

高等学校文科英语泛读教材

# 英语学习背景知识

A CULTURAL BACKGROUND  
FOR ENGLISH STUDY

外语教学与研究出版社



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# A Cultural Background for English Study

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## 前 言

本书是高等学校文科的英语泛读教材之一。内容简单介绍了英国、美国、加拿大、澳大利亚这四个以英语为主要语言的历史、地理、政治、经济、教育、文化以及宗教、生活习惯等基本情况。目的是帮助学生在复习巩固英语语言（包括文科常用词汇、各种语言现象和语法结构）的同时，能获得一些有关这几个国家的基本知识。本书对于将去这些国家学习和工作的同志，也有参考价值。

本书材料都是选自英、美国家的出版物，书中自然要反映作者及原书编者的资产阶级偏见或观点。有的地方不符合历史事实；有的地方是片面地美化资本主义制度或吹捧一些历史人物。虽然我们在注释中对此有所说明，但不可能一一指出。希望读者对于本书的思想内容持正确的批判态度。

为了兼顾各方面的知识，本书材料选自几本不同的书籍，这就难免存在文体和风格上不协调的问题，望读者谅解。

全书共四个部分。第一部分介绍英国；第二部分介绍澳大利亚；第三部分介绍美国；第四部分介绍加拿大。

由于我们的水平有限，注释中难免存在着疏漏或错误，欢迎读者提出批评意见。

编注者



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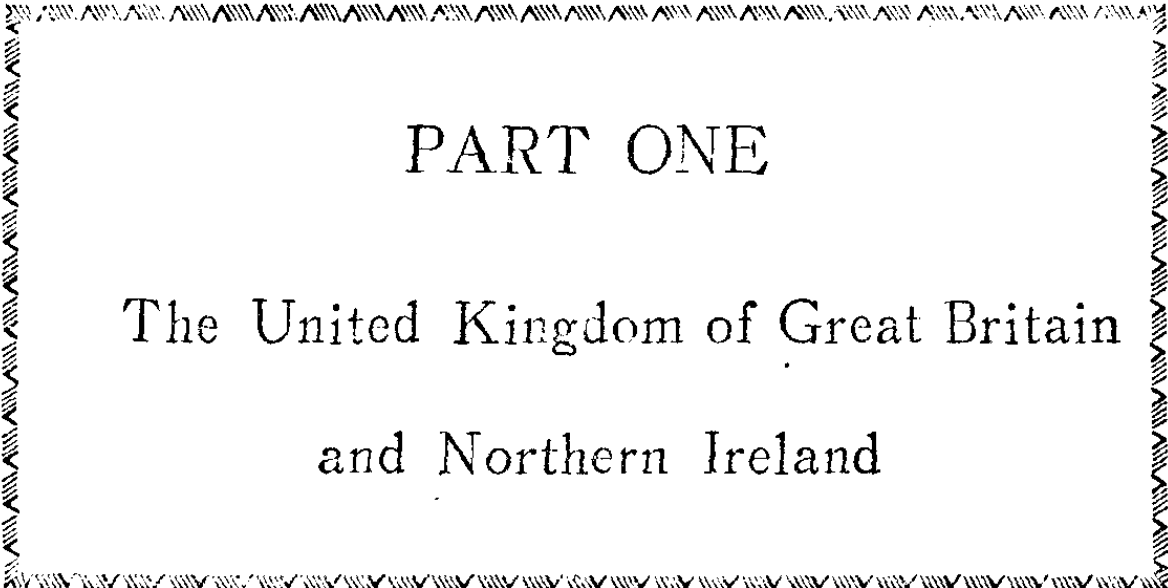
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# PART ONE

The United Kingdom of Great Britain  
and Northern Ireland



# I. The People and the Land

## They Live in

What is the difference between the British Isles, Britain, the United Kingdom and England? These terms are so often confused that we had better start by distinguishing them.

The British Isles consists of two large islands; one is called Ireland and the other Britain.

Britain, or Great Britain, is the larger of these two islands, and it is divided into three parts: Scotland, Wales and England.

The United Kingdom is that part of the British Isles ruled over by the Queen. It consists of Scotland, Wales and England (i.e. the whole of Britain), and also about one-sixth of Ireland, the Northern part. The rest of Ireland is self-governing, as we shall see later.<sup>1</sup> The full title of the United Kingdom is therefore 'The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland'.

England is the largest, most populous, and generally speaking<sup>2</sup> the richest section. We English people take this

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1. as we shall see later: 这是 as 引导的制性定语从句。as 为关系代词, 在从句中作 shall see 的宾语。这类从句修饰的不是主句中某个名词, 而是整个主句。在这儿它修饰 The rest of Ireland is self-governing。这类从句可放在句首、句尾或句子中间。 2. generally speaking: 一般说来。这是分词短语作独立成分, 相当于一个状语从句, 等于 "if one may speak in a general way".



too much for granted,<sup>1</sup> and tend to use the words 'England' and 'English' when<sup>2</sup> we mean 'Britain' and 'British'. This sometimes annoys the Scots and the Welsh. The Scots in particular are very proud of their separate nationality; they have their own legal system, and some of their internal affairs are managed by special Scottish departments, though they have no separate Parliament. The Welsh too do not regard themselves as English, and have a culture and even a language of their own. There is a Welsh Nationalist and a Scottish Nationalist party, demanding a measure of independence from England, but although they have held seats in the House of Commons, they are not very strong; and in general the Scots, the Welsh and the English feel sufficiently similar to each other to be quite content to form a combined Parliament in London.<sup>3</sup>

With the Irish, the question is more complicated and much less happy. Ireland became part of the United Kingdom in 1801, but it soon grew discontented, and for forty years the 'Irish Question' was the greatest headache of the British Parliament. At last, after much bloodshed, Ireland divided itself into two:<sup>4</sup> Northern Ireland remained loyal to the Crown (though it has its own Parliament sitting in Belfast<sup>5</sup>

---

1. take this...for granted: 认为这种情况是理所当然的。 2. when: 连词。一般引导时间状语从句。但在这儿, 相当于 although 的意思。 3. feel sufficiently similar...in London: 认为彼此很相象, 因而对于在伦敦组成一个联合国会也感到很满意了。不定式 "to be quite content...in London" 为结果状语。 4. Ireland divided itself into two = Ireland was divided into two 5. Belfast (贝尔法斯特): 北爱尔兰首府, 英国工业城市和海港, 商业和运输中心。



for internal affairs), and in 1922 the rest of the country broke away to form an Irish Free State, later called Eire (pronounced Aira) and now the Republic of Ireland.

The Republic of Ireland is almost entirely Roman Catholic; it does not regard itself as British, and is not now even a supporter of the Commonwealth.<sup>1</sup> Unlike the major Commonwealth countries it did not lift a finger to help Britain in the Second World War.<sup>2</sup> It is still discontented, as it resents the existence of Northern Ireland, and wants the whole of Ireland to be a republic.

Are the British people Europeans? This may seem a strange question to Africans and Asians, who tend to think of all white men as Europeans. But the British, *when they are in Britain*,<sup>3</sup> do not regard themselves as Europeans. The Europeans, to them, are those rather excitable foreigners from the other side of the English Channel, who have never learnt how to speak English. Europe is 'the Continent': a place full of interest for British tourists, but also the source of almost all the wars in which Britain has ever been involved. Thus, although geographically speaking Britain is a part of Europe, yet the fact that it is a separate island has made

---

1. the Commonwealth=the (British) Commonwealth of Nations: 英联邦简称。英联邦是由英国和已经独立的前英帝国殖民地或附属国组成,是英国用来维持它对联邦其它成员国在政治、军事、经济和文化上的控制和影响的工具。英国从1931年起正式用“英联邦国家”称呼那些独立的前英帝国“自治领地”国家。

2. it did not... in the Second World War: 在第二次世界大战中,它丝毫没有帮助英国。

3. when they are in Britain: 当他们在英国时(如果他们不在英国而在外国时,他们就不这样想了)。



its people feel very, very *insular*.<sup>1</sup> They feel, and in many ways are, different from the rest of Europe,<sup>2</sup> and they sometimes annoy continental nations by failing to support them, or even to understand them, in time of need.

Where did the British people come from? This is an extraordinarily interesting question, since they are a mixture

Invaders (in chronological order)	Contribution
Iberians	?
Celts {	Gaels <i>Scottish and Irish</i> race and culture
	Britons <i>Welsh</i> race and culture
Romans	<i>Latin</i> alphabet and civilisation
Anglo-Saxons	<i>English</i> race and language
Danes	Some peculiarities of dialect in North and East England.
Normans (French speaking)	Final unification of England. Great administrative progress. English civilisation permanently linked to France rather than to Scandinavia. Foundation of aristocracy.

Fig.1 Origins of the British people: table of invasions

1. insular: 与世隔绝的; 偏狭的。 2. They feel,...are, different from the rest of Europe: 他们觉得与其余欧洲人不同, 而且在许多方面也确实如此。系动词 feel 和 are 共用一个表语 “different...Europe”。



of many different races, and all these races invaded Britain at various times from Europe. Nobody knows very much about Britain before the Romans came during the first century B. C., but there had been at least three invasions before that. The first of these was by a dark-haired Mediterranean race called the Iberians. The other two were by Celtic tribes: first the Gaels, whose descendants are the modern Scots and Irish, some of whom still speak the Gaelic language; and secondly the Britons, who gave their name to the whole island of Britain. These were the people whom the Romans conquered. The Romans gave the Britons a good deal of their civilisation, but they never settled in Britain in very large numbers, so the British race survived until the overthrow of the Roman Empire by the 'barbarians', i.e. the numerous Germanic tribes which overran the whole of Western Europe.

There were three great Germanic tribes which invaded Britain: the Angles, the Saxons and the Jutes; and together they form the basis of the modern English race. The Britons, as a race, disappeared except in Wales and Cornwall. Many Welsh people still speak their 'British', i.e. Celtic, tongue, which is called Welsh. In Cornwall the language has died out, though it can still be recognised in some proper names. The Angles were so numerous that the country was called Angle-land, i.e. England, and the Anglo-Saxon language was Old English: in other words, modern English has descended directly from it.



So far<sup>1</sup> then, we have noted the Iberians, two kinds of Celts, the Romans, and the Germanic peoples, which<sup>2</sup> we shall call collectively the Saxons; but the story is by no means ended. A few hundred years later a further invasion took place from the North-East, that<sup>3</sup> of the Danes, and the whole North-Eastern half of England became for a long time Danish territory. Finally, and even more important, there came the great Norman invasion.<sup>4</sup> The Normans were 'North-men', and like the Danes had come originally from Scandinavia in the North-East; but they had settled in part of Northern France, still known as Normandy, and adopted the French language. In the year 1066, Duke William of Normandy claimed the English throne, and after defeating and killing the Saxon king Harold at the Battle of Hastings, he went on to conquer the whole country, and to merit the name of<sup>5</sup> William the Conqueror. He was crowned William I of England, and the present Queen is one of his descendants. The Saxons became a subject<sup>6</sup> people, and all the most important noblemen were Normans. English was the language of the common people and Norman French was the language

---

1. So far: 到目前为止。这是修饰句子的状语。 2. which: 在这儿等于 "which peoples". which 代表 the Germanic。如果先行词没有 the Germanic, 只是 peoples, 那末, 关系代词不能用 which, 只能用 whom。 3. that: 代表前面的 invasion, 并构成 invasion 的同位语。 4. there came the great Norman invasion: 这是一个倒装句, 动词 came 在主语 invasion 之前。当 there, here, now, then 等副词放在句首时, 语序一般倒装。 5. and to merit the name of...: 并赢得……称号。 6. subject: 形容词。"臣属, 隶属"的意思。



of the aristocracy, including the King and his court. Even today, many French expressions occur in traditional ceremonial language, and a few English people feel proud if they can prove that their ancestors were Normans. Eventually, however, the speech of the common people prevailed, and the use of French died out: but the common people had already absorbed some of it, and many everyday expressions in English have a French origin.

There has never been another invasion of Britain in the 900 years since William the Conqueror, so that all the various elements have had time to settle down and form one people. As a whole, the British are proud of their diversity, and like to think that it has given them a diversity of qualities which has turned out to their advantage.<sup>1</sup>

The country they live in, that is, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, has an area of about 93,000 square miles. This is remarkably small when you consider its population and its importance in world affairs.

The population of the United Kingdom is about 55,500,000. It is a very large population for such a small area, and yet it is very unevenly distributed. About 8,000,000 people are crowded into the London area alone, and most of the rest live in a few densely populated industrial areas. On the other hand, there are some quite large tracts of barren, hilly

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1. which has turned out to their advantage: which 的先行词是 diversity, has turned out, (结果) 变成。to their advantage, 对他们 (英国人) 有利的事。



country, especially in Northern Scotland, which are almost uninhabited. The reason for this unevenness is that Britain is mainly an industrial country, and most of the people live in large towns. Apart from London, there are two towns containing over a million people each (Birmingham and Glasgow), four with half-a-million or more, and over forty others with more than a hundred thousand people each.



## II. The Weather

'Other countries have a climate; in England we have weather.' This statement, often made by Englishmen to describe the peculiar meteorological conditions of their country, is both revealing<sup>1</sup> and true. It is revealing because in it<sup>2</sup> we see the Englishman insisting once again that what happens in England is not the same as what happens elsewhere; its truth can be ascertained by any foreigner who stays in the country for longer than a few days.

In no country other than England, it has been said, can one experience four seasons in the course of a single day!<sup>3</sup> Day may break as a balmy spring morning; an hour or so later black clouds may have appeared from nowhere<sup>4</sup> and the rain may be pouring down. At midday conditions may be really wintry with the temperature down by<sup>5</sup> about

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1. revealing: 很能说明问题。这是形容词。 2. in it: it 指 this statement.  
3. In no country other than England, it has been said, can one experience... day: 有人说只有在英国人们才能在一天之中经历四个季节的变化。其中: (1) no... other than=except (2) it has been said: 有人说,据说,插入语。 (3) can one experience: 情态动词 can 置于主语 one 之前,为部分倒装,这是由于句首有否定词 In no country。 4. from nowhere: 不知从哪儿; 蓦地。 nowhere 在这儿是名词,做 from 的宾语。 5. with the temperature down by...: 温度下降……。这个短语等于 "with the temperature going down", by 开头的短语表示下降多少度。



eight degrees or more centigrade. And then, in the late afternoon the sky will clear, the sun will begin to shine, and for an hour or two before darkness falls, it will be summer.

In England one can experience almost every kind of weather except the most extreme. (Some foreigners, incidentally, seem to be under the impression<sup>1</sup> that for ten months of the year the country is covered by a dense blanket of fog; this is not true.) The snag is that<sup>2</sup> we never can be sure when the different types of weather will occur.<sup>3</sup> Not only do we get several different sorts of weather in one day, but we may very well get a spell of winter in summer and vice-versa.<sup>4</sup>

This uncertainty about the weather has had a definite effect upon the Englishman's character; it tends to make him cautious, for example. The foreigner may laugh when he sees the Englishman setting forth on a brilliantly sunny morning wearing a raincoat and<sup>5</sup> carrying an umbrella, but he may well regret<sup>6</sup> his laughter later in the day! The

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1. seem to be under the impression: 似乎有这样的印象; 似乎认为。  
2. The snag is that...: 问题(或困难)在于……。snag 一般指“隐伏或意想不到的困难、障碍”。  
3. we never can be sure...occur: 这儿 when 引导的从句相当于宾语从句, be sure 的作用相当于及物动词。  
4. Not only...vice-versa. 我们在一天当中不仅遇到几种不同的天气,而且很可能在夏天遇到一阵冬天的天气,或者反过来,在冬天里遇到一阵夏天的天气。  
(1) 由于含有否定意义的 not only 在句首,所以句子部分倒装,主语 we 之前加助动词 do。  
(2) may very well: 在这儿是“很可能”的意思。  
(3) a spell: 一阵子。  
5. and: 连接 wearing 和 carrying。这两个分词用作补充说明的状语。  
6. he may well regret: 他很可能要后悔。