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Opening extract from
A Walk in London

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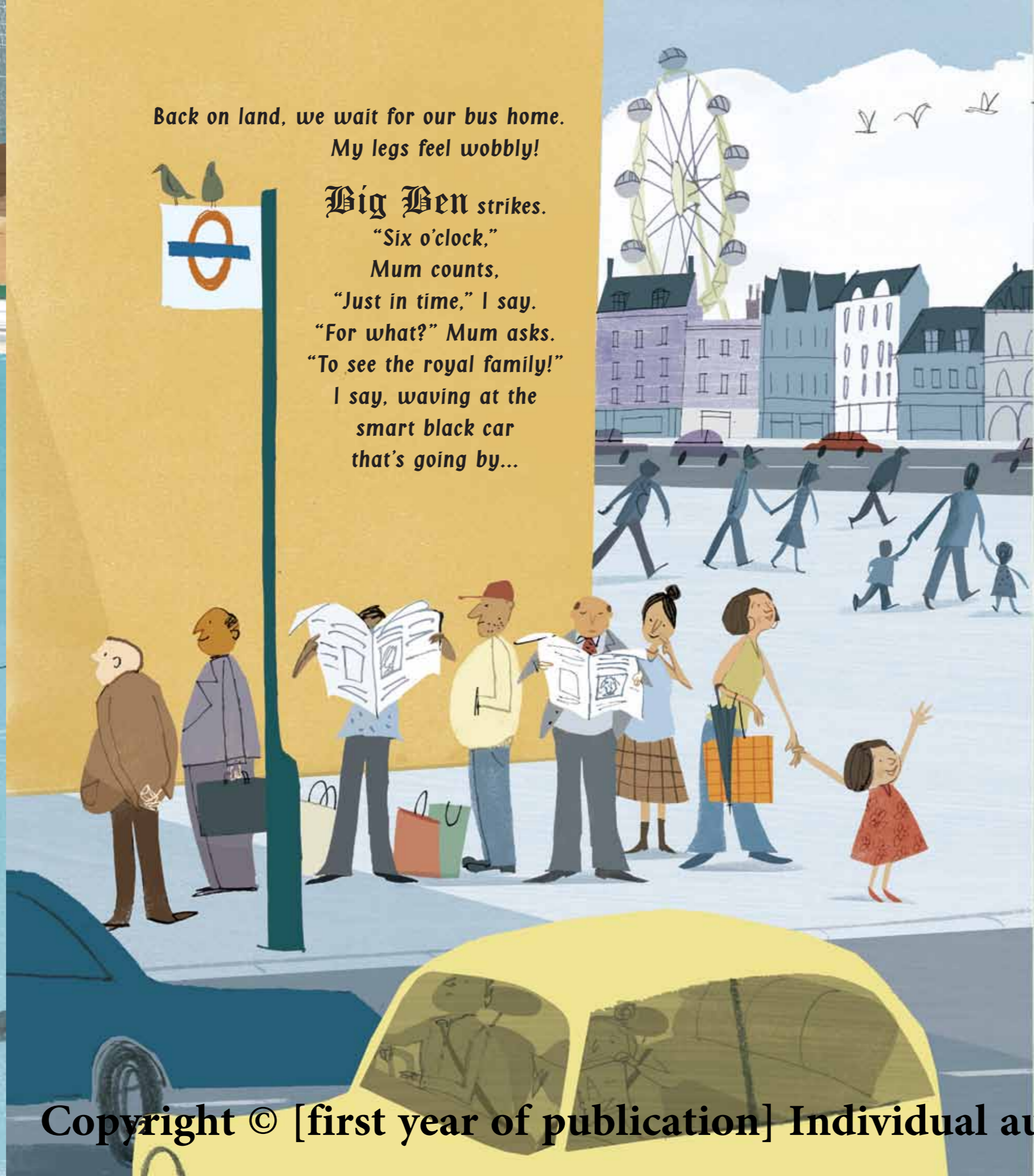
The River Thames is 346 kilometres long, and flows east-west from the North Sea to Gloucestershire.

Although the North Sea is 42 miles away, you often see seagulls in London.

Back on land, we wait for our bus home.
My legs feel wobbly!



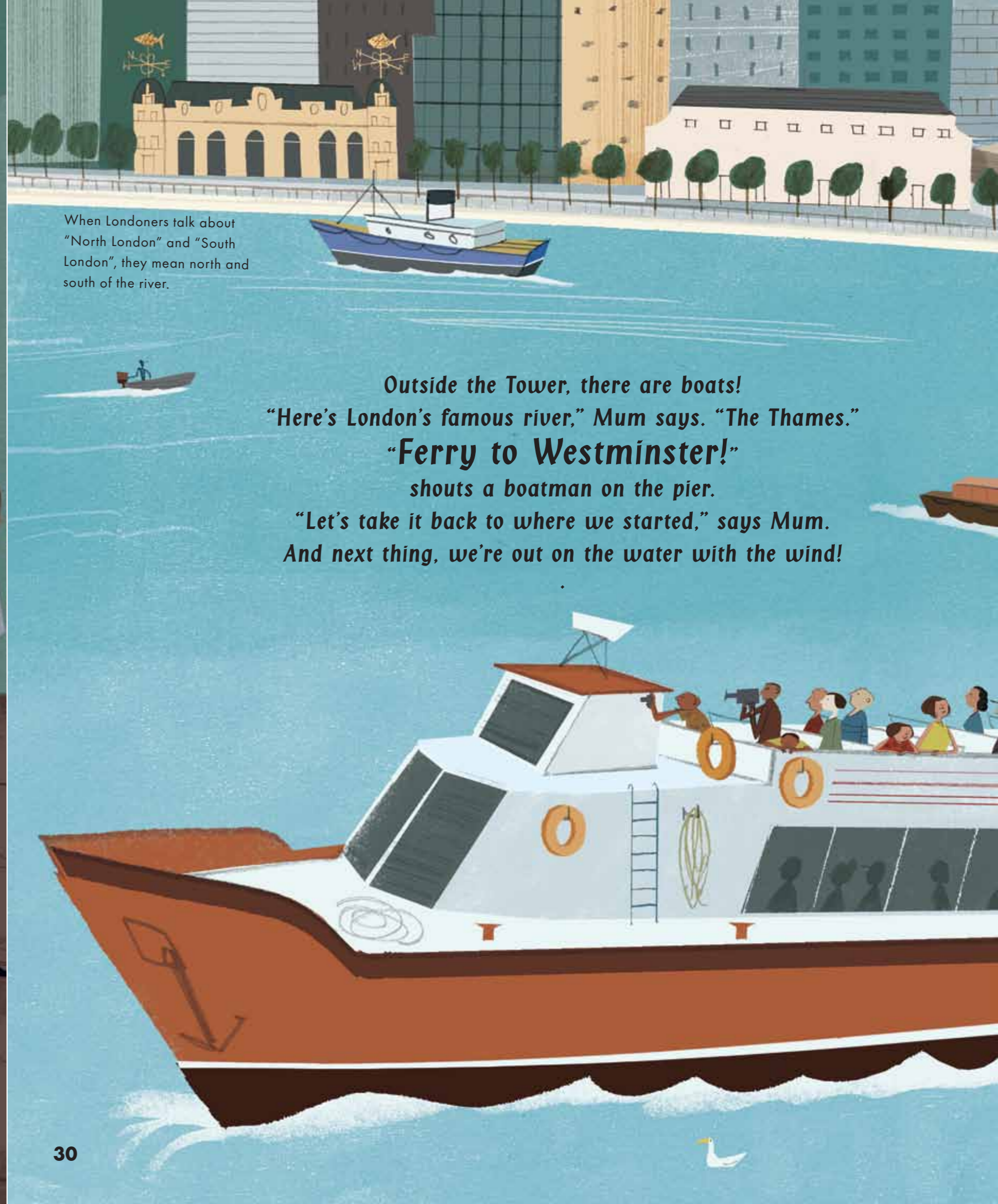
Big Ben strikes.
"Six o'clock,"
Mum counts,
"Just in time," I say.
"For what?" Mum asks.
"To see the royal family!"
I say, waving at the
smart black car
that's going by...



"What makes the crown so sparkly?" I whisper.
"Diamonds," a boy in our group whispers back.

The Imperial State Crown has 2,868 diamonds, 17 sapphires, 11 emeralds, 5 rubies and 273 pearls in it.

The monarch wears it every year at the State opening of Parliament.



When Londoners talk about "North London" and "South London", they mean north and south of the river.

Outside the Tower, there are boats!
"Here's London's famous river," Mum says. "The Thames."
"Ferry to Westminster!"
shouts a boatman on the pier.
"Let's take it back to where we started," says Mum.
And next thing, we're out on the water with the wind!

More people live in London than in any other city in Europe.

Over 300 different languages are spoken here.

Until 1749, only one bridge crossed the Thames in London. Now there are 23 ways to cross the river in the city centre:
8 road bridges, 3 footbridges, 4 rail bridges and 8 tunnels beneath the riverbed.

More planes fly over London than over any city in the world.

Altogether, London covers an area of about 1,750 square kilometres. It is divided into 32 districts or 'boroughs'.

Londoners often give new buildings on their skyline nicknames:

Between the 14th and 19th centuries, winters were so cold that the river often froze. Londoners could skate or sledge across it, and 'frost fairs' were held on the ice.

London is about 20 centuries old. The first Romans to settle here came in 43 AD.

The London Eye lifts 3.5 million visitors a year 135 metres high above the city. On a clear day you can see for 40 kilometres in any direction.

The Palace of Westminster is where MPs debate new laws to govern the country. You can visit the public gallery to watch them doing it for free.

Completed in 1710, St Paul's Cathedral was the city's tallest building for two and a half centuries.

In 1967, the previous London Bridge was sold to an American, who re-built it in Arizona.

this one is known as 'the Gherkin'. Its real name is 30 St Mary Axe.

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SHAKESPEARE'S GLOBE

The word 'Thames' comes from the Celtic 'Tamesa', which means dark or muddy.

The Thames in London is tidal, so its water is partly fresh and partly salt. It is home to lots of fish - including trout, bass and flounder.

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