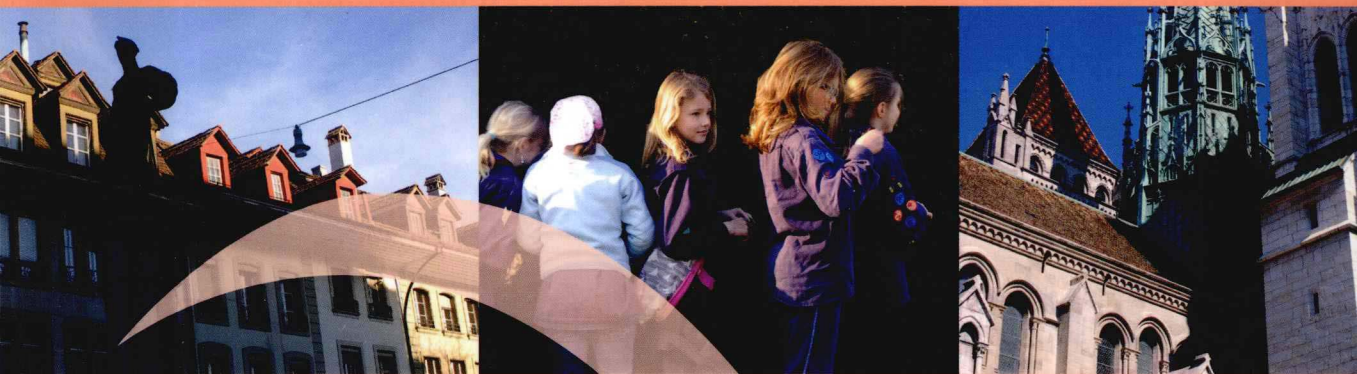




高等学校英语专业教材



英语国家概况

A Survey of Major English-Speaking Countries

编著◎张富生 张红梅 祝乃荣



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策划编辑 张春超

项目编辑 姚 望

审读编辑 吴悦舟 柯学星

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前言

随着国际交往的深入和全球一体化的发展,英语文化已成为一门独立的学科,得到了学界普遍的关注。在教学领域,英语文化受到的关注尤为广泛,英语专业研究生考试、英语专业本科专业八级考试、英语专业成人自学考试无不如此。二十多年来,有关英语文化方面的著作出版不少,专家学者见仁见智,从不同的角度为介绍英语文化做出了卓越贡献。然而,由于英语国家的政治、经济、文化等方面的情况变化很快,不少著作中的数据及资料已显得陈旧,某些提法也存在一定局限。鉴于此,我们编写了这本《英语国家概况》。

本书主要介绍了英国、美国、澳大利亚、加拿大、新西兰和爱尔兰六个国家。它主要有以下特点:

1. 力争内容新颖,注重数据更新:收入了最新的重大事件,如2010年5月英国大选、美国金融风暴、2010年8月美韩黄海军事演习及2010年温哥华冬季奥运会;数据援引自国际权威机构发布的报告,大多为2011年最新数据。
2. 章节布局新颖:根据英语教学规律进行编排,既保持了章节的相对独立,有利于教师备课,又保持了全书的完整性。
3. 图文并茂:在一些专有名词、术语和习惯用法旁边,增加了相关的图片,便于理解。
4. 厚今薄古:除了介绍客观事实和历史外,侧重对六国当前政治、经济和文化情况的介绍,添加了与中国相关的内容。
5. 兼顾其他:在系统介绍六国文化的前提下,兼顾了英语研究生入学考试、英语本科生专业八级考试和英语成人自学考试的需求,并增加了相应的练习题型。
6. 注重任务型教学和拓展性训练:在每个章节增加了标题导读、相关思考题及 mini-task,丰富了内容,增强了互动,增加了趣味性。

在本书编写过程中,我们得到了华东师范大学出版社李恒平老师的大力协助。美国朋友 Timothy Ralph Osgood 博士对书稿的语言文字进行了修改润色,并对有关章节提出了宝贵的意见。另外,我们还引用了有关部门提供的大量数据,在此我们一并表示真诚谢意!

限于作者水平,《英语国家概况》中仍难免会有缺点和不妥之处,欢迎读者批评指正。

编者

2011年8月

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VOLUME ONE

**THE UNITED KINGDOM
OF
GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND**

Chapter One Geography and Population



The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, to some extent, is a representative of the western countries. Before going into this chapter, try to get some information about the following items through movies, books, the Internet and other resources available:

1. Characteristics of its geography and climate.
2. The detailed information about one of the rivers or lakes in Great Britain, such as the Thames River.

Part One Names and Position

Official and Geographical Names

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland refers to the state consisting of the British Isles and the northeast of the island of Ireland. It is often shortened to the United Kingdom, the UK, Great Britain, or Britain for the sake of convenience. Since the 5th century, the southern part of the island of Great Britain has been named England, and the English language in this area has become the official language of the state. As England has been playing an important role in British politics and economy, many foreign people tend to call the whole country England rather than Britain.

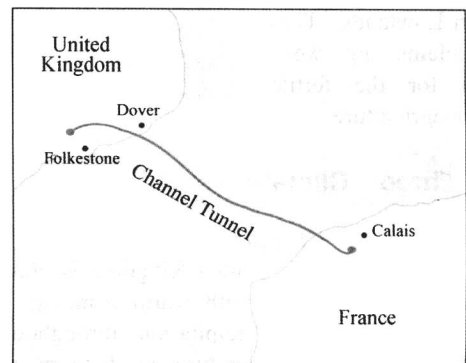
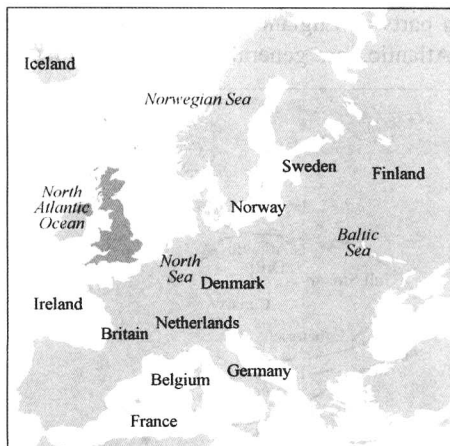
Position

As an island state, the UK lies to the west of the **North Sea**, facing **Belgium**, the **Netherlands**, **Germany**, **Denmark** and **Norway**; to the west of the UK is the **Republic of Ireland**, with the **Irish Sea** separating the island of Great Britain from the island of Ireland; the UK is opposite **America** and **Canada** across the **Atlantic Ocean** and neighbours **Iceland** to the north and **France** to the south, covering an area of 244,100 square kilometres with a population of 61 million (2008). The island of Great Britain, surrounded by over 1,000 smaller islands and isles, is

the largest one of the British Isles as well as the largest island in Europe and the eighth largest one in the world, running nearly 1,000 kilometres from the south to the north and extending about 500 kilometres from the east to the west. With rich coastline resources, the UK abounds in vast excellent deepwater ports that extend to the inland, offering inexpensive transportation. It consists of **four chief districts** as follows: **England** is in the south as the largest political division, **Scotland** in the north as the second largest one, **Wales** in the southwest, and **Northern Ireland** in the northwest. The first three districts are on the British Isles, and the fourth one is on the island of Ireland, which is the second largest island to the west of Great Britain. Northern Ireland has become an inseparable part of the United Kingdom since the 17th century when the English Protestant settlers immigrated and occupied the northeast corner of the island of Ireland.

Part Two Geographical Features

As one of the island countries with a long coastline, Britain is separated from the European Continent by the English Channel to the south and the North Sea to the east. The **Channel Tunnel**, also known as the Chunnel, is a 50.5-kilometre undersea rail tunnel linking Folkestone, Kent in the UK with Coquelles, near Calais in northern France beneath the English Channel at the Strait of Dover.



In general, Britain can be divided into two parts on geographical basis: the highland zone in the north and the west, and the lowland zone in the east and the southeast.

The Highland Zone

The highland zone mainly covers Scotland, North England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Its geographical features are as follows: the **Scottish Highlands** consist of many great mountains with rounded outlines, which form a barren plateau with a sparse population devoted to sheep and cattle farming; to the south of the Scottish Highlands is the **Middle Valley**, which was ever suitable for the growth of swamp forests and now becomes one of the British Central Coalfields, famous for its industry and cultivated farmland; the southern highlands border on the Middle Valley and are characterized by pasture and woods; the **Pennines**, known as the “**Backbone of England**”, runs from the highest west to the lowest east and borders on the North Sea, and is featured by moorland; to the west of the Pennines is the **Lake District**, notable for its lakes and mountains as well as its inspiration for the 19th-century Lake Poets such as William Wordsworth, Samuel Coleridge and Robert Southey; the **Welsh Massif** rises steeply with smooth hilltops, most of which is pasture suitable for feeding sheep and cattle, and southern Wales abounds in coal deposits; Northern Ireland, half surrounded by the barren rocky coastline, has several gulfs penetrating into the inland, and the landform of the **Antrim Plateau** in Northern Ireland is high around the circuit with mountains and low in the centre with a lake and flatlands.



The Lowland Zone

The lowland zone is distributed mainly over England, consisting of the Cheshire Plain and the Lancashire plain, the lowlands of York and the North Eastern Lowlands. These three plains are well-known for the fertile soil for agriculture.

Part Three Climate

Features of Climate

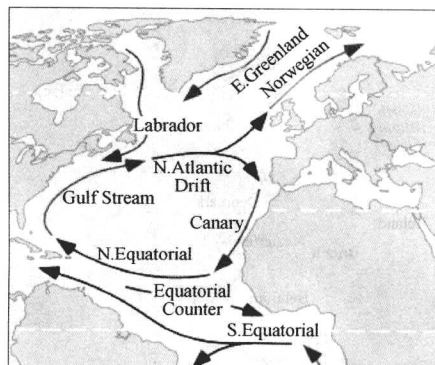
The climate of the United Kingdom is classified as **mid-latitude oceanic** with warm summers, cool winters and plentiful precipitation throughout the year. The average temperature in January ranges

approximately from 4°C to 7°C, and in July from 13°C to 17°C. The annual rainfall in the mountainous area of the west and the north is over 1,000 mm, while that in the east and the south varies from 600 mm to 700 mm. As the convergence between the warm tropical air and the cold polar air lies over Britain, the large temperature variation creates instability and works as a major factor that influences the notoriously **changeable** and often **unsettled** weather in this country, where many types of weather can be experienced in a single day. Therefore the British people often say, “There is no climate but weather in Britain.” Such variable weather makes people more cautious when they go outside. Foreigners may be taken aback at the sight of those carrying raincoats and umbrellas in a sunny and bright weather, but they will understand the need after an unexpected downpour.

On the whole, the most distinct feature of the British climate lies in **mildness**. It is warm in winter and cool in summer, and the seasons are neither wet nor dry. Another feature is **abundant precipitation**, steady and reliable throughout the whole year. But the precipitation distribution in Britain is a little uneven — there is a water surplus in the north and the west, and a water deficit in the south and the east. On the other hand, the west part in winter and the east part in summer have the greater proportion of the annual precipitation. In addition, the British weather is characterized by **variability**. It is so changeable that even the experienced weather experts find it difficult to produce a reliable weather forecast. Maybe that's the reason why weather has become the main topic for the British people to socialize with each other.

Factors Influencing Climate

In general, there are four factors that contribute to the mild climate and variable weather. First of all, the **North Atlantic Current** flows through and warms up the west coastline of the British Isles. Climate in Britain is primarily influenced by the Atlantic Ocean and its latitude. Northern Ireland, Wales and the western parts of England and Scotland, being closest to the Atlantic, are generally the mildest, wettest and



windiest regions of Britain, and the temperature ranges here are seldom extreme. By contrast, the eastern areas are drier, cooler, and less windy, going through the greatest daily and seasonal temperature variations. The northern areas are generally cooler, wetter and have a smaller temperature range than the southern areas. Secondly, the **westerly wind**, warm and wet, stays for the whole year and brings warm and wet air to the island. Britain is mostly under the influence of the maritime tropical air mass from the southwest, but different regions are susceptible to different air masses: Northern Ireland and the west of Scotland are mostly exposed to the maritime polar air mass which brings cool moist air; the east of Scotland and the northeast of England are more affected by the continental polar air mass which brings cold dry air; the south and the southeast of England are under the control of the continental tropical air mass which brings warm dry air; Wales and the southwest of England are chiefly influenced by the maritime tropical air mass which brings warm moist air. Thirdly, the surrounding sea waters balance the differences of the seasons, keeping it cool in summer and warm in winter because of the relatively slow warming and cooling of sea water. Last but not least, the numerous inlets of the rivers sweep the barriers to the incoming westerly wind and moisture.

? Questions for discussion:

It is well-known that the English people prefer to talk about weather when they meet, no matter whether they are strangers or good friends. Weather seems to be an eternal topic to start a conversation. Why?

Part Four Natural Resources

Minerals

Great Britain is abundant in mineral resources which played an essential part in the industrialization of Great Britain. The major minerals were coal, iron, tin, copper, lead and silver, but recently, the discovery of petroleum and natural gas on the UK Continental Shelf has changed the situation. With the increase of petroleum production, Britain has been self-reliant in oil since 1980.

Fisheries

Abundant fisheries are another feature of Great Britain. As an island country, Britain has developed a fishing industry with rich sea waters and has become an important fishing source in Europe.

Forests and Farmlands

In contrast, Britain is short of forest and farm-

land resources. Forests, only covering 8% of the country, are insufficient to meet the need for wood in Britain, 90% of which depends on import. On the other hand, the lack of farmlands also means that Britain can not provide enough food for the residents by itself.

Waters

Britain has sufficient water resources. Rivers and lakes are not very large but in great number. Many of the rivers flow throughout the whole year under the influence of the mild climate, and the lakes can provide rich surface water as large reservoirs do, mostly distributed in the north of Scotland, the northwest of England and the north of Ireland. In addition, the abundant rainfall benefits the development of farmlands, and the surrounding sea waters bring convenience to transportation and fishing industries. In a sense, the sufficient water supply confronts Britain with the problem of drainage rather than irrigation.

The **Severn River** is the longest river in Britain, the length of which is 354 kilometres. It originates from the Welsh Massif and runs into the Bristol Strait.



The **Thames River** is the second longest river with a length of 330 kilometres. It derives from the southwest of England, runs through six counties in the south of England and empties up into the North Sea. The Thames River is of great importance in its heavy transportation, serving as the most important commercial channel in the world.



Lough Neagh in the centre of Northern Ireland is the largest freshwater lake in Britain. It is 29