

The Thames Barrier



Have you ever seen the River Thames? This river flows through London. London is our Capital city. You can see the River Thames in the picture. What are those strange things in the water? Are the ships? No! They are the piers of the Thames Barrier. They are very strong. They are built on the river bed. In between each one of them there is a stainless steel barrier or gate. You cannot see the gates. They are under the water. They lie on the river bottom. Ships can go over them.

The gates are there to stop the water flooding the middle of London. This might happen if the tide was high at a time when lots of water was coming down the river. Perhaps there has been heavy rain. Then there is a lot of water flowing down. Then there is a high tide and lots of water is flowing up too. What might happen to London? Water might flood over the river banks and into buildings.

But before this could happen the Thames Barrier would do its job. The strong gates would be raised from the bed of the river. They would stop the rising tide going beyond the gates. The gates are big. They are strong. They are heavy. They must move slowly. To close all the gates takes an hour and a half. Look at the picture carefully. Can you see a yellow arm in the middle of each pier? These are the arms that pull the gates up out of the water. All the gates were pulled up for the first time on **31st October** 1982. When there is a flood warning the gates are shut. The gates are also shut once every month to make sure they work well.

When the Barrier was made the government said, “ The sea is rising. Every year it is 8mm higher. In 2030 we will need a new Barrier. This one will not be big enough.”

Was that true? No! The sea has not risen 8mm every year. There are no plans for a new Thames Barrier in 2030 now.