##### READINGS

**IN**

**“ENGLISH”**

**CULTURE and CIVILISATION**

**Level 4**

♦ **Prepared by Hoda Al-Helaissi ♦**

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Introduction

Learning about another culture is always a worthwhile experience because it permits an individual to learn more about the world, to look at issues in a different way, and to establish a certain intellectual distance from his or her own national values.

In today’s global village, the choice of languages and cultures offered to the student is constantly on the increase. And it’s precisely because the world is shrinking in this new age of powerful instant electronic communication, and because internationalism is becoming increasingly important as an aspect of education, “English” culture has a very particular significance.

“... there is something distinctive and recognisable

in English civilisation.(…) It is somehow bound up with

solid breakfasts and gloomy Sundays, smoky towns and

winding roads, green fields and red-pillar boxes. It has

a flavour of its own.” George Orwell (1968)

Culture is all about the people of a country and the way they perceive themselves as well as the way others perceive them too. How has history influenced these people and what, if any, of its ancient traditions and customs still thrive in modern society?

Different elements need to be examined such as:

Creative minds. Minds that have affected, influenced and changed society throughout the ages via inventions, discoveries and thoughts.

* Faiths. Their multitude in a society, the major and minority groups.
* Scientific discoveries.
* Fashions and trends.
* Every day folk.
* Eccentricities.
* Minority cultures.
* Leaders and heroes.

And much more.

Society is being held up to scrutiny, not in an overly intellectual way, but via an ever-growing series of features, articles and general widespread information.

But would it be fair to say that “English” culture exists only in England? Would it not be necessary to in fact visit as many different “English” speaking countries as possible in order to comprehend more fully the existing and evolving cultures that make up a big part of our world?

Nowadays, the cultivated man or woman is conscious of deficiencies in his education, in his lack of some knowledge of economics, medieval history, recent advances in the basic natural sciences… He may also want to discover something of the nature and development of a language, therefore of a civilisation and a culture.

The medium by which he communicates his thoughts and feelings to his fellow men, the tool with which he conducts his business or the government of millions of people, the vehicle by which have been transmitted to him the science, the philosophy, the poetry of a race is language.

The English language of today reflects many centuries of development. The political and social events that have in the course of English history so profoundly affected the English people in their national life have generally had a recognisable effect on their language. The Christianising of Britain in 597 brought England into contact with Latin civilisation and made significant additions to the vocabulary. The Scandinavian invasions resulted in a considerable mixture of the two peoples and their languages. The Norman Conquest made English for two centuries the language mainly of the lower classes while nobles and those associated with them used French on almost all occasions. And when English once more regained supremacy as the language of all elements of the population, it was an “English” greatly changed in both form and vocabulary from what it had been in 1066. In a similar way, the rise of an important middle class, the Renaissance, the development of England as a maritime power, the expansion of the British Empire, and the growth of commerce and industry, of science and literature, have, each in its way, contributed to make the English language what it is today. In short, the English language reflects in its entire development the political, social, cultural history of the English people.

Moreover, English, like all other languages, is subject to that constant growth and decay which characterise all forms of life. It is convenient to speak of languages as dead or alive; we observe in speech something like the process of change that characterises the life of living things. When a language ceases to change, we call it a dead language. Classical Latin is a dead language because it has not changed in nearly two thousand years. Change in a living language is most seen in the vocabulary. Old words die out, new words are added, and existing words change their meaning. Much of the vocabulary of Old English has been lost, and the development of new words to meet new conditions is one of the most familiar phenomena of language. Change of meaning can be illustrated from any page of Shakespeare.

Nice in Shakespeare’s day meant foolish; rheumatism signified a cold in the head.

So intimate is the relation between a language and the people who speak it that the two can scarcely be thought of apart. A language lives only so long as there are people who speak it and use it as their native tongue, and its greatness is only that given to it by these people. A language is important because the people who speak it are important --- politically, economically, commercially, socially, and culturally. English, French, German and Arabic are important languages because they are the languages of important peoples; for this reason they are widely studied outside the country of their use. But for instance, Romanian and Serbian and Malay are seldom learned by any save the native populations. Sometimes the cultural importance of an ethnic group or nation has at some former time been so great that their language remains important among cultivated people long after it has ceased to represent political, commercial, or other greatness. Greek, for example, is studied in its classical form because of the great civilisation which its literature preserves the most complete record of; but in its modern form as spoken in Greece today the Greek language is largely neglected by the outside world.

The importance of the English language is naturally very great. Spoken by more than 340 million people as a first language in the United Kingdom, the United States, and the former British Empire, it is the largest of the occidental languages. English, however, is not the largest language in the world. Western estimates of the population of China would indicate that Chinese is spoken in its different forms and dialects by more than 880 million people in China alone. But the numerical ascendancy of English among European languages can be seen by a few comparative languages:

* Spanish, next in size to English, is spoken by about 210 million people.
* Russian by 200 million
* Portuguese by 115 million
* German by 105 million
* French by 80 million native speakers (and a large number of second-language speakers)
* Italian by 62 million

Thus at the present time, English has the advantage in numbers over all other western languages.

But the importance of a language is not just a matter of numbers or territory; it depends also on the importance of the people who speak it. The importance of a language is inevitably associated in the mind of the world with the political role played by the nations using it and with their influence in international affairs; with the extent of their business enterprise and the international scope of their commerce; with the conditions of life under which the great mass of their people live; and with the part played by them in art and literature and music, in science and invention, in exploration and discovery --- in short, with their contribution to the material and spiritual progress of the world. English is the mother tongue of nations whose combined political influence; economic soundness, commercial activity, social well being, and scientific and cultural contributions to civilisation give impressive support to its numerical precedence.

English is widely used as a second language throughout the world; estimates of the number of speakers with varying degrees of proficiency range between 50 million and 300 million. In some of the developing countries, which are experiencing the greatest growth, English is one of the official languages, as it is in India, Nigeria and the Philippines.

Will English become the language of the world? The wish springs partly from considerations of national pride, partly from a consciousness of the many disadvantages that result from a multiplicity of tongues. How much pleasanter travel would be if we did not have to contend with the inconveniences of a foreign language? How much more readily we could conduct our business abroad if there were but a single language of trade. How greatly would the problem of the scientist and the scholar be simplified if there were one universal language of learning? And how many of the misunderstandings and prejudices that divide nations would be avoided, how much the peace of the world would be promoted if there were free interchange of national thought and feeling --- if only we could make effective the French proverb: “Tout comprendre, c’est tout pardonner.”

The language of a country often symbolises its independence and nationalism. The official languages of the United Nations are English, French, Russian, Spanish, Chinese, and Arabic. Since it is not to be expected that the speakers of any of these six languages will be willing to subordinate their own language to any of the other five, the question is rather which languages will likely gain ascendancy in the natural course of events. Just over a century ago French would have appeared to have attained an undisputed claim to such ascendancy. It was then widely cultivated throughout Europe as the language of polite society, it was the diplomatic language of the world, and it enjoyed considerable popularity in literary and scientific circles. During the nineteenth century its prestige, though still great, gradually declined. The prominence of Germany in all fields of scientific and scholarly activity made German a serious competitor. Now more scientific research is probably published in English than in any other language, and the pre-eminence of English in commercial use undoubted. The revolution in communications during this century has contributed to the spread of several European languages, but especially of English because of major broadcasting and motion picture industries in the United States and Great Britain. It will be the combined effect of economic and cultural forces such as these rather than explicit legislation by national or international bodies that will determine the world languages of the future.

Since English seems likely to occupy an increasingly prominent place in international communication, it is worth pausing to inquire into its qualifications for so important a mission. It shares with the other highly developed languages of Europe the ability to express the multiplicity of ideas and the refinements of thought that demand expression in our civilisation.

English is classified as a Germanic language. That is to say, it belongs to the group languages to which German, Dutch, Flemish, Danish, Swedish, and Norwegian also belong. It shares with these languages similar grammatical structure and many common words. On the other hand, more than half of its vocabulary is derived from Latin. Some of these borrowings have been direct a great many through French, some through the other Romance languages, which means that English presents a somewhat familiar appearance to anyone who speaks a Germanic or a Romance language.

The English vocabulary contains borrowings from many other languages. Instead of making new words chiefly by the combination of existing elements, as German does, English has shown a marked tendency to go outside its own linguistic resources and borrow from other languages.

We do not feel there is anything “foreign” about the words chipmunk, moose, raccoon, skunk, all of which are borrowed from the American Indian.

We are not conscious that the words brandy, golf, duck (light canvas), measles, wagon and uproar are from Dutch.

From Italian come the words balcony, canto, duet, granite, opera, piano, umbrella, volcano…

From Spanish come the words alligator, cargo, hammock, cork, mosquito, stampede, tornado, vanilla…

From Greek, directly or indirectly, come the words acrobat, anthology, barometer, catarrh, catastrophe, chronology, elastic, magic, tactics…

From Russian come the words vodka, ruble …

From Persian come the words caravan, dervish, divan, khaki, shawl, sherbet, jasmine, paradise, check, chess, lemon, lilac, turban…

And many other languages too such as Arabic, Hungarian, Hindi-Urdu, Bengali, Malay, Chinese to name but a few.

Therefore a cosmopolitan vocabulary is an undoubted asset to any language that seeks to attain international use.

# Coping with Stereotypes

This is easier said than done. Fortunately, there are many approaches to the problem. Are stereotypes of a country or of a people inevitable, even after cultural instruction?

In order to ascertain the principal stereotypes students hold about a country like England and the English, for instance, is to ask them at the beginning of the course to make a list of

Three things they know about England

Those things they like about the English and the English way of life

Three things they don’t like about the English and the English way of life

Three adjectives to describe the English

The same four questions are to be asked about our own culture. A brief comparison will sensitise the class to the subjectivity of such judgements and raise the question of the source of their judgements.

While the use of a double collection of stereotypes may be one means of drawing attention to the fundamental differences between English and Arab cultures, the principal danger of such an approach lies in the destruction of empathy and the development of a real antipathy to the other culture: the “us versus them” mentality.

An example of such a danger may be found in the presentation of some common English and in fact European, assumptions about Americans. If it is said that it is believed that the Americans are loud, politically naïve, superficial in friendship, generally overweight, and excessively materialistic, this does not create a climate of debate or evaluation. Normally the reaction is considerable annoyance to such caricatures.

The reductionist nature of stereotyping eliminates the difference between the subcultures in the society, thus preventing the student from perceiving its richness and diversity.

If stereotypes are so powerful, and if stereotypes are already part of the beginning of the students’ intellectual baggage, strategies need to be devised to allow the learners at least some possibility of refining their notions.

Advertisements and satirical cartoons are rich sources of a culture’s self-image because sales and social critique are primarily geared for internal consumption. These can be compared with advertisements geared towards foreigners such as the sale of luxury items and the promotion of tourism, which imply the marketing of certain notions of England that the English want to project to a foreign audience.

Illustrations, advertisements, and articles can also be used to discuss the image Americans have of themselves and the image they wish to project to other cultures. How accurate are the images the United States wishes to project internationally? How accurate are the images England wishes to project internationally?

**He wears chequered shorts two sizes too small**

**which touch his fairy-white knees. His baseball**

**cap placed backwards on his head emphasise his**

**protruding ears. His short-sleeved shirt is striped**

**and his tie is decorated with bright yellow ducks.**

**He wears black socks with his open-toed brown**

**sandals. He sports a substantial paunch and is**

**ever ready for a “pig out”. He has a weakness**

**for pop corn, hot-dogs and baseball games. His**

**daily physical exercise consists of flexing the**

**finger muscles of one hand on the remote control**

**while the other hand moves upwards and downwards**

**from the side-table to his mouth placing potato**

**chips in his face. Who is he?**

The use of positive themes will promote identification and significantly challenge the negative stereotypes and perceptions we may have. Humour can be considered a remedy of some of the stereotypes out there.

In the example above, the character is the exact opposite of the American comic strip and film character, Superman. Committed to “truth, justice, and the American way”, the original Superman was precisely the embodiment of all the virtues of the American stereotype, and as such, the character sent completely different messages to other societies. Only in the films of the seventies does Superman take on any self-conscious irony and, even then, the character never ridicules fundamental American values.

Again, which is the right perception of the American image to be projected internationally?

## Humour

In learning a language, people reach a point where they are comfortable enough to start using word games, puns, double entendres, and even idioms in joking. Such word games are often used in short puzzles called riddles. Riddles are a luxury in any language, as they are used solely to entertain and engage one’s listeners. For this reason, they fall outside the flow of normal conversation. Instead, they stand as independent, humorous bits of banter. One interesting feature of riddles is that they appeal to all age groups, from the wise-and-experienced to the very young.

Riddles go back to ancient times. Originally, they were posed to generate introspection and to teach lessons. They were used as part of sacred rituals, prophecies, and even matters of life and death. One of the most ancient riddles that has come down to us is the riddle of the Sphinx. The Sphinx, a mythological creature, stood guard over the gates of the city of Thebes and asked the following riddle of all who passed: “What walks on four legs in the morning, two legs at noon, and three legs at night?” Those who could not answer the riddle were killed. One day, a man named Oedipus solved the riddle and destroyed the Sphinx. He correctly interpreted “the morning” as infancy, when we crawl on our hands and knees. “Noon” represents the period of life when we walk on two feet as adults. “Night” refers to our old age, when we must use canes to walk.

Over the years, the nature of riddles has changed. Today in America, riddles are used to mislead, trick and amuse. They have become a state of American humour. As a linguistic puzzle, a riddle can be a test of one’s cleverness or a way to challenge one’s wits. Solving the riddle is as much a part of the fun as asking the riddle.

English in particular has many words with more than one meaning. Consequently, these words constitute a wide store-house of material from which a riddle may originate; for example: “How can a leopard change his spots? Answer: “Move from place to place”. The word spot can mean a “mark or stain”, like the black spots on the coat of a leopard. It can also mean a “particular physical location”.

The humour in some riddles lies in knowing the meaning of an idiomatic expression. Some riddles have words that sound alike, but have different spellings and, consequently, different meanings. Others are worded to focus your attention on a certain part of the question, all in an effort to confuse you. All these riddles stimulate thought about language and are enjoyable learning tools for non-native speakers of English.

However, not all riddles depend on word play for their humour. In one of the most common types of riddle, the expected or logical solution turns out to be the wrong answer. For example, to the question “Why do surgeons wear masks during an operation?” one would expect an answer such as, “For sanitary purposes”. However, the answer is, “So that if they make a mistake, no one will know who did it. The surprise ending of the riddle makes it funny.

Humour is a way of communicating with a specific goal. The way it is used in different countries, in different ways, reflects a people’s way of thinking particular to a certain country, reflects in fact a certain culture.

**SO, WHERE IN THE WORLD IS ENGLAND?**

England, along with Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, form the United Kingdom --- a Northern European country. England is the largest political division in the UK (with Wales to the west and Scotland to the North) and is separated from mainland Europe by the North Sea and the English Channel and from Ireland by the Irish Sea. It consists of two main zones: the lowlands, which extend across the Midlands, South-East Anglia and the Pennines and the Lake District in the north and the granite uplands of Dartmoor and Exmoor in the southwest.

## 2000 YEARS OF ART AND INVENTION

The years A.D. 1 – 2002 have been action packed in terms of artistic and scientific development, and the human mind, ever inquisitive, has never stopped delving, creating and perfecting. Over the past twenty centuries, the English have played an important role in the development of world culture by making major scientific discoveries and producing great works of art and literature. There follows a small selection of key dates to great innovative and original works by English artists, writers, philosophers, composers, inventors and scientists of the past 2000 years.

**1st- 8th century**

Around A.D.670: the earliest known Christian English poet, C’dmon, produces a hymn on the Creation.

A.D.700 Anglo-Saxon poet, Cynewulf, writes “Juliana”.

**9th century**

Around A.D.800: “Beowulf”, an Anglo-Saxon epic poem, is written by a bard.

A.D.878-99: Alfred the Great (849-899) establishes schools for English nobles’ sons.

**11th century**

A.D.1049-1109: the flowering of ecclesiastical architecture in England.

A.D.1086: Doomsday Book compiled.

**12th century**

A.D.1128: Monk and historian, John of Worcester, makes the earliest known sketch of a sunspot.

A.D.1150-1200: Oxford University founded.

**13th century**

A.D.1209: Cambridge University founded.

A.D.1266: Monk and scholar, Friar Roger Bacon (~1214-94), experimental scientist at Oxford, publishes Opus Majus, containing all the scientific knowledge of the age.

**14th century**

Around A.D.1375: the anonymous epic poem, “Sir Gawayne and the Greene Knight” is written in Middle English.

A.D.1387-1400: Poet, Geoffrey Chaucer (1340-1400) writes Canterbury Tales.

**15th century**

A.D.1446-1515: King’s College Chapel in Cambridge is built in the English Perpendicular style.

A.D.1476: William Caxton (~ 1421-91) sets up printing press at Westminster.

A.D.1485: “Le Morte D’Arthur” a collection of stories about King Arthur is written by Thomas Malory.

**16th century**

A.D.1531: Diplomat and scholar, Thomas Elyot (1490-1546), publishes “The Governor”, the first modern handbook on the education of children.

A.D.1535: Protestant priest, Miles Coverdale (1488-1569), produces the very first English translation of the whole Bible.

~A.D.1590-2: William Shakespeare (1564-1616) writes his first plays: Henry VI parts 1,2 & 3 and Love’s Labour Lost.

A.D.1597-1625: Statesman and philosopher, Francis Bacon (1561-1626), composes his “Essays”, the very first examples of the form in English.

**17th century**

A.D.1616: Poet and dramatist, George Chapman (1559-1634), translates the Greek epics of Homer into English.

A.D.1622: Mathematician, William Oughtred (1575-1660), invents the slide rule.

A.D.1628: Physician, William Harvey (1578-1657), discovers circulation of the blood.

A.D.1659: Physician, Thomas Willis, gives a detailed description of Typhoid fever for the first time.

A.D.1666: The Master of mechanics to King Charles II, Samuel Morland (1625-1695), invents the first multiplying machine.

A.D.1667: Poet, John Milton (1608-74), writes “Paradise Lost”.

A.D.1668: Physicist and mathematician, Isaac Newton (1642-1727) invents the reflecting telescope.

A.D.1687: Isaac Newton publishes Philosophiae naturalis principia mathematica, which includes his laws of motion and gravity.

**18th century**

A.D.1709: Abraham Darby (1677-1717) first uses coke in a blast furnace to smelt iron at Coalbrookdale, Shropshire.

A.D.1711: Essayist, Alexander Pope (1688-1744) writes “An Essay on Criticism”.

A.D.1712: Devon blacksmith, Thomas Newcomen (1663-1729), invents the first practical steam engine.

A.D.1719: Novelist, Daniel Defoe (1660-1731), publishes The Life and Strange and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe.

A.D.1744: The rules for cricket are first laid down --- a game first played by shepherds using their crooks as bats!

A.D.1747: Critic and essayist, Samuel Johnson (1709-84), starts compiling the first useful English dictionary.

A.D.1754: Furniture maker, Thomas Chippendale (1718-79) publishes his book on furniture design, Gentleman and Cabinet Maker’s Director.

A.D.1774: Scientist, Joseph Priestly (1733-1804), discovers oxygen.

A.D.1792: Feminist and member of the English Jacobins, Mary Wollstoncraft (1759-97), publishes “A vindication of the Rights of Women”.

A.D.1796: Physicist, Edward Jenner (1749-1823), successfully completes twenty years of experiments in the protective power of vaccination.

**19th century**

A.D.1803: Cornish engineer, Richard Trevithick (1771-1833), constructs the first steam locomotive.

A.D.1804: Aviation pioneer, George Cayley (1773-1857) develops an instrument to measure wind resistance.

A.D.1811: Sense and Sensibility by author Jane Austen (1775-1817) is published.

A.D.1823: Rugby football is played for the first time at Rugby school.

A.D.1821-31: Scientist, Michael Faraday (1791-1867) develops the electric generator, culminating in the discovery of electromagnetic induction. (the basis of electric motors)

A.D.1830: The world’s first regular railway passenger service is started between Liverpool and Manchester.

A.D.1847: Jane Eyre by novelist, Charlotte Brontë (1816-55) and Wuthering Heights by her sister Emily (1818-48) are published.

A.D.1852: Physician Peter Mark Roget (1779-1869), publishes a Thesaurus of English Words and Phrases.

A.D.1856: Richard assistant, William Henry Perkin (1838-1907), discovers Mauveine, the first synthetic dye.

A.D.1862: The very first plastic articles, made from “Parkesine” are exhibited in London.

A.D.1863: the world’s first tube train starts running between Paddington and the city of London.

A.D.1868: the world’s first traffic lights are installed near London’s House of Commons.

A.D.1865-6: Antiseptic surgery introduced by Joseph Lister (1827-1912)

A.D.1884: Surgeon, Rickman John Godlee, performs first operation to remove brain tumour.

**20th century**

A.D.1906: biochemist, Frederick Hopkins (1861-1947), discovers “accessory food factors”, which are later renamed vitamins.

A.D.1909: the first motion pictures in colour are shown in a London theatre.

A.D.1922: Crime writer, Agatha Christie (1890-1976) publishes her first novel, The Mysterious Affair at Styles.

A.D.1926: Scholar and author, Henry Fowler (1858-1933), publishes Modern English Usage.

A.D.1929: the world’s first television studio opens in London’s Long Acre.

A.D.1930: Aviator and engineer, Frank Whittle (1907- ), patents jet engine aircraft.

A.D.1948: First successful stored program computer operated at Manchester University.

A.D.1953: Molecular biologist, Francis Crick (1916- ), along with James Watson, discovers the helical structure of DNA and: writer, Ian Flemming (1908-1964) publishes Casino Royale, the first of his secret service thrillers to feature James Bond.

A.D.1959: First full sized model of a hovercraft, invented by Christopher Cockerell (1910-99) is launched at Cowes, Isle of Wight.

A.D.1960: Film director, Alfred Hitchcock (1899-1980), makes Psycho.

A.D.1967: Liverpudlian pop group, The Beatles (1960-1970), release the album Sergeant Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band.

A.D.1976: High Speed Trains (HST), capable of reaching 230km/h (143mph), are introduced.

A.D.1984: Molecular biologist, Alec Jeffreys (1950- ), develops genetic fingerprinting, which uses unique sequences of DNA to identify an individual.

A.D.1989: Physicist, Tim Berners-Lee, proposes a global hypertext project, to be known as the World Wide Web.

A.D.1999: The VSV (very slender vessel), capable of going faster than any other ocean going craft, is produced by the Special Boat Squadron.

A.D.2000: A new synchrotron (called Diamond) is set up in Oxfordshire to study the structure of complex molecules. Scientists are able to look at fundamental reactions in chemistry as they happen and; heart surgeon, Steve Westaby, fits man with the very first miniature electric heart pump at the Oxford Heart Centre.

21st century

A.D.2002: Scientists from Cambridge University weigh the lightest known particle in the universe, unlocking the secret of one of the greatest mysteries in cosmology.

**AND NOW FOR A BRIEF HISTORY LESSON**

Britain is an island, and Britain’s history has been closely connected with the sea. Until modern times it was as easy to travel across water as it was across land, where roads were frequently unusable. At moments of great danger Britain has been saved from danger by its surrounding seas. Britain’s history and its strong national sense have been shaped by the sea.

### Britain’s prehistory

Britain has not always been an island. It became one only after the last ice age. The temperature rose and the ice cap melted, flooding the lower-lying land that is now under the North Sea and the English Channel.

#### The Celts

Around 700 BC, a group of people began to arrive. Many of them were tall, and had fair or red hair and blue eyes. These were the Celts, who probably came from central Europe or further east, from southern Russia, and had moved slowly westwards in earlier centuries. The Celts were technically advanced. They knew how to work with iron. The Celts began to control all the lowland areas of Britain.

The Celts are important in British history because they are the ancestors of many of the people in Scotland, Wales, Ireland and Cornwall today.

The Celts traded across tribal borders and trade was probably important for political and social contact between the tribes. Much trade, both inside and beyond Britain, was conducted by river and sea. For money, the Celts used iron bars, until they began to copy the Roman coins used in Gaul (France).

According to the Romans, the Celtic men wore shirts and breeches (knee-length trousers), and striped or checked cloaks fastened by a pin. It is possible that the Scottish tartan and dress developed from this “striped cloak”.

The Celtic tribes were ruled by a warrior class, of which the priests, or Druids, seem to have been particularly important members. During the Celtic period, women may have had more independence than they had again for hundreds of years. When the Romans invaded Britain, two of the largest tribes were ruled by women who fought from their chariots. The most powerful Celt to stand up to the Romans was a woman, Boadicea. She had become queen of her tribe when her husband had died. She was tall, with long red hair, and had a frightening appearance. She nearly drove them from Britain, and she destroyed London, the Roman capital, before she was defeated and killed. Roman writers commented on the courage and strength of women in battle.

#### The Romans

The name “Britain” comes from the word “Pretani”, the Greco-Roman word for the inhabitants of Britain. The Romans mispronounced the word and called the island “Britannia”.

The Romans brought the skills of reading and writing to Britain. The written word was important for spreading ideas and also for establishing power. While the Celtic peasantry remained illiterate and only Celtic-speaking, a number of town dwellers spoke Latin and Greek with ease, and the richer landowners in the country almost certainly used Latin. But Latin completely disappeared both in its spoken and written forms when the Anglo-Saxons invaded Britain in the fifth century A.D. Britain was probably more literate under the Romans than it was to be again until the XVth century.

#### Roman Life

The most obvious characteristic of Roman Britain was its towns, which were the basis of Roman administration and civilisation. Many grew out of Celtic settlements, military camps or market centres. Many of these towns were at first army camps, and the Latin word for camp, castra, has remained part of many town names to this day (with the ending chester, caster or cester): Gloucester, Leicester, Doncaster, Winchester, Chester, Lancaster etc.

### Christianity: the partnership of Church and State

It was the Celtic Church that brought Christianity to the ordinary people of Britain. The Celtic bishops went out from their monasteries of Wales, Ireland and Scotland, walking from village to village teaching Christianity.

England had become Christian very quickly. The Church also increased the power of the Kings. Bishops gave kings their support, which made it harder for royal power to be questioned. Kings had “God’s approval”. When kings were crowned, it was done at a Christian ceremony led by a bishop. It was good political propaganda, because it suggested that kings were chosen not only by people but also by God.

There were other ways in which the Church increased the power of the English state. It established monasteries, or minsters, for example Westminster, which were places of learning and education. These monasteries trained the men who could read and write, so that they had the necessary skills for the growth of royal and Church authority,

#### The Vikings

Then came the Vikings towards the end of the 8th century who were tempted by Britain’s wealth. The actual word probably means “pirates” and they came from Norway and Denmark. In 865, the Vikings invaded, conquered and settled in Britain. They quickly accepted Christianity.

In 1066, William the Conqueror was crowned King of England. A new era began. This was the Middle Ages and Feudalism was a very important part of society at the time. William was careful in the way he gave land to his nobles. As each new area of land in England was captured, William gave parts of it as rewards to his captains. At the same time he kept enough land for himself to make sure he was much stronger than his nobles. William, and the Kings after him, thought of England as their personal property.

William organised his English kingdom according to the feudal system. The word “feudalism” comes from the French “feu”, which the Normans used to refer to land held in return for duty or service to a lord. The basis of feudal society was the holding of land, and its main purpose was economic. The central idea was that all land was owned by the king but it was held by others, called “vassals”, in return for services and goods. The king gave large estates to his main nobles in return for a promise to serve him in war. The nobles also had to give him part of the produce of the land. The greater nobles gave part of their land to lesser nobles, knights, and other “freemen”. Some freemen paid for the land by doing military service, while others paid rent. The nobles kept “serfs” to work on their own land. These were not free to leave the estate, and were often little better than slaves.

There were two basic principles to feudalism: every man had a lord, and every lord had land. The king was connected through this “chain” of people to the lowest man in the country. At each level a man had to promise loyalty and service to his lord. This was called “homage”. On the other hand, each lord had responsibilities to his vassals. He had to give them land and protection.

William gave out land all over England to his nobles. By 1086 he wanted to know exactly who owned each piece of land, and how much it was worth. He needed this information so that he could plan his economy; find out how much was produced and how much he could ask in tax. He therefore sent a team of people all through England to make a complete economic survey. His men asked all kinds of questions at each settlement: How much land was there? Who owned it? How much was it worth? How many families, ploughs and sheep were there? And so on. This survey was the only one of its kind in Europe. Not surprisingly, it was most unpopular with the people, because they felt they could not escape from its findings. It so reminded them of the paintings of the Day of Judgement, or “doom”, on the walls of their churches that they called it the “Domesday” Book. The name stuck. The Domesday Book still exists, and gives us an extraordinary amount of information about England at this time.

Eventually, feudalism declined.

In 1258 a council of nobles was elected which was called a parliament or parlement, a French word meaning a “discussion meeting”. It made statutes, wrote laws and made political decisions. This eventually became the House of Lords.

At the same time, taxation was becoming a problem. The lords were less able to provide the king with money. The king could only raise it by taxation. Edward I was the first to create a “representative institution” which could provide the money he needed. This institution became the House of Commons. Unlike the House of Lords it contained a mixture of “gentry” (knights and other wealthy freemen) and merchants from the towns. The co-operation of these groups, through the House of Commons, became important to Britain’s later political and social development.

#### The growth of towns as centres of wealth (an economical overview)

England was, to a very large degree an agricultural society. Even in towns and cities, many of those involved in trade or industry also farmed smallholdings of land on the edge of town. In this sense England was self-sufficient. However, throughout the Middle Ages England needed things from abroad, such as salt and spices. Inside England there was a good deal of trade between different regions. Wool-growing areas, for example, imported food from food-producing areas.

We know more about international trade, which was recorded because the king obtained a considerable income from customs dues. For example, English grain was highly valued in Norway. In return, England imported Scandinavian fish and tall timber.

England has always been famous for its wool. In order to improve the manufacture of woollen cloth, William the Conqueror encouraged Flemish weavers and other skilled workers from Normandy to settle in England. They helped to establish new towns: Newcastle, Hull, Boston and others. As the European demand for wool stayed high, and since no other country could match the high quality of English wool, English exporters could charge a price high above the production cost, and about twice as much as the price in the home market. People developed social and economic organisations free from feudal rule. It was the beginnings of a middle class and a capitalist economy.

### Language, literature and culture

The growth of literacy in England was closely connected with the Renaissance, a cultural movement which had first started in Italy. Its influence moved northwards along the trade routes. This revolution in ideas and learning brought a new desire to test religious faith against reason. Schools of learning were established in many towns and cities. Some were “grammar” schools independent of the Church, while others were attached to a cathedral. All of these schools taught Latin, because most books were written in this language. Although a dead language, Latin was important because it was the educated language of almost all of Europe, and was therefore useful in the spread of ideas and learning. In England two schools of higher education were established, the first at Oxford and the second at Cambridge, at the end of the twelfth century. By the 1220s these two universities were the intellectual leaders of the country.

Few could go to the universities. Most English people spoke neither Latin, the language of the Church and of education, nor French, the language of law. It was a long time before English became the language of the ruling class.

The 14th century was the age of chivalry. Edward III and his eldest son, the Black Prince, were greatly admired in England for their courage on the battlefield and for their courtly manners. They became symbols of the “code of chivalry”, the way in which a perfect knight should behave. He should fight for his good name if insulted; he should serve God and the King and defend any lady in need. Chivalry was a useful way of persuading men to fight by creating the idea that war was a noble and glorious thing.

The year1348 brought an event of far greater importance than the creation of a new order of chivalry. This was the terrible plague, known as the Black Death, which reached almost every part of Britain. Probably more than one-third of the population died, and less than one person in ten who caught the plague managed to survive it. Whole villages disappeared, and some towns were almost completely deserted until the plague itself died out.

After the Black Death there were other plagues during the rest of the century, which killed mostly the young and healthy. In 1300 the population of Britain had probably been over four million. By the end of the century, it was about half that figure, and it only began to grow again in the second half of the 15th century. Even so, it took until the 17th century for the population to reach four million again.

Throughout the 14th century the poor revolted against the king because of their discontent and because of the dreadful conditions they lived in. The next century saw discontent with the Church. The greed of the Church was one obvious reason for its unpopularity. The people disliked paying taxes to it. Another reason was that people were becoming literate and read a lot of religious writings. Private religious experience and the increase of knowledge encouraged people to challenge the Church’s authority, and the way it used this to advance its political influence.

The year 1485 has usually been taken to mark the end of the Middle Ages in England. During that time, society was still based upon rank. At the top were dukes, earls and other lords. Below these great lords were knights although most were no longer heavily armed fighters on horses. They were “gentlemen farmers” or “landed gentry” who had increased the size of their landholdings, and improved their farming methods. This class had grown in numbers.

Meanwhile, in the towns, a new middle class was developing. By the 15th century most merchants were well educated, and considered themselves to be the equals of the gentlemen of the countryside. The lawyers were another class of city people. In London, they were considered equal in importance to the big merchants and cloth manufacturers. The growth of this new middle class, educated and skilled in law, administration and trade, created a new atmosphere in Britain. This was partly because of the increase in literacy. Indeed, the middle class could be described as the “literate class”. This literate class questioned the way in which the Church and the state were organised, for both religious and practical reasons.

By the end of the Middle Ages, English as well as Latin was being used in legal writing, and also in elementary schools. Education developed enormously during the 15th century and many schools were founded by powerful men. Clerks started grammar schools where students could learn the skills of reading and writing.

The Middle Ages ended with a major technical development: William Caxton’s first English printing press, set up in 1476. Caxton had learned the skill of printing in Germany. Caxton’s printing press was as dramatic for his age as radio, television and the technological revolution are for our own. Books suddenly became cheaper and more plentiful, as the quicker printing process replaced slow and expensive copywriting by hand. Printing began to standardize spelling and grammar, provided information for the newly educated people and encouraged literacy.

The 16th century saw a growth in trade abroad. Spices for instance were extremely important for making the winter salted meat tastier. The English were determined to have a share in this trade.

In 1485, much of the countryside was still untouched. There were still great forests of oak trees, and unused land in between. There were still wild animals, wild pigs, wild cattle and even a few wolves. Scattered across this countryside were “islands” of human settlement, villages and towns.

In the 16th century, however, this picture began to change rapidly. The population increased, the unused land was cleared for sheep, and large areas of forest were cut down to provide wood for the growing shipbuilding industry. England was beginning to experience greater social and economic problems than ever before.

The price of food and other goods rose steeply during the 16th and early 17th centuries. This inflation was without equal until the twentieth century. The problem was the sudden increase in population which doubled from 2.2 million in 1525 to four million in 1603. Twice the number of people needed twice the number of food. It was not produced. Living conditions got worse as the population rose.

Many of the poor moved to the towns. The rich of this new capitalist society showed off their success by building magnificent houses and churches in the villages where they worked.

During this period, London English had become accepted as standard English. Printing made it more widely acceptable amongst the literate population. For the first time, people started to think of London pronunciation as “correct”. Literacy increased greatly during the mid-sixteenth century. By the 17th century about half the population could read and write.

Nothing, however, showed England’s new confidence more than its artistic flowering during the Renaissance. England felt the effects of the Renaissance later than much of Europe because it was an island. The Renaissance also influenced religion, encouraging the Protestant Reformation.

In music, England enjoyed its most fruitful period ever. There was also considerable interest in the painters in Europe and England developed its own special kind of painting, the miniature portrait.

Literature, however, was England’s greatest art form. Playwrights like Christopher Marlowe, Ben Jonson, and William Shakespeare filled the theatres with their exciting new plays.

During the 17th century economic power moved fast into the hands of the merchant and land-owning farmer classes.

Britain’s main enemies were Spain, Holland and France.

Revolution in thought was happening at the same time and it showed through scientific thinking. Careful study of the natural world led to important new discoveries. It was not the first time that the people of Britain had taken a lead in scientific matters. Almost a thousand years earlier, the English monk and historian Bede, had argued that the earth stood still, fixed in space, and was surrounded by seven heavens. This, of course, was not correct, but no one doubted him for centuries.

In the 13th and 14th centuries English scientists, most of them at the University of Oxford, had led Europe. Friar Roger Bacon, one of the more famous of them, had experimented with light, heat and magnetism. Another, William of Ockham, had studied falling objects. William Marlee, had been one of the first to keep a careful record of the weather. At the same time, the practical effects of such curiosity were seen in new machinery, water mills and geared wheels.

By the 17th century, scientific thinking was on an entirely different scale. The new mood had been established by a remarkable man, Francis Bacon. Every scientific idea, he argued, must be tested by experiment. With idea and experiment following one after the other, the whole natural world would be understood. Throughout the rest of the century, British scientists put these ideas into practice. The British have remained at the front of experiment and research ever since.

In 1628, William Harvey discovered the circulation of blood and this led to great advances in medicine and in the study of the human body. Scientists Robert Boyle and Robert Hooke used Harvey’s methods when they made discoveries in the chemistry and mechanics of breathing.

In 1666, Cambridge Professor of Mathematics, Sir Isaac Newton, began to study gravity, publishing his important discovery in 1684. Newton’s work remained the basis of physics until Einstein’s discoveries in the 20th century.

Well before the end of the 18th century Britain was as powerful as France. This resulted from the growth of its industries and from the wealth of its large new trading empire. Britain now had the strongest navy in the world; the navy controlled Britain’s own trade routes and endangered those of its enemies.

In 1764 a serious quarrel over taxation between the British government and its colonies in America took place. The British government continued to think of the colonists as British subjects. In 1700 there had been only 200 000 colonists, but by 1770 there were 2.5 million. Some American colonists decided that it was not lawful for the British to tax them without their agreement. The American War of Independence had begun. It lasted from 1775 till 1783.

In 1700, England was still a land of small villages. In the northern areas of England, in Lancashire and West Midlands, the large cities of the future were only just beginning to grow. By the middle of the century Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, Sheffield and Leeds were already large. All the towns smelled bad. There were no drains. Streets were used as lavatories and the dirt was seldom removed. In fact people added to it, leaving in the streets the rubbish from the marketplace and from houses. The streets were muddy and narrow, some only two metres wide.

The towns were centres of disease. As a result only one child in four in London lived to become an adult. It was the poor who died youngest. They were buried together in large holes dug in the ground. These were not covered with earth until they were full.

During the eighteenth century, efforts were made to make towns healthier. Streets were built wider, so that carriages drawn by horses could pass each other. From 1734, London had a street lighting system. After 1760 many towns asked Parliament to allow them to tax their citizens in order to provide social services, such as street cleaning and lighting. Each house owner had to pay a local tax, the amount or “rate” of which was decided by the local council or corporation.

There were four main classes of people in eighteenth-century towns: the wealthy merchants; the ordinary merchants and traders; the skilled craftsmen; and the large number of workers who had no skill and who could not be sure of finding work from one day to another.

### The Industrial Revolution

Several influences came together at the same time to revolutionise Britain’s industry: money, labour, a greater demand for goods, new power, and better transport.

Increased food production made it possible to feed large populations in the new towns.

By the early 18th century simple machines had already been invented for basic jobs. They could make large quantities of simple goods quickly and cheaply so that “mass production” became possible for the first time. Each machine carried out one simple process. This was the beginning of the industrial revolution.

By the 1740s, the main problem holding back industrial growth was fuel. There was less wood, and, in any case, wood could not produce the heat necessary to make iron and steel either in large quantities or of high quality. But at this time the use of coal for changing iron ore into good quality iron or steel was perfected, and this made Britain the leading iron producer in Europe.

One invention led to another, and increased production in one area led to increased production in others. Other basic materials of the industrial revolution were cotton and woollen cloth, which were popular abroad.

In the Midlands, factories using locally found clay began to develop very quickly, and produced fine quality plates, cups and other china goods. These soon replaced the old metal plates and drinking cups that had been used. Soon, large quantities of china were exported. The most famous factory was one started by Josiah Wedgwood. His high quality bone china became very popular, as it still is.

The social effects of the industrial revolution were enormous. Workers tried to join together to protect themselves against powerful employers. They wanted fair wages and reasonable conditions in which to work.

Britain in the 19th century was at its most powerful and self-confident. After the industrial revolution, 19th century Britain was the “workshop” of the world. Until the last quarter of the century, British factories were producing more than any other country in the world.

By the end of the century, Britain’s empire was political rather than commercial. Britain used this Empire to control large areas of the world. The empire gave the British a feeling of their own importance which was difficult to forget when Britain lost its power in the 20th century.

In 1851, Queen Victoria opened the Great Exhibition of the Industries of All Nations inside the Crystal Palace, in London. The exhibition aimed to show the world the greatness of Britain’s industry. No other nation could produce as much at the time. At the end of the 18th century, France had produced more iron than Britain. By 1850, Britain was producing more iron than the rest of the world together.

Britain had become powerful because it had enough coal, iron and steel for its own enormous industry, and could even export them in large quantities to Europe. With these materials, it could produce new heavy industrial goods like iron ships and steam engines. It could also make machinery which produced traditional goods like woollen and cotton cloth in the factories of Lancashire. Britain’s cloth was cheap and was exported to India, to other colonies and throughout the Middle East. Britain made and owned more than half the world’s total shipping. The great industrial empire was supported by a strong banking system developed during the eighteenth century.

### The railway

The greatest example of Britain’s industrial power in the mid-nineteenth century was its railway system. Indeed, it was mainly because of this new form of transport that six million people were able to visit the Great Exhibition, 109 000 of them on one day. Many of them had never visited London before.

In fact industrialists had built the railways to transport goods, not people, in order to bring down the cost of transport. By 1840, 2400 miles of track had been laid, connecting not only the industrial towns of the north, but also London, Birmingham and even an economically unimportant town like Brighton. By 1870, the railway system of Britain was almost complete. The canals were soon empty as everything went by rail. The speed of the railway even made possible the delivery of fresh fish and raspberries from Scotland to London in one night.

In 1851, the government made the railway companies provide passenger trains, which stopped at all stations for a fare of one penny per mile. Now people could move about much more quickly and easily.

Between 1875 and 1914, the condition of the poor in most of Britain greatly improved as prices fell by 40 percent and real wages doubled. Life at home was made more comfortable. Most homes now had gas for both heating and lighting. As a result of falling prices and increased wages, poor families could eat better food, including meat, fresh milk (brought from the countryside by train) and vegetables.

In 1870 and 1891, two Education Acts were passed. As a result of these, all children had to go to school up to the age of thirteen, where they were taught reading, writing and arithmetic. England started to build “redbrick” universities in the new industrialist cities. The term “redbrick” distinguished the new universities, often brick-built from the older, mainly stone-built universities of Oxford and Cambridge. These new universities were unlike Oxford and Cambridge in that they taught more science and technology to feed Britain’s industries.

From the middle of the century, many people had started to use the railway to get to work. Now they began to travel for pleasure. The working class went to the new seaside holiday towns. The middle class enjoyed the countryside, or smaller seaside resorts of a more expensive kind.

The invention of the bicycle was also important. For the first time people could cycle into the countryside, up to 50 miles from home. It gave a new freedom to working-class and middle-class people, who met each other for the first time away from work.

The most important idea of the 19th century was that everyone had the right to personal freedom, which was the basis of capitalism.

**Family Life in the 19th century**

In spite of the greater emphasis on the individual and the growth of openly shown affection, the end of the 18th century also saw a swing back to stricter ideas of family. In part, the close family resulted from the growth of the new attitudes to privacy, perhaps a necessary part of individualism. It was also the result of the removal, over a period beginning in the 16th century, of the social and economic support of the wider family and village community, which had made family life so much more public. Except for the rich, people no longer married for economic reasons, but did so for personal happiness. However, while wives might be companions, they were certainly not equals. As someone wrote in 1800, “the husband and wife are one, and the husband is that one”. As the idea of the close family under the “master” of the household became stronger, so the possibility for a wife to find emotional support or practical advice outside the immediate family became more limited. In addition, as the idea of the close family spread down the social order, an increasing number of women found their sole economic and social usefulness ended when their children grew up, a problem that continued into the 20th century. They were discouraged from going out to work if not economically necessary, and also encouraged to make use of the growing number of people available for domestic service.

The chance of happy family life in the 19th century was reduced. Strict parental behaviour, the regular beating of children (which was widespread), and the cruel conditions for the boys at boarding school, all worked against it. Family life ended when children grew up. A wife was legally a man’s property, until nearly the end of the century.

### The rights of women

In 1918, some women over the age of thirty gained the right to vote after a long, hard struggle.

A man thought of his wife and daughters as his property, as did the law. It was almost impossible for women to get a divorce, even for those rich enough to pay the legal costs. Until 1882, a woman had to give up all her property to her husband when she married him. And until 1891, husbands were still allowed by law to beat their wives with a stick “no thicker than a man’s thumb”, and to lock them up in a room if they wished. By 1850, wife beating had become a serious social problem in Britain. Men of all classes were able to take advantage of women. Women were probably treated worse in Britain than in any other industrialising European country at the time.

After 1870 the situation, particularly for middle-class women, began to improve. A very small number started to study at Oxford and Cambridge in separate women’s colleges. But while they were allowed to follow the same course of study as men, they could not receive a degree at the end. Middle-class women became increasingly determined to have equal rights. Working-class women were more interested in their legal rights concerning working conditions.

In 1897 women started to demand the right to vote in national elections. Within ten years these women, the “suffragettes”, had become famous for the extreme methods they were willing to use. However, if they had not been willing to shock the public, the suffragettes might not have succeeded.

The war in 1914 changed everything. Britain would have been unable to continue the war without the women who took men’s places in the factories. By 1918, 29 per cent of the total work force in Britain was female. Women had to be given the vote. But it was not until ten years later that the voting age of women came down to 21, equal with men.

The liberation of women took other forms. They started to wear lighter clothing, shorter hair and skirts, began to smoke and drink openly, and to wear cosmetics. Married women wanted smaller families, and divorce became easier, rising from a yearly average of 800 in 1910 to 8000 in 1939.

Once women could vote, many people felt that they had gained full and equal rights. But there was still a long battle ahead for equal treatment and respect both at home and at work.

More and more women protested against violence. They tried to win the same pay and work opportunities as men. This new movement resulted from the growth in the number of workingwomen. Between 1965 and 1985 the number of wives with jobs increased from 37% to 58%. In 1975, it became unlawful to treat women differently from men in matters of employment and pay. But this law was not fully enforced, and it continued to be harder for women to take a full part in national life.

**A brief overview of political power shifts during world wars I and II:**

By the end of the century, it had become clear that Britain was no longer as powerful as it had been. Why? There seems to be a number of reasons.

* Other countries, Germany in particular, had greater natural wealth, including coal and iron, and wheat producing lands
* Most British people invested their money abroad rather than building up home industry
* British workers produced less than those in other countries
* Britain was behind other countries in science and technology, as well as management skills
* Public schools --- the private system of education for the richer middle class --- did not encourage business or scientific studies

London was beyond doubt the centre of the growing international financial system, but in spite of this, Britain found that Germany, France and the USA were increasingly competing with her. Suddenly Britain realised that it no longer ruled the seas quite so assuredly, and that others had more powerful armies and more powerful industries.

The danger of war with Germany had been clear from the beginning of the century, and it was this fact that brought France and Britain together.

When Germany attacked France in August 1914 Britain immediately declared war. It also declared war because it feared that Germany’s ambitions would completely change the map of Europe. Germany nearly defeated the allies, Britain and France, in the first few weeks of war in 1914. It had better trained soldiers, better equipment and a clear plan of attack. Four years of bitter fighting followed, both armies living and fighting in the trenches, which they had dug to protect their men.

When peace came, there were great hopes for a better future. These hopes were created by the government itself, which had made too many promises about improved conditions of life for soldiers returning from the war. As soon as the war had ended, the government started a big program of building homes and improving health and education. But there was far less progress than people were led to hope for.

Again, by 1935, it was clear that Germany, under its new leader Adolph Hitler, was preparing to regain its position in Europe, by force if necessary. Britain had done nothing to increase its fighting strength since 1918 because public opinion in Britain had been against the war. The government suddenly had to rebuild its armed forces, and this meant investing a large amount of money in heavy industry. By 1937 British industry was producing weapons, aircraft and equipment for war, with the help of money from the United States.

In September 1939, Germany invaded Poland. Its allies were Italy with its Fascist leader, Benito Mussolini, and Japan. Britain entered the war. The British felt again that they were fighting for the weaker nations of Europe and the world (Germany had occupied Czechoslovakia and Italy had invaded Abyssinia --- Ethiopia --- in 1935) as well as Democracy. Few people realised how strong the German army was. In 1940 it attacked, defeating the French in a few days, and driving the British army into the sea. Almost one and a half million people in London were made homeless by German bombing.

The war had begun as a traditional European struggle, with Britain fighting to save the “balance of power” in Europe, and to control the Atlantic Ocean and the sea surrounding Britain. But the war quickly became worldwide. Both sides wanted to control the oil in the Middle East, and the Suez Canal, Britain’s route to India. In 1941, Japan attacked British colonial possessions, including Malaya (Malaysia), Burma and India. As a result, Britain used soldiers from all parts of its empire to help fight against Germany, Italy and Japan. But the weakness of Britain was obvious to the whole world when its army surrendered Singapore to Japan.

In 1941, Germany and Japan had made two mistakes that undoubtedly cost them the war. Germany attacked the Soviet Union, and Japan attacked the United States, both quite unexpectedly. Whatever the advantages of surprise attack, the Axis of Germany, Italy and Japan had now forced onto the battlefield two of the most powerful nations in the world. Britain could not have possibly defeated Germany without the help of its stronger allies.

In May 1945, Germany finally surrendered. Britain and the United States then used their bombing power to defeat Japan. This time they used the new atomic bombs to destroy most of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, two large Japanese cities. Over 110 000 people died immediately and many thousands more died later from the after-effects.

At the start of the 20th century, Britain was still the greatest world power. By the middle of the century, although still one of the “Big Three”, Britain was clearly weaker than either the United States or the Soviet Union. By the end of the seventies Britain was no longer a world power at all, and was not even among the richest European powers. One reason for this sudden decline was the cost of the two world wars. (First World War: 1914-1918. Second World War: 1939-1945) Another reason was the basic weaknesses in Britain’s industrial power, and particularly its failure to spend as much as other industrial nations in developing its industry.

At the end of the war, the victorious Allies created the United Nations, which replaced the failed League of Nations of after the First World War. The Allies formed themselves into a “Security Council”, into which they invited some less powerful nations.

Economical and Social changes in Britain after the wars:

1. In 1944, for the first time, the government promised free secondary education for all, and promised to provide more further and higher education.
2. In 1946, the National Health Service, which gave the right to free medical treatment, was introduced.
3. In 1948 the National Assistance Act provided financial help for the old, the unemployed and those unable to work through sickness. Mothers and children also received help.

Like most of post-war Europe, Britain had become economically dependent on the United States. Because of American aid, Britain was able to recover quickly from the war. Working people now had a better standard of living than ever before. There was enough work for everyone. Wages were about 30% higher than in 1939 and prices had hardly risen at all.

People had free time to enjoy themselves. At weekends many watched football matches in large new stadiums. In the evenings they could go to the cinema. They began to go away for holidays to low-cost “holiday camps”. In 1950, car production was twice what it had been in 1939, and by 1960 cars were owned not only by richer people but also by many on a lower income.

It was also the age of youth. Young people had more money in their pockets than ever before, now that wages for those just starting work had improved. The result was that the young began to influence fashion, particularly in clothing and music. Nothing expressed the youthful “pop” culture of the sixties better than the Beatles, whose music quickly became internationally known. It was no accident that the Beatles were working-class boys from Liverpool. They were real representatives of a popular culture.

Britain experienced new social problems, particularly after the arrival of immigrants in Britain. All through British history there have been times when large numbers of immigrants have come to settle in the country. But until recently these people, being Europeans, were not noticeably different from the British themselves. In the fifties, however, the first black immigrants started to arrive from the West Indies, looking for work. By 1960, there were 250 000 “coloured” immigrants in Britain and also the first signs of trouble with young whites.

Later, Asian immigrants started to arrive from India and Pakistan and from East Africa. Most immigrants lived together in poor areas of large cities. Leicester’s population became 16 % immigrant, Wolverhampton and Bradford about 8% each. By 1985, there were about five million recent immigrants and their children out of a total population of about fifty six million. By 1985, too, almost half this black population had been born in Britain.

As unemployment grew, the new immigrants were sometimes wrongly blamed. In fact, it was often the immigrants who were willing to do dirty or unpopular work, in factories, hospitals and other workplaces. The relationship between black immigrants and the white population of Britain was not easy. Black people found it harder to obtain employment and were often only able to live in the worst housing.

The old nineteenth century city centres in which black immigrants had settled were areas with serious physical and economic problems. In the 1980s bad housing and unemployment led to riots in Liverpool, Bristol and London. Black people were blamed for causing these riots, but they were in fact mainly the result of serious and longstanding economic difficulties, which affected the black population living in the old city centres more than the white.

The black community also felt separated from richer Britain. Most blacks lived in the poor inner city areas, not the richer suburbs, and unemployment among blacks by 1986 was twice as high as among the white population.

There were other signs that British society was going through a difficult period. The Saturday afternoon football match, the favourite entertainment of many British families, gradually became the scene of frightening and often meaningless violence. British football crowds became feared around the world.

Britain has more living symbols of its past than many countries. It still has a royal family and small nobility. Its capital, cities and countryside boast many ancient buildings, castles, cathedrals, and the “stately homes” of the nobility. Every year there are historical ceremonies, for example the State Opening of Parliament, the Lord Mayor’s Show or the meeting of the Knights of the Garter at Windsor each St George’s day. It is easy to think that these symbols are a true representation of the past. Britain’s real history, however, is about the whole people of Britain and what has shaped them as a society.

### Population Timeline

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1600 | Population of Britain just over 4 million |
| 1700 | Population of Britain 5 million |
| 1801 | Population of Britain 8 million |
| 1851 | Population of Britain 20 million |
| 1901 | Population of Britain 40 million |
| 1951 | Population of Britain 50 million |
| 1998 | Population of Britain just over 57 million |

A Number of British Cultural Aspects

### How much do things cost in England?

The cost of living varies from one part of the UK to another. Generally, it is more expensive to live in London and the South East of England, and cheaper in the North.

Britain’s currency is based on the pound sterling (£) which is divided into one hundred pence (100p). Coins are normally issued up to the value of £2.00.

Below is **a very rough** estimate of how much things cost in Britain.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Item | Cost | Item | Cost |
| Milk (4 pints) | 0.90 | Butter | 0.95 |
| Apple Juice | 0.69 | Strawberry Jam | 1.29 |
| Bread (loaf) | 0.39 | Newspaper | 0.50 |
| Eggs | 0.78 | Cheap restaurant | 12.00 |
| Sugar | 0.54 | Coffee in a café | 1.50 |
| Petrol | 0.90 | Toothpaste | 1.39 |
| Shampoo | 2.19 | Kit Kat chocolate bar | 0.50 |

Dos and Don’ts in England

In England:

1. Do stand in line: In England, people like to form orderly queues (standing in line) and wait patiently for their turn e.g. boarding a bus. “Queue jumping” is frowned upon.
2. Do say “Excuse me”: If someone is blocking your way and you would like them to move, say excuse me and they will move out of your way.
3. Do Pay as you Go”: Pay for drinks as you order them in cafes and coffee shops.
4. Do say “Please” and “Thank you”: It is good manners to say these “magic words”. It is considered rude if you don’t.
5. Do cover your Mouth: When yawning or coughing, always cover your mouth with your hand.
6. Do Shake Hands: When you are first introduced to someone, shake their right hand with your own right hand.
7. Do Smile: A smiling face is a welcoming face.
8. Do drive on the left side of the road.

**\*\* \*\* \*\* \*\* \*\* \*\* \*\* \*\***

1. Do not greet people with a kiss: the English only kiss people who are close friends and relatives.
2. Do not talk loudly in public
3. Do not stare at anyone in public: privacy is highly regarded.
4. Do not pick your nose in public: IT IS DISGUSTING.
5. Do not do gestures such as backslapping and hugging.
6. Do not pass wind in public (or through any other bodily orifice): IT IS DISGUSTING.
7. Do not speak with your mouth full.
8. Do not ask personal or intimate questions: the English like their privacy. So don’t ask questions such as “How much do you earn?” or “How much do you weigh?” or “Why aren’t you married?”
9. Do not eat off a knife when having a meal.

**\*\* \*\* \*\* \*\* \*\* \*\* \*\* \*\***

In England:

1. It is ok for women to eat alone in a restaurant.
2. It is ok for women to wander around on their own.
3. It is ok to eat in the street.
4. It is ok to blow your nose into a tissue in public.

**Population in England:**

People from all cultures and ethnicities can be found in every corner of Britain, and each person in his or her own way has contributed to make Britain the place it is today.

Britain has always been a mixed race society. Early in its history, the British were invaded by Roman, Saxon, Viking and Norman armies and later Africans were brought to Britain by force in the 17th and 18th centuries as slaves or servants. Over the years, thousands of people have arrived into Britain as refugees from France, Ireland, Russia and other countries, escaping persecution or famine in their own countries.

About 7% of the population of Britain today is made up of people from other cultural ethnicities. That is about 4 million people.

Ethnic:

1. White 94%,
2. Indian 2%,
3. Pakistani 1%,
4. Black and other 3%.

**What religions are there in England?**

In 1953, during the reign of Henry VIII, England broke from the Roman Catholic Church to form the Anglican Church, which became the established church of the country, of which the monarch is head. Sixty-eight per cent of the population are registered as Anglicans.

There is a wide range of religions in England.

1. Anglican (Church of England) 27 million
2. Roman Catholic 9 million
3. Muslim 1 million
4. Presbyterian 800 000
5. Methodist 760 000
6. Sikh 400 000
7. Hindu 350 000
8. Jewish 300 000

### What are Britain’s main Trade and Industries?

Britain is the 5th largest trading nation in the world. Computers have taken over much of the work people used to do by hand. Japanese makers have built factories in Britain and now employ many people.

The main industries are banking and finance, steel, transport equipment and gas, and tourism.

#### Exports

The chemical industry is Britain’s largest export earner. British Petroleum is Britain’s biggest industrial company.

UK pharmaceutical companies make three of the world’s best selling medicines: “Zantac” (made by Glaxo Wellcome) for ulcer treatment; “Tenormin” (ICI) a beta-blocker for high blood pressure; and “AZT” (Glaxon Wellcome) a drug used in the treatment of AIDS.

Britain is also a major supplier of machinery, vehicles, aerospace products, electrical and electronic equipment. Britain is responsible for 10% of the world’s export services, including banking, insurance, stock broking, consultancy and computer programming.

#### Imports

Food, beverages and tobacco account for half of Britain’s imports, machinery and road vehicles account for two-thirds. Other major imports include chemicals, fuels, clothing and footwear.

### What are England’s natural resources?

* Coal Natural gas Tin limestone
* Iron ore Salt Clay
* Chalk Gypsum Lead
* Silica
* Arable land

### What about farming in Britain?

Farming in Britain has changed a great deal in the last 30 years. Farming used to employ a great many people but nowadays, with machinery, people can run a huge farm of thousands of acres.

There are many types of farming in Britain.

They include:

1. Arable (growing of crops and cereals)
2. Pastoral (rearing and production of animals including pigs, chickens, farming sheep, beef and dairy cattle)
3. Mixed farming (combination of arable and pastoral)
4. Horticulture (production of flowers)
5. Market gardening (production of fruit and vegetables)
6. Viticulture (grapes)

Some parts of Britain have excellent soil for crops, while others are used for cattle, sheep, pigs and poultry.

Climate plays an important role in determining what type of farming is carried out.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Principal crops:** | **Livestock products:** |
| * Wheat | * Poultry |
| * Barley | * Sheep |
| * Potatoes | * Cattle |
| * Sugar beet | * Milk |
| * Vegetables | * Meat |
| * Fruits | * Eggs |
|  | * Wool |

### What is the weather like in Britain?

The English weather is very changing, and can pass from a rainy cold to a splendid sunny day in just a couple of hours, reason why it is a good idea to always take an overcoat or a raincoat when going out; as well as an umbrella! It usually rains one day in three. The temperature fluctuates between a Max of 30°C in summer and a Min of -5˚C in winter in some places.

Because Britain is an island, the surrounding sea gives England a varied climate. We never know what the weather will be like from one day to the next!

July is normally the warmest month. Around the coasts, February is normally the coldest.

There are four seasons:

* Spring – March to June
* Summer – June to August
* Autumn (Fall in the States) – Sept. to Nov.
* Winter – December to February

### Tourism in England

England, and especially London city, are among the more desired destinies by travellers. The British capital has seen an ever-increasing tourist resurrection. London is one of the largest cities of Europe, one of the richest in history and culture in the world.

Some key places to visit in London are:

* Hyde Park
* London zoo
* The Royal Albert Hall
* The Victoria, the Science, the Natural History Museums
* Buckingham Palace
* Westminster Abbey
* Big Ben
* Trafalgar Square
* Leicester Square, Piccadilly Circus, Chinatown and Soho
* The London Eye

England is also well known for its rural landscape, its famous countryside, its quaint towns, inns, farms and mansions; as well as its magnificent coasts, cliffs and beaches.

The Southern coast is famous for some of the most beautiful towns in England, like Brighton, a famous and important tourist centre, and Bournemouth. At about the middle of the 18th century, the English aristocracy found sea baths fashionable and spent their summers in these sea-side resorts.

Portsmouth is famous for being the seat of England’s greatest naval base, while Southampton is the port from where great transatlantic ships, like the Titanic and the Queen Mary, depart. It is also from where the Mayflower began its journey with the first English settlers of North America.

**A Brief Introduction to British Food.**

Fish and chips, a typical English meal, has been more or less forgotten because of the proliferation of pizzas, burgers and kebabs. The English gastronomic tradition has always been ridiculed by its European neighbours, but it is possible to find many and varied meals in different parts of the country that go beyond the “fish and chips”. There are Lincolnshire sausages, Cornish pasties (stuffed with meat and potatoes). From Yorkshire, we have roast beef and Yorkshire pudding. The most famous cheeses are processed in Stilton.

England is the puddings homeland: spotted dick (pudding with raisins and currants), syllabub (medieval style dish made with cream and lemon juice) and bake-well tart (covered with jam and almonds). The English cream tea is served in all tearooms. Generally, the tea is served with scones, bread, jam, butter and clotted cream.

**Mealtimes:**

It has to be considered that the English meal timetables are very different from the customs of Continental Europe.

In many European countries it is normal to have a long break in the middle of the day when all members of the family return to their houses to eat together. This is not very common in Britain because normally it is a long way from the place of work or school to the home. Consequently, the British people tend to have a big breakfast before they go to work and the meal at midday is not spent with the members of the family but with work-mates or schoolmates.

Lunch is normally eaten between 12.30pm and 1.30pm. Most people finish work at 5.30. It often takes at least an hour to get home from work or from school, so people tend to eat their “dinner” between 6.30 and 8.00pm.

Because people don’t have to work on Sundays, they take the opportunity to eat with their family. Sunday lunch is usually the best meal of the week and many of the dishes which are considered typically British are eaten for Sunday lunch. For example, roast beef and Yorkshire pudding.

Although everyone in Britain understands that “breakfast” is the first meal of the day, there is a lot of confusion about the words for other meals such as “dinner, lunch, tea, high tea, elevenses, brunch, supper” and if you ask a British person what these words mean, most of them will give you a different answer according to what part of the country they come from or from what social class they are from.

**Breakfast:**

Generally speaking the British breakfast is much bigger than in most other countries. Many people like to have a fried breakfast that can consist of fried bacon and eggs with fried bread and possibly fried tomatoes and mushrooms. Of course not everybody wants to eat a lot early in the morning and many people prefer to just eat toast and marmalade with tea or coffee. Cereals are also very popular, the most common being Corn Flakes. In Scotland, many people eat “porridge” which is very heavy but will keep you warm in winter.

**Lunch:**

If you go to Britain to study English and you stay with a family you will almost certainly be given a “packed lunch” to eat for your midday meal which consists of sandwiches, a packet of crisps, an apple and a can of soda. Some factories and schools have canteens where you can have lunch, or else you can pop into the nearest café or restaurant for a quick bite.

**Dinner:**

Things are changing and most British people eat meals from different countries such as spaghetti or curry. In fact, you can say that they don’t eat much British food. A typical dinner would be “meat and two veg”, which consists of a piece of meat accompanied by two different boiled vegetables, all covered in gravy. One of the vegetables is almost always potatoes.

**Afternoon Tea (traditionally at 4.00pm)**

This usually consists of tea (or more frequently nowadays coffee) served with either of the following:

* Freshly baked scones served with cream and country preserves. This is called a cream tea.
* Afternoon tea sandwiches often thinly sliced cucumber sandwiches with the crusts cut off.
* Assorted pastries.

High tea (traditionally at 6.00pm)

Usually eaten early evening, high tea was a substantial meal that combined delicious sweet foods, such as scones, cakes, buns or tea breads, with tempting savouries, such as cheese on toast, toasted crumpets, cold meats and pickles or poached eggs on toast. This meal is now replaced with a supper because people eat their main meals in the evening rather than at midday.

### Tea

Tea in Britain is traditionally brewed in a warmed china teapot, adding a spoonful of tea per person and one for the pot. Cold milk and sugar are added.

**Typical English Food:**

Baked Beans: Baked beans are beans cooked in a tomato sauce. They come in cans and are normally eaten on toast.

Bangers and mash: This is mashed potatoes with sausages.

Black pudding: A thick sausage made with blood and fat.

Yorkshire pudding: A batter made with flour, eggs and milk and cooked in the oven, often eaten with roast beef.

A ploughman’s lunch: This is very popular in a “pub”. It consists of a bread roll with a piece of cheese and a pickled onion. British cheeses are very good, the most famous is Cheddar. Most cheeses are named after the region from where they come from like Red Leicester, Cheshire. Over 400 varieties of cheeses are produced in England.

Haggis: This is only normally eaten in Scotland. It is sheep’s intestine stuffed with meat and vegetables.

Fish and chips: Fried potatoes called chips accompanied by fish, pies, mushy peas etc. This used to be wrapped in newspaper but now white paper is used. Salt and vinegar is sprinkled over the chips.

Pie: A pie is food covered in pastry and baked in the oven. The filling of the pie can be either sweet or savoury. The most famous pies are “steak and kidney pie” and “apple pie”.

Bread and butter: When the British eat bread, they almost always cover it with butter or margarine.

British bread: British bread is very good and there are many varieties to choose from. The most popular bread is white sliced bread sold in plastic packets, which is not as good as the one you slice yourself.

Shepherd’s pie: minced lamb and vegetables covered with a layer of mashed potato and grated cheese.

**EDUCATION in ENGLAND**

Education is important in England. English children are required to attend school until they are 16 years old. Education is free for all children from 5 to 18. Most children attend government-run schools, known as state schools. Parents do not pay. They are financed by the money that comes from the national and local taxes. Ninety per cent of children in England attend a state school.

There are also private schools. Parents pay for their children to attend these schools. They are known as Independent Schools.

All state schools follow the same National Curriculum.

The school year is 39 weeks long and is divided into three terms: September to December, January to Easter, and Easter to July.

In general, children start school on the first day of term after they turn 6 years old. At the age of 11, they move onto regular high schools, known as secondary schools.

At the age of 16, students sit an examination called the GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education). All students are tested in mathematics, English literature, English composition, chemistry, biology, physics, history, the Classics, one modern language, and one other subject, such as art or computer studies.

After completing the GCSE, some students leave school, others go onto technical college, whilst others continue at high school for two more years and take a further set of standardised exams, known as A levels, in three or four subjects. These exams determine whether a student is eligible for university.

When are school vacations / holidays?

State schools in England are closed on national holidays and at weekend.

The summer vacation lasts about 6 weeks from July 20 to early September. Winter and spring vacation both last two weeks, from December 21 to around January 6 and March 25 to around April 5, respectively.

Do children wear a school uniform?

Most school in England require children to wear a school uniform.

**Boys:** long grey or black trousers (shorts may be worn in the Summer), white shirt, school tie (optional in most primary schools), jumper or sweater with the school logo on it (the colour is the choice of the school) and black shoes.

**Girls:** As above. Girls may wear skirts. During the summer term, girls often wear summer school dresses.

How long is the school day?

Most school starts at 8.55am. and end around 4.00pm.

**Higher education:**

England’s most famous universities are Oxford and Cambridge which both date back to the Middle Ages. Both require high grades in A levels to enter, as does university of London. The choice of colleges and departments are too numerous to mention.

**Transport**

**Airports**: London has five international airports. Heathrow, 24 km west of London, is the most important one. The others are Gatwick, Stansted, Luton and the London City Airport. There are other international airports in the cities of Birmingham, Manchester and Newcastle.

**Airlines**: British Airways is the English flag line. It covers international destinies and domestic flights.

**Trains**: The United Kingdom is covered by over 16 500km of rail, that are the fastest way of communication between London and all the major cities in the country. The system has reasonable prices.

**Automobile**: Roads and motorways are Britain’s primary domestic travel routes. At the beginning of the 20th century, railway trains and canal barges were the main means of transporting heavy goods. Now around 65% are carried by lorries. Most people in Britain travel by car. About 72% of households have at least one car. The British drive on the left-hand side of the road, the steering wheel is on the right. Many of the roads of Britain are built on the old roads laid down centuries ago.

**Subway**: London, Newcastle, Liverpool and Glasgow have an underground network. Those of London and Glasgow are the oldest. London was the first city in the world to have an underground railway, called the “tube”. The first line was built in 1890.

**Buses**: All English cities have urban and suburban networks for buses. The famous Double-Decker bus is red in London and of other colours in other towns.

**Taxis**: These are found in all main cities. In London, they are black and are recognisable all over the world. In the rest of the country, taxis are of different colours.

**Sports**

It’s well known that many sports originated in the United Kingdom such as soccer, cricket, rugby, golf and tennis amongst others. Soccer is at the top of the list while cricket is England’s national sport.

The main championships of cricket and tennis are played in England, while rugby is particularly popular in Wales. There are also many golf courses in England (Scotland is regarded as the home of golf) as well as numerous places for trekking, hiking and cycling. Horse racing and greyhound racing are popular spectator sports. Another equestrian sport is polo, brought to Britain from India in the 19th century by army officers. Table tennis was invented in England in 1880. Although the game originated in England, British players don’t have much luck in international championships.

In the 19th century, students at Oxford and Cambridge were huge fans of rowing. In 1829, the two schools decided to hold a race against each other for the first time on the Thames River. A tradition was born and today, the University Boat Race is held every spring in either late March or early April.

Fishing or Angling is a popular pastime throughout the year as is swimming.

Sports play an important part in the life of the Englishmen.

**Superstitions:**

What superstitions are there in England?

Here are the top ten.

1. It’s unlucky to walk underneath a ladder.
2. It’s unlucky to cross paths with a black cat.
3. Seven years bad luck if you break a mirror.
4. It’s unlucky to see a magpie, lucky to see two.
5. It’s unlucky to spill salt. If you do, throw some over your shoulder to counteract the bad luck.
6. It’s unlucky to open an umbrella indoors.
7. The number thirteen is unlucky. Friday the thirteenth is extremely unlucky.
8. It’s unlucky to put new shoes on the table.
9. It’s unlucky to pass someone on the stairs.
10. It’s good luck to touch wood.

**Weddings**

The wedding is one of life’s primeval and surprisingly unchanged rites of passage. Nearly all of the customs we observe today are merely echoes of the past. Everything from the veil, rice and flowers to the bridesmaids had a significance. Today, although the original substance is often lost, Old World customs are incorporated into modern weddings because they are traditional and ritualistic.

**The matchmaker.**

For centuries, the matchmaker enjoyed the honoured, if occasionally ridiculed, position of ensuring ethnic identity and compatibility. People who wanted this assurance regularly employed the services of a matchmaker, whose commission was a certain percentage of the dowries. Today, the modern version of the matchmaker is found as easily as turning on your computer. Computer programs can allegedly match individual backgrounds and traits so accurately that two people brought together can be assured of “common interests” at the very least. So matchmaking has not really disappeared; it has only changed its appearance.

**Giving the Bride away.**

In times when women were granted few privileges and even fewer personal rights, the bride was literally given away to the groom by the father, usually in exchange for monetary gain. Today, it is a symbol of the blessings and support of her union.

Why a wedding ring?

The circular shape of the wedding ring has symbolised undying, unending love since the days of the early Egyptians. A primitive bride wore a ring of hemp or rushes, which had to be replaced often. Durable iron was used by the Romans to symbolise the permanence of marriage. Today’s favourite is, of course, gold with its lasting qualities of beauty and purity.

Why the third finger of the left hand?

In ancient times, it was believed there was a vein in the third finger of the left hand that ran directly to the heart. Thus, the ring placed on that finger denoted the strong connection of a heartfelt love and commitment to one another. Although during times of modern autopsy, this long held belief was found not to be so, the tradition continues today.

Why does the Bride wear white?

The colour white has been a symbol of joyous celebration since early Roman times. At the beginning of the 20th century, white stood for purity as well. Today, it holds its original meaning of happiness and joy.

Why does the bride wear a veil?

The bride’s veil and bouquet are of greater antiquity than her white gown. Her veil, which was yellow in ancient Greece and red in ancient Rome, usually shrouded her from head to foot, and has since the earliest of times, denoted the subordination of a woman to man.

According to tradition, it is considered bad luck for the bride to be seen by the groom before the ceremony. As a matter of fact, in the old days of marriage by purchase, the couple rarely saw each other at all, with courtship being of more recent historical emergence. The lifting of the veil at the end of the ceremony symbolises male dominance. If the bride takes the initiative in lifting it, thereby presenting herself to him, she is showing more independence.

Why a wedding cake?

Beginning in early Roman times, the cake has been a special part of the wedding celebration. A thin loaf was broken over the bride’s head at the close of the ceremony to symbolise fertility. The wheat from which it was made, symbolised fertility and the guests eagerly picked up the crumbs as good luck charms. During the Middle Ages, a small cluster of cakes was used. Later a clever baker decided to amass all these small cakes together, covering them with frosting.

Why a trousseau?

The word trousseau came from the French word, trousse, which meant bundle. The trousseau originated as a bundle of clothing and personal possessions the bride carried with her to her new home. This was later expanded upon with a generous dowry. Today, the trousseau includes all of the new items for the household, as well as for the bride herself.

Why the honeymoon?

In ancient times, many of the first marriages were by capture, not choice. When early man felt it was time to take a bride, he would often carry off an unwilling woman to a secret place where her relatives wouldn’t find them. While the moon went through all its phases, (about 30 days) they hid from the searchers and drank a brew made from honey. Hence, we have the word honeymoon.

### What language is spoken in Britain?

‘British English’ is spoken in Britain. It is not the same as American or Australian English. “Hi mate” is not the correct and appreciated way to approach someone in the street. Neither is “G’day”, “Howdy” or “Hey Mister”. The British way to greet someone is “Good morning, good afternoon or good evening” and when you want to ask something, “excuse me”.

In Britain, every part of the country has its own way of speaking English. People in Yorkshire sound very different to people in Surrey; a Somerset accent is very different from a Scottish accent and it’s hard to believe that people from Birmingham are speaking the same language as those from Cornwall. Most people in Britain can guess where someone comes from by the way they speak, either by their accent or by the words they use.

Ex: Wales - people in Wales speak a different language completely. About 25% of the people there still speak in their native Celtic tongue called welsh.

Shwmae? In welsh means How are you?

Hoffet ti ddiod? means Would you like a drink?

Below are a few slang words commonly used in Britain.

Chuffed: if you are chuffed, you are happy with something.

“I was chuffed to win a medal”

Gobsmacked: Incredibly amazed.

Gutted: not happy because of an event that has occurred that didn’t go our way. “I was gutted when I didn’t win the race”

Jammy: used in place of lucky when describing someone else. “He was very jammy winning the game”

Scrummy: delicious, shortened from scrumptious.

Skint: broke. No money.

**What are the differences between British English and American English?**

There are many English words that are different to American words.

For example:

* A lorry is a truck
* A lift is an elevator
* A fortnight is two weeks
* A chemist is a person who works in a drugstore, a pharmacist.
* A dual carriage way is a divided highway

###### **British and American Vocabulary**

#### **What shall we wear?**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **British** | **American** |
| Trousers | Pants |
| Pants / underwear / knickers | Underwear |
| Jumper / pullover / sweater / jersey | Sweater |
| Vest | Undershirt |
| Waistcoat | Vest |
| Wellington / wellies | Golashes |
| Mac (slang for Macintosh) | Rain coat |
| Plimsolls | Gym shoes |
| Trainers / plimsolls / pumps | Sneakers |
| Braces | Suspenders |
| Dressing gown | Robe |
| Nappy | Diaper |
| Pinny / apron | Apron |
| Polo neck | Turtle neck |
| Swimming costume / cozzy | Bathing suit |

### Buildings / Shops

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| British | **American** |
| Semi-detached house | Duplex |
| Flat | Appartment |
| Terrace | Bleachers |
| Chemist | Drug store / druggist |
| Bungalow | House (one story) |

#### **At school**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| British | **American** |
| Friend / mate | Friend |
| Glue | Gum |
| Rubber | Eraser |
| Maths | Math |
| Public school | Private school |
| State school | Public school |
| Holiday | Vacation |
| School dinner | Hot lunch |

#### **On the road**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| British | **American** |
| Car park | Parking Lot |
| Zebra crossing / pedestrian crossing | Cross walk |
| Lollipop man or lady | Crossing guard |
| Motorway | Freeway |
| Traffic jam / tailback | Traffic jam |
| Lorry | Truck |
| Articulated lorry | Tractor trailer / trailer truck |
| Petrol | Gasoline |
| Pavement | Sidewalk |
| Petrol station | Gas station |
| Skip | Dumpster |
| Diversion | Detour |
| Fire engine | Fire truck |

**Let’s eat!**

Are you peckish? (Are you hungry?)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **British** | American |
| Biscuit / bickie | Cookie |
| Fairy cake | Cup cake |
| Sweets | Candy |
| Sausage / banger | Sausage |
| Crisps | Chips |
| Chips | French fries |
| Starter | Appetizer |
| Puddings / afters / dessert / sweets | Dessert |
| Jacket potato / baked potato | Baked potato |
| Jelly | Jello |
| Aubergine | Eggplant |
| Sandwich / butty / sarny | Sandwich |
| Ice lolly | Popsicle |
| Bill (at a restaurant) | Check |
| Grill | Broil |
| Food / grub / nosh | Food |
| Rasher | A slice of bacon |
| Runner beans | String beans |
| Soldiers (these are dipped in soft-boiled eggs) | Finger sized slices of toast |
| Take-away | Take out |

**Parts of a car**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| British | American |
| Bonnet | Hood |
| Windscreen | Windshield |
| Boot | Trunk |
| Reversing lights | Back-up lights |
| Wing / mudguard | Fender |

###### **In and around the house**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **British** | **American** |
| The toilet / loo / the John | Bathroom / restroom |
| Tap | Faucet |
| Garden | Backyard / yard |
| Cupboard | Closet |
| Bin / dust bin | Trash can |
| Telephone / blower | Telephone |
| Television / box / telly | Television |
| Cooker | Range or stone |
| Couch / sofa / settee | Sofa |
| Hand basin / sink | Sink |
| Run the bath | Fill the tub |

People

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| British | **American** |
| Girl / lass | Girl |
| Boy / lad | Boy |
| Man / bloke / gentleman / guy/chap | Man / guy |
| Lady / woman | Lady |
| Policeman / bobby / copper | Policeman |
| Postman | Mailman |
| Dustman | Garbage man |
| Friend / pal / chum / mate / buddy | Friend / buddy |
| Cashier | Teller |
| Lollipop man | Crossing guard |
| Mum | Mom |

Sport

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **British** | American |
| Football | Soccer |
| Rounders | Baseball |
| Bat (table tennis) | Paddle (ping pong) |

Other words

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **British** | **American** |
| Plaster | Band-aid |
| Autumn | Fall |
| Bank holiday | National holiday |
| Lift | Elevator |
| Queue | Stand in a line |
| Quid (slang for pound) | Bucks |
| Surgery | Doctor’s office |
| I’m knackered | I’m beat |
| Come round | Come over |
| It’s gone off | It’s spoiled |
| Lady bird | Lady bug |

**And here are some British sayings:**

* Every cloud has a silver lining.

There is always something good in bad times.

* A stitch in time saves nine.

Act early and you can save a lot of time.

* Nothing ventured nothing gained.

You have to try or you won’t get anything.

* Out of the frying pan and into the fire.

From one problem to another.

* One man’s meat is another man’s poison.

People often don’t like the same things.

* Don’t look a gift horse in the mouth.

Don’t question good luck.

* You can lead a horse to water but you cannot make it drink.

You can give a person a chance, but you can’t make him or her take it.

* The grass is always greener on the on the other side.

You always think that other people’s lives are better than yours.

* Bob’s your uncle.

It is added to the end of sentences a bit like “and that’s it”.