B2-C1 ENGLISH LISTENING WORKSHEET

Tower of London Ravens: The Legend and the Ravenmaster

4 November 2026

CBS Sunday Morning - Meet the Tower of London's Ravenmaster (approx. 4:50)

At the Tower of London, eight ravens are cared for under a centuries-old royal tradition. Meet the current and former Ravenmasters, and discover how history, superstition and everyday animal care overlap.

Before your lesson: Watch once without subtitles, then replay difficult passages. Answer using details from the report, complete the vocabulary tasks and prepare ideas for discussion.

Watch the CBS Sunday Morning video on YouTube

Listening Comprehension

Answer in your own words. Some questions ask you to connect two details or explain a contrast. Write brief notes in the spaces provided; use a separate notebook for longer answers.

No.	Listening question and answer space
1	Which two purposes did the Tower of London serve in the past, and what important attraction does it house today besides the ravens?
2	According to the legend, what would happen to both the Tower and the monarchy if the ravens disappeared?
3	What military experience did Barney need before qualifying for his role, and when does he sometimes bring his work home?
4	How do Barney and his mother view the ravens differently, and why does he think these birds have acquired a sinister reputation?
5	Why did the royal astronomer reportedly want to remove the ravens, and what did Charles II decide to do instead?
6	What mistake does the reporter make while looking at a bird, and what does Chris warn him about ravens?
7	What reveals Chris's connection to the ravens, and how does he react when the reporter calls him famous?
8	What two reasons does Chris give for retiring as Ravenmaster?
9	What measures help keep the ravens at the Tower, and which routine duty contrasts with Barney's impressive uniform?
10	What two kinds of pressure does Barney describe, and what surprising comparison does he make between the ravens and the Crown Jewels?

Phrase Match

Match each **exact expression from the video** (1-10) to its contextual meaning (A-J).

Expressions (1-10)	Meanings (A-J)
1. carry the weight of the entire kingdom on their feathers	**A.** completely tired of or irritated by something
2. if legend is to be believed	**B.** be widely regarded in an unfavourable way
3. fly by on the tour	**C.** be symbolically responsible for something extremely important
4. bring his work home with him	**D.** watch or monitor something carefully
5. got a bad reputation	**E.** through an official order from a monarch
6. stretching back	**F.** be mentioned very briefly without much attention
7. by royal decree	**G.** originating or beginning a long time ago
8. fed up with	**H.** continue dealing with job responsibilities at home
9. keep an eye on	**I.** open to disagreement rather than definitely settled
10. up for debate	**J.** according to a traditional story that may not be true

Synonym Match

Match each **word heard in the video** (1-10) to its closest contextual synonym (A-J).

Words (1-10)	Synonyms (A-J)
1. intriguing	**A.** blasted
2. fortress	**B.** upkeep
3. inhabitants	**C.** remains
4. predominantly	**D.** posted
5. carcasses	**E.** fascinating
6. confounded	**F.** novice
7. amateur	**G.** mainly
8. stationed	**H.** stronghold
9. maintenance	**I.** appropriate
10. fitting	**J.** residents

Use the New Language

Choose five expressions or words from this lesson and write **one original sentence** with each.

No.	Your sentence
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

Discussion Questions

Use the video as a starting point. Explain your reasoning, respond to each other and support your opinions with examples.

Student A - Personal experience	Student B - Opinions and analysis
1. Have you ever visited a historic building with an unusual legend attached to it?	**1.** Can a legend have cultural value even if there is no evidence that it is true?
2. Would the ravens or the Crown Jewels interest you more on a visit to the Tower? Why?	**2.** Should tour guides distinguish folklore clearly from documented history, or is storytelling part of the appeal?
3. What superstition did you hear when you were growing up? Does anyone still believe it?	**3.** Is it ethically acceptable to trim birds' feathers and keep them in cages overnight to preserve a tradition?
4. Have you ever met someone with a particularly unusual job? What did you ask them?	**4.** Should governments spend public money preserving royal traditions that attract large numbers of tourists?
5. Do you prefer discovering a place with a guide or exploring on your own?	**5.** Why do societies attach national identity and political stability to animals, buildings or rituals?
6. Have you ever changed your opinion about an animal or creature you initially disliked?	**6.** When, if ever, should animal welfare take priority over an established cultural tradition?
7. Would you enjoy a tour led by someone with Chris's first-hand experience?	**7.** Do ceremonial uniforms and prestigious titles hide the less glamorous realities of some jobs?
8. What local custom or tradition would you recommend that visitors experience?	**8.** If the last ravens freely left the Tower, how should the authorities respond to public concern and pressure?

60-Second Argument Challenge

Should the Tower of London keep ravens as part of its royal tradition? Choose a position, use two details from the report, acknowledge one counterargument and include at least two phrases from the matching exercise.

Access the Video Transcript

The report features an American correspondent and British Ravenmasters, with natural humour and some specialist historical vocabulary. After completing the tasks, use YouTube captions or **Show transcript** to check difficult passages. Captions may contain errors in names and historical terms.

Watch the report and open its YouTube transcript

Answer Key

Listening Comprehension

1. [0:20-0:32] It was once a prison and sometimes a place for executions; today it houses the Crown Jewels, as well as the eight ravens.

2. [0:41-0:56] According to the legend, the Tower would crumble into dust and the monarchy would disappear if the ravens left.

3. [1:20-1:35] Barney had to complete 22 years in the military. He sometimes takes his work home when helping to raise the next generation of ravens.

4. [1:35-2:05] Barney loves the ravens and calls them "fabulous creatures", whereas his mother thinks they are "horrible". He links their bad reputation to feeding on carcasses and prey, and therefore to death.

5. [2:28-2:53] The ravens were interfering with the royal astronomer's work. After hearing the warning about the kingdom, Charles II reportedly ordered that six ravens should remain "by royal decree".

6. [2:54-3:06] The reporter mistakes a crow for a raven. Chris says that if you upset a raven, it will remember.

7. [3:06-3:27] Chris cared for the ravens for 17 years, spent 11 of those years as Ravenmaster and wrote a book. When called famous, he replies that the ravens are famous.

8. [3:25-3:37] He wanted to spend more time with his wife and was "fed up with" continually smelling of bird poo.

9. [3:38-4:10] They are fed, their feathers are trimmed and they are kept in cages overnight; the birds are also territorial. Barney cleans or "mucks out" the cages despite wearing an elaborate uniform.

10. [4:11-4:31] He feels pressure from caring for living creatures and from the legend surrounding them. He says that, for many visitors, the ravens are the main attraction and the Crown Jewels come second.

Phrase Match: 1=C, 2=J, 3=F, 4=H, 5=B, 6=G, 7=E, 8=A, 9=D, 10=I
Synonym Match: 1=E, 2=H, 3=J, 4=G, 5=C, 6=A, 7=F, 8=D, 9=B, 10=I

Example Sentences With the Phrases

No.	Example sentence
1	In local folklore, the ancient tree carries the weight of the entire kingdom on its branches.
2	If legend is to be believed, a hidden tunnel runs beneath the castle.
3	The most controversial part of the story seemed to fly by on the tour.
4	The museum curator sometimes has to bring his work home with him.
5	Ravens have got a bad reputation in some traditional stories.
6	The village celebrates a custom stretching back several centuries.
7	The protection order was issued by royal decree.
8	After fifteen years, she was fed up with working every weekend.
9	The conservation team will keep an eye on the birds during the nesting season.
10	Whether tourist attractions should use animals is still up for debate.

Teacher note: Accept accurate paraphrases supported by the report. Model answers retain the speaker's recognisable wording; timestamps are approximate. The legend is presented as folklore, not established fact. Discussion and original-sentence tasks are open-ended.