

General Introduction of Britain and America

英美国家概况

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清华大学出版社

内容提要

本书分为两大部分:第一部分为英国国家概况,第二部分为美国国家概况。英国国家概况部分一共十个单元。其中第1至第3单元为英国主要地理特征,气候特点,以及人口结构等基本信息介绍。第4至第6单元主要讲述了英国政治经济方面的一些主要特点,分析了其法律设置的基本思想。此部分最后章节主要焦距点在英国的文化和教育方面,对其现行教育体制进行了深入的分析研究。美国国家概况部分一共10个单元。其中前三个单元主要内容为美国社会基本信息概括,涵盖了美国现行法律及宗教方面的内容。接下来的第4至第6单元对美国一些基本风俗特点进行了介绍,如饮食文化、家庭文化等。本书最后四个单元主要焦距在美国的文化教育方面,涵盖了媒体、文学等方面的内容。

图书在版编目(CIP)数据

英美国概况/何礼、刘璐主编.--重庆:重庆大学出版社,2017.12

ISBN 978-7-5689-0961-7

I.①英… II.①何…②刘… III.①英语—阅读教学—教材
②英国—概况③美国—概况 IV.①H319.4;K

中国版本图书馆CIP数据核字(2017)第316451号

General Introduction of Britain and America

英美国家概况

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责任编辑:杨琪 版式设计:杨琪

责任校对:秦巴达 责任印制:张策

*

重庆大学出版社出版发行

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网址: <http://www.cqup.com.cn>

邮箱: fxk@cqup.com.cn (营销中心)

全国新华书店经销

重庆升光电力印务有限公司印刷

*

开本:787mm×1092mm 1/16 印张:10 字数:184千

2017年12月第1版 2017年12月第1次印刷

ISBN 978-7-5689-0961-7 定价:29.00元

本书如有印刷、装订等质量问题,本社负责调换

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前 言

“英美国概况”课程是英语专业学生必修的一门基础知识课程,目的是让学生熟悉英国和美国的历史、经济、文化、教育、社会习俗、自然地理等一般知识,丰富文化修养,加深对英语语言和文学的理解,提高分析与辨别的能力。

按照教育部 21 世纪我国高等学校英语专业人才的培养目标和规格要求,编者希望通过本书引导学生在打好扎实的英语语言基本功和牢固掌握英语专业知识的前提下,拓宽人文学科知识面,并对英国和美国社会文化、政治、经济、历史和科技教育等有较全面的了解。

本书分为两大部分:第 I 部分为英国国家概况,第 II 部分为美国国家概况。

英国国家概况部分一共 10 个单元。其中第 1 至第 3 单元为英国主要地理特征,气候特点,以及人口结构等基本信息介绍。同时,该部分还对英国历史及其宗教特点进行了相应的总结。第 4 至第 6 单元主要讲述了英国政治经济方面的一些主要特点,分析了其法律设置的基本思想。此部分最后章节主要焦点点在英国的文化和教育方面,对其现行教育体制进行了深入的分析研究。

美国国家概况部分一共 10 个单元。其中前 3 个单元的主要内容为美国社会基本信息概括,涵盖了美国现行法律及宗教方面的内容。在接下来的 4、5、6 单元中,作者对美国一些基本风俗特点进行了介绍,如饮食文化、家庭文化等。本书最后 4 个单元主要焦距在美国的文化教育方面,涵盖了媒体、文学等方面的内容。

本书由何礼和刘尧负责全书的设计工作,并对全书进行了认真、细致的修改和校对。邹立,王婷婷,王博华对全书进行了润色,并对编写小故事、讨论题等方面提出了许多宝贵的修改意见。

本书各章节具体分工如下:

何 礼:美国部分第 11、12、13、14、15、16 单元全部。

刘 尧:美国部分第 17、18、19、20 单元全部,英国部分第 3、7 单元问题。

刘 璐:英国部分第 1、2 单元全部,第 4 单元正文。

叶 春:英国部分第 5、6 单元全部,第 10 单元正文。

杨静雯:英国部分第 3、7 单元正文,第 8、9 单元全部。

蒋晓洁:英国部分第 4、10 单元问题。

由于编者的水平和经验的限制,错误和缺点在所难免,欢迎读者批评指正。

编 者

2017 年 8 月

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Part I

The Great Britain

Unit 1

Geographical Features

The full name of the country we are studying is the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. 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 simple UK. This is one country on the British Isles and its capital is London.

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 8 years of hard work, this channel tunnel which is called “Chunnel” was open to traffic in May 1994.

Britain covers an area of 244,820 square km. It runs 1,000 km from north to south and extends at the widest part about 500 km. 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 harbors. 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 route ways. The east and south-east are mostly lowland. 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.

England occupies the largest, southern part of Great Britain with Wales to its west and Scotland to its north. It covers an area of 130,423 square km 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 between coastal moors and the Pennines, and in Northumberland to a coastal strip.

Scotland has an area of 77,080 square kilometers. 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 are a wild, rocky, mountainous plateau with a coast-line deeply indented, especially in the west. Ben Nevis (1,343 m), the highest mountain in Britain is located here. The western part of Highlands and 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, are cut by small fertile river valleys. Scotland has about 800 islands including the Orkneys, Shetlands, Hebrides and hundreds of lakes. Edinburgh is the capital city of Scotland.

Wales is in the west of Great Britain. It has an area of 20,776 square km 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 180~600 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.

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 km. It has a rocky and wild northern coastline, with several deep indentations. In the north-east lie the uplands of Country 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.

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 km long. It rises in central Wales and flows in a semicircle through West Central England to the Bristol Channel. The second longest and most important river in Britain is the Thames River. It is 336 km 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 favorable for

water transportation. Ocean-going ships can sail up it as far as London and small ships can sail up it for further 138 km. Oxford is also on the Thames. River Clyde is the most important river in Scotland. It rises in Dumfries and runs 171 km, 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 kilometers. The Lake District is one of the most 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 the 19th century Britain.

When we say climate we mean the average weather conditions in a certain place over a period of years. We do not mean the day-to-day weather conditions in 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 favorable one. It has a favorable 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 °C. and in summer in the south is 12~17 °C. So even in winter one can still see stretches of green grass in the open country, in the parks and around the houses.

Britain has a mild temperature and plenty of rainfall, but areas sharing the same latitude with it have different climates. What are the factors that have a determining influence on the character of the English weather and climate?

The shores of the British Isles, especially the western shores, are bathed by a warm drift of water, the North Atlantic Drift which is a continuation of the Gulf Stream. The existence of this large warm drift of sea water undoubtedly has an important effect in moderating winter conditions in

Britain. To the north and north-east of the British Isles, no land barrier exists to prevent the flow of the warm drift. The British Isles thus lie within the warm embrace of this well-known warm stream.

Except, perhaps, for certain periods in winter, the British Isles lie wholly within what has long been called the westerly wind belt. The south-westerly wind is the dominant wind in Britain. Since it comes from the Atlantic Ocean, it is always mild and moist.

The configuration of Britain, particularly the existence of numerous inlets, makes the penetration inland of oceanic influences more effective than would otherwise be the case.

Of course there are some other contributing factors, but the above-mentioned factors are considered the most important ones.

▼ *A Short Story* ▼

English Channel

English Channel, also called The Channel, French La Manche, looks like a narrow arm of the Atlantic Ocean separating the southern coast of England from the northern coast of France and tapering eastward to its junction with the North Sea at the Strait of Dover (French: Pas de Calais). With an area of some 29,000 square miles (75,000 square km), it is the smallest of the shallow seas covering the continental shelf of Europe. From its mouth in the North Atlantic Ocean—an arbitrary limit marked by a line between the Scilly Isles and the Isle of Ushant—its width gradually narrows from 112 miles (180 km) to a minimum of 21 miles (33 km), while its average depth decreases from 400 to 150 feet (120 to 45 m). Although the English Channel is a feature of notable scientific interest, especially in regard to tidal movements, its location has given it immense significance over the centuries, as both a route and a barrier during the peopling of Britain and the emergence of the nation-states of modern Europe. The current English name (in general use since the early 18th century) probably derives from the designation “canal” in Dutch sea atlases of the late 16th century. Earlier names included Oceanus Britannicus

and the British Sea, and the French have regularly used La Manche (in reference to the sleeve-like coastal outline) since the early 17th century.

''' Exercises '''

【 Fill in the Blanks 】

1. The full name of the United Kingdom is _____.
2. The island of Great Britain is made up of England, _____ and _____.
3. The narrowest part of English Channel is called _____.
4. England occupies the largest, _____ part of the Great Britain.

【 Multiple Choices 】

1. There are _____ political divisions on the island of Great Britain.
A. one B. two C. four D. three
2. The British Isles are mainly made up of _____.
A. England and Ireland
B. England, Scotland and Wales
C. Great Britain and Northern Ireland
D. Great Britain and Ireland
3. Which is the largest city in Scotland?
A. Cardiff. B. Edinburgh. C. Glasgow. D. Manchester.
4. The north and west of Britain are mainly _____.
A. level land B. farmland C. highlands D. lowlands
5. Ben Nevis, the highest mountain in Britain, is located in _____.
A. England B. Wales
C. Scotland D. Northern Ireland

【 Discussion 】

1. Describe the geographical position of Britain.
2. What are the main factors which influence the climate in Britain?

Unit 2

People and Religion

Britain has a population of 61,383 million (2016). This is a very large population for such a small country. So it is a densely populated country with an average of 237 people per square km and it is very unevenly distributed. 90% of the population is urban and only 10% is rural, i. e. most people live in the cities and towns and only a few live in the country. On the other hand, there are some quite large tracts of barren, hilly country, especially in Northern Scotland, which are almost uninhabited.

There is a great concentration of population in England, with 80% of its population living in cities, and only 2% of the population working in agriculture. Its largest city is the capital, London, which is dominant in the UK in all fields: government, finance, and culture. England is physically the largest of the four nations, and it has by far the largest population. This dominance in size is reflected in a cultural and economic dominance. It has the result that people in foreign countries sometimes make the mistake of talking about England when they mean the UK. Significantly, people in England sometimes make that mistake too, but people in the other three nations would not: they might call themselves British (as might the English), or they might call themselves Scottish or Welsh or Irish, but they certainly wouldn't call themselves (or lie to be called) English. So oddly, of the four nations, the English feel most British and therefore have the weakest sense of themselves as a separate "English" culture within Britain.

The population of Britain is made up mainly of the English (81.5%), the Scottish (9.6%), the Welsh (1.9%), the Irish (2.4%), the Northern Irish (1.8%) and other peoples (2.8%).

Today British people move around the country more than they used to. Northerners come to live in the south and Southerners and East Anglians go to the north. Lots of Scots, Welsh and Irish come and live in England. They take on each other's way of life and this makes it more difficult for people to distinguish between people from different parts of Britain. However, differences in regional character and speech can still be seen and heard. In fact in some regions people are doing all they can to preserve their own language and culture.

The English are Anglo-Saxons, but the Scots, Welsh and Irish are Celts. The Celts were different groups of ancient people who came originally from Germany and spread through France, Spain and Britain. The Celts came to Britain after 700 B.C. When they came, one group was called Britons and from this group the people of Britain grew. Later they were conquered by the Romans. During the 5th century when the Roman Empire fell, the Germanic Angles and Saxons invaded and conquered Britain. The Germanic conquerors gave England its name "Angle" land. During the 9th century, Britain was invaded by the Danes or Vikings and in 1066 by the Norman French. It was from the union of Norman conquerors and the defeated Anglo-Saxons that the English people and the English language were born. Today the names of most English people still bear the trace of their ancestors. The commonest English name "Smith" comes from the German name "Schmidt" and some English families have Norman French names such as D'Arcy, Beaufort and Beauchamp. It is estimated that there are about 800,000 people called Smith in England and Wales.

The ancestors of the Welsh were the ancient Britons who escaped from the invading Angles and Saxons and found shelter in the wild mountains of Wales. The Celts of Wales defended their freedom for 1,000 years and were not conquered by the English until 1536. Today about a quarter of the Welsh population still speak Welsh as their first language and about one per cent speak only Welsh. Welsh is an ancient Celtic language. It was given equality with English for all official use in Wales in 1965. So many school children have to learn Welsh and most public sings are in Welsh as well as in English.

Welsh is quite different from English and Welsh names are different too.

The Welsh are emotional and cheerful people. They are music lovers and are proud of their past. Throughout the year they have festivals of song and dance and poetry called Eisteddfodau. The great event of the year is the National Eisteddfod. On these occasions competitions are held in Welsh poetry, music, singing and art and in this way they keep the Welsh language and Welsh culture alive.

Some Germanic Angles settled in the Scottish lowlands and in the borderlands between Scotland and England, but they never invaded the Highlands, where the Scots remained safe in their mountain glens and on their islands. Scots are proud that the English never conquered them. Though the Scots are said to be a serious, cautious and thrifty people, today most visitors to Scotland come away with an impression that they are hospitable, generous and friendly.

Hundreds of years ago, Scots and English Protestants were sent to live in Northern Ireland. Since then there has been bitter fighting between the Protestants who are the dominant group, and the Roman Catholics, who are seeking more social, political and economic opportunities. The British Government and the Government of Ireland (Eire) are now working together to bring peace to Northern Ireland.

Irish, often called Erse, is a form of Gaelic. It is the official first language of the Republic of Ireland and English is the second. The Irish are known for their charm and vivacity as well as for the beauty of their Irish girls.

Religion in the United Kingdom and in the countries that preceded it has been dominated, for over 1,400 years, by various forms of Christianity. Religious affiliations of United Kingdom citizens are recorded by regular surveys, the four major ones being the UK Census, the Labor Force Survey, the British Social Attitudes Survey and the European Social Survey. According to the 2011 UK census, Christianity is the major religion, followed by Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Judaism and Buddhism in terms of number of adherents. Among Christians, Anglicans are the most common denomination, followed by Roman Catholics. This, and the relatively large number of

individuals with nominal or no religious affiliations, has led commentators to variously describe the United Kingdom as a multi-faith and secularized society.

The United Kingdom was formed by the union of previously independent countries from 1707, and consequently most of the largest religious groups do not have UK-wide organizational structures. While some groups have separate structures for the individual countries of the United Kingdom, others may have a single structure covering England and Wales or Great Britain. Similarly, due to the relatively recent creation of Northern Ireland in 1921, most major religious groups in Northern Ireland are organized on an all-Ireland basis.

While the United Kingdom as a whole lacks an official religion, the Church of England remains the state church of its largest constituent country, England. The Monarch of the United Kingdom is the Supreme Governor of the Church, and accordingly, only a Protestant may inherit the British throne.

Society in the United Kingdom is markedly more secular than it was in the past and the number of churchgoers fell over the second half of the 20th century. In 2012 about 6% of the population of the United Kingdom regularly attended church, with the average age of attendees being 51; in contrast, in 1980, 11% had regularly attended, with an average age of 37. It is predicted that by 2020 attendance will be around 4%, with an average age of 56. This decline in church attendance has forced many churches to close down across the United Kingdom, with the Church of England alone closing 1,500 churches between 1969 and 2002. Their fates include dereliction, demolition, and residential, artistic and commercial conversion. Christians will be a minority in the UK by the middle of this century amid surging growth in atheism and Islam, an authoritative new study charting the future of the world's religions predicts. According to projections by the US-based Pew Research Centre, the proportion of the British population identifying themselves as Christian will reduce by almost a third by 2050 to stand at just 45.4 per cent, compared with almost two thirds in 2010.

One study showed that in 2004 at least 930,000 Muslims attended a mosque at least once a week, just outnumbering the 916,000 regular churchgoers in the Church of England. Most Muslim immigrants to the United Kingdom came from former colonies. The biggest groups of Muslims are of Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Indian and Arab origins, with the remainder coming from Muslim-dominated areas such as Southwest Asia, Somalia, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Muslim sources claim the number of practicing Muslims is underestimated as nearly all of them pray at home. The number of Muslims in Britain is predicted to more than double to 11.3 per cent, or one in nine of the total population during that time.

The history of the Jews in England goes back to the reign of William the Conqueror. The first written record of Jewish settlement in England dates from 1070. The Jewish presence continued until King Edward I's *Edict of Expulsion* in 1290. British Jews number around 300,000 with the United Kingdom having the fifth largest Jewish community worldwide and being home to the second largest Jewish population in Europe. However, this figure did not include Jews who identified "by ethnicity only" in England and Wales or Scottish Jews who identified as Jewish by upbringing but held no current religion. Jews faced anti-Semitism and stereotypes in Britain, and anti-Semitism "in most cases went along with German phobia" to the extent that Jews were equated with Germans in the early 20th century. This led many Jewish families to anglicize their often German-sounding names. Regardless of some growing anti-Semitism during the 1930s, it was counterbalanced by strong support for British Jews in their local communities.

Though the main political parties are secular, the formation of the Labor Party was influenced by Christian socialism and by leaders from a nonconformist background. In the early 21st century, the *Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006* made it an offence in England and Wales to incite hatred against a person on the grounds of their religion. The common law offences of blasphemy and blasphemous libel were abolished with the coming into effect of the *Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008* on July 8th, 2008.

Global study predicts one in nine Britons will be Muslim by 2050 but UK