

主要英语国家 概览

■ 胡振东 主编

吉林大学出版社

Overview

主要英语国家

概览

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前 言

语言是信息的载体,也是文化的载体,人们在利用语言交流思想的同时,也传递了文化的信息,文化与语言是密不可分的集合体。学习英语的中国人,不但要熟练掌握英语语言本身的基本知识,而且要了解英语国家的政治、经济和历史,学习英语国家的文化知识。《主要英语国家概览》就是旨在帮助英语学习者系统掌握英、美、加、澳四个主要英语国家政治、历史、教育、文学、艺术、宗教、习俗、礼仪知识和基本国情而精心设计编写的。

2000年的《高校英语专业英语教学大纲》提出了“拓宽人文知识”的目标,2004年新的八级考纲也增加了人文知识的考试项目。为了完成人文知识的教学目标,本科院校英语专业普遍开设了《英语国家概况》这一门课程,并成为了英语专业学生必修课程。

然而高职高专英语专业,特别是一些带专业方向的英语专业(如:商务英语、旅游英语等),该门课程既无国家统一的教学大纲,也无适合高职教育的专门教材,一般都采用本科学校英语专业使用的《英语国家概况》教材。本科教材很不适合高职院校学生学习,其一,内容太多,教学时数有限,难以完成教学任务;其二,内容太深,学生基础差,理解不透,掌握不了。根据高职院校学生英语基础较差、教学时数有限等特点,我们以教学内容适用、够用为原则,编写了这本《主要英语国家概览》。该书以英语专业本科教材《英语国家概况》为蓝本,对内容进行了大幅删减和调整,对一些难于理解的文字表述进行了简化和修改,并为每一章节提供了汉译对照和练习题。这是一本适应高职高专英语专业的好教材,既能帮助学生提高英语水平又能使学生学到很多关于英、美、加、澳四个主要英语国家的人文、地理知识。

客观地讲,除英语专业学生以外,《主要英语国家概览》也是广大英语爱好者和学习者的必读课本。随着经济全球化进程的加快和我国对外开放水平的提高,我国与世界各国的交流日益频繁,为了适应这一形势,中国人民正掀起前所未有的学习英语这一世界性语言的热潮,这一学习潮流已经涉及到各行各业,不仅从小学到大学的学生们要学,就连普通老百姓也想懂一点英语。然而,长期以来,我国的外语教学只注重语言基本知识的传授和训练,忽视了英语国家文化知识的教学和学生跨文化交际能力的培养,其结果往往是学习效果不佳,学习英语若干年还难以与外国人进行正常的交流和沟通,这是因为他们对英语国家包括政治、历史、宗教、习俗等在内的文化知识缺乏了解、跨文化交际能力低下所致。因此,即使是非英语专业的学生,只要是真正想学好英语,使自己具备一定的语言交流能力的人都必须注重英语文化知识的“补充”,在学习英语的同时尽可能多地了解英语国家,特别是主要英语国家,掌握其历史、文化、习俗及政治、经济等方面的情况,只有这样,才能使自己步入学习的正轨并最终实现自己的学习目标。

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2008年12月10日

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Part one

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

Land and People

I. Different Names for Britain and its Parts

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 U.K. 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.

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 33km 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.

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 (978m), 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 (300m—over 1,200m) are a wild, rocky, mountainous plateau with a coastline deeply indented, especially in the west. Ben Nevis, the highest mountain in Britain (1,343m) 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 240m—600m), are cut by small fertile river valleys. Scotland has about 800 islands including the Orkneys. Shetlands 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 180m and 600m, rocky in the north and coal bearing in the south. Snowdonia (1,085m) in the north-east 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. 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°C–6°C. and in summer in the south is 12°C–17°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°N to 60°N. 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.

3. Rainfall

Britain has a steady reliable rainfall throughout the whole year. The average annual rainfall in Britain is over 1,000mm. It has 750mm–1,250mm 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 1,250mm to 2,000mm of rainfall and in some areas in the north-west it is over 2,000mm. 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.

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.

V. The People

Britain has a population of 57,411,000 (1990). 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 kilometre 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. There is a great concentration of population in England. On the other hand, there are some quite large tracts of barren, hilly country, especially in Northern Scotland, which are almost uninhabited.

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 about 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 Scottish, 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.

1. The English

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 BC. 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 fifth 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 1,066 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 English have many differences in regional speech. The chief division is between southern England and northern England. Generally speaking, southerners speak the type of English closer to BBC English. They do not have a special accent except the Cockneys from the East End of London.

2. 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 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 percent 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 signs are in Welsh as well as in English. Welsh is quite different from English and Welsh names are different too. Names beginning with "Ll" are Welsh, like Llewellyn, Lloyd and Llyn. Other common Welsh names are Lewis, Davies, Morgan, Edwards.

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.

3. 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. Scots are proud that the English never conquered them. Many Scottish names begin with M', Mc or Mac, which means "son of" in Gaelic, the old Celtic language of the Scots. Though the Gaelic language is still heard in the Highlands and the Western Isles, the English language is spoken all over Scotland because most of the people are not of Celtic origin and children on the islands have to go to secondary schools on the mainland where they speak English.

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.

4. 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 (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.

5. Immigrants

About three million have come to Britain to live and find work since World War II. They are mainly from the West Indies, India and Pakistan. It has not been easy for them to find decent jobs or decent places to live. There are laws to protect them from unfair treatment, but

these laws do not always work successfully. There is still discrimination by employers, landlords and club owners. Usually the coloured immigrants have to take the lowest paid jobs, and when there is unemployment they are usually the first to be sacked.

Questions on the Chapter

1. What are the differences between Britain and the British Isles, Great Britain, England, the United Kingdom and the British Commonwealth?
2. Describe the geographical position of Britain.
3. Whereabouts in Great Britain are mostly highland and lowland?
4. Does Britain have a favourable climate? Why?
5. What are the factors which influence the climate in Britain? Which part of Britain has the most rainfall and which part is the driest?
6. Describe the distribution of Britain's population.
7. What are the three natural zones in Scotland?
8. What is the difference between the ancestors of the English and Scots, Welsh and Irish?
9. What are the differences in character and speech between southern England and northern England? How do the Welsh keep their language and culture alive?
10. What is the main problem in Northern Ireland?

国土与人民

(参考译文)

I. 英国及各地的不同名称

严格说来,不列颠诸岛、大不列颠和英格兰都是地理名称,并非这个国家的官方称谓。不列颠诸岛是由两个大岛和数百个小岛构成的。两个大岛是不列颠岛和爱尔兰岛,其中前者较大,它与爱尔兰岛的北部即北爱尔兰构成联合王国。但如此长的国名一口气很难说完,因此人们干脆称它为不列颠联合王国或简称 U.K.。这是一个位于不列颠诸岛之上的国家,首都为伦敦。另一个国家,爱尔兰共和国或称不列颠诸岛中的爱尔,占据了爱尔兰岛南部的剩余地方。它于 1949 年独立,建都都柏林。

不列颠岛上有三个政治分区:英格兰、苏格兰和威尔士。英格兰面积最大,人口最密集,一般说来也最富有。

不列颠一直是世界上最重要的国家之一。大约一百年前,由于其帝国主义扩张,不列颠帝国统治着世界上四分之一的人口和土地面积。它不仅在北美拥有殖民地,在亚洲、非洲和澳大利亚也拥有。

然而,两次世界大战极大地削弱了不列颠的实力,它的殖民地相继独立。不列颠帝国逐渐消失,于 1931 年为英联邦所取代。

英联邦(国家)是一个由原为殖民地的独立国家组成的自由联合体,成员国经济联合,有一定的贸易协议。英联邦没有特殊权力,是否成为成员国由各个国家自己决定。如今(到 1991 年为止),英联邦有 50 个成员国。

II. 地理特征

不列颠是一个岛国,四面环海,位于北大西洋之中,与欧洲北海岸隔海相望,南面的英吉利海峡和东面的北海将它与欧洲其他部分隔开。英法之间的英吉利海峡非常狭窄,最窄处为多佛海峡,仅 33 公里宽。1985 年,英法两国政府决定在多佛海峡下面修建一条隧道,以使英法道路相连。经过 8 年艰辛劳动,这条名为“查诺尔”的海底隧道于 1994 年 5 月竣工通车。不列颠面积为 244100 平方公里,从北到南跨度为 1000 公里,最宽处大约 500 公里。因此不列颠各地均靠近海岸,海岸为它提供了丰富的资源。不列颠海岸线很长且拥有优良的深水港。海运线延伸至内陆,提供了廉价的交通。

数世纪来,由于西北部缓慢上升,东南部缓慢下沉,不列颠一直在慢慢倾斜。它的北部和西部主要为高地。在苏格兰西部,陆地上升使得在一个本来多山的地区形成了隆起的、如同海岸般平坦的地区,这就提供了主要的耕地、定居地、工业区以及道路。东部与东南部多为低地,是“欧洲大平原”的一部分,土地平坦,土壤肥沃,尤其在南部和英格兰东海岸一带有着许多良田。

1. 英格兰

英格兰占据了大不列颠岛南部最大部分,西邻威尔士,北接苏格兰,面积超过 130000 平方公里,几乎占整个岛的 60%。除了塞汶河谷和柴郡——兰开郡平原(环绕利物浦)以外,西南部

和西部主要是高原,也有着起伏的平原、丘陵和少数沼泽。从中北部绵延至苏格兰边界的群山中,奔宁山脉是主要山脉。但英格兰的最高峰斯加菲尔山(海拔 978 米)却位于西北部的湖区。英格兰东部主要是开阔的可耕平原,到了北约克郡渐窄,在海岸沼泽与奔宁山脉间形成一条通道,即约克谷,到了诺森伯兰郡时则变成了海岸带。

2. 苏格兰

苏格兰面积 78760 平方公里,位于大不列颠岛北部,群山绵延,湖泊处处,岛屿众多。它有三个自然区:北部高地、中部低地和南部山岭。北部高地(300~1200 多米)是一片荒芜、山石林立的多山高原,海岸线深陷,西部尤其如此。不列颠的最高峰本·尼维斯峰(1343 米)位于此处。高地西部赫不莱德斯岛地区景色迷人。巨大的内海或峡湾与荒芜的空山交织,一些内海农场只有乘船才能到达。中部低地主要由福斯和克莱德山谷、煤铁矿床以及奶牛牧场组成。这里是苏格兰最重要的区域,囊括了大多数工业和人口。南部山岭地带是起伏的沼泽湿地(主要在 240~600 米之间),被许多小而肥沃的河谷分割。包括奥克内群岛、舍特兰群岛和赫不莱斯群岛在内,苏格兰有 800 座岛屿以及数百个湖泊。苏格兰首府为爱丁堡。

3. 威尔士

威尔士位于大不列颠岛的西部,面积 20761 平方公里,占整个岛面积的近 9%。威尔士多山:山脉从海上峻峭地耸起,顶部却很平坦。威尔士 6%的土地为森林覆盖,乡村多为牧场,用以放牧牛羊,只有 12%的土地可耕地。沿英格兰边境和南海岸,有一片低地环绕的山丘,大多在 180~600 米之间,北部多岩石,南部产煤。西北部的斯诺多尼亚山(1085 米)是威尔士的最高峰。威尔士首府为卡迪夫。

4. 北爱尔兰

北爱尔兰是联合王国的第四个区域,它占据了爱尔兰北部的五分之一土地,面积 14147 平方公里。它有着多石、荒凉的北部海岸线,海岸线上有若干深深的凹陷处。其东北部是安特利姆郡的山岭地,而东南部的山脉则逐渐让位于洛尼格盆地的中部低地。北爱尔兰首府是贝尔福斯特。

III. 河流和湖泊

英国的河流冬季不结冰,它们在国家经济中扮演着重要角色。伦敦、利物浦和格拉斯哥的重要港口都有河流与海洋相连。此外,东海岸的退德河、泰恩河、蒂斯河和泰晤士河都面向欧洲大陆上的北海港口,它们也与富饶的渔区毗邻。西海岸的克莱德河、默西河和塞汶河则将原材料运送到繁忙的内陆制造业城市。英国的河流并不非常大,最长的河流塞汶河也仅 338 公里长。它发源于威尔士中部,以半圆路径流经英格兰中西部,流入布里斯托尔海峡。英国第二大河,也是最重要的河流是泰晤士河,全长 336 公里,发源于英格兰西南部的科茨沃尔德斯山,流经英格兰中部至伦敦,汇入北海。泰晤士河流速缓慢,很适宜于水路交通,牛津也在泰晤士河上。克莱德河是苏格兰最重要的河流,它发源于邓弗里斯山,长 171 公里,流经格拉斯河,进入克莱德河湾,是重要的商业水路。

英国湖泊众多,苏格兰北部、英格兰西北部的湖区和北威尔士尤为如此。然而,英国最大的湖泊要数北爱尔兰的洛尼格湖,面积为 396 平方公里。湖区是英国最受欢迎的旅游名胜之一,它以其野性而美丽的景色以及 15 个湖泊广为人知,其中最大的湖泊为温德米尔湖、鄂尔斯水湖、德温特水湖和柯尼斯顿水湖。湖区也是湖畔诗人之家,如 19 世纪的威廉·华兹华斯、塞缪尔·泰勒·柯勒律治和罗伯特·骚塞等英国诗人。