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BRITAIN PAST AND PRESENT:  
HISTORY, LANGUAGE AND  
INSTITUTIONS

*English for Political Science*



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## Preface

This book is intended for Political Science students at Cagliari University, who are required to learn English at a B1/B2 level (CEF) for their first level degree (Laurea Triennale). It is designed to integrate with and complement the general English integrated skills course which all students are required to attend. So rather than being a language text book as such, it presents students with relevant topics, lexis and language used in the various disciplines (History, Politics, Law, Social Sciences) taught during their university studies.

The four fundamental skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing are developed and consolidated through a wide range of activities and tasks which are designed to stimulate and enhance cognitive learning and communicative skills, with the aim of helping students to become more autonomous in their acquisition of English.

Each of the ten units contains invaluable basic information on a range of subjects such as British history, language, institutions and social issues. The reading passages in *Britain Past and Present: History, Language and Institutions* aim to further students understanding of the structure of texts, unfamiliar lexis and grammar forms they will need to know in order to transfer their skills to other contexts and become independent and confident readers.

The texts are integrated with skimming and scanning activities, comprehension questions, true/false post-reading, matching and chart completion exercises as well as listening activities from authentic spoken texts accompanied by note taking, gap filling, and multiple choice tasks. Writing tasks include sentence transformation, summarising and drafting of short texts, while speaking activities encourage students to ask and answer questions, express opinions, and exchange ideas.

Considerable attention has been given to the creation of exercises on the use of English, pronunciation and phonetics along with dictionary skills and basic elements of translation from and into

English. At the end of the book there is a glossary of useful words to help students acquire new vocabulary and thus increase their word power and vocabulary range. The specific lexis students encounter in this book will serve as a basis for extending their knowledge of specialised discourse in the second level degree courses offered by the faculty.

By improving and developing the four skills through the study of topics related to specific areas of interest, it is to be hoped that our students will be motivated to engage in a more creative approach to learning English which will better prepare them to enter the new European and global reality of today.

We would like to express thanks to colleagues at the University of Cagliari who have been invaluable in discussing ideas and providing critical comment.

We would also like to thank Loredana Farris for her valuable insights, suggestions and patience, Nicola Ambrosini and Manuela Giordano for their encouragement and precious technological support in the realisation of this project.

The authors naturally take full responsibility and apologise for any mistakes or omissions to be found in the book.

*The authors*

# Unit 1

## Great Britain: what's in a name?

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### AIMS

In this unit you will learn about

- 1.1 The British Isles
- 1.2 Great Britain
- 1.3 The United Kingdom
- 1.4 The counties

You will also learn how to

- read and understand a text
- answer questions
- analyse maps
- pronounce new words
- write simple sentences
- translate into English

#### **Language**

Singular and plural  
Adjectives and adverbs  
Acronyms  
Synonyms

Listening  
Skimming and scanning  
Comprehension questions  
Matching  
True/false  
Writing  
Pronunciation and phonetics  
Using a dictionary  
Translation

## Unit 1

### Great Britain: what's in a name?

#### 1.1 The British Isles 🗺️

The geographical expression ‘**The British Isles**’ identifies a group of islands including the two large islands of **Great Britain** and **Ireland**, and many other smaller islands (more than 6,000). They are in the northern part of the Atlantic Ocean, off the north-west coast of Europe. **Great Britain** includes **England**, **Wales** and **Scotland**. **Ireland** is divided into **Northern Ireland** (or Ulster) and **Southern Ireland** (or Eire). **Great Britain** and **Northern Ireland** form the **United Kingdom**. Southern Ireland is not part of the United Kingdom and it has been an independent republic since 1922.

People living in the United Kingdom are **British**. Not all the inhabitants of the British Isles are English: only people from England are called **English**. People from Wales are **Welsh**, people from Scotland are **Scottish** and people from Ireland are **Irish**.



#### 1.2 Great Britain 🗺️

**Great Britain** is the largest island in Europe and the largest island of the British Isles. **Britain** (the short name for Great Britain) is made up of **England**, **Scotland**, and **Wales**. The capital of England is **London**, the capital of Scotland is **Edinburgh** and the capital of Wales is **Cardiff**. ‘Great Britain’ refers to the island in which England, Wales and Scotland are situated. In everyday speech, the expressions ‘Great Britain’ or ‘Britain’ are generally used to mean the United Kingdom.



### 1.3 The United Kingdom 🗺️

‘**The United Kingdom**’ is a political term which is shortened to ‘the **UK**’ in everyday English. The official name for the UK, which appears on British passports, is the **United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland** and its capital is London. The name refers to four separate countries: **England**, **Wales**, **Scotland**, and **Northern Ireland**. Scotland and Wales have their own Parliament. The adjective of nationality used for people who come from the UK is ‘**British**’.



The UK is part of Europe and it has been a member of the **European Union (EU)** since 1973. In 2008 Gordon Brown, who became Prime Minister after Tony Blair’s resignation, declared “*The European Union is essential to the success of Britain and a Britain fully engaged in Europe is essential to the success of the European Union*”.



The British flag is called the ‘**Union Jack**’ and it is a combination of the three superimposed flags of Scotland, Ireland and England, known as Saint Andrew’s cross, Saint Patrick’s cross and Saint George’s cross.

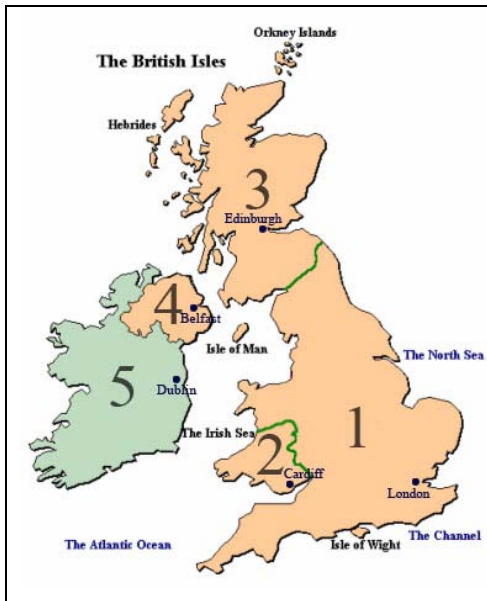
**Task 1. Skimming:** give a quick look at the three texts and answer the following questions. Discuss with your classmates.

1. What is text 1.1 about?
2. What is text 1.2 about?
3. What is text 1.3 about?
4. What did you already know about Great Britain and the United Kingdom before reading the texts?

**Task 2. Scanning:** read the texts again and look at the maps to search for the following information.

Country	Capital	Nationality
UK	<i>London</i>	
Great Britain		
England		
Wales		
Scotland		
Northern Ireland		
Ireland		

**Task 3. Look at the map and answer the questions below.**



What is 1?

---

What is 2?

---

What is 3?

---

What is 1+2+3?

---

What is 4?

---

What is 1+2+3+4?

---

What is 5?

---

What is 1+2+3+4+5?

---

#### 1.4 The counties 🌀

Great Britain is divided into small regions called **counties**, which are territorial divisions with their own **local government**. The word **county**, from French **comté**, came into use after **1066** when the

**Normans** invaded Britain. Before that the old name for county was *shire*. A shire was an **administrative division** of an Anglo-Saxon kingdom usually named after its administrative centre. Many county



names still contain the word **shire**, e.g. Yorkshire or Oxfordshire, because, up to Medieval times, they were controlled on behalf of the sovereign by a ‘**Shire Reeve**’ or ‘**Sheriff**’ (the most famous of whom was the ‘*Sheriff of Nottingham*’ in the *Tales of Robin Hood*). Local authorities or **county councils** in the UK are responsible for running education, emergency services, social services, town planning, transport, and waste disposal.

**Task 4. Reread the four texts and answer the questions below.**

1. How many islands are there in the British Isles?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Are ‘the British Isles’ and ‘Great Britain’ political or geographical expressions?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What does Great Britain include?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Which countries make up the United Kingdom?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Which people can be considered English?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Is Southern Ireland part of the United Kingdom?  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. What is a county?  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. What does the word *shire* mean?
- 
9. When was the word 'county' first used?
- 
10. Who was the 'Shire Reeve' or 'Sheriff'?
- 
11. What are some of the functions of county councils?
- 

**Task 5. Grammar: complete the table with the plural forms.**

Singular	Plural
country	
county council	
inhabitant	
isle	
local authority	
nationality	

**Task 6. Word formation: fill in the table with the correct adverbs.**

Adjective	Rule	Adverb	Adjective	Rule	Adverb
usual	+ -ly	<i>usually</i>	local	+ -ly	
official			recent		
political			current		
geographical			general		

**Task 7. Vocabulary: match the acronyms and abbreviations with their meaning.**

PM	European Union
EU	United Kingdom
GB	<i>exempli gratia</i>
a.k.a.	Great Britain
UK	Prime Minister
e.g.	also known as

**Task 8. Decide if the statements are true or false.**

	<b>T</b>	<b>F</b>
1. Great Britain and Ireland are two islands in the British Isles.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Great Britain is the smallest island in the British Isles.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. The United Kingdom is a geographical expression.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. People from Wales are Welsh.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Great Britain is the same as Britain.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Great Britain includes Northern Ireland.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. The official name for the UK is the 'United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland'.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. The UK has been part of the EU since the 1960s.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. The British flag is called 'The Union Jack'.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Scotland and Wales have their own parliament.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. A person from Northern Ireland is British.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. A county is an area with its own local government.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. A 'sheriff' controlled a county in Medieval times.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. County councils are responsible for such things as town planning, education, and waste disposal.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Task 9. Vocabulary: rewrite the sentences using a synonym.**

*be responsible for   split up into   manage   abbreviate   utilize*

1. Britain is **divided into** counties.  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. County councils **look after** schools, roads and libraries.  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. County councils **run** things such as education and transport.  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. 'The United Kingdom' is **shortened** to 'the UK' in everyday English.  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. In everyday speech, the expressions 'Great Britain' or 'Britain' are generally **used** to mean the United Kingdom.  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Task 10. Pronunciation: how do you pronounce these words? Match the correct phonetic transcription in each column.**

London	ad'ministrətɪv
inhabitant	ɪn'hæbɪtənt
Edinburgh	'lʌndən
authority	'gʌvnmənt
government	ɪn'hæbɪtənt
administrative	'edɪnbərə

ocean	'sʌðən
island	'nɪ:ðn
southern	'aɪələnd
isle	'əʊfɪ
Ireland	'aɪlənd
northern	aɪl

Parliament	'sɒvrɪn
united	'θaʊznd
sovereign	'pɑ:ləmənt
north	ju:'nɑ:tɪd
shire	'lɪstə(r)
thousand	'ʃaɪə* ʃɪə*
Ulster	nɔ:θ

Wales	'kʌntri
country	rɪ:v
this	weɪlz
these	'kaʊntri
Eire	ðɪs
county	'eərə
reeve	ðɪs

**Task 11. Writing: look in your dictionary and find an example sentence for each verb below. Work in pairs.**

e.g. to be split up into *Britain is split up into counties.*

1) to consist of

---

2) to be part of

---

3) to form

---



---

4) to include

---

5) to comprise

---

6) to be divided into

---

7) to be made up of

---

8) to look after

---

**Task 12. Vocabulary: translate into Italian.**

county council	
cross	
engaged	
inhabitant	
kingdom	
manage (v.)	
mean (v.)	
on behalf of	
shire reeve	
run (v.)	
shorten (v.)	
social services	
sovereign	
split up (v.)	
superimposed	
tale	
town planning	
waste disposal	

**Task 13. Translate the following sentences into English. Use a bilingual dictionary to find the words you do not know.**

1. Nelle Isole Britanniche ci sono circa 6000 isole.  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Il termine 'Britain' è l'abbreviazione di 'Great Britain'.  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Ogni regione in Gran Bretagna ha una sua capitale.  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. La bandiera del Regno Unito è una combinazione delle tre bandiere dell'Inghilterra, della Scozia e dell'Irlanda.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Il Galles e la Scozia hanno il loro parlamento.  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Il Regno Unito è un paese membro dell'Unione Europea.  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Le contee britanniche sono suddivisioni territoriali.  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Ogni contea ha un suo governo locale.  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Molti nomi di contee contengono il suffisso *-shire*.  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Prima che i Normanni invadessero la Gran Bretagna le contee si chiamavano *shires*.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. Nel Medioevo le contee erano amministrare da un '*Shire Reeve*'.  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. I governi locali si occupano dello smaltimento dei rifiuti del trasporto pubblico, dell'istruzione e dei servizi sociali.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
13. L'espressione Gran Bretagna è usata per dire Regno Unito.  
\_\_\_\_\_



## Unit 2

# A history of invasion and migration

---

### AIMS

In this unit you will learn about

- 2.1 The Celtic tribes
- 2.2 The Roman invasion
- 2.3 Anglo-Saxon Britain
- 2.4 The Norman invasion

You will also learn how to

- listen and complete a text
- read and understand a text
- take notes
- answer questions
- pronounce new words
- write sentences in the past tense
- write a summary

#### Language

The past tense  
Numbers  
Dates  
Irregular verbs

#### Tasks

Listening comprehension  
Gap filling  
Skimming and scanning  
Comprehension questions  
Matching  
True/false  
Taking notes  
Writing a summary  
Pronunciation and phonetics  
Pair work