



Isambard Kingdom Brunel (B2 - Upper Intermediate)

A – Before you start

Answer the questions with a partner.

1. Can you name any of your country's most famous bridges and tunnels?
2. If so, do you know who they were built by?
3. Have you ever heard of Isambard Kingdom Brunel?
4. If so, what do you know about him?

B – Listen and answer

Read these incomplete statements. Then listen (without reading) and fill in the blanks.

1. Isambard Kingdom Brunel was born on _____, _____ in Portsmouth, England.
2. His first job was helping his father to design and build the _____.
3. One of Brunel's best-known creations is a _____-long suspension bridge.
4. In 1833, he was asked to build a railway between London and _____.
5. In the late 1830s, Brunel began to design steamships. His first was the SS _____.
6. In 1838, it sailed from Bristol to New York in _____ days.
7. Brunel's health suffered because he worked long hours and smoked _____ a day.
8. He died aboard his last ship at the age of _____.

C – Read and answer

Read the article and answer the questions.

1. What does the article say about Brunel's physical appearance?
2. Why did he become an engineer?
3. What was the purpose of the tunnelling shield designed by Brunel and his father?
4. What does the article say about the location and yearly traffic of the Clifton Suspension Bridge?
5. What was the SS *Great Western* famous for besides its speed?
6. What was special about Brunel's second steamship, the SS *Great Britain*?
7. What was the SS *Great Eastern* eventually used for?
8. What did Brunel die of?

D – Learn it! Use it!

Complete these sentences with words from the glossary. (You may have to adapt the expression in some way; e.g. change the verb tense, or change from singular to plural.)

1. Rose took the documents out of her briefcase and _____ them on the desk.
2. In the mid 1950s, aeroplanes began to replace _____ for transatlantic crossings.
3. The prisoner escaped by sawing through the _____ bars of his cell.
4. We got to the harbour late and found our ship had _____ without us.
5. The aircraft used in World War II were driven by _____ not jet engines.
6. As a child, Joey hated going to the dentist's. His mother always had to _____ him there.

E – Ready for the B2 FIRST Certificate in English? (Reading and Use of English, Part 2)

Read the text and think of the word which best fits each gap. Use only one word for each gap.

When the SS Great Britain was launched by Prince Albert on 19th July, 1843, she was the largest and ¹_____ technically innovative ship of the day. She was ²_____ of iron and was equipped with a propeller, as well as sails for wind power. She ³_____ accommodate a total of 360 passengers and 120 crew members, along ⁴_____ 1,200 tons of coal for the engines and 1,200 tons of cargo.

Her first transatlantic voyage was from Liverpool to New York in July 1845, during ⁵_____ she covered 3,100 miles in 14 days and 21 hours. This was the first time an iron steamship ⁶_____ crossed the Atlantic. On her return journey, ⁷_____ of damage to her propeller, she used only her sails, but still ⁸_____ to complete the voyage to Liverpool in 20 days.

F – Write about it

Write about one of your country's greatest engineers or architects. Mention:

- when/where he/she was born;
 - how his/her career began;
 - what he/she is most famous for.
-

Answers: Isambard Kingdom Brunel (B2 - Upper Intermediate)

B – Listen and answer

1. 9th April, 1806
2. Thames Tunnel
3. two-hundred-metre
4. Bristol
5. Great Western
6. 15/fifteen
7. 40/forty cigars
8. 53/fifty-three

C – Read and answer

1. He was short./only 1.52 metres tall.
2. Because his father, Marc Brunel, was also an engineer and he wanted his son to follow in his footsteps.
3. To protect the workers from the river's dangerous raw sewage and methane gas.
4. It goes over the River Avon, near Bristol, and it's used by four million vehicles a year.
5. It was the largest passenger ship in the world at that time.
6. It was an iron-hulled, propeller-driven steamship that set new standards in engineering, reliability, speed and size.
7. It was used to lay telegraph cables across the floors of the Atlantic and Indian Oceans.
8. He died of a stroke.

D – Learn it! Use it!

1. laid
2. ocean liners
3. iron
4. sailed
5. propellers
6. drag

E – Ready for the B2 FIRST Certificate in English?

1. most
2. built/made
3. could
4. with
5. which
6. had
7. because
8. managed