

# Reader's Guide for Misbehaving Clocks

This Readers' Guide suggests ideas that can be used to enrich young readers' experiences of this story and the accompanying music. The story touches on several disciplines, including math, social studies, music, art and literature. Therefore, the story can be approached from different angles. It can be used as a fun way to introduce children to telling time, for instance. It can be woven into a social studies lesson about London, England, and the British language and culture. (Tea anyone?) The story stimulates critical thinking that can lead to interesting discussions about topics such as what does it mean to misbehave and what is the value of imagination. The story also exposes readers to colorful vocabulary and expressions, and it affords the sophisticated reader an opportunity to search for puns and spoofs. Additionally, it highlights certain familiar nursery rhymes and encourages music appreciation and gives children a reason to sing, dance and go a little cuckoo (in the most delightful way)!

Of course, *Misbehaving Clocks* can be read for pure entertainment. Children love to pore over the detailed illustrations and find new things in the pictures.

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# Ahead of Time



## Pre-Reading Questions

The story is about clocks that come to life. Here are some questions to set the stage for some of the sights and sounds in the story, as well as foreshadow some of the motivations for the clocks to misbehave.

- What do clocks do? Do they make sounds? What kind of sounds?
- Name some different types of clocks and describe how they look and work? What does a cuckoo clock do, for instance? Perhaps show some different types of clocks, either in photos or “real-live” clocks. Compare and contrast, for example, a clock with a pendulum, an analog, round-faced clock and a digital clock.
- Do clocks ever get to take time off from keeping time? For instance, do they get to go out to play at recess like kids do?
- Can you think of ways that a clock might “misbehave”?
- How are clocks like people? (e.g., faces, hands, heart-like beat, etc.)

## Pre-Reading Activity

1. On the Misbehaving Clocks Reader’s Guide home page, click on A Chime and a Place to access an interactive social studies lesson about the story setting.
2. The music that goes along with the story includes the melodies of some nursery rhymes. Sing and/or recite the following nursery rhymes:

- “Hickory Dickory Dock”
- “London Bridge”
- “Polly Put the Kettle On” [not named in the story but is in the music]

The words to these rhymes are included on the [Extras](#) page of the Website. They are PDFs with illustrations that can be downloaded.

When the story is read aloud, children can participate by singing the songs when they appear in the story.

# There's a Chime and a Place

Before reading the story aloud, one way to introduce **Misbehaving Clocks** to young readers is to lead an interactive discussion about the story setting. It can be a mini social studies lesson. Of course, the story can also be used as enrichment in a more comprehensive study of London, England.

## 1. Provide a geographical overview

Inform the readers/listeners that the story is make-believe (fiction), but it is set in a real place. Show on a globe or map where the readers/listeners are located, and then point to where the story takes place. Maybe indicate how many miles away that is. Ask if anyone has ever been to London, England. If so, what do they remember about it?

## 2. Familiarize readers with one of the main story characters, i.e., Big Ben.

If the readers/listeners were to visit London, they would no doubt see Big Ben because it is a famous landmark, much like the Eiffel Tower is for France. (If time allows, perhaps ask what would be a famous American landmark. Allow for multiple answers.)

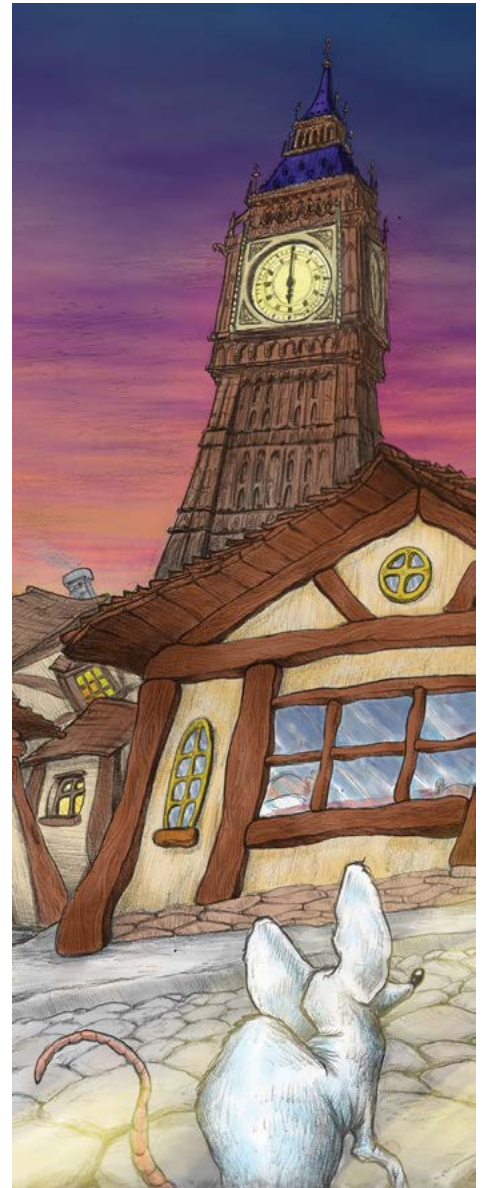
Show photos of Big Ben (links below). Children love the photo of the men hanging from ropes cleaning Big Ben's face (yes, even clocks have to get their faces washed!). The photo demonstrates the immense size of the clock's face (one of four faces) relative to the seemingly small men dangling like mountain climbers from ropes.

Photo of Big Ben and Parliament:

<http://www.8thingstodo.com/thebig-ben-london>

Photo of men cleaning Big Ben's face:

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/home/books/article-1193999/Time-Travels-IN-SEARCH-OF-TIME-JOURNEYS-ALONG-A-CURIOUS-DIMENSION-BY-DAN-FALK.html>



Wikipedia Article about Big Ben:  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Big\\_Ben](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Big_Ben)

A few interesting details about Big Ben can be selected from the Wikipedia article. Most importantly, mention that the clock is famous for playing “Westminster Chimes” (link to audio below. Perhaps sing the chime melody together, either with or without the audio. (This will prepare the listening audience to eventually be able to pick out “Westminster Chimes,” which is played in two different sections of the Misbehaving Clocks music. However, it is probably best to read the story aloud before playing the narrated version with music in order to clearly present the story line before adding the element of music.)

Audio of Big Ben playing “Westminster Chimes”: [http://www.bbc.co.uk/london/content/articles/2006/03/15/bigben\\_audio\\_feature.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/london/content/articles/2006/03/15/bigben_audio_feature.shtml)

### **3. Familiarize readers with some differences in British and American English.**

Perhaps ask... What language is spoken in England? How is British English different than American English? Maybe say a phrase or two with a British accent or inquire if one of the readers/listeners could say a few words with a British accent. Also, mention that British English sometimes uses different words. Example: Good-bye = Cheerio. A young child or baby is a sprog. And the word “circus” in British English has two meanings. It can be a form of entertainment with various performers, just as we use the word in American English, or it can be an open circular place where several streets come together, such as Piccadilly Circus. Piccadilly Circus is another place in London that students/readers would probably tour on a trip to London, and it is a place they will definitely visit in the story.

### **4. Familiarize readers with Piccadilly Circus.**

Wikipedia article about Piccadilly Circus:  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Piccadilly\\_Circus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Piccadilly_Circus)

Indicate that Piccadilly Circus is similar to Times Square in New York City because of the large illuminated billboards on display.

Photo of Piccadilly Circus:  
<http://www.piccadillycircuslondonhotels.com/public/images/welcome.jpg>

Now let’s see how the misbehaving clocks turn Piccadilly Circus into a crazy clock circus! [Read Misbehaving Clocks.]

## 5. After reading the story...

Here are some photos and a video of performers doing amazing circus acts in Piccadilly Circus in September 2012.

Before *The Piccadilly Circus Circus, Misbehaving Clocks* had been written, but not published. Surely, the double meaning of the word circus makes it a most irresistible pun to play off of.

Photos of circus performers in Piccadilly Circus in 2012:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/culture/gallery/2012/sep/02/piccadilly-circus-circus-pictures>

Video of circus performers in Piccadilly Circus in 2012:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=ljQrwwS7LWA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ljQrwwS7LWA)



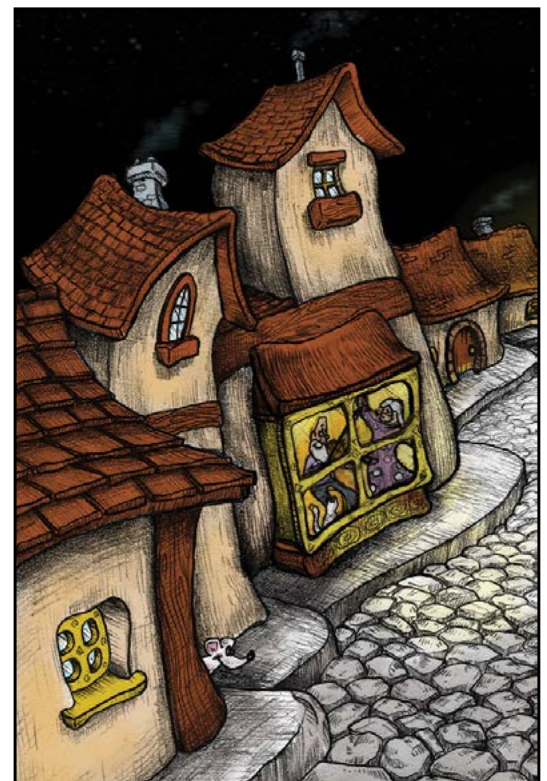
# What's In a Picture?

The questions below are designed to help children recognize how some of the story is told through pictures (not through words) and to guide them to think critically about what is happening in the story. The questions are listed in order of the appearance of the corresponding pictures in the story.



1. In the illustration with *Phineas* talking to Red, the cat and mouse are looking at each other from different sides of the window. What do you think they are thinking? If they could talk to each other, what would they be saying?
2. From the illustration of Phineas leaving the clock shop, what can you tell about him based on the way he looks? What can you tell about him from the things (the books, the objects on his desk, the clocks, the furnishings, etc.) in his clock shop?
3. Why is there a sundial (on the window sill) in the clock shop?
4. Count all the teapots or kettles in the story? Why do you think there are so many?
5. In the picture with the clocks squabbling, what is the mouse on top of the shelf holding in his hand? What is he doing with it? Notice throughout the story the different ways the mouse uses this object? At the end of the story on the last page, the mouse gives it back to Phineas. What do you think that shows?
6. What are the three objects on the top shelf, above the window in the clock shop in the illustration where the mouse is leading the clocks out of the clock shop? You might need an adult to help you figure them out. How do these objects relate to the story?
7. How is Digital World different from Westminster Clocks?
8. On the billboard on the side of Digital World, why do the clocks add an e to the word Teas?

1. In the illustration where a crowd of clocks is heading down the street (same as the book cover), who do you see in the picture window of the house below the big moon? To find out more about who's there and what's happening, go to [misbehavingclocks.com](http://misbehavingclocks.com), click on Extras, then below Nursery Rhymes, click on Dance to Your Daddy.
2. In the first illustration at Piccadilly Circus, what does it say on the lady's shopping bag? Why is this funny?
3. One of the billboards at Piccadilly Circus pictured in the story states, "Think Baroque." In fact, some of the background music during the Piccadilly Circus section of the book is baroque style with lots of fancy trills. In the actual Piccadilly Circus in London, there's a billboard for a cola company. Can you guess what the actual slogan is? Hint: It rhymes with Think Baroque.
4. What are some of the circus-like stunts the clocks are performing at Piccadilly Circus?
5. What kind of buses are in Piccadilly Circus?
6. In the Piccadilly Circus spread with the clock on the high wire. Notice that below the clock on the high wire there are four clocks going across the crosswalk. This is a spoof on a famous record album cover of a very famous British rock band. Ask a grown-up who they are and maybe they can help you look up a photo of the actual album cover online.
7. In the illustration where the cat is about to enter the clock shop, who do you think is with him?
8. Based on the last spread in the clock shop, what can we tell about Phineas's relationship with the clocks, cuckoo and mice?
9. Going back to question #5, what does it show when the mouse gives the minute hand back to Phineas?
10. On the copyright page (the last page of the book), what book is the mouse reading? Where did he get the book, and why is he excited? Ask an adult what *The Time Machine* is about. Perhaps someday you will read it, too.





# It's About Time

## Roman numerals and Arabic numerals on the clock faces

1. Some clocks have Roman numerals (I, II, III, IV or IIII, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, XI, XII) and other clocks have Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12). Point to some clocks with Roman numerals . Point to some clocks with Arabic numerals.
2. Some clocks show 4 as Roman numeral IIII (for example, the cuckoo clock) and other clocks show 4 as Roman numeral IV (for example, the clock on the high wire). The real Big Ben in London shows 4 as Roman numeral IV, but it is hard to see in the story illustrations. Many fascinating reasons have been suggested as to why IIII is sometimes used instead of IV on clocks. This would be an interesting subject to research. Maybe start by looking up the following link; there's a section at the end of this article about IIII on clocks: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman\\_numerals](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_numerals)





## Telling time in the story

Before answering the questions below, consider the following questions: How do you know what time it is in the story? Does the music sometimes help? How?

1. What time is it when the clock shop closes?
2. What time is it when Red flies out of his clock house (“miniature chalet”)?
3. What time is it when the mice and cuckoo play “Hickory Dickory Dock”?
4. What time is it when Big Ben gongs the clocks back home?
5. What time is it when Phineas returns to the clock shop in the morning?
6. How many total hours does the story cover, counting from when Phineas closes the clock shop to when he returns in the morning?



# A Word at the Right Time

Below are some words and expressions from *Misbehaving Clocks* that might be new to young readers. In italics next to the definitions, notice different types of questions (factual, interpretive, viewpoint, speculative and creative-thinking questions) that relate to how the words and expression are used in the story.

## Timely Words

**Acrobat** - An athlete who performs acts requiring skill and agility and coordination. *What are some of the acrobatic stunts the clocks do?*

**Baroque** - A period of artistic style that used exaggerated motion and clear, easily interpreted detail to produce drama, tension, exuberance, and grandeur in sculpture, painting, architecture, literature, dance and music. In Baroque music there is a love of ornamentation (fancy sounds, such as trills). Baroque art features “exaggerated lighting, intense emotions, release from restraint, and even a kind of artistic sensationalism” (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baroque>). *In Piccadilly Circus, one of the lighted signs reads, “Think Baroque.” It is a spoof on a popular cola company’s slogan. How might this Baroque reference relate to the story’s illustrations and music? Note: The piccolo plays a Baroque variation of “Dance to Your Daddy” during the Piccadilly Circus section. Also, “Le CouCou,” which is a major theme in the musical reprise at the end of the story, is a Baroque piece by the French composer Louis-Claude Daquin.*



**Chalet** - A type of wooden house of Swiss origin. *Who lives in the chalet?*

**Cheeky** - Saucy, bold. *What are some things Red does that are cheeky?*

**Cheerio** - Good-bye (British) *Who says this? For the fun of it, say “Cheerio” to friends and family the next time you say good-bye!*

**Circus** - An open circular place where several streets come together (British); a show that features a variety of acts including feats of physical skill, performances by clowns and daring acts. *How does “circus” have a double meaning in the story?*



**Dub** - To raise (someone) to knighthood; to call by a distinctive title or nickname. *Knights have the title of Sir. Who were dubbed clock-knights? If you were made a knight, what would your name be? [Put Sir in front of your own name, your nickname or a made-up name.]*

**Hullabaloo** - Uproar, loud confused noise. *What caused the hullabaloo?*

**Miniature** - Small or reduced size. *What is miniature in the story? Do you see anything on the upper shelf in the clock shop that is also miniature?*

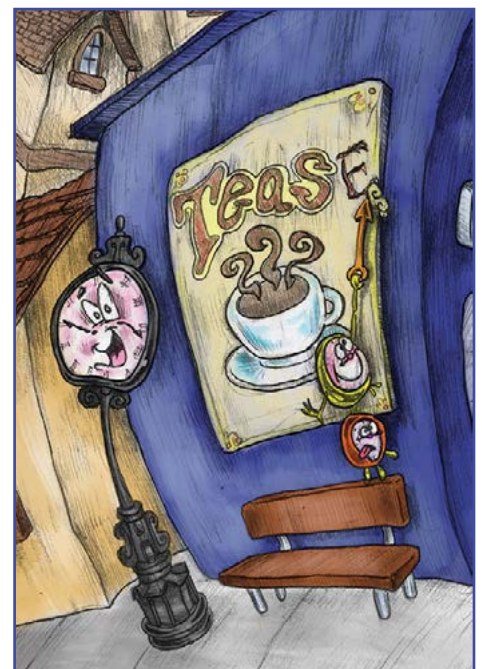
**Misbehave** - To disregard rules or behave badly; to clown or fool around. *The clocks misbehave in different ways. Point to (or name) some of the things that the clocks do that would be considered a bad or mean kind of misbehaving. Point to some of the clocks' actions that might be seen as a fun kind of misbehaving. It's possible that some might see certain behavior differently. For instance, some might think that when the clock adds an "e" to Teas on the billboard on the side of Digital World that it is simply clowning around and others might view it as destroying property.*

**Noble** - Impressive in appearance; distinguished by rank or title; of high moral character. *Why is Big Ben noble? Try to think of more than one reason.*

**Pendulum** - A swinging weight under the action of gravity that helps clocks keep regular time. *Point to the clocks that have pendulums.*

**Squabble** - To quarrel or argue noisily and usually over petty things. *What kinds of things might clocks squabble over?*

**Tease** - To make fun of; to annoy or pester; to joke around. *In one of the story illustrations, there is a play on words (pun) with the words "teas" and "tease." See the image below. Why is this clever or funny as it relates to what the clocks are doing?*



## Timely Expressions (Idioms)

**Call it a day** - Stop one's activity or work for the day; quit temporarily. *In the story, who calls it a day?*

**Go cuckoo** - Go crazy or become wildly enthusiastic about something. *Who goes cuckoo?*

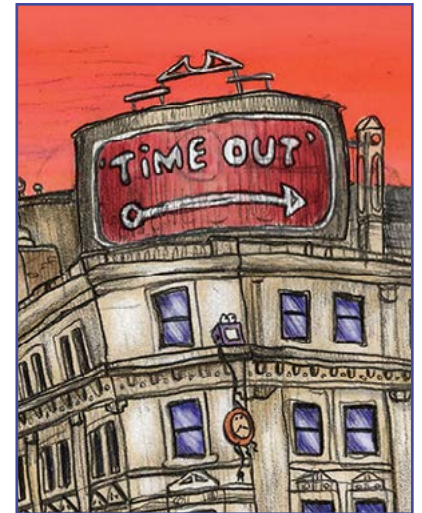
**Have someone's word** - Have someone's promise. *Who makes a promise?*

**Ruffle someone's feathers** - Do something to cause confusion, agitation, irritation or annoyance in that person. *Who ruffles feathers? Try to name more than one character. And who becomes irritated or annoyed? Again, name more than one character.*

**Run late** - Be behind schedule and therefore likely to be late. *Because the clocks come to life, how can this have more than one meaning?*

**Time-out** - A short break from work or play; also, a form of discipline for misbehavior in young children in which they are briefly separated from the group to be quiet and reflect on what they did. *What kind of work do clocks do that they might want a break from? Why do the clocks need both kinds of time-outs at different points in the story?*

**When the cat's away, the mice will play** - When no one in authority is present, those under that person's rule will enjoy their freedom. *How does this apply to the story? How can this apply to children when grown-ups are away?*





# Time to Talk



To answer these questions, readers can draw inferences/ conclusions from the story text, music and art. There are three clusters of questions with sub-questions to aid in the thinking process. Questions can have more than one answer that can be supported. Not all questions need to be asked. Choose questions or formulate new questions that will keep the discussion going and are appropriate for the age group and background of the readers.

## Why do the clocks misbehave?

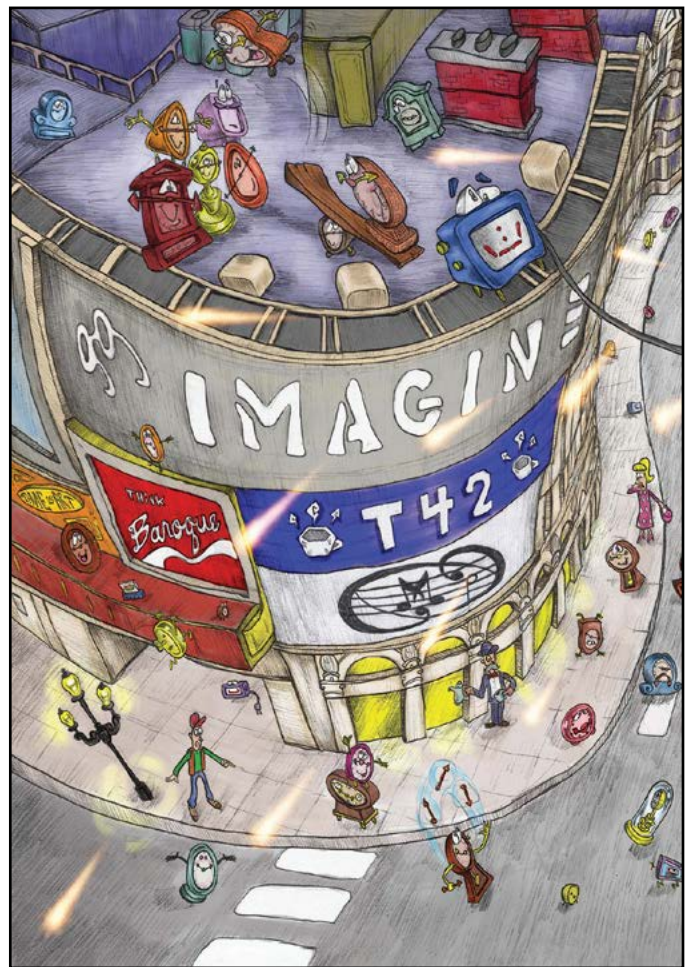
1. What do the clocks do all day long? What effect could that have on the clocks?
2. Why do you think the clocks misbehave at nighttime?
3. How do the clocks misbehave? After initial discussion, perhaps refer to the two definitions of “misbehave” in the A Word at the Right Time section of this Reader’s Guide. Ask them to point to pictures that show the harmless, fun-type of misbehaving and the mean-spirited or disobedient kind of misbehaving.
4. What kinds of fun and creative things do the clocks do?
5. What kinds of dangerous or hurtful things do the clocks do?
6. Why do Red and the mice misbehave?
7. How do Red and the mice influence the clocks?
8. Why do the clocks sing and dance?
9. Why do the clocks call each other names?
10. Why do the clocks leave the clock shop?
11. What does it mean to “go cuckoo,” and how is that related to misbehaving?
12. Do you think the clocks know when they are misbehaving?
13. How do Grandfather and Big Ben treat the clocks?
14. How does the mouse use the minute hand in different ways? In the last illustration the mouse gives the minute hand back to Phineas. What does that gesture show?
15. How are the clocks like children?

## Why do you think Phineas happens to own clocks that come to life?

1. What can we tell about Phineas from his shop, the books he reads, the types of clocks he has, his cat, etc.?
2. What can we tell about Phineas from the way he looks and dresses?
3. What can we tell about Phineas from the things he says and does?
4. Why do you think Phineas talks to clocks?
5. What kind of relationship does Phineas have with the clocks?
6. Do you think Phineas knows what the clocks did overnight?
7. Does Phineas really believe the clocks are alive or could the whole story be in his imagination? Defend your answer.

## What is the value of imagination?

1. What message do you think the story is sending regarding the power of imagination?
2. What kinds of things stir the imagination of the characters in the story? and in your life?
3. Do you think we need to do everything we imagine? Why or why not?



# Face Time

## Drawing Activities

1. Draw your own clock face and clock. Make the face funny, sad, angry, surprised, etc. Get creative with the clock hands. In the story, many clocks have two sets of hands, i.e., the real ones on their faces and the imaginary ones on their sides. Feel free to put your clock in a fun pose or give it accessories such as a hat or jewelry. Then give your clock a name. (While drawing, possibly play in the background the Misbehaving Clocks narration with music.)
2. Choose an object in the real world that does not have a face, and put a funny face on it. Cartoonists do this all the time with objects, e.g., cars, vegetables and even sponges. Maybe put a face on an object that you haven't seen a face on in cartoons.



## Interactive Activities

1. Look at all the clock faces in the book very carefully. Then choose your favorite one and share in a small group (or one-on-one with a classmate) why you especially like that one. Or share which clock you would be if you were a clock and explain why.
2. Play the “London Bridge” game. Learn how to play the game at: [http://www.ehow.com/how\\_2085902\\_play-london-bridge-falling-down.html](http://www.ehow.com/how_2085902_play-london-bridge-falling-down.html)