



全国高等教育自学考试

英语国家概况自学辅导

组编 / 全国高等教育自学考试指导委员会
主编 / 余志远

外语教学与研究出版社

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Guide to English-Speaking Countries: A Survey

英语国家概况自学辅导

全国高等教育自学考试指导委员会组编

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前 言

为了完善高等教育自学考试教育形式,弥补考试的局限性,促进高等教育自学考试的发展,根据全国考办的工作部署,我们组织编印了《高等教育自学考试自学辅导丛书》。

该套丛书以全国考委公布的课程自学考试大纲为依据,以全国统编教材为蓝本,相关专家、学者担任各册辅导书的主编和主审,旨在帮助自学者达到学习目标,顺利通过国家考试。

自学辅导书是高等教育自学考试教育媒体的重要组成部分,我们将在全国考办和各专业委员会的指导帮助下,根据专业的开考情况和考生的实际需要,陆续组织编写、出版文字、音像和计算机多媒体自学辅导资料,由此构成与大纲、教材相配套的、完整的学习体系。

全国高等教育自学考试指导委员会办公室

自学指导服务中心

1998年10月

编者的话

本书是全国高等教育自学考试指导委员会组编的《英语国家概况》的自学辅导书,书中每章的内容与自学考试教材紧密配合,供个人自学、社会助学和国家考试参考之用。

本书的主要部分是注释(Notes to the Chapter),包括《英语国家概况自学考试大纲》所规定的每章的学习要点和考核目标。注释部分就每章涉及的主要人物、事件、概念等作简要的解释,进一步帮助参加自学考试的学员理解自学考试教材的内容。由于《英语国家概况》编写于1995年,至今英美等英语国家的政治、经济以及社会等方面的情况有了一些变化,教材中某些统计数字已显陈旧,某些资料需要更新与重写。为此,我们在注释部分注意引用最新的资料,语言叙述力求准确、通俗易懂,内容介绍详略得当,重点突出。需要说明的是,这部分的内容与教材若有出入,应以本书为准。本书的第二部分是练习(Exercises)。练习采用自测试题的形式,题型与要求完全按照《英语国家概况自学考试大纲》所规定的命题原则。通过自测试题,参加自学考试的学员可以检查自己对教材的理解和掌握程度,提高学习的主动性,还可以熟悉英语国家概况试题的题型、题量和范围,提高应试的能力。本书的第三部分是练习答案(Key to the Exercises),供参加自学考试的学员使用。

参加本书编写的人员均参加过《英语国家概况》的编写。他们多年来从事英语国家的研究与教学,经验丰富,知识渊博。梅仁毅教授与李贺教授现分别担任北京外国语大学美国与英国研究中心的主任。

由于编者水平有限,书中内容疏漏之处在所难免,望广大英语自学者指正。

编者

1998年7月于北京外国语大学

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Chapter 1 Land and People

Notes to the Chapter

1. United Kingdom

The United Kingdom is a country in northwestern Europe. It consists of four political divisions — England, Scotland, and Wales, which make up the island of Great Britain, and Northern Ireland, which occupies the northeastern part of the island of Ireland. The nation's official name is the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. When people refer to the country, most shorten its name to (1) the United Kingdom, (2) the U. K. , (3) Great Britain, or (4) Britain.

2. British Isles

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.

3. British Empire

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.

4. British Commonwealth or Commonwealth of Nations

The British Commonwealth or the Commonwealth of Nations is an association of independent countries and other political units that have lived under British law and government. It includes the United Kingdom (Britain), about 50 independent nations that were once British colonies, and about 25 other political units, such as territories and dependencies.

All of the independent members recognize the British monarch as head of the Commonwealth. But the monarch is mainly a symbol and has no real power to govern. Britain and about 15 other Commonwealth nations are monarchies that regard the British ruler as head of state. A few others have their own monarchs. Over half the Commonwealth nations are republics. The Commonwealth countries have a tradition of mutual cooperation that stems from their common history. The Commonwealth heads of government assemble from time to time to exchange views on important international issues. At these meetings, the leaders seek to identify common goals in economic and foreign affairs. They work to coordinate their national policies to pursue these goals. But the nations are not required to obey conclusions reached at the conferences.

5. English Channel

The English Channel separates the island of Great Britain from France. This narrow stretch of water helped shape the character and history of the British people. It helped protect Britain from invasion and gave the people a feeling of security. In 1066, a group of Vikings called the Normans sailed across the channel from northwestern France and conquered England. After the

Norman Conquest, no enemy ever again crossed the channel and invaded the country.

6. England

England lies in the southern and eastern part of the island of Great Britain in the British Isles. It covers about three-fifths of the island. England has much charming countryside, with green pastures and neat hedges. But most of the English people live in sprawling cities. London, the capital of Great Britain, is England's largest city. England has three main land regions. They are the Pennines, the Southwest Peninsula, and the English Lowlands. The Pennines are England's main mountain system, often called the backbone of England. They extend from the Scottish border about halfway down the length of England. They are also known as the Pennine Chain or Pennine Hills. The Pennines are rich in coal. West of the Pennines lies the Lake District, an area known for its beautiful mountain scenery and its many lakes. The highest point in England, Scafell Pike, is in the Lake District. The Southwest Peninsula consists of a low plateau with highlands rising above it. Several of the highlands are composed of granite. Near much of the coast, the plateau ends sharply in cliffs that tower above the sea. The westernmost point in England, Land's End, and the southernmost point in the British Isles, Lizard Point, are both on the peninsula. The English Lowlands cover all of England outside the regions of the Pennines and the Southwest Peninsula. The Lowlands have most of England's farmable land, industry, and people.

7. Scotland

Scotland occupies the northern third of the island of Great Britain in the British Isles. Most of Scotland is mountainous.

Its rugged mountains, green valleys, and deep, blue lakes provide some of the most beautiful scenery in Europe. Scotland has three main land regions. They are, from north to south, the Highlands, the Central Lowlands, and the Southern Uplands. The Highlands are a rugged, barren region that covers the northern two-thirds of Scotland. Two major mountain ranges, the Northwest Highlands and the Grampian Mountains, rise in this region. The ranges have parallel ridges that run through the Highlands from northeast to southwest. The highest peak in the British Isles, Ben Nevis, is located there. Much of the land in the Highlands is a treeless area called a moor or heath. The most rugged land lies along the west coast. Most Highlanders live on the narrow coastal plains. The Central Lowlands are crossed by the valleys of the Rivers Clyde, Forth, and Tay. This region has Scotland's best farmland. Wide, fertile fields and low hills with patches of trees cover the entire region. About three-fourths of the Scottish people live in the lowlands. The Southern Uplands consist of rolling moors, broken in places by rocky cliffs. The tops of the hills are largely barren, but rich pastureland covers most of the lower slopes. Many sheep and cattle are raised in the Southern Uplands.

8. Wales

Wales lies on the west coast of the island of Great Britain. It takes up about a tenth of the island. Wales has a wealth of scenic beauty. Its landscape includes low, broad mountains and deep, green valleys. Wales is bordered by extensions of the Atlantic Ocean on the north, west, and south, and by England on the east. Most of the Welsh people live in towns, cities, and industrial areas of southern Wales. The rest of Wales is mainly rural. Most of Wales consists of mountains and upland plateaus.

The Cambrian Mountains cover about two-thirds of the land. In northern Wales, the mountains are steep and rugged. The highest peak in Wales, Snowdon (called Yr Wyddfa in Welsh), rises in the northwest. It is part of the Snowdonia range (Eryri in Welsh). In central and southern Wales, the Cambrian range becomes flatter and forms large plateaus cut deeply by valleys. On the plateaus are forests, pastures, grassy plains, moors (open wasteland), and bogs (swamplands). Many small lakes and waterfalls dot the mountain and plateau regions. Coastal plains and river valleys cover about a third of Wales. Low, narrow plains stretch along the south and west coasts.

9. Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland is a fourth political division 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 indentations. In the northeast lie the uplands of County Antrim, while the mountains in the southeast gradually give way to the central lowlands of the Lough Neagh basin. Belfast is the capital of Northern Ireland.

10. Rivers and lakes

Britain's longest rivers are the Severn, which is 338 kilometers long, and the Thames, which is 336 kilometers long. Many British rivers have drowned, or sunken, mouths called estuaries, up which the ocean tides flow. These rivers include the Clyde and Forth of Scotland; the Humber, Mersey, and Thames of England; and the Severn of England and Wales. The estuaries of these rivers make excellent harbors. Bristol, Hull, Liverpool, London, Southampton, and other cities on or near estuaries are important ports. Lough Neagh (pronounced lahk NAY) in Northern Ireland is the largest lake in the British

Isles. It is about 29 kilometers long and about 18 kilometers wide. Loch Lomond in Scotland is the largest lake on the island of Great Britain. England's biggest lakes are in the Lake District. The largest, Windermere, is about 16 kilometers long and up to 1.6 kilometers wide.

11. Climate

The United Kingdom has a mild climate, even though it lies farther north than the northernmost part of Heilongjiang Province of China. Winter temperatures rarely drop as low as 12 degrees C below zero, and summer temperatures seldom rise above 32 degrees C. The climate is influenced by the Gulf Stream, a warm ocean current that sweeps up from the equator and flows past the British Isles. Steady southwest winds blow across this current and bring warmth in winter. In summer, the ocean is cooler than the land. Winds over the ocean come to Britain as refreshing breezes. The sea winds also bring plentiful rain. The heaviest rains fall in the highland areas of western Scotland. The United Kingdom has rain throughout the year, and rarely is any section of the country dry for as long as three weeks. Much of the rain comes in light, but steady, drizzles. Mild fogs hang over parts of the country from time to time. But the famous "pea soup" fogs (thick heavy yellow fogs) of London and other big cities seldom occur any more. These thick, heavy fogs were caused chiefly by smoke and other pollution released into the air by factories, automobiles, and homes where coal was burned for heat. Antipollution laws have helped make such fogs much less severe than they once were.

12. Population

The United Kingdom is more thickly populated than most countries. Most of the people live in cities and towns. About a third

of the country's residents live in England's seven metropolitan areas. Greater London, the largest metropolitan area, has about 10 percent of the United Kingdom's total population. The six other metropolitan areas are as follows, with the largest city of each area shown in parentheses: Greater Manchester (Manchester), Merseyside (Liverpool), South Yorkshire (Sheffield), Tyne and Wear (Newcastle upon Tyne), West Midlands (Birmingham), and West Yorkshire (Leeds). More than four-fifths of the population of the United Kingdom live in England. London and England as a whole have great influence over the rest of the United Kingdom because of their large populations.

13. The English people and the English language

The English are Anglo-Saxons. They are not 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 BC. 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. English is the official language of the United Kingdom. It developed mainly from the Anglo-Saxon and Norman-French languages. Many English words have different meanings in England than they have in the United States. In England, for example, *freight cars* are *trucks* and *trucks* are *lorries*. *Gasoline* is called *petrol*. *Elevators* are *lifts*, and *cookies* are called *biscuits*. The way English is

spoken varies throughout England. For example, people in the western part of England speak with a flatter accent and pronounce the letter *r* more clearly than do people in other areas. In east Yorkshire, in the northern part of England, the accent is soft and rather musical. People in the East End section of London speak a harsh dialect called cockney.

14. The Welsh

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 Welsh take great pride in their heritage. Although Wales has been united with England for more than 400 years, the Welsh have kept alive their own language, literature, and traditions. The Welsh name for Wales is Cymru (pronounced KUM ree).

Wales has two official languages, Welsh and English. Either language may be used in the courts or for government business. Some newspapers are published partly or only in Welsh, and many radio and television programs are broadcast in both languages. Welsh is still the daily language in many sections of western and northern Wales.

Welsh is one of the oldest languages in Europe. It is derived from ancient Celtic and has been influenced by each group of settlers. The letters *j*, *k*, *q*, *v*, *x*, and *z* are not used in modern Welsh. The letter *y* is always a vowel, and the letter *w* is usually used as one. Certain letter combinations are considered part of the Welsh alphabet. They include the double letters *dd*, *ff*, and *ll*. The combination *dd* is pronounced like the *th* in *they*. The letter *f* sounds like the English *v*, and *ff* sounds like *f*. The *ll* sound is made by placing the tongue in the position for *l* and then trying to pronounce an *h*.

15. Eisteddfod or Eisteddfodau

The eisteddfod (pronounced eye STEETH vahd), a popular Welsh tradition, is a festival of poetry and music in which performers compete. Its origins date back to the Middle Ages, but the modern form began at the end of the 1700's. Annual eisteddfods, or eisteddfodau, are held throughout the land. The largest is the Royal National Eisteddfodau. It is held in various cities and towns, alternately between northern and southern Wales.

16. The Scots

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. In Scotland English is spoken in a variety of dialects. About 80,000 Scots speak Gaelic, an ancient Celtic language.

The Scottish people have long been famous for their close-knit clans (groups of related families), colorful plaid kilts, and skill as fierce warriors. But the clans have lost much of their importance, kilts are worn mainly for ceremonial occasions, and no war has been fought in Scotland for more than 200 years.

17. The Irish

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 are now working together to bring peace to Northern Ireland. (See Chapters 11 and 12)

18. Immigrants

About three million people have migrated to Britain since World War II. They are mainly from the West Indies, India and Pakistan.

Exercises

I . There are 20 statements below. Read them carefully and then decide whether they are true or false. Put a "T" if you think the statement is true. Put a "F" if it is not.

1. The United Kingdom is located in northern Europe.
2. The United Kingdom consists of four political divisions—England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.
3. The British Isles are made up of three large islands and hundreds of small ones.
4. The Commonwealth of Nations is a free association of independent countries that were once colonies of Britain.
5. England is one of the two large islands in the British Isles.
6. England has three main land regions: the Pennines, the Southwest Peninsula, and the English Lowlands.
7. In Scotland rugged mountains, green valleys, and deep, blue lakes provide some of the most beautiful scenery in Europe.
8. The two major mountain ranges in Scotland are the Northwest Highlands and the Grampian Mountains.
9. Wales lies on the east coast of the island of Great Britain.
10. Northern Ireland, which is a fourth political division of the United Kingdom, takes up the northern fifth of Ireland.
11. Britain's longest rivers are the Severn and the Thames.
12. Lough Neagh in Northern Ireland is the largest lake in the British Isles while Loch Lomond in Scotland is the largest