



Segment 12 (Units 21–24)

Boots by hand

Genre: Documentary

Viewing Time: 1:57

Background Information

The man in the video, the head of John Lobb Bootmakers, speaks of how his great-grandfather went to Australia during the Gold Rush. In the mid-nineteenth century, after gold had been discovered in various parts of the world, such as in California, North America and in New South Wales and Victoria, Australia, many people fled (or rushed) to these parts to try their luck at finding gold. They were called prospectors, since *prospect* means "to look for something under the ground or in the ocean." People who worked digging for the gold in a mine owned by someone else were called gold *miners*. Lobb's great-grandfather did not become rich by finding gold, but became famous for making boots for the miners that included a place for them to hide gold for themselves—in the hollow heel of their boots.

Language Notes

Since the subject of this documentary is a British company, there are many British terms that are used that you might want to point out to your students: *made to measure*, meaning "made specifically for a particular person," would be *custom-made* in American English; *ring up* in British English is *call* in American English; and instead of *carry on*, Americans would say *continue*.

Vocabulary for Comprehension

Preview the vocabulary with your students.

apprentice: *someone who works for an employer for an agreed amount of time, usually for low pay, in order to learn a particular skill*

firm: *a business or small company*

founder: *someone who establishes a business, organization, school, etc.*

great-grandson: *the grandson of your child*

heel: *the back raised part at the bottom of a shoe or boot*

hollow: *having an empty space inside*

measure: *to find the size, length, or amount of something*

run by: *to be in charge of; to control, organize, or operate a business, organization, etc.*



Answer Key

Previewing (Answers may vary—as long as they are appropriate guesses, accept them for now.)

1. They are bootmakers / employees and the owner of a bootmaking company.
2. They are at John Lobb Bootmakers in London.
3. There are tools and wooden forms (lasts and trees). They are used for making shoes and boots.
4. It's about a bootmaking company and how their boots are made.

In-Depth Viewing

1. F—He's the great-grandson of the founder.
2. T
3. F—A customer's foot is measured.
4. F—The boots are made from a piece of wood.
5. T

Video Script

Narrator: This is John Lobb Bootmakers in London, England. It was founded almost 150 years ago by John Lobb and is now run by his great-grandson, who is also named John Lobb. As he takes us on a tour of his shop, we'll find out what makes John Lobb's boots and shoes so special.

John Lobb: I'm the great-grandson of the founder of this firm, which is called John Lobb Bootmakers, and, um, my great-grandfather founded about 1849. He was actually the son of a farmer in Cornwall. And there, was apprenticed at a bootmaker, and was good at his craft, and came to London. He actually went to Australia first of all, and, ah, at the time of the gold rush. And instead of prospecting for gold he, um, made boots for the miners and, ah, one of the things he was well known for at the time was little hollow heels that he—that the miners—could hide their gold in. That's how he started, and he came back to London. And, ah, we've carried on this craft ever since—which is making shoes by hand to measure.

Narrator: When a customer comes in, an employee measures his or her feet. Then the employee makes a last, which is a piece of wood in the shape of the customer's foot. The shoes are then made using the last. It's very difficult to make a good last. Workers have to shape it slowly and carefully using hand tools like files and sandpaper.

An object called a "tree" is used to make boots. The tree has four pieces and gives shape to the leather. Making good trees is also a very slow job. And it requires skill and patience.

John Lobb: And then when a customer is an American who's come in here to be measured goes back to America, or wherever it might be, we keep the lasts, and he rings us up or writes to us and says, "Make me another pair." Or he sees our representative—we travel around the States quite a lot—twice a year. And he, ah, chooses a new style and places another order. And tells his friends—or her friends.