

● 全国高等教育自学考试教材

# TEACH

*English-Speaking Countries: A Survey*

## 英语国家概况

全国高等教育自学考试指导委员会组编

余志远 主编

# YOURSELF

外语教学与研究出版社

全国高等教育自学考试教材

# 英语国家概况

## English-Speaking Countries: A Survey

全国高等教育自学考试指导委员会组编

外语教学与研究出版社

(京)新登字 155 号

图书在版编目(CIP)数据

英语国家概况:英文/余志远主编. —北京:外语教学与研究出版社, 1996. 12

全国高等教育自学考试教材

ISBN 7-5600-1094-6

I. 英… II. 余… III. 英语-语言读物-高等教育-自学考试-教材 IV. H319.4

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字(96)第 25521 号

英语国家概况

全国高等教育自学考试指导委员会 组编

余志远 主编

\* \* \*

外语教学与研究出版社出版发行

(北京西三环北路 19 号)

北京丰华印刷厂印刷

新华书店总店北京发行所经销

开本 850×1168 1/32 18 印张 317 千字

1996 年 12 月第 1 版 1996 年 12 月第 1 次印刷

印数: 1—31000 册

\* \* \*

ISBN 7-5600-1094-6

G·483

定价: 18.80 元

## 出版前言

编写高等教育自学考试教材是高等教育自学考试工作的一项基本建设。经国家教育委员会同意,我们拟有计划、有步骤地组织编写一批高等教育自学考试教材,以满足社会自学和适应考试的需要。《英语国家概况》是为高等教育自学考试英语专业组编的一套教材中的一种。这本教材是根据专业考试计划,从造就和选拔人才的需要出发,按照全国高等教育自学考试指导委员会颁布的《英语国家概况自学考试大纲》的要求,结合自学考试的特点,组织高等院校一些专家学者集体编写而成的。

英语专业《英语国家概况》自学考试教材,是供个人自学、社会助学和国家考试使用的。现组织专家审定同意予以出版发行。我们相信,随着高教自学考试教材的陆续出版,必将对我国高等教育事业的发展,保证自学考试的质量起到积极的促进作用。

编写高等教育自学考试教材是一种新的尝试,希望得到社会各方面的关怀和支持,使它在使用中不断提高和日臻完善。

全国高等教育自学考试指导委员会

1996年8月

# Contents

## Part One

### The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Chapter 1	Land and People .....	(3)
Chapter 2	The Origins of a Nation (5000 BC-1066) .....	(17)
Chapter 3	The Shaping of the Nation (1066-1455) .....	(29)
Chapter 4	Transition to the Modern Age (1455-1688) .....	(43)
Chapter 5	The Rise and Fall of the British Empire (1688-1990) .....	(67)
Chapter 6	The Economy .....	(94)
Chapter 7	Government and Administration .....	(113)
Chapter 8	Justice and the Law .....	(131)
Chapter 9	Social Affairs .....	(142)
Chapter 10	Cultural Affairs .....	(164)

## Part Two

### The Republic of Ireland

Chapter 11	Geography and History .....	(191)
Chapter 12	Ireland Today .....	(204)

## Part Three

### The United States of America

Chapter 13	Geography .....	(221)
Chapter 14	Population, Race and Ethnic Groups .....	(237)
Chapter 15	American History (I) (1600-1900) .....	(250)
Chapter 16	American History (II) (1900-1945) .....	(266)
Chapter 17	American History (III) America in Post-W. W. II Era (1945-1980s) .....	(280)

Chapter 18	The Economy .....	(300)
Chapter 19	Political Institutions .....	(316)
Chapter 20	Education .....	(334)
Chapter 21	Literature, Architecture and Music .....	(351)
Chapter 22	Holidays and Festivals .....	(368)

#### **Part Four**

##### **Canada**

Chapter 23	Geography and History .....	(385)
Chapter 24	The Economy .....	(398)
Chapter 25	Government and Politics .....	(410)
Chapter 26	Society and Culture .....	(424)

#### **Part Five**

##### **Australia**

Chapter 27	Land and People .....	(441)
Chapter 28	Australian History (I) Australia to Federation .....	(455)
Chapter 29	Australian History (II) Australia Since Federation .....	(471)
Chapter 30	The Economy .....	(485)
Chapter 31	Government and Politics .....	(501)
Chapter 32	Society and Culture .....	(516)

#### **Part Six**

##### **New Zealand**

Chapter 33	The Making of New Zealand .....	(535)
Chapter 34	New Zealand Today .....	(550)

# *Part One*

The United Kingdom  
of Great Britain  
and Northern Ireland





# Chapter 1

## Land and People

### I. Different Names for Britain and its Parts

When people refer to Britain, they often use different names such as Britain, Great Britain, England, the British Isles, the United Kingdom or the UK. Do they mean the same thing? Or are they different?

Strictly speaking, the British Isles, Great Britain and England are all geographical names. They are not the official name of the country. The British Isles are made up of two large islands and hundreds of small ones. The two large islands are Great Britain and Ireland. Great Britain is the larger of these two islands. It forms the United Kingdom with Northern Ireland – the northern part of Ireland. So the official name of the United Kingdom is the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. But it is too much of a mouthful to say such a long name for a country, so people just say Britain, the United Kingdom or simply UK. This is one country on the British Isles and its capital is London. There is another country called the Republic of Ireland or Eire on the British Isles. It takes up the remainder of Ireland – the southern part of Ireland. It has been an independent republic since 1949 and its capital is Dublin.

There are three political divisions on the island of Great Britain:

England, Scotland and Wales. England is the largest, most populous and generally speaking the richest section. So people tend to use "England" and "English" when they mean "Britain" and "British". This sometimes annoys the Scots or the Welsh who do not regard themselves as English and who have a culture and even a language of their own.

Britain has been one of the most important countries in the world. About a hundred years ago, as a result of its imperialist expansion, Britain ruled an empire that had one fourth of the world's people and one fourth of the world's land area. It had colonies not only in North America, but also in Asia, Africa and Australia. However, the two world wars greatly weakened Britain. The British colonies became independent one after another. The British Empire gradually disappeared and it was replaced by the British Commonwealth or the Commonwealth of Nations in 1931.

The Commonwealth ( of Nations ) is a free association of independent countries that were once colonies of Britain. Member nations are joined together economically and have certain trading arrangements. The Commonwealth has no special powers. The decision to become a member of the Commonwealth is left to each nation. At present there are 50 member countries within the Commonwealth (1991).

## II. Geographical Features

Britain is an island country. It is surrounded by the sea. It lies in the north Atlantic Ocean off the north coast of Europe. It is separated from the rest of Europe by the English Channel in the south and the North Sea in the east. The English Channel between England and France is quite narrow and the narrowest part is called the

Straits of Dover, which is only 33 km across. In 1985 the British government and the French government decided to build a channel tunnel under the Straits of Dover so that England and France could be joined together by road. After eight years of hard work this channel tunnel which is called "Chunnel" was open to traffic in May 1994. Britain covers an area of 244,100 square km. It runs 1,000 km from north to south and extends, at the widest part, about 500 kilometres. So no part of Britain is very far from the coast and it provides a valuable resource. The British coast is long and has good, deep harbours. Sea routes extend far inland, providing cheap transportation.

Britain has, for centuries, been slowly tilting with the North-West slowly rising and the South-East slowly sinking. The north and west of Britain are mainly highlands. In western parts of Scotland this rise in the land has resulted in the formation of raised beaches – flat areas of land in an otherwise mountainous area, which provide the main farming, settlements, and industrial areas as well as routeways. The east and south-east are mostly lowlands. They are part of the Great European Plain, with its level land and fertile soil. There is much good farmland especially in the south and along the east coast of England.

During the Ice Age great ice covered Great Britain. Ice has been responsible for most of Britain's spectacular mountain scenery especially in Snowdonia, the Lake District, and the Scottish Highlands. It left Great Britain with mountains with flat tops, hanging valleys with waterfalls, ribbon lakes, flat valley floors, steep valley sides, boulder clay and fertile soil.

### **1. England**

England occupies the largest, southern part of Great Britain with

Wales to its west and Scotland to its north. It has an area of more than 130,000 square kilometres which takes up nearly 60% of the whole island. The south-west and west except for the Severn valley and the Cheshire-Lancashire plain (round Liverpool) are largely a plateau, with rolling plains, downs and occasional moors. The Pennines, a range of hills running from North Midlands to the Scottish border, are the principal mountain chain. But the highest peak of England, Scafell (978 m), is in the Lake District in north-west England. The east of England is mainly an open cultivated plain, narrowing in North Yorkshire to a passage (Vale of York) between coastal moors and the Pennines, and in Northumberland to a coastal strip.

## **2.Scotland**

Scotland has an area of 78,760 square kilometres. It is in the north of Great Britain with many mountains, lakes and islands. There are three natural zones: the Highlands in the north, the central Lowlands, and the southern Uplands. The Highlands (300 – over 1,200 m) are a wild, rocky, mountainous plateau with a coastline deeply indented, especially in the west. Ben Nevis, the highest mountain in Britain (1,343 m) is located here. The western part of Highlands and the islands of Hebrides are a very beautiful region. Great sea-lochs, or fiords, alternate with wild and empty hills, and on some of the lochs there are farms which can only be reached by boat. The Lowlands in the centre comprise mostly the Forth and Clyde valleys, coal and iron fields and dairy pasture. This is the most important area in Scotland which contains most of the industry and population. The southern Uplands, a rolling moorland (mainly 240-600 m), are cut by small fertile river valleys. Scotland has about 800 islands including the Orkneys, Shet-

lands and Hebrides and hundreds of lakes. Edinburgh is the capital of Scotland.

### **3. Wales**

Wales is in the west of Great Britain. It has an area of 20,761 square kilometres which takes up less than 9% of the whole island. Most of Wales is mountainous: the hills rise steeply from the sea and are rather flat on top. 6% of Wales is covered with forest and much of the country is pasture—land for sheep and cattle. Only 12% of the land is arable. Wales forms a massif with a lowland fringe widest along the English border and south coast. The massif is largely between 180 and 600 m, rocky in the north and coal bearing in the south. Snowdonia (1,085 m) in the northwest is the highest mountain in Wales. The capital of Wales is Cardiff.

### **4. Northern Ireland**

Northern Ireland is a fourth region of the United Kingdom. It takes up the northern fifth of Ireland and has an area of 14,147 square kilometres. It has a rocky and wild northern coastline, with several deep indentations. In the north-east lie the uplands of County Antrim, while the mountains in the south-east gradually give way to the central lowlands of the Lough Neagh basin. Belfast is the capital of Northern Ireland.

## **III. Rivers and Lakes**

Rivers in Britain do not freeze in winter. They play a very important role in the country's economy. The great ports of London, Liverpool and Glasgow are all connected to the sea by rivers. Besides, the Tweed, the Tyne, the Tees, and the Thames rivers on the east coast all face North Sea ports on the European continent.

They are also close to rich fishing grounds. On the west coast the Clyde, the Mersey, and the Severn rivers carry raw materials to busy manufacturing cities inland. The rivers in Britain are not very large. The longest river is the Severn River which is only 338 kilometres long. It rises in central Wales and flows in a semicircle through West Central England to the Bristol Channel. The second largest and most important river in Britain is the Thames River. It is 336 kilometres long. It rises in the Cotswolds in southwest England and flows through the Midlands of England to London and out into the North Sea. The Thames flows rather slowly, which is very favourable for water transportation. Ocean-going ships can sail up it as far as London and small ships can sail up it for a further 138 kilometres. Oxford is also on the Thames. River Clyde is the most important river in Scotland. It rises in Dumfries and runs 171 kilometres, passing through Glasgow, and enters the Firth of Clyde. It is an important commercial waterway.

There are many lakes in Britain especially in northern Scotland, the Lake District in north-west England and North Wales. However, the largest lake in Britain is the Lough Neagh in Northern Ireland which covers an area of 396 square kilometres. The Lake District is one of the popular tourist attractions in Britain. It is well known for its wild and beautiful scenery and 15 lakes. The largest ones are Windermere, Ullswater, Derwentwater and Coniston Water. It was also the home of the Lake poets William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Robert Southey of 19th century Britain.

## IV. Climate

### 1. A maritime type of climate

When we say climate we mean the average weather conditions at a certain place over a period of years. We don't mean the day-to-day weather conditions at a certain place. Though it seems that people are always complaining about the weather in Britain because it is rainy and so changeable and unpredictable, the climate in Britain is in fact a favourable one. It has a favourable maritime climate – winters are mild, not too cold and summers are cool, not too hot, and it has a steady reliable rainfall throughout the whole year. It has a small range of temperature. The average temperature in winter in the north is 4-6 degrees C. and in summer in the south is 12-17 degrees C. So even in winter one can still see stretches of green grass in the open country, in the parks and round the houses.

### 2. Factors which influence the climate in Britain

Britain is an island country which lies between latitude 50 to 60 degrees north. It lies farther north than even the northernmost part of Heilongjiang Province of China. Compared with other countries of the same latitudes it has a more moderate climate, which is influenced mainly by three factors:

(1) The surrounding waters tend to balance the seasonal differences by heating up the land in winter and cooling it off in summer. As the sea heats up and cools off relatively slowly it brings warm air in winter and cool air in summer.

(2) The prevailing south-west winds or the Westerlies blow over the country all the year round bringing warm and wet air in winter and keeping the temperatures moderate.

(3) The North Atlantic Drift, which is a warm current, passes the western coast of the British Isles and warms them.

Since Britain's climate is of the maritime type, it is characterised by cool temperatures, frequent cloudy days and rainstorms. It changes from day to day, and this makes it difficult to forecast. It is so changeable that sometimes one can experience four seasons in the course of a single day. Day may break as a fine spring morning; an hour or so later black clouds may have appeared from nowhere and rain may be pouring down. At midday conditions may really be wintery with the temperatures down to about 8 degrees C. Then in the later afternoon the sky will be clear, the sun will begin to shine again, and for an hour or two before darkness falls, it will be summer. It has been said that the uncertainty about the weather has had a definite effect upon the Englishman's character. It tends to make him cautious, for example. You may laugh when you see an Englishman going out on a brilliantly sunny morning wearing a rain-coat and carrying an umbrella. However, most frequently it comes in drizzles and you don't necessarily need an umbrella.

### **3. Rainfall**

Britain has a steady reliable rainfall throughout the whole year. The average annual rainfall in Britain is over 1,000 mm. It has 750mm-1,250 mm of rainfall along the coast in the east and south except a small area in the south-eastern corner of the country which receives less than 750mm. In the west there is as much as 1,250 mm to 2,000 mm of rainfall and in some areas in the north-west it is over 2,000 mm. The Westerlies blow over Britain all the year round bringing warm and wet air from the Atlantic Ocean. It rises, climbs the highlands and the mountains in the west, becomes colder and then causes heavy rainfall. There is not so much rainfall in the



east because after climbing over the highlands and mountains the air gets warmer and drier when it descends and does not give so much rain.

As a result of the rainfall distribution in Britain there is a water surplus in the north and west, and a water deficit in the south and east. Reservoirs have therefore to be built in such highland areas as Central Wales, the Lake District and the Scottish Highlands, so that water can be stored here and then transferred to the more populated and industrial areas of lowland Britain.

#### **4. Natural calamities**

Generally speaking the climate in Britain is favourable and equable. Extremes of heat or cold, or of drought or prolonged rainfall are rarely experienced. It is estimated that on average about 3-6 cubic metres of rain per person per day fall over Britain. This is far more than is needed, but problems still remain. Sometimes there are several months of drought, and at other times too much rain causes flooding. Fog, smog, frost and severe gales are not uncommon and often cause great damage to crops and to people's life. In 1952 the sulphur dioxide in the four-day London smog, an unhealthy atmosphere formed by mixing smoke and dirt with fog, left 4,000 people dead or dying. Since then most cities in Britain have introduced "clean air zones" whereby factories and households are only allowed to burn smokeless fuel.

Although Britain does not experience hurricanes, that is, storms with a strong fast wind such as typhoons or cyclones, many areas are subjected to severe gales, especially in winter. Gales can cause flooding, shipwrecks and loss of life.