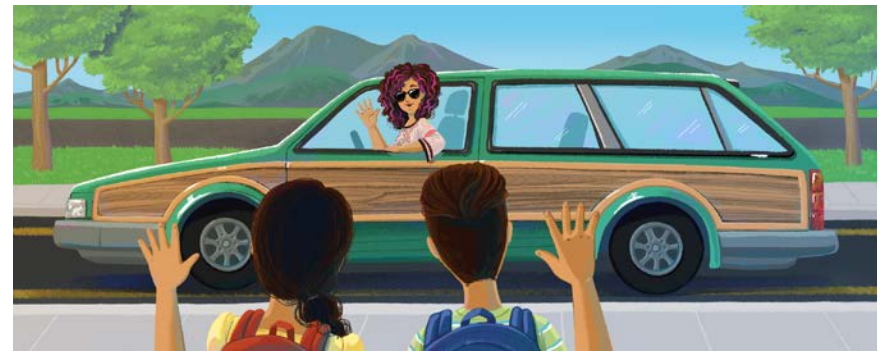
"She's probably working," Erik said. His mom was a river-raft guide at Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Sometimes, **tourists** showed up without warning and she squeezed them into her schedule.

"Should I call my mom?" Sasha asked.

"No, it's okay," Erik said. "Mom never leaves me stranded."

Just then, an old green station wagon pulled up and screeched to a stop. A woman with enormous sunglasses poked her head out. "Hop in, you two!" she shouted.

"Aunt Isa!" the cousins exclaimed.



They had not seen their Aunt Isa since she left for the Amazon rainforest six months earlier. She was their moms' youngest—and wildest—sister. She was always traveling and had explored much of the world on her trips.

"Sorry I'm late! I went to the elementary school first. Oops!" Aunt Isa laughed as Erik and Sasha climbed in. "Your mom is working, so it's just us this weekend," she said, waggling her eyebrows at Erik.

Erik smiled, but as Aunt Isa hit the gas, he looked out the window and sighed. Weekend plans with his mom would have to be postponed—again.

After taking Sasha to soccer practice, Aunt Isa and Erik headed home. His house felt different with her there—more alive. The radio was playing, the windows were open, and even Arnold, his lazy old dog, seemed more **energetic**.

“Should we bake brownies?” she asked. “Blow bubbles? Brew a volcano?”

“I’m too old for that stuff,” Erik groaned as he sank into the couch.

Aunt Isa squeezed his shoulder. “You know your mom would be here if she could.”

“I know,” Erik replied, “but the weekend was going to be so fun!”

“Who says it won’t be?” Aunt Isa demanded, hands on her hips. “In fact, I just had a brilliant idea . . .”



Ten minutes later, a car honked outside. Erik peeked out the window—it was a taxi. “They must have the wrong address,” he said.

But when he turned around, Aunt Isa was lugging suitcases toward the door. “Grab your shoes or we’ll miss our flight!” she said.

“Our flight?” Erik exclaimed. When did his aunt have time to plan a trip? He ran out the door after her.

“A change of scenery will be just the ticket!” Aunt Isa declared, entering the taxi. “To the airport, please, and then to London!”

“London!” Erik scrambled into the taxi, too. “London is in a whole different country!”

Aunt Isa winked. “Exactly!”

“What about plane tickets? Hotel reservations?” Erik asked.

“Oh, things will work out. They always do!”

The taxi pulled away. “Are you sure this is okay with my mom?” Erik insisted.

“What’s life without a little adventure?” Aunt Isa replied.



It was Erik's first flight overseas, and the view crossing the ocean took his breath away. "I can't believe this is real," he whispered as the plane landed and the pilot welcomed them to London.

First: the subway. "In London, it's called *the tube*," Aunt Isa explained, breezing through a **turnstile**. Erik blinked. Had she even swiped a ticket? The turnstile let him through, too. Maybe Aunt Isa had prepaid their fares?

He didn't have time to wonder—the train arrived, and everyone rushed aboard. Somehow, despite the crowd, Aunt Isa grabbed the last two seats. A few stops later, they reached a hotel where an energetic bellhop grabbed their bags and led them to a room without stopping at the front desk. Before Erik could catch his breath, they were back outside on the streets of London.

"What's the plan?" he asked.

"Why don't we play it by ear?" Aunt Isa suggested.



They began with a stroll along the River Thames. Tower Bridge, with its sturdy stone **turrets**, caught Erik's eye. He stopped by the riverbank to admire it.

"Fancy a lift?" called a voice from below. It was a man in a rowboat, with two life vests on the empty seat. It seemed too good to be true—but Erik was beginning to realize that traveling with Aunt Isa led to all kinds of crazy **coincidences**.

They hopped aboard, and the man rowed them up the Thames. Something about his face looked strangely familiar.







“Now we’re beneath London Bridge,” the boatman said. A short time later, he pointed. “That’s the Globe Theatre, venue of William Shakespeare and his famous plays . . . And this is Millennium Bridge. A bit modern for my taste, I must say.”

Erik and Aunt Isa hopped out at the next bridge—Westminster. The boatman tipped his hat. Suddenly, Erik recognized him.

“Was that—*William Shakespeare*?” Erik asked in disbelief.

“Oh, he’s an old friend,” Aunt Isa replied with a smile.

Westminster Bridge was beautiful, but the real sight was Big Ben. The tower had a clock face on every side, keeping time for the entire city.

“Can you believe it still uses the eighteenth-century **clockwork**?” Aunt Isa said.

Suddenly, Erik had an idea as wild as any of Aunt Isa’s. “Can we climb it?” he asked.

“I think that can be arranged!”

With a finger to her lips, Aunt Isa led Erik through a door at Big Ben’s base. Quiet as mice, they crept past the dozing watchman, up three hundred steps, and through another door.



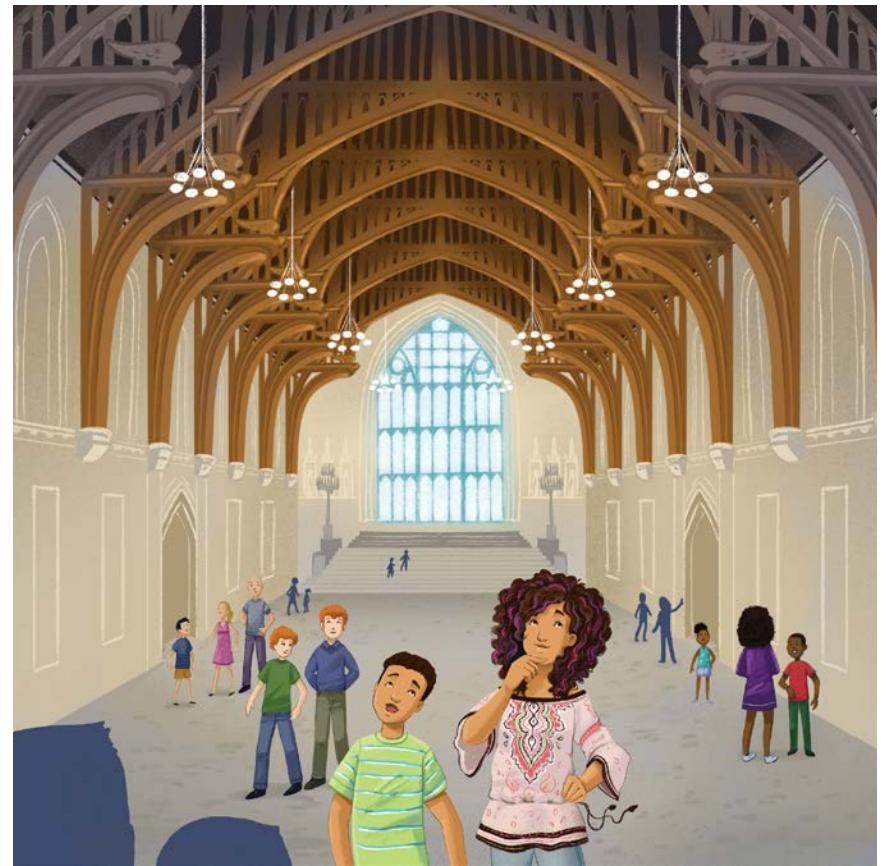


Erik was speechless. Above them hung three enormous bells and a dizzying web of ladders, cogs, wheels, and knobs.

Then the clock struck twelve. Erik felt the vibrations of every **chime** from the top of his head down to his toes. The closest thing he could compare it to was being caught in a cave with his mom during a thunderstorm.

“Mom would love this,” he said as they descended.

“I imagine she would,” Aunt Isa agreed.



“We should be more behaved this time,” Aunt Isa whispered. They were waiting with other tourists to enter Westminster Palace. “Don’t want to upset the **prime minister!**”

Erik enjoyed the tour—the palace was beautiful. He liked learning about how **Parliament** debated in chambers like the House of Commons and how people began petitioning the king or queen. It was also interesting to remember that this modern city and country were ruled by a **monarch**.



After dinner in a small place tucked away in an alley that may or may not have been a restaurant, Erik and Aunt Isa wandered back to the hotel.

“This whole city is incredible, but Big Ben was my favorite part,” Erik admitted. Aunt Isa looked at him with a spark in her eyes just as a regal woman wrapped in furs glided toward them. A scowling boy about Erik’s age trailed behind her.



“My son doesn’t appreciate the finer things, but perhaps you will!” she said, thrusting a **trinket** in Erik’s hand and marching off, the angry boy still in tow. Erik looked down, astonished to find he was holding a tiny version of the clock tower. It chimed just like the real one.

The next morning, they rode a red **double-decker bus** around the city, taking photos from the top. Then they had to catch their flight home. Erik couldn’t believe their trip was already at an end.

“Once you’ve been bitten by the travel bug, there’s no going back,” Aunt Isa warned as they unpacked Erik’s suitcase together late that night.

“So, next time my mom has to work, can we take another trip? Can Sasha come?” Erik asked. Before Aunt Isa could answer, the front door slammed.

“Mom!” Erik shouted and ran downstairs.

“Hey, buddy!” His mom gave Erik a hug. “What did you and Aunt Isa get up to this weekend?”





“You won’t even believe me,” Erik began, launching into the story of their trip. Just as he finished, Aunt Isa came rushing downstairs.

“I’ve got to go!” she exclaimed, hugging them both.

“Thanks for looking after Erik. Sounds like you had quite the adventure!” Erik’s mom said with a wink.

“Anytime!” Aunt Isa said. She hurried out the door.

“Don’t you believe me?” Erik said, but his mom was already walking down the hall.

“It seems you had a wonderful time, whatever you two were doing,” she said as she closed the bathroom door.

Erik pulled the tiny clock tower out of his pocket just as it began to chime midnight.



## Glossary

<b>chime</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	the ringing sound of a bell or clock (p. 11)
<b>clockwork</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	the inner parts, such as gears and springs, that make a clock or other mechanism run (p. 10)
<b>coincidences</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	situations in which things happen at the same time by accident but seem to be connected (p. 8)
<b>double-decker bus</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a bus with two floors or levels (p. 14)
<b>energetic</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	active and lively (p. 5)
<b>monarch</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a ruler of a kingdom or empire, such as a king or queen (p. 12)
<b>Parliament</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	the lawmaking body of the government of the United Kingdom, consisting of the House of Commons and the House of Lords (p. 12)
<b>prime minister</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	the leader of the government in most countries that have a parliament (p. 12)
<b>tourists</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	people who travel to a place for enjoyment or to learn more about it (p. 3)
<b>trinket</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a small ornament or piece of jewelry that is often not valuable (p. 13)
<b>turnstile</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a gate with horizontal arms that rotate to allow one person to enter at a time (p. 7)
<b>turrets</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	small towers on castles or other buildings (p. 8)