



A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO  
BRITAIN AND AMERICA

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李学珍

# 英美概况

山东大学出版社

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## 序

《英美概况》即将付梓，今邀为其作序，我欣然从命，缘起如下：

一、该书成稿已久，作为试用教材，历经十余春秋。作者孜孜不倦，默默耕耘，精益求精，几番更新，倾注无尽心血，使其终于问世，当是幸事，为此致贺。

二、该书两位作者先后赴沪参加美籍专家执教的中美文化研讨班，史料例证有根基；一道参与翻译《英汉对照实用中医文库》，语言文字有功底；同为硕士生导师，联袂开设“英美文化专题”学位课程，学术理论有水平；联名申请出版基金，携手推出《英美概况》英文教材，合作共事创新绩，可谓佳话，借此介绍。

三、该书编写原则针对性强，具有自己的特色。选材难易得当，注重实用；内容充实、新颖，适合教学；语言通顺、地道，便于自学。《英美概况》实属应社会之需，补教学之缺，并带有创新性的一部好的教科书，质量应属上乘，特此推荐。

是为序。

李延福

1997年4月于山东大学

## 前 言

本书应教学需要，在参阅大量国内外文献资料的基础上，以马列主义立场、观点为指导进行取舍、整理和编排而成，并经过多年课堂试用和反复修改。

本教材的宗旨是密切结合教学实际，为英语语言文学专业的专、本科学生简明扼要地提供学习英语必须掌握的英美两国的地理、政治、经济和历史知识，为学好本专业奠定坚实的文化背景知识基础，为培养外向型外语人材、为改革开放、建设有中国特色的社会主义服务。

本教材的编写原则如下：

一、密切联系时代与本专业其他课程教学的实际需求精选材料，力求做到繁简得当，学以致用。

二、充分考虑到本门课程知识性强的特点，教材的编排力求内容丰富、新颖，编排合理，便于教学，易于记忆。

三、用英语编写，力求语言通顺、地道，便于学生在学习知识的同时提高英语的理解与应用水平。

本教材共 20 课，每课附有知识性练习、讨论与思考题，每课开头有内容提要，便于学生自学、理解和记忆。书后附有英美历史大事记、英王朝历代国王名表及任期、美国 50 州、历任总统名表及任期等，以便查阅。

本教材可用作英语专业专、本科生教材、自学考试教材和英语爱好者的业余读物。经多年课堂试用，证明使用效果良好。

本教材在编写过程中，得到了山东大学教务处、外语学院和出版社领导的大力支持。山东大学外语学院的李延福教授、丁原骥教授在百忙中审读了本书的全部文稿，提出了许多宝贵的修改意见。在此，对上述各位的支持与帮助，特表衷心的感谢，并向在本书编写过程中参考的有关文献的作者致谢，文献名称、作者恕不一一列举。

由于作者水平有限，错漏之处在所难免，衷心希望同行专家批评、指正。

编者

1997年2月

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**Part One**  
**An Introduction to Britain**



## Lesson 1 Geography: the Land

### Major Points

#### Britain

is officially called the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

is situated in Western Europe, a country of islands off the northwestern coast of Europe.

is rather small, having a total area of some 244,019 square kilometres.

has played a major role in shaping the modern world.

is made up of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

is divided into the lowland area and the highland area.

has large mountain ranges: the Pennines, the Cumbrian Mountain Range, the Grampian Mountains, and the Cambrian Mountain Range.

has such important rivers as the Thames, the Severn, the Mersey, the Humber, the Clyde and the Forth.

has a temperate, maritime climate.

is rich in coal, petroleum, natural gas deposits, but rather poor in other natural resources.

# **Main Content**

## **1. 1 The Name of the Country**

The full and official name of the union formed by England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland is the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, usually shortened or abbreviated to the United Kingdom or U. K. , Great Britain , Britain , or sometimes informally England.

England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland were once separate nations. England came to control the others over a period of several centuries. The name "Britain" comes from the Brythons (Britons) who migrated from the European Continent before 300 B. C. The name "England" comes from the Anglo-Saxon conquerors; it means "Angla-land", the land of the Anglo-Saxons, collectively known as Angles. The name for the union once existing in the period between 1800 and the early 1920's was "the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland", which changed to its present form in 1927 after the 26 Irish Free States achieved their independence in the early 1920's.

## **1. 2 The Location and Size**

Britain is situated in Western Europe and is separated from the European continent by the North Sea, the Strait of Dover and the English Channel. It lies between 50° and 60° north latitude, and roughly between 2° east and 8° west longitude. The prime meridian of 0° just passes through the old observatory at Greenwich.

The neighbouring countries of Britain include France, Holland, Germany, Denmark, Norway, Belgium, the Irish Republic, and Iceland.

Britain is a rather small country, with a total area of some 244,019 square kilometres, accounting for less than 2% of the land area of the world and ranking about the 75th in size among countries in the world. It is just under 966 kilometres in a straight line from the south coast to the extreme north of mainland Britain, and about 483 kilometres across the widest part. No point in the country is as much as 121 kilometres from tidal waters.

Though it is small in size, Britain has played an important role in shaping the modern world. It was once one of the oldest and strongest colonial powers in the world and ruled a vast empire, as boasted to be, "on which the sun never sets." Beginning with the Age of Exploration (about 1450~1600), English ships carried explorers, traders, and colonists to every corner of the globe. The English eventually ruled wherever they settled. Thus, the British have spread their way of life around the globe through conquest and colonization. Many nations have laws and governments modeled on the British system. Millions of people speak English, which is probably the world's most widely spoken language. The works of British greatest authors and thinkers——Chaucer, Shakespeare, Newton, Locke, Shelley, Keats, and Wordsworth, to name only a few——are known and read in every corner of the world. The British inventions, such as the spinning Jenny, the steam engine and the railroads during the Industrial Revolution helped make modern life possible. In the 20th century, British scientists and engineers have helped develop the jet aircraft, radar, and penicillin, the miracle drug that has

saved millions of lives.

### **1. 3 Landforms**

The four regions of Britain are England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. England is the largest of the four and occupies most of the British Isles. Scotland occupies the northern part of the British Isles, and Wales the western part. Northern Ireland occupies the northern part of Ireland.

The island of Great Britain can roughly be divided into the low-land area and the highland area. The former comprises Midland, southern and eastern England, and the latter the broad central up-land known as the Pennines, the Lake District, most of Wales and Scotland. In the British Isles there are hundreds of smaller islands, including the Channel Islands, the Scilly Isles, the Isles of Wight and Man, Anglesey, the Inner and Outer Hebrides, the Orkneys, and Shetlands.

England may be divided into three regions in terms of land-form; the east and the southeast are made up of rolling downs and low-lying plains; middle England is a region of mountains formed by the Pennines, the "backbone" of England, which extends south from the Scottish border to Derbyshire; the north and west are hilly, partly formed by the Cumbrian Mountain Range, the highest mountain peak of which is Scafell (977 m), the highest in England but the third highest mountain in the whole country.

About two thirds of Scotland is covered by the Highlands. The chief range in the Highlands is the Grampian Mountains, which contain Ben Nevis (1344 m), the highest mountain on the island of Great Britain. The central lowlands of Scotland include the valleys of

the Clyde, Tay and Forth rivers. The Southern Uplands reach their highest point in Merrick.

Most of Wales is mountainous, mainly formed by the Cambrian Mountain Range. Its highest peak Snowdon (1085 m) is the second highest mountain in Britain. The most fertile land in Wales is found near the coast and in the interior valleys.

The central part of Northern Ireland is composed of plains surrounded by such highlands and mountains as Antrim, Sperrin and Mourne.

#### **1. 4 Rivers and Lakes**

Being short and swift, few rivers in Britain are navigable.

The most important river in Britain is the Thames River (338 kilometres), which rises in Cotswold Hills and flows through the capital city London and empties into the English Channel. The river is navigable for large ships to London.

The longest river in Britain is the Severn River (354 kilometres), which rises in the mountains of Wales and empties into the Bristol Channel, where the ports of Cardiff and Bristol are located.

The Mersey River (110 kilometres) flows between Lancashire and Cheshire into the Irish Sea. Its estuary, navigable for ocean vessels, is linked to Manchester by a ship canal, with Liverpool on its mouth.

The Humber River in Humberside is also navigable for large ships to Hull.

The Clyde and the Forth are the most important rivers in Scotland. The former flows through Glasgow, and the latter passes by

Edinburgh, with the port Leith on its mouth.

Lakes in Britain are chiefly found in the English Lake District, the Scottish Highlands, the Welsh mountains and Northern Ireland. The largest lake in England is Lake Windermere. It covers an area of 16 square kilometres and is located in the Lake District, in the Northwest of England. The Lake District is commonly accounted the most beautiful part of England, where William Wordsworth and the other Lake Poets were born and lived, who were inspired by the perfection of water, trees and heather-covered slopes. Lake Neagh in Northern Ireland is the largest of all throughout the country and covers an area of some 396 square kilometres.

### **1. 5 The Coast**

For a small country of islands Great Britain has a great length of coastline (about 11,450 kilometres). The coast is very varied, with perhaps the best parts in the southwest of England and in the west of Scotland. The coast of Devon and Cornwall, in the southwest, is much indented, with many sheltered bays and coves and fine rocky headlands. With so large a population on so small an island the best parts of the coast are inevitably rather crowded during the summer. In the parts nearest to great centres of population big seaside-resort towns have grown up. Four of these— Brighton, Bournemouth and Southend in the south, and Blackpool in the northwest— have become important towns, remarkable for the great number of visitors they receive.

### **1. 6 Climate**

Britain has a temperate, maritime climate, which is damp and



warm all the year round and generally does not run to extremes. As the prevailing south-westerly winds are warmed by the Gulf Stream and made moist by the Atlantic Ocean, the climate in Britain is much milder than that of many places in the same latitude. During a normal summer, the temperature occasionally rises above  $27^{\circ}\text{C}$  in the south; winter temperatures below  $-7^{\circ}\text{C}$  are rare. The annual air temperature is about  $10^{\circ}\text{C}$ , varying from around  $5^{\circ}\text{C}$  in the coldest month (January) to  $17^{\circ}\text{C}$  in the warmest month (July) on average. The British Isles as a whole have an annual average rainfall of over 1,020 millimetres, while England has about 860 millimetres. The mountainous areas of the west and north have far more rain than the plains of the east and the south.

The climate in Britain has three features. The first one is more fogs and smogs in winter, for which London is famous. The second one is more rainy days but less sunny days. The rainfall is not very heavy and there is not often any very violent storm or wind. In some places there are over 260 rainy days a year. The third one is its instability or changeability. All the seasons are very variable; there is no part of the year at which it is possible to expect, with any degree of assurance, that the weather will be dry or wet, clear or dull, and a bad day in July can be as cold as a mild day in January.

## **1.7 Natural Resources**

The main natural resources in Britain are coal, petroleum, natural gas, iron ore, limestone, clay, shale, chalk and tin. Coal and petroleum are the most important.

**1.7.1 Coal** Many of the coalfields in the United Kingdom have been in continuous production since the beginning of the 17th