**CULTURAL STUDIES:**

**THE UK and THE US**

**THE UK**

**1. GENERAL FACTS ABOUT THE UK**

The UK is situated north-west off the European continent between the Atlantic Ocean and the North Sea. It has a total land area of 242, 500 square kilometers and the population of about 68 million people. From north to south it is about 1,000 kilometres long.

The longest river of the UK is the Severn with the Thames being the second longest. The highest mountain is Ben Nevis located in Scotland. The capital of the country is London. The country’s main industries today are banking and finance, steel, transport equipment, oil and gas, and tourism.

The official name of the country is **“The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland”**. The country is made up of England, Scotland, Wales (Great Britain) and Northern Ireland, as well as several islands off the British coast (the Isle of Wight, the Orkneys, Hebrides and Shetlands, and the Isles of Scilly). The Channel Islands and the Isle of Man are not part of the UK.

**Great Britain** is the name of the island which is made up of England, Scotland and Wales. It’s part of **the** **British Isles**, which also include the whole of Ireland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man. In everyday speech “Britain” is used to mean the United Kingdom. People who live in the UK should be called “British”.

The Union Flag, popularly known as the [*Union Jack*](http://projectbritain.com/geography/unionjack.html#jack), is the national flag of the [United Kingdom](http://projectbritain.com/britain/uk.htm). It is called the Union Flag because it symbolises the administrative union of the countries of the United Kingdom. It is made up of the individual flags of three of the Kingdom's countries all united under one Sovereign - the countries of [England](http://projectbritain.com/britain/england_facts.htm), Scotlandand **Northern Ireland**. As Wales was not a Kingdom but a Principality it could not be included on the flag. The flag contains three crosses – the Cross of St. George (England), the Cross of St. Patrick (Northern Ireland) and the Cross of St. Andrew (Scotland).

**ENGLAND**

It’s the biggest country in the UK both in territory and in population (84% of the UK population is concentrated in England). The capital of England, **London**, is the capital of the UK.

England is also subdivided into three parts: The South, the Midlands and the North. One of the most beautiful **counties** in the South is **Kent**. It’s known as the Garden of England. The South has some of the richest farmland in the country. In general, the South is wealthier than other areas of Britain. There people find a lot of job opportunities on the land, in trade and industry. The Midlands Region is known as an industrial area. One of the main cities here is **Birmingham** (the second largest city in the UK). The North is a region of great natural beauty (the Lake District) and industry. The most important cities are Manchester, Liverpool, Sheffield and Leeds.

The patron saint of England is **St. George** (23rd April), the emblem is **the rose** and the official animal is **the lion**.

**SCOTLAND**

Scotland is a mountainous country in the north of the island of [Great Britain](http://www.projectbritain.com/britain/britain.htm) and shares a land border to the south with [England](http://www.projectbritain.com/britain/england_facts.htm). Its capital city is **Edinburgh**. Scotland has some 790 islands - 130 inhabited. Although a part of the UK, to this day Scottish law is different in many respects from English law, Scotland has her own Church, the Parliament, as well as educational system and banknotes.

Fishing remains an important activity in Scotland, as well as manufacturing of high quality tweeds and other textiles. Scotland has about one-third of Britain’s total agricultural land, but most of it is used for cattle and sheep grazing.

The patron saint of Scotland is **St. Andrew** (30th November), the emblem is **the thistle** and the official animal is **the unicorn**.

**WALES**

Wales is a principality (a country ruled by a prince, or from which he takes his title). The title of “Prince of Wales” is traditionally given by the British sovereign to his or her eldest son, who is heir to the throne. The capital of Wales is **Cardiff**. At present the main industries are agriculture, renewable energy, oil and gas, electronics, engineering, and tourism.

The Welsh pride themselves on being the true Britons, the oldest inhabitants of the island. 20% of the population speak Welsh, one of the oldest languages in Europe. Wales is called “The Land of Song”, as the Welsh are renowned for their good voices and poetic manner of speech. It’s rare to find a village in Wales without at least one choir.

The patron saint of Wales is **St. David** (1st March), the emblem is **the daffodil**, the official animal is **the** **dragon**.

**NORTHERN IRELAND (ULSTER).**

In 1801 the whole of Ireland became part of the United Kingdom, with the adoption of the name the ***United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.*** After years of civil war, Ireland became a republic in 1921 with northern part of it staying in the UK.

Population and industry are concentrated on the eastern seaboard, while the rest of the country remains mainly rural with agriculture being its major industry. Another traditional industry in Northern Ireland is shipbuilding. It was in **Belfast**, the capital of Northern Ireland, that the “Titanic” was built.

The patron saint of the country is **St. Patrick** (17th March), the emblem is **the shamrock**.

*A. Answer the following questions:*

1. How can you describe the location of the UK?

2. What is the population of the UK?

3. What are the longest rivers of the UK?

4. What is the highest mountain of the UK?

5. What are the main industries of the UK?

6. What is the official name of the country?

7. What is the difference between the names Great Britain and the British Isles?

8. Why is the British flag called the Union Jack?

9. What is the second largest city in the UK?

10. Do the Scots have the same laws as the English?

11. What are the main industries in Scotland?

12. Who is the Prince of Wales?

13. What language is spoken in Wales?

14. What kind of art is especially popular in Wales?

15. What is the capital of Northern Ireland famous for?

B. Fill in the table below:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Country** | **Capital** | **Patron Saint** | **Emblem** |
| England |  |  |  |
| Scotland |  |  |  |
| Wales |  |  |  |
| Northern Ireland |  |  |  |

**2. LONDON**

“When a man is tired of London, he is tired of life; for there is in London all that life can afford” *(Samuel Johnson, 18th century).* There are few places that offer such a variety of sights, entertainments, educational and business opportunities, world-famous museums and theatres, and superb shopping.

London is the second largest city in Europe. It’s made up of the ancient, historical part - **the City of London** – and 32 London boroughs (**Greater London).** The City of London, known simply as '**the City**', is the business and financial heart of the United Kingdom. It is also known as the **Square Mile** (2.59 sq km/1 sq mi). It was the original Roman settlement (ancient Londinium), making it the oldest part of London and already 1,000 years old when the Tower of London was built.

The history of the city and its gradual growth helps to explain the fact that London doesn’t have just one centre, it has a number of centres, each with a distinct character: the financial and business centre called the City, the shopping and entertainment centre in the West End, the government centre in Westminster.

**The City**

The City of London is one of the major banking centres of the world. Here you will find not only *the Bank of England*, but also the banks of many nations. Besides, *the Stock Exchange* and Lloyds (the most famous insurance company in the world) are located in the City. Other important places of the City are *the Old Bailey* (the centre of the country’s judicial system, houses many courts) and Fleet Street (the home of the nation’s newspapers). Most important historical buildings in the City include *St Paul’s Cathedral* and *the Tower of London*.

**The West End**

The West End includes *Trafalgar square*, the main shopping areas of *Oxford Street*, the entertainment centres of *Soho*, *Piccadilly Circus*, *Leicester Square* and *Covent Garden*. Its name is associated with glamour and bright lights. Over thirty theatres are located in the West End.

**Westminster**

Westminster is a part of London that has long been connected with royalty and government. Here you can find most popular London attractions, such as *the Houses of Parliament* with *Big Ben*, *Westminster Abbey* and *Buckingham Palace* with one of the most beautiful royal parks – *St James’s* *Park*.

**The East End**

The East end grew with the spread of industries to the east of the City, and the growth of the port of London. On the one hand, it’s the place where docks, wharfs and warehouses are concentrated. On the other hand, it’s one of the areas where people from abroad have come to find work and settle. The East End is also known as the centre of the clothing industry and famous for its markets. Traditionally someone born in the East End is known as a cockney. The Tallest building in the UK, known as *the Canary Wharf Tower*, 244 metres high, is situated in the East End. Though being largely redeveloped during last decades, the area still has one of the poorest houses in London.

London is remarkable and unique in many ways. For example, London was the ***first city in the world to have an underground railway***, known as the ***'***[***Tube***](http://www.projectbritain.com/customs/questions/transport.html)***'***.

*Read the text and fill in the table in your exercise book:*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **The boroughs of London:** | **The City** | **Westminster** | **The West End** | **The East End** |
| Main characteristics: |  |  |  |  |
| Main sights: |  |  |  |  |

**3. EDUCATION IN THE UK**

The education system in the UK is divided into [**nursery**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nursery_school)**,**[**primary**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Primary_education)**,**[**secondary**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Secondary_education) and **higher** education.

At the moment full-time education is compulsory for all children aged between 5 and 16. Students may then continue their secondary studies for a further two years ([sixth form](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sixth_form)). However, in England in 2015 the leaving age for compulsory education was raised to 18. If you do not stay at school, you must do one of the following until you are 18: stay in full-time education (e.g. at a college), start an apprenticeship or traineeship or spend 20 hours or more a week working or volunteering, while in part time education or training.

Education in Great Britain is provided by Local Education Authorities (LEA) in each county. It is financed partly by the Government and partly by local taxes.

## Nursery education *(under 5)*

## Children do not have to go to school until they reach the age of five, but there is some free nursery-school education (15-30 hours a week) before that age. Because not everyone can get a place in a nursery school (it depends on parents’ income), parents in many areas have formed play groups where children under 5 can go for a morning or afternoon a couple of times a week.

#### Primary education *(5 to 11)*

#### In some areas primary education can be divided into an *infant school* (pupils aged from 5 to 7) and a *junior school* (from 8 to 11).

#### Before 1965 all the children on leaving their primary school at the age of 11 had to take an exam called the “11+”. Depending on the exam results some 20% were chosen to go to academic grammar schools, while the rest of the pupils went to secondary modern schools. As many people felt that this system was unfair, in 1965 *comprehensive schools* were introduced which accepted pupils of all abilities.

#### Secondary education *(11-18)*

#### Nowadays most state-funded secondary schools are non-selective (comprehensive schools), while there still exist selective ones (grammar schools). There are other types of secondary schools depending on additional sources of funding (personal or corporate sponsors) and freedom not to follow the National Curriculum - academies and free schools.

All state-funded schools in England are required to follow ***the***[***National Curriculum***](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Curriculum_(England,_Wales_and_Northern_Ireland))(more orless strictly depending on the type of school). The National Curriculum covers what subjects are taught and the standards children should reach in each subject. The *core subjects*—[English](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_studies), [Mathematics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mathematics) and [Science](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Science)—are compulsory for all students aged 5 to 16. A range of other subjects, known as *foundation* *subjects*, are compulsory at one or more periods of studying: [Art & Design](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_education), [Citizenship](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Citizenship_education), Design and [Technology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Design_%26_Technology), [Geography](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geography), [History](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History), Computing, [Modern Foreign Languages](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Language_education), [Music](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Music_education), [Physical Education](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Physical_Education).

In addition, schoolchildren must be provided with [Religious Education](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious_education) and Sex and Relationships Education. However, parents can ask to withdraw their child from all or part of such lessons.

#### Pupils in comprehensive schools are often put into *“sets”* for more academic subjects such as mathematics or languages. A pupil may find him/herself in different sets for different subjects.

In most cases pupils move to the next class automatically, although it is possible in some circumstances for a student to repeat or skip a year. Repetition may be due to a lack of attendance, for example from a long illness, and especially in Years requiring *national tests* (at the ages of 7, 11 and 16). A child significantly more advanced than their classmates may be forwarded one or more years.

At the age of 16 pupils take ***GCSE exams***. If they pass the exams, they get their GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education).

Post-16 education can be academic or vocational. Students over 16 typically study in the sixth form of a school (*sixth form* is a historical term for Years 12–13), in a separate [**Sixth Form College**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sixth_form_college), or in a [**Further Education (FE) College**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Further_education_college), which can either prepare students for University or give them necessary skills for a certain job. Alternatively, they can start an **apprenticeship** (on-the-job training with accompanying study) or switch to the International Baccalaureate programme (**IB**). In the sixth form students choose several subjects to study for an ***“A” Level*** (Advanced Level) GCE exam (General Certificate of Education). Since 1988 there has been a new level of exam: the “AS” Level (Advanced Subsidiary), which is worth half an “A” Level. This means that if pupils wish to study more than two or three subjects in the sixth form, they can take a combination of “A” and “AS” Levels. Normally students take three or four A-levels as this is the number of exams required by Universities.

### Independent schools

Approximately 7% of all school children in England and 18% of students over 16 attend privately run [independent schools](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Independent_schools), commonly called "private schools". Independent schools do not have to follow the National Curriculum. Some of the earliest established independent schools are known for historical reasons as "[public schools](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_school_(Britain))".

Education at independent schools is usually chargeable. Such schools, some of which are [boarding schools](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boarding_schools), cover primary and/or secondary education and charge between £15,000 and £35,000 per year. Some schools offer scholarships for those with particular skills or talents from less financially well-off families to attend.

Traditionally, many private schools have been single-sex, but a growing number are now co-educational. Traditional public schools such as [*Winchester*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Winchester_College)*,*[*Eton*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eton_College) *and*[*Harrow*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harrow_School) take boys at 13 years of age. Many students must pass the [Common Entrance Exam](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Common_Entrance_Exam) at 11 or 13 to gain entry into highly selective schools.

## Higher education *(18+)*

There are about 115 universities in the UK, 90 of which are located in England. Good “A” Level results in at least two subjects are necessary to get a place at University. Besides, many universities choose their students after interviews and additional entrance exams, and competition for places at universities is fierce.

Students normally enter [university](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University) from age 18 onwards, and study for an [academic degree](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Academic_degree). Historically, all undergraduate education was largely state-financed. However, fees of up to £9,000 per year have been charged from October 2012. To cover tuition fees a government-provided loan is available. Also, some students can be given a scholarship or bursary depending on their achievements and parents’ income.

The biggest and most prestigious universities of the UK are, besides *Cambridge* and *Oxford*, *University College London,* Imperial College London, King’s College London, the Universities of *Edinburgh*, *Manchester, Glasgow, Birmingham,*  *Leeds* and others.

### The typical [first degree](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Undergraduate_degree) offered at English universities is the [*bachelor's degree*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bachelor%27s_degree), and usually lasts for three years. During a first degree students are known as [*undergraduates*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Undergraduate).

Students who have completed a [first degree](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Undergraduate_degree) can study for a [postgraduate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postgraduate) degree, which might be a: [***Master's degree***](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Master%27s_degree)(typically taken in one year, though research-based master's degrees may last for two), [***Doctorate***](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doctorate) (typically taken in three years).

*Answer the following questions.*

1. How long do they study at school in the UK?
2. How long do they stay at primary school?
3. Do they have to take exams?
4. What subjects are compulsory during the whole school period?
5. Do you study with the same group of people all the time?
6. Can you repeat or skip a year at school? In what circumstances?
7. Is Sixth Form College compulsory?
8. What famous British independent schools do you know?
9. Is studying at University free in Britain?
10. How do Universities choose their students?
11. How is a person with the first degree called?

**4. OXFORD AND CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITIES**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Oxford** | **Cambridge** |
| **History** | It is the oldest university in the [English-speaking world](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English-speaking_world), and the second-oldest surviving university in the world. Although its exact date of foundation is unclear, there is evidence of teaching as far back as 1096. The University grew rapidly from **1167** when [Henry II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_II_of_England) banned English students from attending the [University of Paris](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Paris). | It is the [second-oldest university](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_oldest_universities_in_continuous_operation) in the [English-speaking world](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English-speaking_world) (after the [University of Oxford](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Oxford)), and the third-[oldest surviving university](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_oldest_universities_in_continuous_operation) in the world.  The university grew out of an association of scholars that was formed in **1209** by scholars leaving [Oxford](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Oxford) after a dispute with townsfolk. The two "ancient universities" have many common features and are often jointly referred to as [*Oxbridge*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxbridge). |
| **Most famous colleges** | There are 38 colleges, the most well-known being **Christ Church**. | It has 31 Colleges. Most famous colleges are **King’s College** and **Trinity College**. |
| **Number of students** | 21, 000 | 18,000. |
| **Famous graduates** | More than **40 Nobel laureates** and more than fifty [world leaders](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Leaders) have been connected with the University of Oxford. **26 British**[**Prime Ministers**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prime_Minister_of_the_United_Kingdom) have attended Oxford, including [***Margaret Thatcher***](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Margaret_Thatcher), [***Tony Blair***](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tony_Blair) and most recently [***David Cameron***](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Cameron). Writers  [***Lewis Carroll***](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lewis_Carroll), [Aldous Huxley](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aldous_Huxley), ***John R. R. Tolkien***, [***Oscar Wilde***](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oscar_Wilde), the economist [***Adam Smith***](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adam_Smith), the actor ***Rowan*** ***Atkinson*** graduated from Oxford. | Graduates of the university have won a total of **65**[**Nobel Prizes**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nobel_Prizes), the [most of any university in the world](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Nobel_laureates_by_university_affiliation).  **15**[**British Prime Ministers**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prime_Minister_of_the_United_Kingdom) attended Cambridge, as well as writers ***Clive Lewis*** and ***Alan Milne***, poet ***Lord Byron***, actors Stephen Fry, Hugh Laurie. Notable educationalists to have attended the university include the founders and early ***professors of***[***Harvard University***](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harvard_University). |
| **Reputation** | More famous for **political science** and **linguistics**. | Cambridge University is more renowned than its rival for **mathematics** and **natural sciences**. |

*Study the table and speak about the differences between the two universities and the things they have in common.*

**5. The Political System of the UK**

***Two Chambers of Parliament***

The British Parliament has two houses, or chambers: **the House of Commons** and **the House of Lords.** The House of Commons is the most powerful and decides national policy, but the House of Lords can ask the House of Commons to rewrite certain parts of **a bill** before it becomes a new law. The House of Commons consists of Members of Parliament, MPs. Each MP is elected by **voters** in one **constituency** (region). There are about **650** MPS, or seats, in the House of Commons (524 for England, 72 for Scotland, 38 for Wales and 17 for Northern Ireland).

The **800** members of the House of Lords are not **elected.** The majority are **life peers:** they are members of the House of Lords, but their sons or daughters cannot be members. There are also a number of judges or bishops. Some members, however, are **hereditary peers,** the heads of aristocratic families. This means that most members of the House of Lords are there because of something their ancestors did. The average age of members is 71. The head of both Houses of Parliament is the Queen, but she has very little power.

***Elections***

MPs are elected either at a **general election,** or **at a by-election** following the death or retirement of an MP. Everyone over the age of 18 can vote in an election, which is decided on a **simple majority** - the candidate with the most votes wins. Under this system, an MP who wins by a small number of votes may have more votes against him (that is, for the other candidates) than for him. That is why many people think that this system is unfair because the wishes of those who voted for the unsuccessful candidates are not represented at all.

Parliamentary elections must be held every five years at the latest, but the Prime Minister can decide on the exact date within those five years.

***The Government***

The party with most MPs forms the government. The leader of the winning party automatically becomes **Prime Minister** and appoints **the Cabinet.** The members of the Cabinet are the leading government ministers. The Prime Minister is the most important person in Parliament. The party who comes second is **the Opposition** and forms its own **Shadow Cabinet.** British Prime Ministers have lived at 10 Downing Street since 1731.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (responsible for money and finance) lives next door at number 11. People often talk about “Downing Street” when they mean the Prime Minister and his or her Cabinet.

There are about 20 ministers in the Cabinet. Each minister is responsible for a particular area of government, and for **a Civil Service department.** For example, **the Minister of Defence** is responsible for defence policy and the armed forces, **the Chancellor of the Exchequer** for financial policy, and **the Home Secretary** for law and order and immigration. Their Civil Service departments are called **the Ministry of Defence, the Treasury and the Home Office** respectively. They are staffed by **civil servants** who are politically neutral and who therefore do not change if the Government changes.

***The Monarch***

Britain is a **constitutional monarchy.** This means that the monarch, at the moment Queen Elizabeth II, is the Head of State. The Queen is also head of the **judiciary** (all the judges) and of the Church of England, as well as **the Commander-in-chief** of the armed forces. Her face is on all British bank notes, coins and post stamps. The Queen's constitutional role, however, is mainly symbolic. True power lies in the hands of the Prime Minister and his or her Cabinet. It is the Queen who formally opens Parliament every autumn, but the speech she makes from the throne, giving details of the government's future plans, is written for her by politicians. Nothing becomes British law without the monarch's signature, but the Queen would never refuse to sign a bill which has been passed by Parliament. It is the Queen who officially appoints the Prime Minister, but traditionally she always asks the leader of the party with a majority in the House of Commons.

The most important function of the Queen is ceremonial. On great occasions, such as **the State opening of Parliament,** she is driven through the streets in a golden carriage, guarded by soldiers. She gives a state banquet, usually in her home Buckingham Palace, when foreign monarchs or Heads of State visit Britain. The Queen is head of the Commonwealth (a group of former and present-day British colonies). As head of the Commonwealth, she meets and entertains prime ministers of the member states. Since Elizabeth II came to the throne in 1952, she has represented Britain in visits to most parts of the world. Prime Ministers come and go, but she carries on above politics, a symbol of British traditions.

*Answer the following questions.*

1. What kind of state is the UK?

2. What do you know about the origin of British Parliament?

3. What is the difference between the House of Lords and the House of commons in terms of membership and functions?

4. Who is the head of the government in GB?

5. How is the Prime Minister elected?

6. Who is the Prime Minister of GB now?

7. What is the role of the queen?

**THE BRITISH HISTORY**

**6. THE INVADERS, THE NORMAN CONQUEST**

The British Isles have a long history. It is now thought that by 1000 BC Britain was a crowded island with probably as many people living there as in the 16th century AD. The greatest monuments of those times are the great stone circles, the most spectacular of them being at **Stonehenge** on Salisbury Plain. The British Isles were first mentioned in writing by a Greek sea captain who visited Cornwall in 320 B.C. At that time Britain was inhabited by **the Celts** who had arrived from Central Europe in the 7th century B.C. The name “Britain” comes from the name of a Celtic tribe known as **the Britons** who held most of the country. Celtic tribes called **the Picts** and **the Scots** settled in the north and in the west of the British Isles. The Scots gave the name of Scotland to the northern part of the country. Nowadays some people in Scotland, Wales and Ireland still speak Celtic languages.

The Celts were divided into three classes: the nobles, whose task was to fight; the Druids, who acted as judges, teachers and dealt with the gods by means of magic; and common people working on the soil.

For about 600 years the Celts lived in peace until in the middle of the first century BC Julius Caesar decided to invade the island. But it was not until almost a century later, in AD 43, that a Roman army actually occupied Britain. **The Romans** had little difficulty conquering Britain (apart from Boadicea’s revolt) because they had a better trained army and because the Celtic tribes fought among themselves. Thus, Britain became a province of the Roman Empire. The Romans failed to conquer Scotland. In the 120s Emperor Hadrian built a strong wall to defend the Roman Britain from the Picts and the Scots (**Hadrian’s Wall**). The Romans brought with them a number of changes, the greatest being the introduction of towns. Urban life was essential to them, but totally new to the Celts. Many modern British city names come from the Roman times: Gloucester, Leicester, Winchester, Lancaster and others. All these names are formed from the Latin word *castra* meaning *armed camp*. The English language is unique among its Germanic cousins for the very large number of words which came into it from Latin.

Roman control of Britain came to an end as the empire began to collapse. In AD 409 Rome pulled its last soldier out of Britain. When the Romans went, they left behind defenceless people, who became easy prey for new invaders. These were Germanic tribes from Northern Europe known as **the Anglo-Saxons**. They used dialects of the language that later became known as Old English or Anglo-Saxon. The country got its new name, England, which means “the land of Angles”. The Anglo-Saxons were pagans who worshipped gods such as Woden, Thor and Freya, whose names were to give the English language the words Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.

The Angles and Saxons took possession of all the land as far as the mountains in the north and west, and divided it into small kingdoms. In the south-east there was the kingdom of Kent and the south Saxon kingdom (Sussex), in the east – the kingdom of East Saxons (Essex), in the south-west – Wessex.

In 597 Pope Gregory sent a mission to convert the Anglo-Saxons to Christianity. The missionaries made their base in Canterbury, which later became a monastery and a center of teaching and learning.

Towards the end of the 8th century new raiders were tempted by Britain’s wealth and these were **the Vikings**. They came from Scandinavia, they were pagan and believed that the gods rewarded fighters above all and that bloodshed and death in battle were the true paths to wealth and happiness. Besides the British Isles, the Vikings settled in a part of north-western France which became known as Normandy.

One by one the kingdoms of Anglo-Saxons fell until there was only Wessex left, where a young man called *Alfred* came to the throne in 871. During his reign, which lasted almost 30 years, the advance of the Vikings was stopped. Alfred was followed by three strong kings who took up the task of creating and consolidating the new kingdom of England.

One of the greatest Anglo-Saxon kings of the 11th century was *Edward the Confessor*. He was a competent and wise monarch, ruling England for 24 years and leaving a united country to his successor. He was a very religious man, and it was in his reign that Westminster Abbey was constructed. He was childless and did not give a clear reference to whom he regarded as his heir. This gave right to William, Duke of Normandy, claim the throne. Meanwhile, *Harold*, Earl of Wessex, was actually crowned after Edward. William of Normandy considered this fact a betrayal and invaded Britain. Harold faced William in ***the battle of Hastings***, which took place on October 14, ***1066***. After many hours of desperate fighting Harold was killed like most of his army. Some historians say that half of England’s noblemen of the time stayed lying dead at Hastings. Soon the whole of the south-east surrendered to William. On Christmas Day 1066 he was crowned in Westminster Abbey as *William I* (1066-1087), also known as *William the Conqueror.*

Although William was now crowned king, his conquest had only just begun, and the fighting lasted for another five years. There was an Anglo-Saxon rebellion against **the Normans** every year until 1070. The small Norman army marched from village to village, destroying places it could not control, and building forts (castles) to guard others. It was a true army of occupation for at least 20 years. The north was particularly hard to control, and the Norman army had no mercy: they burnt, destroyed and killed. It took a century for the north to recover. Most Saxon lords lost everything. William gave the Saxon lands to his Norman nobles. As he gave out land all over England, by 1086 he wanted to know exactly who owned which 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 sent a team of people all through England to make a complete economic survey. This survey was unique for the time. Its results were written down in a book, which was metaphorically called by people *“Domesday” Book*, because its decisions, like those of the Last Judgement, or “doom”, were unalterable. The book still exists and it is an extremely precious source of information about that time. The manuscript is kept at the National Archives in London.

*A. Fill in the table in your exercise book.*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Dates** | **Invaders** |
|  |  |

B. *Answer the questions.*

1. What is the origin of the names *Britain*, *Scotland*, and *England*?

2. Who were Druids?

3. Why did the Romans conquer Britain so easily?

4. What changes did he Romans bring to Britain?

5. What kind of tribes were the Anglo-Saxons?

6. In what century was Christianity introduced to Britain?

7. Did the Vikings conquer the whole of Britain?

8. Who was the last Anglo-Saxon king?

9. What battle brought the Normans to the British throne?

10. Why was the *Domesday Book* so important for William the Conqueror?

**7. the Middle Ages**

Among William’s outstanding successors was ***Henry II*** (1154-1189). Henry’s father was Geoffrey Plantagenet, Count of Anjou, his wife was Eleanor from Aquitaine. So when he came to the throne he held an enormous empire including England and most of France. Henry II was the first of 13 *Plantagenet kings* who were to rule England for 300 years. He was universally respected as a just and wise king.

Henry II is best remembered for his reform of the courts and the system of law. He introduced the jury system. The jury consisted of witnesses themselves, and no man could be tried unless a jury of 12 men swore that there was a true case against him.

However, Henry had problems with the Church and with his family. He had a bitter quarrel with the Archbishop of Canterbury, *Thomas Becket*. Three of the king’s knights, willing to please their king, murdered the archbishop in his own cathedral. Becket’s tomb in the Canterbury Cathedral became a shrine at which miracles occurred and soon after the pope canonized him. Canterbury quickly became the most popular centre of pilgrimage in medieval England.

Besides, the king quarrelled with his wife, Eleanor. His sons, Richard and John, took Eleanor’s side. Richard and John fought against their own father and defeated him. Henry was followed by his son, ***Richard I*** (1189-1199), who has always been one of England’s most popular kings, although he spent hardly any time in England. He took part in crusades to the Holy Land and fought against the Muslims. His courage earned him a nickname Coeur de Lion, “lionheart”. He died in France while fighting.

Richard was followed by his brother ***John*** (1199-1216) who, on the contrary, is one of the most unpopular English kings (his nickname was the Lackland). Very soon he lost almost all the lands that English king and lords owned in France. He made everyone pay to the king much more than was the custom. The barons were furious. In 1215 they forced him to sign ***Magna Carta***, the Great Charter which was the first attempt to limit the absolute power of the king and in the long term it was to lead to Parliament.

John’s son, ***Henry III*** (1216-1272), also quarrelled with the barons who were annoyed by his heavy spending and foreign advisers. A council of nobles was elected and called a *parliament,* or *parlement,* a French word meaning a “discussion meeting”. When Henry died, his son, Edward I, took the throne. During his reign not only lords and bishops were represented in Parliament, but also “commoners”. Among them were knights and other wealthy freemen of the shires and merchants from the towns. Thus, the main historical event of the *13th century* was ***the making of Parliament*.** It was also the century when Wales was joined to England and the son of the king was made Prince of Wales.

The *14th century* was disastrous for Britain as well as most of Europe, because of the effects of wars and plagues. In 1330s England began a long struggle against the French Crown (***The Hundred Years’ War***). It lasted from 1337 to 1453, so it might more accurately be called the "116 Years' War." The causes of the war were complex. ***Edward III*** (1327-1377) claimed the French throne through his mother, a French princess. Besides, the French were trying to spoil England’s wool trade. France was allied with Scotland and supported its rebellious anti-English policy.

The first decades of the war were glorious for England. They won several important battles and conquered about one quarter of France. In the 1360s, the French were winning. A peace followed from 1389 to 1415. In 1415-1422, the English King Henry V conquered large portions of France. However, the French were united by the teenage girl Joan of Arc, who led the troops in 1429 to reclaim their lands. Her enemies captured and killed her. After her death the French continued to take back their territory. Within next 30 years England lost practically all its lands in France.

During the Hundred Years’ War some important events took place in England. In *1348* a terrible ***plague* *epidemic*** broke out in England, killing 1/3 of the population of the country. The economy and trade of England suffered. After the Black Death there were so few people to work on land that the remaining workers could ask for more money for their labour. They also resisted new taxes introduced by the government to compensate the expenses on the war with France. In 1381 the poor led by *Wat Tyler* rebelled, they forced the king to meet them, he seemed to have accepted their demands, but Wat Tyler and other leaders of *the* ***Peasants’ Revolt*** were killed. Though the revolt was put down, it had its role in the disappearing of serfdom by the end of the 15th century.

Other historical events of the second half of the 15th century were the civil wars commonly known as ***the Wars of the Roses*** (1455-1485). The Houses of Lancaster (the red rose) and York (the white rose) were both descended from Edward III and had equal claims to the throne of England. The last of the Lancaster kings had a nervous breakdown, after which he could not rule the country. Many nobles wanted to get rid of the weak king, and this was finally achieved by Edward of York, who defeated the king’s army. Edward was crowned, but soon his rivals seized the crown. The wars were a disaster for the nobility. By 1485 the old nobility had nearly destroyed itself. It was this fact that made it possible for the Tudors to build a new nation state.

A. *Fill in the table in your exercise book.*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **centuries** | **important events** |
|  |  |

B. *Give a talk about each of the questions.*

1. Talk about the achievements and failures of Henry II.

2. How did the sons of Henry II rule the country?

3. How did the Parliament appear in Great Britain?

4. Why was the 14th century disastrous for England?

5. Talk about the Hundred Years’ War: the causes of the war, the course of the war and the outcome for Britain.

6. Talk about the Peasants’ Revolt in England in the 14th century: say why it started, who the leader was, how it ended and what the results were.

7. Talk about the Wars of the Roses, their reasons and consequences for the country.

**8. The Tudors**

The century of Tudor rule (1485-1603) is often thought of as a most glorious period in English history. However, the true history is more complicated and the real rule of these monarchs was less glorious and quite controversial.

Henry VII (1485-1509) became king after his victory at Bosworth field, the last battle of the Wars of the Roses, and his marriage to Princess Elizabeth, the heiress of the House of York. He was succeeded by his son **Henry VIII (1509-1547)**, who, on the one hand, was said to be a very gifted man, a talented musician, an athlete and quite a knowledgeable person for the time. On the other hand, he is notorious for being cruel, tyrannical, in fact, very wasteful with money, interested only in pleasing himself. He spent so much on maintaining a magnificent court and on unsuccessful wars that the money was soon gone.

As a result, Henry VIII was always looking for new sources of money. Also, he disliked the power of the Church of England, which was an international organization (the pope being its head) and he could not completely control it. Thus, when the pope did not give his consent for Henry’s divorce, Henry persuaded the bishops to make him **head of the Church in England**, and this became law after Parliament passed the Act of Supremacy in **1534**. Henry was now free to divorce his first wife and marry his second one (he head six wives on the whole, their fate is described by a popular rhyme “divorced, beheaded, died, divorced, beheaded, survived”).

Henry’s break with Rome was purely political at first. He had simply wanted to control the Church and to keep its wealth in his own hands. He did not approve of the new ideas of Reformation introduced by Martin Luther. He criticized his teaching earlier in a specially written book, for which the pope rewarded him with the title *Fidei Defensor,* Defender of the Faith. The letters “F.D.” can still be found on every British coin.

Between 1536 and 1539 Henry closed 560 monasteries. Part of the monasteries’ lands he took for himself, the other part was sold to landowners and merchants. The monks and nuns were thrown out, many of them becoming beggars.

When Henry died among his heirs were Mary, the daughter of his first wife, Elizabeth, the daughter of his second wife, and nine-year-old Edward, the son of his third wife. When Edward died, **Mary (1553-1558)**, a keen Catholic, came to the throne. She married king Philip of Spain, which was very unpopular with her subjects. She then began to burn Protestants. Three hundred people died in this way, and the burnings began to sicken people (she got the nickname ‘Bloody Mary’), and only her death prevented a rebellion.

**Elizabeth I (1558-1603)** wanted to find a peaceful answer to the problems of the English Reformation. In general, the English Protestantism remained closer to the Catholic religion, but Elizabeth made sure that the Church was still under her control. However, for the rest of her life Elizabeth feared a Catholic rebellion, which was the main reason why she finally agreed to execute her Catholic cousin Mary (“Queen of Scots”) in 1587. This was a hard year for Elizabeth, as the Spanish king Philip decided to conquer England. They had long been rivals. Spain at that time ruled the Netherlands, an economical partner and a religious ally of England. England supported the Dutch in their fight with the Spanish. Spain interfered with English trade in American colonies, English ships attacked Spanish ships as they returned from America loaded with silver and gold. The pirates (‘the sea dogs’) like Francis Drake shared their treasure with the Queen.

Philip built a great fleet (‘Armada’) to move his army across the English Channel from the Netherlands. Elizabeth personally spoke in front of her soldiers and encouraged them before the battle. The Spanish were defeated partly due to quicker English ships, partly due to the weather (many Spanish ships were blown northwards by the wind and wrecked on the rocky coasts of Scotland and Ireland).

It was a glorious moment for England, but it was not the end of the war with Spain (peace was only made with Spain after Elizabeth’s death). Elizabeth had to keep an army and fleet against Spain in the Netherlands, another army was attempting to conquer Ireland. All this cost England a lot of money. **Ireland was** only **conquered** by the time of Elizabeth’s death. The colonization of Ireland did not make England richer, but it destroyed much of Ireland’s society and economy and lead to constant social and religious tension in the region.

The effect of all these expensive campaigns and “enclosures” (when landowners used village lands for sheep farming and peasants lost these lands to grow crops) was a great number of poor people and thieves on the roads. In 1601 Parliament passed the first *Poor Law*. This made local people responsible for the poor in their own area.

There were tensions among the top classes as well. Wishing to avoid asking Parliament for money, Elizabeth started to sell official posts. Only respect for the ageing queen kept angry voices silent, but they were to become great trouble for her successor.

However, Elizabeth’s reign is often called “**the Golden age of Elizabeth**”. She was an embodiment of everything English and the English felt themselves a nation. It was the age of greatest artistic achievements in the works of William Shakespeare.

*A. Answer the following questions:*

1. How was Henry VII connected with the War of Roses?

2. Speak about Henry VIII and his wives. How were his family affairs connected with the church reform?

3. What do the letters “F.D.”( which are still to be found on every British coin) mean?

4. When Henry VIII died, who were his heirs?

5. Why was Henry’s daughter called “Bloody Mary”?

6. How did Elizabeth become the queen?

7. What countries did England fight with during Elizabeth I’s reign? What were the consequences for England?

8. Speak about the Poor Law.

9. Why Elizabeth’s reign is often called “the Golden age of Elizabeth”?

*B. Talk about Henry VIII or Elizabeth II. Point out the negative and positive sides of their rule and personality. Explain why they are such famous figures in the British history.*

**9. The Stuarts**

The Stuart monarchs, from James I onwards were less successful than the Tudors. They quarreled with Parliament and this resulted in civil war. The only king of England ever to be tried and executed was a Stuart.

During the 17th century economic power moved even faster into the hands of merchants and landowning farmer classes. The Crown could no longer raise money or govern without their cooperation. These groups were represented by the House of Commons. In return for money the Commons demanded political power.

Like Elizabeth, **James I** (1603-1625) tried to rule without Parliament as much as possible. He was afraid it would interfere, and he preferred to rule with a small council. As all previous kings, James I strongly believed in the divine right of kings: the king was chosen by God and only God could judge him. He expressed his ideas openly and this led to trouble with Parliament.

His son, **Charles I** (1625-1649), found himself quarrelling even more bitterly with the Commons. At a certain point he dissolved Parliament and ruled by himself. However, this period did not last long. Religious disagreements caused rebellions in Scotland and Ireland and Charles needed money for military campaigns. It was impossible for Charles to find this money except through Parliament. The Parliament was determined to limit the power of the king and to ensure that it would meet regularly in the future. The conflict was unavoidable. The country divided into those who supported the king and those who supported the Parliament. The ***civil war*** broke out and lasted from ***1642***to ***1645***. But as the main sources of national wealth were in the hands of Parliament, the Royalist army was finally defeated.

One of the commanders of the Parliamentarian army was **Oliver Cromwell**. He captured the king and together with some other MP’s who were Puritans decided to get rid of the king. On 31 January 1649 King Charles was executed. From ***1649-1660 Britain was a republic***, which did not prove to be a success. Cromwell and his friends created a government much more severe than Charles’s had been. They got rid of the House of Lords and the Anglican Church. The army remained the most powerful force in the land. From 1653 Britain was governed by Cromwell alone. He became “Lord Protector”, but his methods to govern the country through the army were extremely unpopular.

When Cromwell died in 1658, his republican administration collapsed. The army commanders started to quarrel among themselves. One of them decided to act by inviting **Charles II** (1660-1685) to rule the country. Charles tried to make peace between different religious and political groups, but the Parliament was absolutely pro-Protestant and passed the law which prevented any Catholic from holding official posts. It was the period when the first political parties appeared – “Whigs” and “Tories”. “Whigs” (a rude name for cattle drivers) were afraid of an absolute monarchy and of the Catholic faith. “Tories” (an Irish name for thieves) wanted to keep the authority of the Crown and the Anglican Church. These two parties became the basis of Britain’s two-party parliamentary system of government.

The next king, Charles’s brother **James II (1685-1688)**, tried to restore the rights of Catholics, but in vain. As a result of “glorious revolution” Parliament offered the crown to James's protestant daughter **Mary** and her protestant husband **William of Orange**. The fact that parliament made William king, not by inheritance but by their choice, was revolutionary. The power of Parliament over the monarch was now written into ***the Bill of Rights*** in 1689. The king was now unable to raise taxes or keep an army without the agreement of Parliament, or to act against any MP for what he said and did in Parliament. In 1701 Parliament passed the Act of Settlement, according to which only a Protestant could inherit the crown. Even today, if a son or daughter of the monarch becomes a Catholic, he or she cannot inherit the throne.

After the death of Mary and William they were succeeded by **Anne** (1702-1714), Mary’s sister and the last Stuart monarch. During her reign ***the Union with Scotland*** was achieved. Now the two countries had one parliament. The new British flag united the flags of England and Scotland. Together with Wales the three countries now formed Great Britain.

Besides quarrels between the Crown and Parliament which resulted in “parliamentary monarchy”, the seventeenth-century England saw other important events:

1) First British settlers set off to live in America (1620)

2) Quick development of science (the appearance of the Royal Society and Observatory, Isaac Newton).

3) The rapid spread of literacy and the improvement in printing techniques led to the first newspapers. They were a new way of spreading all kinds of new ideas, scientific, religious and others.

4) In 1665 another epidemic of plague broke out and the Great Fire of London in 1666 put an end to it. Sir Christopher Wren rebuilt the city in stone with St. Paul’s Cathedral being his masterpiece.

*Answer the following questions:*

* + 1. Why did James I quarrel with Parliament?
    2. What were the reasons for the civil war in Britain?
    3. Why did not the republican government last long?
    4. How did Parliament limit the power of the monarch?
    5. What other important events for the British history took place in the 17th century?

**10. The 18th century in Great Britain and the House of Hanover**

Queen Anne was followed by her protestant relative **George I** (1714-1727), an elderly German prince from Hanover who could speak no English. So he hardly interfered in the work of Parliament and his ministers. At that time Britain grew as an empire and wanted to control more colonies and trade ways. It captured French colonies in Canada, defeated French armies in India and started to control most of India. **George III** (1760-1820) was the first Hanoverian to be born in Britain. He wanted to take more active part in governing the country. He was not successful in dealing with British colonies in America. Some American colonists decided that it was not lawful to tax them without their agreement. Protests turned into military conflicts and, finally, into ***the war for Independence***. The war was won by the American forces supported by the French. After the Peace Treaty of 1782 thirteen North American colonies became the United States of America with George Washington as their first president.

However, Britain was more successful in Europe where it took part in the war against Napoleon. ***Admiral Nelson*** won several brilliant victories over the French navy, with his last near Spain at Trafalgar in 1805. The Admiral was killed in the battle, but became one of Britain’s greatest national heroes. Britain’s other hero, **the *Duke of Wellington***, defeated Napoleon completely at Waterloo in Belgium in 1815.

Other important events of the 18th century in Britain were the following.

1. The wealth of Britain’s new trading empire made possible both an agricultural and an ***industrial revolution*** which made Britain ***the most advanced economy in the world***.

The invention of machinery destroyed the old “cottage industries” and created factories. This meant profit for one people and poor working conditions for others, including children, who were forced to work since 6-7 years old and worked long hours. Another unpleasant source of British wealth was slave trade.

* + 1. Ireland, whose native Catholic population suffered a lot from English and Scottish protestant landowners, was united with Britain in **1801** forming **the UK of Great Britain and Ireland**.

*Answer the following questions:*

1. Where did the new dynasty – the House of Hanover – come from?

2. Who actually ruled the country during the reign of George I and George II?

3. What was the main failure of George III’s rule?

4. Who are the main British national heroes of the 19th century? What were they renowned for?

5. What made Britain the most advanced economy in the world in the 19th century?

**11. 19th century**

**1. The British Empire.**

Britain in the 19th century was at its most powerful and self-confident. After the industrial revolution, nineteenth-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. Britain enjoyed a strong place in European councils after the defeat of Napoleon. Its strength lay in its industry, trade and the navy which protected this trade. Britain defended its interests by keeping ships in almost every ocean of the world. It was as a result of defending its interests (important trade routes) that Britain took over more and more land. Among British colonies were Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India, large territories in Africa, Egypt, Sudan, numerous islands in the Atlantic, the Pacific and the Indian oceans. In 1890 Queen Victoria reigned over 400 million people inhabiting one fifth of the surface of the globe. The British liked to say that the sun never set on the Empire.

However, since very often force was used in colonies, at a certain point Britain began to spend more on its empire than it took from it. Keeping the Empire was becoming an increasingly expensive business.

**2. Political and social changes.**

After the war with Napoleon was over 300,000 soldiers and sailors returned to the country looking for work. At the same time the wider use of machines both in industry and farming reduced the number of workers needed. This caused great unemployment. Prices doubled, wages remained the same. To avoid starvation people fled to cities from the countryside. To protect their interests, to be heard by the government they united in trade unions, went on strikes and demonstrations. *The first half of the century was a period of struggle for political rights and social changes for factory and farm workers*. People demanded the vote for all men, parliamentary constituencies of equal size, voting in secret, the right for a man without property to be an MP.  Although many riots were put down and the government resisted reforms, *during the second half of the century these demands were gradually fulfilled*. The government realised the need for change and feared a revolution. As a result, slowly but steadily the political reforms took place.

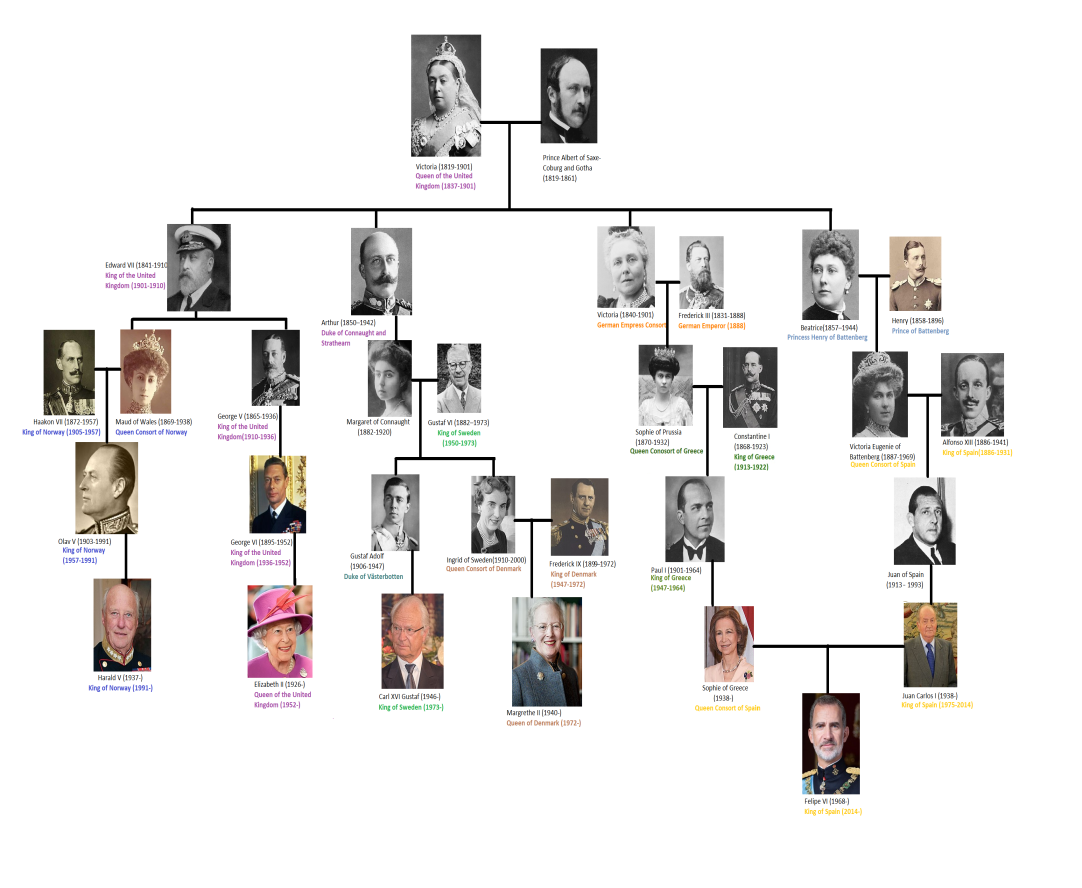
These political changes happened in the course of the struggle between the two main political parties in Britain – the Tories and the Whigs, now called ***the Conservatives*** and ***the Liberals***. Both parties gave outstanding Prime Ministers who had to introduce radical reforms, often losing the support of their party, giving way to the opponents. When a liberal Prime Minister Gladstone proposed Home Rule for Ireland, his own party voted against it. The Liberal Party was split and broken and was to be replaced by ***the Labour Party*** in the struggle against the conservatives.

Together with political changes some social changes took place: 1) prices fell and real wages doubled, 2) life at home was more comfortable (most homes had gas for heating and lighting), 3) working conditions on factories improved, 4) compulsory primary education was introduced, 5) the railway system developed – people could live in suburbs and commute to work, even low-income families could have weekends or holidays out of town, even at the seaside, 5) the first regular police force was established.

**3. Monarchy.**

The 19th century Britain is usually associated with Queen Victoria (“Victorian Age”) who used to be Britain’s longest-reigning monarch (64 years of reign from 1837 to 1901) before Queen Elizabeth II. Victoria became queen at the age of 18. She was very patriotic and determined to make her country prosper. She married her German relative Prince Albert. The marriage was happy, and the Royal family became a model for moral standards. When Albert died in 1861, the queen wore mourning till her last day. She stopped to appear in public and refused to take part in state affairs for many years. But her advisers persuaded her to take more interest in the kingdom. She did so, and she soon became extremely popular.

Certain values were accepted as basic for the period: the idea of hierarchy (both in state and at home), Christianity, respectability (financial independence, a cult of work and deep respect for home and family), philanthropy (helping the needy and the poor, charity). These values were demonstrated not only by the Royal family, but were also shown in the works of the greatest writers of the time, like Charles Dickens.



*A. Answer the following questions.*

1. What role did Britain play in the world in the 19th century?

2. Why did the English claim that the sun never set on their empire?

3. What political changes took place in Britain in the 19th century?

4. What two parties made up the British Parliament?

5. What social changes had taken place in Britain by the end of the 19th century?

6. Why was Queen Victoria popular among her people?

7. Why was Victoria called ‘the grandmother of Europe’?

8. What did Victorian values include?

*B. Topics for individual research about the period.*

1. Education in Victorian Times.
2. Living conditions and family life in Victorian Era.
3. Science and Technology in Victorian Age.
4. Life in British colonies in the time of the Empire.

**12. the 20th century**

Queen Victoria died in 1901 after 64 years on the throne. She was succeeded by her eldest son, **Edward VII**, who was nearly sixty and ruled for nine years, the next king being his son **George V** (changed the dynasty name for *The House of Windsor*)*.*

In politics the House of Commons strengthened their position and influence while the House of Lords significantly lost theirs.

In foreign policy the British government was not prepared to accept growing German domination in Europe, so when Germany invaded Belgium, the British Empire declared war on Germany **in August 1914**. Although it was believed that the war would not last more than a few months, it lasted for four years. The British army suffered heavy losses – about one million soldiers died and other two million were wounded. Though the enemy was defeated, the experience of this war was most traumatic for Britain.

The immediate consequences of the war were the loss of old beliefs and values, the further development of political democracy, a shift of wealth to new classes, the emancipation of women (who got the right to vote), and the extension of state planning and controls. Economic costs of the war were extremely high for Britain, its foreign trade was largely ruined. Britain never regained its markets lost to Japan and the US. The financial centre of the world was no longer London but New York. Soon the American Navy was to eclipse the British.

After the war the situation in Ireland continued to be tensed with riots and even guerilla fighting. As a result, the British government decided to make peace. In 1921 it agreed to the independence of southern Ireland. The official name of the country changed into ***the UK of Great Britain and Northern Ireland***.

In 1936 George V died and the new king Edward VIII was determined to marry Mrs. Simpson, a divorced American woman. Edward had to abdicate and his younger brother succeeded him as ***King George VI***. He was much respected by his subjects. His eldest daughter is the present Queen.

As soon as Germany invaded Poland in 1939, Britain and France declared war on Germany. In May 1940 **Winston Churchill** became Prime Minister. When in June 1940 France fell, Britain stood alone in Europe.

The Germans were planning to cross the Channel and invade Britain, but to do that they needed first to defeat the British in the air. The German Luftwaffe had been resisted by the Royal Air Force for several months until in September 1940 the British pilots managed to stop the German attack by shooting down 60 planes.

Due to the war the state control of the country’s life increased dramatically. Identity cards were obligatory, work was classified into essential and non-essential, food rationing was introduced and lasted till 1954, clothes and shoes were also rationed. Another consequence of the war was the rapid liquidation of the British Empire. In most cases it was achieved with a minimum of conflict, so that after becoming independent the former colonies chose to stay in *the Commonwealth*.

At the end of the war people, tired of the strains of the war, voted for the Labour party, who nationalized the key industries and companies and managed to build ***the Welfare Stat****e*. Full employment became one of the top priorities. All people had to pay contributions and had benefits covering old age, sickness, unemployment, widowhood, and benefits for birth, marriage and death. Free education was provided for everybody, including secondary and further education. The National Health Service began to work, allowing people to get free medical treatment. However, by the end of 1950s the Welfare State was becoming more and more expensive, as did the taxation to sustain it. In 1960s the economy began to alarm. At the same time the trade unions constantly demanded wage increase and threatened the government with strikes and industrial paralysis. The inability of the Labour Party to control its own trade unions resulted in the victory of the Conservatives at the election. The Conservative leader **Margaret Thatcher** reduced the role of the state by extensive privatization. British telecom, British Airways, British steel, oil, gas, airports, water and electricity were all privatized. Employees received preferred rights to buy shares in these new companies. Banking and finance grew significantly. She supported the private sector by reducing all income tax rates. As the power of trade unions was weakened, her government could cut spending on the public sector.

As a result, Thatcher’s policies benefited some 70 percent of the population, while 20 percent lived below the poverty line. Thatcher was becoming increasingly unpopular and, finally, her party lost to Tony Blair in 1997, the leader of ***New Labour***, as the party ideology was modernized by moving away from collectivism and nationalization and taking certain aspects of Thatcherism.

*Answer the following questions:*

1. Why was the experience of WWI so traumatic for Great Britain?

2. How did the official name of the UK change in the 1921 and why?

3. How did George VI become king?

4. What were the consequences of WWII for Great Britain?

5. What did the Welfare State bring to the nation?

6. What changes did the Thatcher government make?

**THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

**1. GEOGRAPHY OF THE USA**

**Physical Geography**

The United States of America is the world's third largest country in size (*9.6 million sq.km*) and the third largest in terms of population (*338 million people*). Located in North America, the country is bordered on the west by the Pacific Ocean and to the east by the Atlantic Ocean. Along the northern border is Canada and the southern border is Mexico.

The United States has high mountains in the West and a vast central plain. The lowest point in the country is in *Death Valley* (California) which is 86 m and the highest peak is *Mt. McKinley* (Alaska) at 6,198 meters. Major Mountain Ranges are *the Rocky Mountains* and *the Appalachian Mountains*. The longest river is *the Missouri* while the second longest is *the Mississippi*.

World-famous is the region of *the Great Lakes*, situated in the north-east of the US bordering Canada. It is a system of five great lakes (Lake Superior, Lake Michigan, Lake Huron, Lake Erie and Lake Ontario) joined together by natural channels. *Lake Superior* is the largest lake that’s partly in the United States. The largest lake that is entirely located in the US is *Lake Michigan*.

Great Salt Lake (Utah), “America’s Dead Sea”, is the largest salt lake in the western hemisphere.

**Political Geography**

The United States of America is a federal republic of 50 states. Forty-eight of the states form the *contiguous United States*. The other two states, Hawaii and Alaska, are situated respectively in the tropical part of the Pacific Ocean and near the Arctic Circle. The capital of the country is *Washington, D.C*. Among America’s largest cities are *New York City, Los Angeles* and *Chicago*.

The country is divided into five regions: Northeast, Southeast, Southwest, the Midwest, and the West.

**Population**

About 75% of Americas 338 million population live in urban areas. Most of these urban centres lie along the Atlantic and the Pacific coasts, the Gulf of Mexico and the Great Lakes. The most populous area is the relatively small Northeast.

Throughout its history, the United States has been a nation of immigrants. The population is diverse with people from all over the world seeking refuge and a better way of life.

The vast majority of the population was WASP (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant) until about 1860. Between 1860 and 1920 almost 30 million immigrants arrived from central and southeastern Europe in particular. Today *white Americans* (people whose ancestors come from [Europe](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Europe), the [Middle East](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_East), and [North Africa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_Africa)) still form the majority (79%). The largest ethnic groups with European origin are the Germans and the Irish. About 12% of the population are black (*Black or African Americans*). They are the largest racial minority. The most rapidly growing ethnic group is *the Hispanics* (almost 7% of Americans). Another rapidly growing group is that of *Oriental Americans* who are concentrated mainly in California. The 1.5 million *Native Americans* (Amerindians) live mainly in reserves in the southwestern states.

**Economic Geography**

The United States is very rich in natural resources. The major resource is *iron* (the Lake Superior region), other basic metals are *zinc, copper* and *silver* (Texas and the West). America has the largest *coal* reserves in the world. The US ranks second in the production of *petroleum* (after Saudi Arabia) and *natural gas* (after Russia). Major deposits of gas and petroleum are found in Texas, Louisiana and Alaska.

The industrial heart of the country is the Midwest around the Great Lakes. The Northeast is the home of the major computer manufacturers.

47% of the land area of the US is farmland. The Midwest is the most important agricultural region and alone produces almost twice as much as the American people can consume. The South produces such traditional crops as *tobacco* and *corn*. Texas is the leading producer of *cattle*, *sheep*, *cotton* and *rice*. The major centres for *technology* are the San Francisco Bay (with its Silicon Valley) and the Pacific Northwest.

**State Symbols**

**The flag** of the US (also known as *Stars and Stripes* or *Star-Spangled Banner*) consists of 13 horizontal stripes, 7 red alternating with 6 white. The stripes represent the original 13 colonies, the stars represent the 50 states of the Union. The colours of the flag are symbolic as well: Red symbolizes Bravery and Valour, White symbolizes Purity and Innocence and Blue represents Vigilance, Perseverance and Justice.

**The US Great Seal** is often used informally as national arms of the USA. It is only attached to certain documents, such as foreign treaties and presidential proclamations. Both sides of the Great Seal can be seen on the back of a U.S. one-dollar bill.

The main figure on the seal is a [bald eagle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bald_eagle) with its wings outstretched. It holds 13 [arrows](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arrow) referring to the [13 original states](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thirteen_Colonies), and an [olive branch](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Olive_branch), together symbolizing that the United States of America has “a strong desire for peace, but will always be ready for war”.

*Bald eagle* is the official **bird symbol** of the United States of America. The bald eagle was chosen because of its majestic beauty, great strength, long life, and because it’s native to North America.

**The USA national anthem** is *“The Star-Spangled Banner.* The lyrics come from a poem written in 1814 by [Francis Scott Key](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Scott_Key), a then 35-year-old amateur poet. The poem was set to the tune of a popular British [drinking song](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drinking_song). Although the song has 4 stanzas, only the first is commonly sung today:

*O! say can you see by the dawn’s early light*

*What so proudly we hailed at the twilight’s last gleaming.*

*Whose broad stripes and bright stars through the perilous fight,*

*O’er the ramparts we watched were so gallantly streaming.*

*And the rockets’ red glare, the bombs bursting in air,*

*Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there.*

*OHH, say does that star-spangled banner yet wave*

*O’er the land of the free and the home of the brave?*

**2. Washington, D.C.**

Although New York City and Philadelphia each served briefly as the capital of the United States, it was necessary to have a capital city which was not a part of a state. George Washington, the US first president, chose a place on the Potomac River. The state of Maryland and Virginia gave some of their land. This made the District of Columbia. Thus, the new capital got its name - Washington, D.C.

French-born American engineer, architect, and urban designer Pierre-Charles L'Enfant designed the city's basic plan, which features wide avenues radiating from the Capitol building through a grid of streets with numerous circles and parks. Congress first met in Washington in 1800, although construction of the first phase of the Capitol was not completed until 1826. Today, millions come to Washington, D.C. each year to see the Capitol, the White House, the Library of Congress, and the city's many museums and monuments.

One of the best seasons to see Washington is in March-April. It is cherry blossom time. Japan sent more than 3,000 cherry trees to the USA in 1912.

**Major sights of Washington, D.C.**

**The United States Capitol** serves as *the* [*seat of*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seat_of_government)  *the* [*US Congress*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Congress), the [legislative branch](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legislature) of the [U.S. federal government](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federal_government_of_the_United_States). It is located on top of [Capitol Hill](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Capitol_Hill,_Washington,_D.C.) at the eastern end of the [National Mall](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Mall).

The building is marked by its central [dome](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dome) above a [rotunda](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Capitol_rotunda) and two wings, one for each chamber of Congress: the north wing is *the Senate* chamber and the south wing is *the House of Representatives* chamber. Above these chambers are galleries where visitors can watch the Senate and House of Representatives. It is an example of the [neoclassical architecture](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neoclassical_architecture) style. The statue on top of the dome is the [Statue of Freedom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Statue_of_Freedom).

Underground tunnels connect the main Capitol building with each of the [Congressional office buildings](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congressional_office_buildings) in the surrounding complex.

***The White House*** is *the* [*official residence*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Official_residence) and principal workplace of the [President of the United States](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/President_of_the_United_States). Located at 1600 [Pennsylvania](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pennsylvania_Avenue) Avenue it was built between 1792 and 1800 of white-painted [sandstone](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aquia_sandstone) in the Neoclassical style and has been the residence of every U.S. President since [John Adams](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Adams).

***Pennsylvania Avenue*** is a street in [Washington, D.C.](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Washington,_D.C.) joining the [White House](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_House) and the [United States Capitol](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Capitol). Called “America’s Main Street”, it is the location of official parades and processions, as well as protest marches.

***The Washington Monument*** (also known as Pencil) is the most prominent structure in Washington, D.C. and one of the city’s early attractions.  It was built in honour of George Washington, who led the country to independence and then became its first President. The Monument is shaped like an Egyptian obelisk. It was finished on December 6, 1884.

***The Lincoln Memorial*** stands at the west end of the National Mall as a neoclassical monument to the 16th President. The north and south side chambers contain carved inscriptions of Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address. Lying between the north and south chambers is the central hall containing the solitary figure of Lincoln sitting in contemplation.

The memorial was opened to the public in 1922. It is visited by millions of visitors each year and is the site of many large public gatherings and protests. Martin Luther King delivered his famous “I Have a Dream” speech [to a crowd by the Lincoln Memorial in 1963](http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/travel/civilrights/dc1.htm).

***The National Mall*** is an open-area [national park](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_park) in [downtown](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Downtown) [Washington, D.C.](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Washington,_D.C.) The term commonly refers to the entire area between the [Lincoln Memorial](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lincoln_Memorial) and the [Capitol](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Capitol), with the [Washington Monument](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Washington_Monument) providing a division slightly west of the center.

***The Library of Congress*** is the [national library](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_library) of the [United States](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States) and the research resource of the [United States Congress](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Congress). Located in three buildings in [Washington, D.C.](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Washington,_D.C.), it is the largest [library](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Library) in the world by shelf space and holds the largest number of books.

***Vietnam Veterans Memorial*** honors the men and women who served when their Nation called upon them. It is made up of two black [granite](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Granite) walls 75 meters long. Inscribed on the walls are the names of servicemen who were either confirmed to be KIA (Killed in Action) or remained classified as MIA (Missing in Action) when the walls were constructed in 1982.

*Choose one of the Washington, D.C. main sites and talk about it (its history, special features and meaning).*

**3. New York City**

New York is possibly the most famous city in the world. Every year millions of tourists come to see its skyscrapers and busy streets, to see the city that never sleeps.

Many people call New York ‘The Big Apple’ or just ‘The Apple’. No one really knows where the name comes from. Some people think that jazz musicians first used this name in 1920s. They meant the place where everything happened.

New York is the biggest city in the state New York and, in fact, in the US. However, it is not the capital of its state, the capital is Albany.

When people think of New York, they often think of Manhattan. Manhattan is an island 21.5 km long and 3.7 km wide. It is one of five New York boroughs. The other four are Queens, the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Staten Island.

Queens is the largest area. There is a bridge from Manhattan to Queens. The Bronx used to be a very criminal area, but there has been much less crime there in recent years. Visitors to Staten Island are surprised to find lakes and green hills there. The residential area there consists mainly of small houses with back- or front-yards. Only three US cities – Los Angeles, Chicago and Houston – have larger populations than Brooklyn.

New Yorkers call Manhattan ‘the city’. When they say ‘the island’, they mean Long Island, an island to east of New York. Some New Yorkers like to leave ‘ the city’ in summer and play on ‘the island’.

Five hundred years ago the territory of and around Manhattan was inhabited by Indians. They called this land ‘*Manna Hatta’* – ‘the island of the hills’. Then in 1626 this area was bought from Indians by Peter Minuit, and employee of the Dutch West India Company. It cost him only 24 $! After that the island was Dutch. The city was called New Amsterdam. By 1640s about 500 Europeans lived there. King Charles II of Britain wanted the island. On his orders in 1664 the island was taken by the British and given a new name – New York. Under the British the city’s business and population grew. By 1750s its population was 16,000 people.

After 1800 more and more immigrants came to the United States from other countries. Many of them stayed in New York. By 1898 the city’s population was over 3 million. It was the largest city in the world at that time.

Today New York is still an international city. In 1990 one out of every three New Yorkers was born in another country. During the last decades many immigrants have moved to ne York from Asia, South and Central America.

There are a number of world-famous sights in New York. Among them are: *The Brooklyn Bridge, Time square, the Metropolitan Museum, Central Park, Broadway, Ellis Island, The Statue of Liberty, the city’s skyline (skyscrapers).*

*Make a presentation about one of New York’s sights.*

**4.** **EDUCATION IN THE US**

The underlying principle of the American system of education is to educate people in such a way that everyone has the opportunity to develop to his/her greatest potential. Americans value education largely as a means to reaching a higher standard of living. The belief is widespread in the US that the more schooling a person has, the more money he or she will earn on college graduation.

The United States does not have a national school system, but the government provides guidance and funding for federal educational programs. Each of the 50 states has its own laws regulating education. From state to state, some laws are similar while others are not, but all states require young people to attend school. The age limit varies, however. Most states require attendance up to age 16, some up to 18. Thus, every child in America receives at least 11 years of education.

The stages a child passes in his/her education are **elementary**, **junior high school** or **middle school**, and **high schools**. American children begin to attend school by the age of five or six. There are also pre-school classes called **kindergarten**. Before this they may attend **nursery school** or a **day care center**.

Today, almost 90 percent of American students attend public elementary and secondary schools, which do not charge **tuition** but rely on local and state taxes for funding. The other ten percent attend private schools, for which their families pay tuition. Four out of five private schools are run by religious groups, where religious instruction is part of the curriculum. There is also a small but growing number of parents who educate their children themselves, a practice known as **home schooling**.

Schooling is divided into twelve academic levels or **grades**, each of which lasts one year. Elementary school usually covers grades one through six or seven. Middle school or junior high school is from grades seven to nine or seven to eight. The concluding three or four grades form high school.

The **school year** usually runs from early September until May or June (nine months) and is divided into “quarters” or terms (semesters). Some schools use the quarter system, which comprises three sessions: fall (September to December), winter (January to March) and spring (March to May or June). Others use a semester system made up of two sessions: fall (September to December) and spring (January to May).

At elementary school a pupil learns basic [arithmetic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arithmetic) and sometimes rudimentary algebra in [mathematics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mathematics), English proficiency (such as basic [grammar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_grammar), [spelling](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_spelling), and [vocabulary](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vocabulary)), and fundamentals of other subjects.

In junior high school students are given more independence in choosing their own classes. Usually, starting in ninth grade, grades become part of a student’s official **transcript**. Future employers or colleges may want to see steady improvement in grades and a good **attendance record** on the official transcript.

Generally, at the [high school](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/High_school) level, students take a broad variety of classes without special emphasis on any particular subject. Many states require a “health” course in which students learn about [anatomy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anatomy), [nutrition](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nutrition), [first aid](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_aid), [sexuality](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_sexuality), and [birth control](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Birth_control). Anti-drug use programs are also usually part of health courses.

There are two basic types of high school: one with more academic curriculum, preparing students for admission to colleges, and the other offering primarily vocational education (training in a skill or trade).

Many high schools offer a wide variety of [**elective**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elective) **courses**. Students choose electives according to their abilities and talents. Though electives are not compulsory students are encouraged to participate in them.

Common types of electives include [*visual arts*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Visual_arts) ([drawing](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drawing), [sculpture](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sculpture), [painting](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Painting), [photography](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Photography), [film](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Film)), [*performing arts*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Performing_arts) ([drama](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drama), [band](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Band_%28music%29), [choir](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Choir), [orchestra](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orchestra), [dance](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dance)), [*technology education*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Technology_education) (“Shop”; [woodworking](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Woodworking), [metalworking](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metalworking), [automobile repair](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Automobile_repair), [robotics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robotics)), [*computers*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Computer) ([word processing](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Word_processing), [programming](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Programming), [graphic design](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Graphic_design)), [*athletics*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sport) (a variety of sports), [*publishing*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Publishing) ([journalism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Journalism)/[student newspaper](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Student_newspaper), [yearbook/annual](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Yearbook/annual&action=edit&redlink=1), [literary magazine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literary_magazine)), [*foreign languages*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foreign_language) (Spanish and French are common; Chinese, [Latin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latin), and German are less common).

Besides electives US students participate in a large number of **extracurricular activities**. On average, in the United States, many students participate in a minimum of one extracurricular activity throughout the course of one school year. If a student is not into team sports, there’s French club, the debating team, chess club, student government, radio, newspaper, environmental club, drama, choir, photography, jazz band, computer club, and more.

There is a great freedom of choice, that is why an important figure in high school is the **guidance counsellor**, who advises the students on what course to take on the basis of their career choices and frequent *aptitude tests*.

In order to receive the **high school diploma,** necessary in most states to get into college, students must accumulate a minimum number of **credits**, which are awarded for the successful completion of one- or half-year course. Students hoping to be admitted to the more famous universities require far more than the minimum number of credits and must also have good **grades** (the mark given on the basis of course work and a written examination). Extra-curricular activity (such as playing for one of the school’s sports teams) is also very important in the American school system and is taken into consideration by colleges and employers.

After high school about 60 per cent of the graduates pursue higher education in **colleges** and **universities**. They may be private or public. Nearly every state has at least one university supported by public funds. Tuition fees are much lower in such universities compared to private ones.

Eight most prestigious universities form the so called *Ivy League*. These schools are Brown, Columbia, Cornell, Dartmouth, Harvard, University of Pennsylvania, Princeton, and Yale. The characteristics of Ivy League schools include relatively small undergraduate populations, prestigious academic reputations, and ranking among the top 15 U.S. universities with the highest tuition fees in the country.

There are also **public community colleges**, also called junior colleges which offer a two-year program in a variety of disciplines, and **state teacher colleges** which specialize in training school teachers.

The cost of study per year (does not includes living expenses) in the USA varies from $5000 to $50000 (might be much more too for MBA/Medical or other programs) per year.

Unlike the European system of higher education, individual colleges and universities in the US do not have their own entrance examinations. Rather, admission is based on scholastic achievement in high school (a transcript) and performance on standardized national tests - **the SAT** (the Scholastic Aptitude Test) or **ACT** (American College Testing). In addition, colleges and universities may require applicants to submit samples of their writing and invite them to an interview.

*Choose one of the stages of education in the US – elementary, secondary, higher – and talk about its main characteristics.*

**5. THE POLITICAL SYSTEM OF THE US**

**The Constitution**

The US Constitution, written in 1787, established the country’s political system and is the basis for its laws. In 200 years, the US has experienced enormous growth and change. Yet the Constitution works as well today as when it was written. One reason is that the Constitution can be **amended**, or changed. (For example, the Fifteenth **Amendment** gave black Americans the right to vote and the Nineteenth Amendment gave women the right to vote). When the Constitution was ratified by all 13 states it already contained 10 amendments, known as the Bill of Rights (the freedom of religion, speech, press, etc.). So far only 27 amendments have been made to the Constitution.

**Federalism**

The US has a federalist system. This means that there are individual states, each with its own government, and there is a federal, or national, government. The Constitution gives certain powers to the federal government, other powers to the state governments, and yet other powers to both. For example, only the national government can print money, the states establish their own school systems, and both the national and the state governments can collect taxes.

**Three Branches of Government**

The American Constitution is based on the doctrine of **the separation of powers** between **the executive, legislative** and **judiciary**. The respective government institutions – **The Presidency**, **Congress** and **the Courts** – were given limited and specific powers.

**The legislative branch** consists of **Congress**, which has two parts – **The House of** **Representatives** and **the Senate**. Congress’s main function is to make laws. There are 100 senators (two from each state) and 435 representatives (the number from each state depends on the state’s population).

**The President** is the head of **the executive branch** and the country. The executive branch administers the laws (decides how the laws should be carried out). In addition to the President, the Vice-President, and their staffs, the executive branch consists of **departments and agencies**. The President appoints the departments’ heads, who form his **Cabinet**.

**The judicial branch** interprets the laws and makes sure that new laws conform to the Constitution. There are different kinds of courts but **the Supreme Court** is the most important. It has nine members who are appointed for life.

The **system of checks and balances**, established by the Constitution, is meant to prevent any branch from having too much power. Each branch has certain controls over the other branches. For example, Congress makes the laws but the president can veto, or reject, a law and the Supreme Court can decide a law is unconstitutional.

**Elections and Political parties**

The US has two main political parties – **the Democrats** and **the Republicans**. There are not clear differences between the Republican and Democratic parties. In general, the Republicans tend to be more conservative and to have more support among the upper classes, while the Democrats tend to be more liberal and to have more support among the working class and the poor.

According to the Constitution, a president’s office is limited to two terms of 4 years each. The President is elected on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November of a leap year and takes office at noon on January 20. Presidential candidates are selected by their party’s national conventions in the summer of each election year. The President is not elected directly but by an **Electoral College** that consists of electors. They are chosen in each state by popular vote and their number is the same as the number of congress people from that state. Electors give their votes for the candidate which has got the majority of votes in their state.

*Answer the following questions.*

1. Why is the Constitution so important?
2. Why does the Constitution still work well today although it was written long ago?
3. What does a federalist system mean?
4. What is the basic doctrine of the US Constitution?
5. What US institutions represent the three powers?
6. What are their functions?
7. What are the two main political parties in the US and what is the difference between them?
8. How is the president elected in the US?

**TWO MOST IMPORTANT EVENTS IN THE US HISTORY**

**6. The American War of Independence (1775-1783)**

***The roots of Revolution***

In the 18th century France and Britain fought several major wars. In North America France **claimed** to own Canada and Louisiana. As a result of long fighting, France gave up its claims to Canada and to all of North America east of the Mississippi River. But Britain’s victory led to conflict with its American colonies.

The colonists were angered when the British government told them to pay new taxes on imports of sugar, coffee, textiles and other goods. The government also told them that they must feed and find shelter for British soldiers it planned to keep in the colonies. These orders seemed perfectly fair to British politicians. It had cost British taxpayers a lot of money to defend the colonies. Surely, they thought, the colonists could not object to repaying some of this money.

But the colonists did object. Merchants believed that the new import taxes would make it more difficult for them to trade **at a profit**. Other colonists believed that the taxes would raise their **costs of living**. They also feared that if British troops stayed in America, they might be used to force them to obey the British government.

Since the early years of their **settlement** the colonists had claimed the right to elect representatives to decide the taxes they paid. Now they **insisted** that as “freeborn Englishmen” they could be taxed only by their own colonial assemblies. We have no representatives in the British Parliament, they said, so what right does it have to tax us? “No taxation without representation” became their **demand**.

Thus, the colonists refused to pay new taxes, **riots** broke out in Boston. As a result, the British government removed all the taxes except for the one on tea. But some colonists in Massachusetts were determined to keep the quarrel going. In December 1773, a group of them **disguised** as Amerindians boarded British merchant ships in Boston harbour and threw over 300 cases of tea into the sea. “I hope that King George likes salt in his tea”, said one of them.

The British reply to this *“Boston Tea Party”* was to pass a set of laws to punish Massachusetts. Boston harbour was blocked by British warships. In September 1774 a group of colonial leaders came together in Philadelphia. They formed *the First Continental Congress* to oppose what they saw as British **oppression**.

***Fighting for Independence***

In April 1775 the first fight between armed colonists and British soldiers took place. In May *the second Continental Congress* met in Philadelphia and began to act as an American national government. It set up an army under the command of *George Washington*, a rich Virginia landowner. The Continental Congress also sent representatives to seek aid from friendly European nations, especially from France, British old enemy.

In July 1776 the Continental Congress **cut all political ties** with Britain and declared that “these United Colonies are free and independent states”. Two days later, on July 4, it **issued** *the Declaration of Independence*.

*The Declaration of Independence* is the most important document in American history. It was written by *Thomas Jefferson*, a landowner and lawyer from Virginia. After repeating that the colonies were now “free and independent states”, it officially named them the United States of America. The Declaration of Independence claimed that all men had a natural right to “Life, liberty and pursuit of happiness”. It also said that the main reason that the government existed was to protect the rights of individual **citizens**.

In the war Americans had both victories and **defeats**. However, after the victory at Saragota Benjamin Franklin, the American ambassador to France, quickly took advantage of this fact to persuade the French government to join in the struggle against Britain. French ships, soldiers and money were soon playing an important part in the war. French ships helped George Washington to win a very important victory in Yorktown in 1781.

The British started to **withdraw** their forces from America. In 1783 *the Treaty of Paris* was signed. Britain officially recognized her former colonies as an independent nation.

*Answer the following questions.*

1. What were the reasons of the war?

2. What important document was issued during the war? What did it state?

3. How did Americans manage to win?

4. What was the result of the war for Britain and America?

**7. The Civil War (1861-1865)**

At the beginning of the 19th century there were 7.2 million people in the United States. For 1.2 million of these people the words of *the Declaration of Independence* “that all men are created equal” were far from true. They were black and they were slaves.

In the mid-19th century the United States was a large country, full of contrasts. Northern states were the centers of finance, trade, shipping, and manufacturing. Southern states had many farms that used slave labour to grow tobacco, sugar, and cotton. The landowners in the south could not imagine how they could cultivate their fields without slave workers. In the north farms were smaller and the climate was cooler. Farmers there did not need slaves to work for them. Some northerners opposed slavery for moral and religious reasons also. Many were **abolitionists** – that is, people who wanted to end or abolish slavery by law. By the early 19th century many northern states had passed laws abolishing slavery inside their own **boundaries**. They also persuaded Congress to make it illegal for ships to bring any new slaves from Africa into the United States.

In the following years, each side held its beliefs more strongly. Many Northerners thought slavery was wrong. Most white Southerners considered slavery part of their way of life. Most Northerners did not care about slavery in the South, but they did not want slavery in the new territories. The Southerners believed that these territories had the right to decide for themselves whether slavery would be allowed.

A young politician from Illinois believed that this was not a **local issue**, but a national one. He was convinced that the spread of slavery must be stopped. His name was *Abraham Lincoln*. In the presidential election of 1860 the southerners put forward a candidate of their own to oppose Lincoln. They threatened that the South would break away, or ‘**secede**’, from the United States if Lincoln became President. However, the voters in the North supported Lincoln and he won the election. A few weeks later, in December 1860, the state of South Carolina voted to secede from the United States. It was soon joined by 10 more southern states. In February 1861 these eleven states announced that they were now an independent nation, *the Confederate States* of America, often known as **the Confederacy**.

In his inaugural address as President, Lincoln appealed to the southern states to stay in the Union. He promised that he would not **interfere with** slavery in any of them. But he warned that he would not allow them to break up the United States by seceding. The southerners took no notice of Lincoln’s appeal. In April 1861 Confederate guns opened fire on a fortress in South Carolina that was occupied by United States troops. These shots marked the beginning of the American Civil War.

The North had more people, bigger **manufacturing** **capacity** (including most of the country’s weapon factories) and grew more food crops than the South. The South had more experienced military leaders and better knowledge of the battlefields because most of the war was fought in the South. The war lasted four years. Tens of thousands of soldiers fought on land and sea.

In June 1863 at a small town named Gettysburg a Union army blocked the Confederate troops. The battle which followed was the biggest that has ever been fought in the United States. In three days of fierce fighting more than 50, 000 men were killed or wounded. The Confederate army had suffered a defeat from which it would never recover. Besides, the south was running out of everything - men, equipment, food, money.

In April 1865 the Confederate army **surrendered**. The Civil War put an end to slavery. In 1865 this was abolished everywhere in the United States by the 13th **Amendment** to the Constitution. Also, the war decided finally that the United States was one nation, whose parts could not be separated.

But the war left **bitter memories**. The US fought other wars later, but all were outside its own boundaries. The Civil War caused terrible destruction at home. All over the South cities and farms lay in ruins. And more Americans died in this war than in any other, before or since (the dead on both sides totalled 635, 000).

*Answer the following questions.*

1. What were the reasons of the war?

2. Why did the North manage to win?

3. What were the consequences of the war for the country?