



THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE PEOPLE • PLACES • INSTITUTIONS

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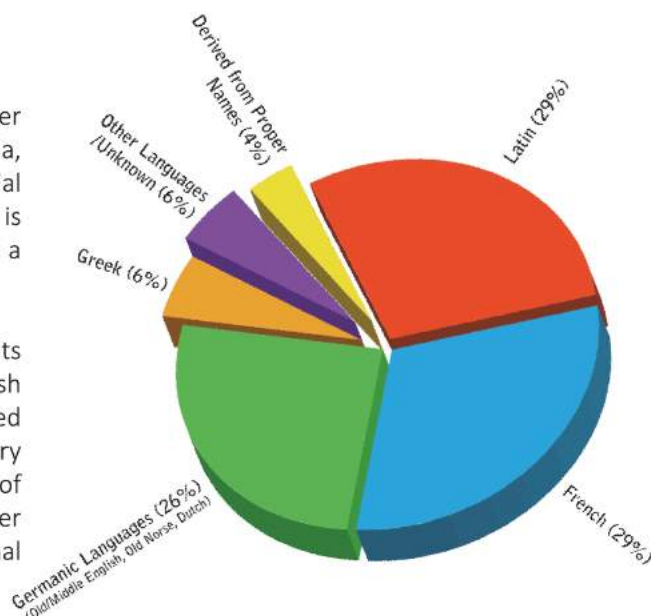


THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Nowadays, English is spoken as a native language by over 500 million people in Great Britain, Ireland, the USA, Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. It is also an official language in many other countries on all continents. It is estimated that around two billion people speak English as a foreign language and the number keeps growing.

English has become a modern *lingua franca* and its popularity is connected with the colonial past of the British Empire, which at the beginning of the 20th century controlled about 25% of the globe. Later on, the economic and military power of the United States and its influence in the sphere of science, technology, the media and pop culture, further strengthened its position as a means of international communication.

Apart from being an international language, English is a source of borrowings for other languages. Words such as *selfie*, *fit*, *gym*, *fast food* or the *Internet* have entered the lexicons of many nations around the world. However, most English words have also been borrowed.



Some history

English is a Germanic language and it derives from the ancient Proto-Indo-European language spoken by our ancestors between 4500 and 2500 BC.

The names 'England' and 'English' come from the name of the Angles who began to settle in the British Isles around the 5th and 6th century AD and pushed the native Celts into the territories of today's Scotland, Wales and Ireland. The Angles and the Saxons were mostly illiterate, and those who were able to read and write used the so-called *runes*. The language they spoke between the 6th and 11th century is referred to as *Old English*. The vocabulary and grammar of *Old English* are more similar to Dutch and German than modern English. So how did English change so much?

The changes in the language reflect the turbulent history of the British Isles and their inhabitants. In the 6th century AD Saint Augustine and a group of monks arrived in Britain to educate and convert the pagan tribes to Christianity. Latin was the language used by the church, so when the new religion began to spread, many Latin words were borrowed into the English language.

In the 8th and 9th century, the Vikings conquered and colonized parts of Britain, and they also left their mark on the language. Words such as *skull*, *sky*, *knife*, *gun*, *husband*, *ugly*, etc. were brought by the Vikings. Their influence is also reflected in the names of the days of the week such as *Wednesday*, *Thursday* and *Friday*, which come from the names of the Nordic gods Odin, Thor and Freya.



In the 11th century, Britain was invaded by the Normans who came from the area of modern France. The French-speaking invaders became the new aristocracy and the upper social classes. Ordinary people communicated in their own Anglo-Saxon dialects, which were strongly influenced by the language of the Vikings.

Over time, English became a 'mixed language', with an extremely complex grammar, grammatical cases and lots of endings that were hard to remember. It was so complicated that a significant simplification of grammar became necessary. The endings and complex grammatical forms began to disappear and the language became a bit more similar to what it is today.

In the 15th century the printing press was brought to England and this invention had a huge impact on the development and standardization of English.

During the Renaissance the influence of Latin continued, and with the development of arts and science thousands of Latin words were borrowed into English. They came from books on religion, medicine, science, law and literature, and were often simply adapted by writers and translators when there were no native terms to describe new objects, ideas and phenomena.

In the 16th and 17th centuries a lot of new words were needed to describe the changing reality. As a result the English language borrowed as many as 30,000 words from over 50 languages – mainly from Latin, French, Italian, Greek, Spanish and Portuguese.



William Shakespeare, who lived in the 16th and the early 17th century, also made a significant contribution to the development of English. He created many popular phrases which are used to this day. It is estimated that Shakespeare added around 1,700 new words to the English dictionary, borrowed and adapted from other languages in order to describe the adventures and feelings of the heroes and heroines in his plays.

In Shakespeare's day, some significant changes in grammar and pronunciation took place and the language became more and more similar to contemporary English. The London dialect began to gain popularity throughout the country. Also, as books and other publications became less expensive and more available, the regional differences between different parts of England began to disappear.

In 1755 Dr Samuel Johnson published *A Dictionary of the English Language* which greatly contributed to the standardisation of spelling and grammar. Researchers claim that a person who spoke English as their native tongue around 1800 would not have any major problems communicating with a contemporary inhabitant of London or New York.

With the growth of the British Empire, different varieties of English developed in the colonies and each of them evolved in its own way. This is how American, Canadian and Australian English were born. The varieties of English spoken in the world today slightly differ from one another in terms of vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation.

Like all other languages, English keeps on changing: new words are created while other words become obsolete and fall out of use. What makes it special is the fact that English is a truly international language, and since it is relatively easy to learn, it is rather unlikely to be replaced by Chinese anytime soon.



American English

It is estimated that American English has twice as many native speakers as the other varieties of English and four times as many as speakers of British English. This is partly connected with the fact that the population of the USA is the greatest, but also with the country's leading position in the world.

Apart from the differences in grammar and vocabulary, the most distinguishing feature of American English is its pronunciation. For example, *r*'s are usually pronounced in American English, while in British English they are often silent before consonants and at the end of a word. Also, *t*'s between vowels are pronounced like *d*'s and as a result words such as *writer* and *rider* may sound the same in American English. Interestingly, experts say, that the pronunciation of American English is similar to eighteenth-century British English!

As far as spelling is concerned, Americans use *-or* instead of *-our* (*color* - *colour*, *flavour* - *flavour*, *favour* – *favour*, *honor* - *honour*). They also use *-z-* instead of *-s-* in words such as *realize* - *realise*, *organize* - *organise*, *standardize* - *standardise*, etc.

American English may sound more direct and it does not use as many polite forms as British English.

The two main varieties of English often use different terms to describe the same thing. Have a look at the list below. Which words and expressions do you use in your English?

American English	British English	American English	British English
apartment	flat	movie theatre	cinema
cookie	biscuit	pants	trousers
cab	taxi	parking lot	car park
downtown	city centre	period	full stop
elevator	lift	second floor	first floor
fall	autumn	sidewalk	pavement
fries	chips	sneakers	trainers
gas	petrol	trash	rubbish
last name	surname	truck	lorry
mall	shopping centre	vacation	holiday

FAMOUS MONARCHS AND POLITICIANS

King Arthur

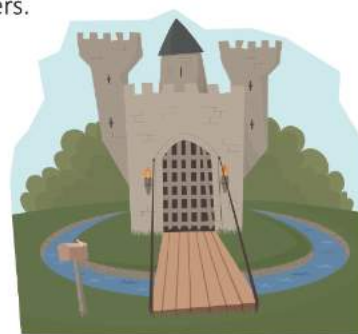
King Arthur is one of the most famous English monarchs, even though he may have never existed! Arthur, also known as Arthur Pendragon, was a legendary British king whose reign dates back to the turn of the 5th and 6th century AD. There is no agreement among scholars as to whether the figure of Arthur was based on a historical person. In fact, most historians admit that he was probably a fictional folk hero brought to life by medieval romances and legends.

According to the legend, Arthur was the son of King Uther Pendragon. The baby boy was born during very turbulent times and Merlin, a wise magician, told the king that Arthur should be raised in a secret place to protect his life. When King Uther died, people started fighting over who should be the next king. Merlin used his magic to set a sword in a stone and only the legitimate heir to the throne of England could pull the weapon out of it. Arthur, who was not aware of his true identity, happened to need a sword and quite by chance, he withdrew it from the stone and became king.

He gathered a group of brave knights around him and together they fought against the Saxons who were invading the country. Arthur's magical sword was called 'Excalibur' and with its help he defeated many enemies. Arthur built a castle called Camelot, where his knights met at a round table. Legend has it that the king had the round table made for them so that none of them could consider himself more important than the others.

King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table carried out many heroic deeds and they fought terrible beasts. They also searched for the Holy Grail – the cup that Jesus Christ drank from at the Last Supper.

By the end of his life, Arthur was badly wounded. His body was never found and he is believed to be resting under a hill with his knights, ready to return when England needs them again. Real or not, the legend of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table is a compelling story that keeps on inspiring writers and film-makers.



Alfred the Great

Alfred the Great was king of Wessex in the second half of the 9th century AD. He successfully defended his kingdom against the Vikings. He managed to stop them thanks to some wise decisions he made during the war. He strengthened the old forts and built new ones in strategic locations. Also, Alfred reorganized his army and used ships



against the invaders. He was a wise diplomat who took good care of his country's interests and maintained friendly relations with its strategic partners. He was the first monarch to name himself 'king of the Anglo-Saxons'.

Apart from his military and administrative skills, he is remembered for supporting art, literacy and education. He promoted the English language and believed that young people should be able to read in English, not only in Latin, so he learned Latin and translated Latin books into English. For these reasons, he is the only English monarch who was given the name 'the Great'.

There is an old legend about King Alfred and the cakes. According to the story, when Alfred was on the run from the Vikings after a battle, he was hiding in a woman's house. She did not know who he was and asked him to look after some cakes that she was baking by the fire. Unfortunately, Alfred was so lost in thought that he forgot about the cakes and let them burn. The woman was very angry and told him off, not knowing that the visitor was her king!

Henry VIII

Henry VIII is one of England's most famous monarchs, known for his numerous marriages, having around 70,000 people (including two of his own wives) executed, and forming the Church of England.

Henry was married six times. There is even a short rhyme which describes what happened to his wives: *'Divorced, beheaded, died. Divorced, beheaded, survived'*.



Henry divorced his first wife because he wanted a male heir to the throne, but Catherine of Aragon, his wife of 22 years, did not give him a son. The Catholic Church refused to grant permission for the divorce. As a result, Henry VIII formed a new church - the Church of England - and appointed himself as its head. The title of Supreme Head of the Church of England is still held by British monarchs today.

Interestingly, Henry was the first English king to write and publish a book. When Martin Luther published his *'Theses'*, which led to the birth of Reformation, Henry decided to support the church in Rome by writing the *'Defence of the Seven Sacraments'*. The book became an international bestseller and the Pope, in order to express his gratitude, gave Henry the title of the *'Defender of the Faith'*. Henry still used the title after breaking away from the Catholic Church and forming the Church of England.

In his youth, Henry was a handsome, fit and athletic man, known for his generosity and kindness. He was also very good at jousting – a sport which was very popular among noblemen. Everything changed when, at the age of 44, he suffered a severe leg injury at a jousting tournament. After the accident, Henry was left with a serious leg problem and could not walk or exercise regularly. As he aged, he gained a lot of weight and became extremely obese. Towards the end of his life Henry weighed almost 180 kilograms. He also suffered from depression and personality change, which made him unpredictable and cruel. Henry VIII died in 1547 at the age of 55 and was buried in Windsor Castle.

Elizabeth I



Queen Elizabeth I was born on September 7th, 1533 as a daughter of King Henry VIII and his second wife, Anne Boleyn. Henry VIII was not happy over her birth as he wanted a son to rule the country after him. Angry with Anne Boleyn, he accused her of a crime that she had not committed and had her sentenced to death. Elizabeth was only 2.5 years old when her mother was executed on the orders of her father and she was sent away from the court.

She hardly ever saw her father, but fortunately, she was surrounded by people who took good care of her well-being and education. Elizabeth was a clever and diligent student. She was well-read and she learned to speak six languages. In fact, she is considered to be one of the best-educated women of her generation.

Elizabeth was only thirteen years old when her father died, and princess Mary, the eldest daughter of Henry VIII, who was later known as 'Bloody Mary', became queen. Mary was Catholic and she wanted English people to be Catholic too. Many of those who refused to convert to Catholicism were burned at the stake.

Mary did not trust Elizabeth, who was Protestant, and she jailed her in the Tower of London. When Mary died without children, Elizabeth was declared the new queen. She was 25 years old when she took the throne of England and she reigned for over 44 years. Even though many people opposed her, claiming that women should not rule the country, she turned out to be an excellent politician who made England a powerful country. She was also very brave and managed to destroy the powerful Spanish Armada. When King Philip of Spain tried to invade Britain, Elizabeth was not afraid to join her soldiers and rode on horseback from London to the soldiers' camp. She encouraged them to fight for England and she told them that even though she was a woman, she had 'the heart and stomach of a king' and that she would live or die among them.

Elizabeth was loved by her subjects who called her 'Good Queen Bess'. She is considered to be one of the most successful English monarchs in history, who turned England from a weak and divided kingdom into a strong and prosperous country, and her reign is sometimes referred to as England's golden age. The Elizabethan era was time of peace and prosperity, when culture and the arts- especially English drama- blossomed with the queen's support. Apart from supporting the arts, she encouraged foreign trade and exploration of other continents.

Queen Elizabeth I was the last monarch of the House of Tudor. She wanted to be independent, so she turned down many suitors and remained single and childless till the end of her life. For this reason, she was also known as the Virgin Queen.

Queen Victoria

Queen Victoria was born in 1819. Her father died when she was a baby and even though her mother tried to control her, she grew up to be a strong-willed and independent young lady. Her family was German, but she learned to speak perfect English. She also spoke French and Italian.

Victoria was crowned queen at the age of 18, when her uncle, King William IV died without a male heir. Even though she was very young and inexperienced, she was determined to do her best to fulfil her duty towards the country and be a good queen for her subjects. Although she was a tiny lady – only about five feet tall, she soon impressed the Parliament with her energy, intelligence and willingness to learn and work hard. At the same time, she was a sociable young woman who enjoyed going to parties and meeting people.



In 1840 she married a German prince, Albert, who was her distant cousin. In fact, she was the one who proposed to him, as because of his lower status, he was not allowed to ask the queen to marry him.

At her wedding Victoria wore a white dress, while most brides at that time wore coloured dresses because white fabrics were very expensive. Her wedding was a big event and it drew so much attention that soon white became the favourite colour for wedding dresses. Another tradition that Victoria and Albert popularized in Britain was decorating the Christmas tree. The custom soon spread to other wealthy English families, and then to the middle classes, as well as to other parts of the world.

Victoria and Albert were a loving couple and they had nine children. When Victoria's offspring grew, they married into numerous royal families in many European countries and she became known as the 'Grandmother of Europe'. Interestingly, both Queen Elizabeth II and her husband Philip are Queen Victoria's great-great-grandchildren.

In 1861 Prince Albert died, and Victoria mourned him till the end of her life. Even though Victoria was lively and

cheerful as a young woman, she went down in history as a sullen and strict ruler.

After her husband's death she wore only black clothes, she withdrew from public life and neglected her duties as a queen. During that time new laws were passed by the Parliament, which took advantage of Victoria's lack of interest in politics and limited the monarch's political power.

Victoria reigned during the Industrial Revolution which was a time of important changes in society. With the growth of factories more and more people moved from the countryside to cities, which started expanding very rapidly and struggled with the problem of poverty and overcrowding.

Queen Victoria was the first monarch who lived in Buckingham Palace, which was completed shortly before her coronation. She was also the first member of the royal family who travelled by train, which was a new invention at that time. She sent the first telegram from Europe to America. She was the first monarch to use the telephone and the first one to have her photo taken.

Queen Victoria's reign was a time of peace and prosperity for Britain, which established many colonies and created the most powerful empire in the world. The British Empire controlled 25% of the total land area on six continents. It built enormous wealth by using the raw materials and resources from the colonies to manufacture goods. Britain produced more goods than any other country and was sometimes called 'the workshop of the world.'

Queen Victoria died in 1901. She had reigned for sixty-three years – longer than any king or queen before her. She was such an important figure that the period of her reign was named the Victorian era.

Queen Elizabeth II

Elizabeth II was born in 1926, as the daughter of King George VI and his wife, Queen Elizabeth. Crowned in 1953, she is the longest reigning monarch in the United Kingdom. Apart from the UK, she is also the head of state in a number of countries, including Australia, Canada, Jamaica and New Zealand. She is married to Prince Philip, and they have four children (Charles, Anne, Andrew and Edward) and eight grandchildren.

Traditionally, the king or queen of the United Kingdom had a big influence on politics, and although that is not the case anymore, the Queen still has to sign a document to pass every new law.

On a more personal level, she is considered an excellent grandmother, a great advice-giver, a hilarious storyteller, a dog-lover and an outdoors person.

She spends most of her time in one of her six residencies. The most famous estates where the Queen lives when she is not at Buckingham Palace, are Windsor Castle, in Berkshire, and Sandringham House, in Norfolk.

Here are some interesting facts about the Queen that definitely separate her from ordinary people:

- She does not need a passport or driving license. Why? Because both documents are issued in the name of Her Majesty anyway, so it's simply unnecessary for her to request them.
- She has two birthdays. Why? Because she can. She has her real birthday on the 21st April. This one is private and celebrated with her family. Her second birthday is on the second Saturday of June, and is celebrated very publicly, with lots of cameras, tourists and parades.
- She married her cousin. Really? Yes, Prince Philip is actually the Queen's third cousin. That means they have the same great-great-grandparents: Queen Victoria and Prince Albert.
- She chose her own surname. Her family's original name was actually 'Saxe-Coburg-Gotha', but it was changed during World War One for sounding too Germanic, so they took the name 'Windsor' instead.
- She has had over 30 dogs and created her own breed of dog. The Queen loves Corgis, and she also created a breed of dog that is half Corgi and half Dachshund.

Although the monarchy does not play such an important role in the United Kingdom anymore, Her Majesty is known to be a generous and kind woman who makes time for those people who are most important to her. Public opinion on whether the United Kingdom really needs a royal family in the 21st century is very divided, but most people are very interested in the life of the Royal Family and still celebrate events happening within it.

Winston Churchill

Winston Churchill was born in 1874, during Queen Victoria's reign, into one of the richest families in England. Since his aristocratic parents did not have much time for little Winston, he was raised by his nanny, who was his closest friend in his youth.

As a young boy Churchill was sent to a prestigious boarding school, which he really hated. He was a poor student and he struggled with many subjects, especially maths and science. However, he was an avid reader and a talented writer. He was also very good at fencing.

After two unsuccessful attempts, he passed the entrance exam to the Royal Military Academy. He loved the school and became one of the best students in his class. After graduating, he did some real fighting: in Cuba, where he developed his famous taste for cigars, in India and in South Africa, where he became a prisoner of war. Luckily, he managed to escape and when newspapers reported on his adventures, he became a war hero in Britain.

Upon returning to England, he became involved in politics and won a seat in the House of Commons. At first he was a member of the Conservative Party, but when he saw that the party was not really interested in helping ordinary people, he moved to the Liberal Party.

His political career developed very fast and he became Home Secretary of Great Britain, and then head of the British Navy. When World War I broke out, the Navy under his command suffered heavy losses and Churchill lost his job. Later, he volunteered and was sent to France where he fought on the front line.

The war cost many lives, but Churchill managed to return home safely and soon after that he was appointed Minister of Munitions, responsible for supplying weapons to the British army. When the war ended, he held other government positions and was involved in creating new boundaries in the post-war Middle East.

In 1922, due to health problems, he withdrew from public life. He settled in the country and took up painting. He also had more time to focus on writing, and he wrote a history of WWI. Two years later he returned to politics and joined the Conservative Party again. He became a Member of Parliament and was responsible for Britain's financial matters.

He was not good at the job and he did not like it. The country was in crisis, unemployment was high and the people were unhappy. The Conservative Party lost the next election and Churchill lost his job. He left politics for over 10 years and focused on public speaking, painting and writing. He was a successful writer and his books were very popular.

When Hitler rose to power, Churchill wrote articles that warned people of the Nazi leader. He considered Hitler a dangerous man and did not trust him.

In 1939, when Nazi troops attacked Poland, Great Britain and France declared war on Germany. One year later Churchill, who was then 65 years old, became Prime Minister. He was an exceptional speaker. His speeches were broadcast on the radio and encouraged people to stand up to the Nazis during WWII. He worked very hard preparing his speeches. It often took him up to one hour to prepare every minute of a speech that he was going to make. However, his words had a great impact on the nation, they lifted people's spirits and gave them the courage to stand up to Germany.

When London was being bombed, instead of hiding in a government bunker, Churchill stood by the civilians. He asked Londoners to stay strong, and they did not surrender. Eventually, the Germans stopped the raids and attacked the Soviet Union. In December 1941, the Japanese bombed the US military base in Pearl Harbour. As a result, the

United States entered the war against Germany, which surrendered in 1945.

After the war the relations between the communist Soviet Union and democratic countries became worse and worse. Churchill was very critical of communism and in one of his speeches said that '*an iron curtain has descended across the continent*'. The Cold War and the division of Europe, symbolised by the 'Iron Curtain' ended in 1991, when the Soviet Union collapsed.

In 1953 Winston Churchill received the Nobel Prize in Literature for his *Memoirs of the Second World War*. The same year his service and achievements were recognized by Queen Elizabeth II. He was knighted by her and from then on people called him Sir Winston. In 1963 President John F. Kennedy named him an honorary citizen of the US. Winston Churchill died of a stroke in 1965. He is considered to be one of the greatest leaders in world history.

Margaret Thatcher

Margaret Thatcher was born in 1925, in Grantham, England, as a daughter of a local grocery store owner. Her father was a member of the town's council and he introduced her to politics when she was a young girl.

She was a clever student and after finishing her secondary school, she was admitted to Oxford University where she studied chemistry. Having earned a degree, she worked as a research chemist for a couple of years, and then she decided to study law. When she qualified as a barrister, she entered politics again, and in 1959 she won a seat in the House of Commons, representing the Conservative Party.

Ambitious, hard-working and tough, Margaret Thatcher rose through the party ranks. In 1970 she was appointed secretary of state for education and science, and she made some unpopular decisions. One of them was to stop giving out free milk to schoolchildren, and as a result, people started calling her 'Thatcher, milk snatcher'. Over time she became the leader of the Conservative party, and in 1979 she was appointed Britain's first female prime minister.



When she took office, Britain was struggling with many economic problems. As prime minister, she was a very controversial figure, accused of creating a wider gap between the rich and the poor. She supported private business and believed that people should take care of themselves instead of waiting for the government to help them. She cut government spending on social welfare programs and privatised social housing and public transport. Her critics claimed that her policies led to the loss of many jobs and Britain's traditional industries, such as mining. Many coal mines were closed down and thousands of miners became unemployed as a result of her decisions.

She stepped down in 1990 and after leaving office she was appointed to the House of Lords, as Baroness Thatcher. Controversial as she was, she was a very important figure in British and international politics. Due to her determination and tough policies she became known as the 'Iron Lady'. Late in her life, her health deteriorated and she suffered from memory problems. She died on April 8, 2013, at the age of 87.

US PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, FAMOUS PRESIDENTS AND STATESMEN

Some history

George Washington was elected in the first US presidential election in 1789. Back then only white men who owned property could vote. This meant that 94% of the population were not allowed to cast a ballot. Over time women and coloured people were given the right to vote in democratic elections.

Americans choose their president every four years and they traditionally vote on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November. The Constitution does not say when Election Day should be and in the early 1800s people could vote from April to December. In 1845, Congress decided that voting day would be the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November, which was after the autumn harvest and before winter weather made travel too difficult.

Back then, officials thought that farmers needed a day to get to the nearest polling station to vote and they did not want to interfere with church day on Sunday. So Tuesday seemed to be a perfect choice.

And who can run for president? To be a presidential candidate one needs to be at least 35 years old, a permanent US resident for at least 14 years, and a natural US born citizen.

President of the United States, also referred to as (POTUS), is the head of state and head of government of the United States of America. He is in charge of the executive branch of the federal government and is the commander-in-chief of the United States Armed Forces. The law requires that all bills passed by Congress must be presented to the president before they can become law and he has the right to veto them. The president can also appoint and dismiss government officials, and has the power to nominate federal judges.

Presidents can only hold the office for two terms and the tradition goes back to the times of George Washington, the first president, who decided that he was not running for a third term and established a 'two-terms then out' precedent. He believed that such a solution would be more democratic and it would help prevent dictatorship. However, there were some exceptions to the 'two-term rule'. In 1940, after leading the nation through the Great Depression, Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected for a third term, and four years later, during World War II, he was re-elected for his fourth term.

A president can be removed from office by the process of impeachment for breaking the law and committing a crime. However, so far no president has been removed from office.

George Washington

George Washington was born in 1732 into the family of a tobacco farmer from Virginia. His father was not wealthy enough to send him to England for schooling, so he was educated at home. George was very good at math, but he struggled with spelling – in fact the problem continued into his adult life, and it was very embarrassing for him.

George grew up to be a very tall and athletic young man. He worked as a surveyor – he measured and marked property boundaries. That was not an easy task as there were few maps, no roads and he had to spend long weeks in the wilderness.

His health was strong and he even survived smallpox, which killed most infected people at that time. However, he had problems with his teeth and lost them quite early. When he became president he only had one tooth left and had to wear dentures. It is said that this is the reason why he never smiles in portraits.



When he was 27 years old, George married a rich widow with two children, but he never had any children of his own. He worked as a farmer for many years, but in 1775, when the thirteen American colonies rebelled against the British rule, Washington was asked to lead the Continental Army and fight against England.

The War of Independence was a tough one. The American soldiers were very young, untrained and uneducated. They did not have proper clothes, weapons or food, and in fact, cold weather and diseases killed more soldiers than the bullets of the enemy. The British army was very well trained, experienced and properly armed – and yet, it lost the war. Washington was a smart commander and he avoided open battles, where Americans stood no chance of winning. Instead, he organized surprise attacks. Also, he hired a German with a lot of military experience, who called himself Baron von Steuben (even though he was not a baron). Von Steuben trained the soldiers and turned them into a professional and well-organized army, which helped the Americans win.

Historians say that George Washington was actually the main reason why the Americans won the War of Independence. The British generals came and went, while Washington stood with his soldiers. Surprisingly, he was never wounded even though he always fought arm in arm with them.

When the British finally surrendered and the war ended in 1781, the new country was very weak and it did not have

a proper government. George Washington knew this had to change and together with other great leaders, including Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin, he worked to create a strong political system for the United States.

The Constitution written in 1787 mapped out the three branches of power, which still exists: a president, a congress and a supreme court. The branches were supposed to control one another to make sure there would be balance and none of them would be too powerful. Today it is called 'the system of checks and balances'.

When the first election was held, George Washington won and became the first president. New York became the temporary capital of the country and then the capital was moved to Philadelphia. Finally, Washington, D.C. was established as the new capital city and it was named after the first president.

George Washington retired after his second term and returned to his family farm. He died in 1799 at the age of sixty-seven, after catching a bad cold. In order to honour the father of the nation, the Congress decided to build the Washington Monument. When it was built, it was the tallest man-made structure in the world and to this day, no other building in Washington D.C. can be taller than the monument. Washington's face is also on the one-dollar bill and it was commemorated on Mount Rushmore.

Benjamin Franklin

Ben Franklin was born in Boston in 1706 into a very large family. He had 16 siblings and his parents were not wealthy, but hard-working people. They made candles and soap and ran a shop where they sold their products. The children had to start working early to help the family make ends meet, so Ben went to school for only two years and then he was put to work in the shop. He was not good with numbers, but he loved reading books and writing.

Ben did not like working in his parents' shop. He wanted to do something else, so at the age of 12 he became an apprentice in his older brother's printing shop. He was a clever and creative kid and soon he started writing poems, which his brother printed and sold in the streets. The poems became quite popular, and then young Ben started writing funny articles about life in Boston, which he published under a woman's name.



Over time Ben became fed up with his brother who was not very kind and often beat him. Thus, Ben decided to look for a better life and become a publisher himself. He ran away from his brother and went to Philadelphia, where he found a job as a printer.

The quality of Benjamin's work drew the attention of the governor of Pennsylvania, who hired him and sent him to London to buy printing supplies. Unfortunately, the governor did not send any money, and Ben found himself penniless and an ocean away from home.

Ben quickly found a job as a printer and learned even more about the trade. When he returned to America two years later, he started publishing his own newspaper. Since there were not many interesting things to report, Franklin made up stories for it. Soon, his publications brought him popularity and wealth.

In his early forties Ben was rich enough to stop working as a printer, and he focused on his passions: science and helping other people. He experimented with electricity and heat and invented a number of practical things that improved people's lives, for example the lightning rod and bifocal eyeglasses.

He wanted to give people access to books, which were then very expensive, and founded the Library Company of Philadelphia. He also founded America's first volunteer fire department, the Philadelphia Academy, America's first general hospital and helped organize postal services in the colonies.

After years of public service, he became interested in politics. When war broke out between England and the colonies, Americans were divided. Some of them wanted to remain under England's rule, while others wanted to

create a new nation. Franklin was in favour of independence and he helped Jefferson create the Declaration of Independence. Later, he was involved in creating the US constitution and developing a system of government for the new nation.

Despite having very little formal education, Benjamin Franklin was a great man: a statesman, a scientist, and an author who coined a number of sayings that are popular to this day, for example: *'Haste makes waste'*, or *'Little strokes fell great oaks'*, and *'God helps them that help themselves'*.

Thomas Jefferson



Thomas Jefferson was born in 1743 on his family's plantation in Virginia, which was a British colony at that time. His family was prosperous, so he went to college and studied law.

Jefferson was a successful lawyer and then he became interested in politics and was involved in the local government of Virginia, one of the 13 British colonies in America. Over the years the colonies became more and more dissatisfied with the British rule and finally they decided to get rid of it.

Jefferson wanted to create a new independent nation and he supported the idea of separating from England. He was a member of a committee that was asked to prepare the Declaration of Independence and he was the person who actually wrote it. It took him 17 days to complete the historic document. The Declaration of Independence was adopted by the Congress on July 4, 1776, and the date is now celebrated as the birthday of the United States.

Jefferson was a very intelligent man and a talented writer. He proposed free education for all kids, he supported freedom of religion and freedom of the press. Many of his ideas, for example the freeing of slaves, were ahead of his time, even though he owned hundreds of slaves himself. When his wife died, he started a relationship with a young slave woman, Sally Hemings, and had seven children with her. Four of them survived into adulthood and they were slaves at Jefferson's estate. Eventually, after many years they were given their freedom.

In 1800 Jefferson ran for president and won. After his first term of office, he was re-elected for his second term as president. He was a great leader for the young nation and he strengthened its international position. He also made many important domestic decisions that helped the US grow. He purchased Louisiana from France, and after the Lewis and Clark Expedition to the Pacific Northwest, which he commissioned, new states were added to the United States.

After retiring, he founded the University of Virginia. He believed in the importance of education and he had no doubt that it was essential for the prosperity of society. He died on July 4, 1826, on the 50th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.

Abraham Lincoln

Abraham Lincoln was born in 1809 into a poor family of Kentucky farmers. Even as a child, little Abe had to work hard to help the family make ends meet, and there was not much time left for schooling. Lincoln attended school for only one year, and he learned how to read and write. He knew that being able to read, he could learn anything he wanted, and he was eager to learn. Despite the fact that books were not easily available, he read every book he came across, even if he had to walk twenty miles to borrow one.

Young Abraham did not want to be a farmer like his father, so he moved to Illinois to look for some other opportunities. He was a hard-working, friendly and honest man, and people trusted him because he never took advantage of anyone. He became a



popular figure in his community, and when he ran for the Illinois state government, he was elected. In order to do his job better, he started to study law on his own. Even though he never had any formal education, he managed to earn a law licence.

Lincoln was ambitious and wanted to make a difference in his country. He hated slavery and he wanted to put an end to it, so he became involved in politics at the national level. He joined the Republican Party and in 1860 he ran for president. Many people thought that a poor man in shabby clothes and a tall top hat, with no political experience and only one year of schooling did not stand a chance. However, he was such a great speaker that he managed to win over huge crowds of people and win the election.

When Lincoln took office, the country was terribly divided over the issue of slavery. Eventually, the southern states decided to leave the United States and form their own country. As a result, the Civil War between the North and the South broke out. The war was long and bloody. Despite having no military experience, Lincoln turned out to be a good leader, and under his leadership, the North won the war. Slavery was abolished in the USA and Lincoln was re-elected in 1865 for his second term as president. Unfortunately, the end of the war did not put an end to hatred and divisions, and a month later Lincoln was shot and killed by a Confederate supporter.

Abraham Lincoln is considered to be America's greatest president. He was sensitive to other people's needs and managed to hold the country together during its most difficult times. His face is on the five-dollar bill, it was also carved on Mount Rushmore, next to the faces of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and Theodore Roosevelt.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR)



Franklin Delano Roosevelt, a Democratic politician who became the 32nd president of the USA, was born in 1882, in New York State into a wealthy family that made a fortune in real estate and trade.

He was an only child and he was educated by private tutors until the age of 14. When he was sent to a prestigious preparatory school in Massachusetts, he did not really fit in there. After graduating he went to Harvard University, but he was an average student. Then he decided to study law at Columbia University. He practiced corporate law for three years, but eventually he found the job boring and gave it up.

In 1921 at the age of 39, Roosevelt was infected with polio, which left him partially paralyzed. Confined to a wheelchair, he thought that his political career was over, but thanks to his wife's encouragement, he continued his public service. Over the next few years he taught himself to walk short distances using braces, but in spite of his efforts, he never regained the use of his legs. However, throughout his career he made sure not to be seen in public using a wheelchair as he believed that his disability would negatively affect his image as a leader.

When the stock market crashed in 1929, Roosevelt, a Democratic politician, began his presidential campaign by calling for reform and government intervention in the economy to help ordinary people, which ensured his victory in 1932. As President, he introduced the New Deal program of thorough reforms that allowed the country to recover.

The Great Depression, which started in 1929 and lasted till the beginning of World War II, was the greatest crisis in American history since the Civil War. Many banks and companies went bankrupt, millions of Americans became unemployed, and millions lost all their savings and homes. Roosevelt's reforms helped rebuild the economy and his wise leadership was appreciated, so when he ran for his second term in 1936, he was re-elected.

Early in 1940, Roosevelt announced that he would run for his third term as president – which was unprecedented in the two-term system. However, in the middle of World War II, he felt that he had the experience and skills to lead America through such difficult times.

Initially America was not involved in the war, but it supported the anti-Nazi Alliance and provided weapons for it. In fact, the war industry, which generated lots of jobs and considerable profits, helped rebuild America's economy.

The United States became involved in World War II after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour in 1941, and Roosevelt, who was a commander in chief, helped develop a strategy for defeating Germany. In 1944 he ran for his fourth term. Leading the nation through the difficult war times took a toll on his health and he died soon before the end of World War II, in April 1945.

Franklin D. Roosevelt went down in history as the only US president to be elected four times. He successfully led the United States through the Great Depression and World War II and strengthened the position of the federal government. During his presidency the United States built a strong economy and established its global leadership.

John Fitzgerald Kennedy (JFK)

John F. Kennedy, also known as JFK, was born in 1917 into a family of a wealthy American businessman of Irish descent. John was the second of his parents' nine children, and his parents called him Jack.



Little Jack was a weak and sickly child. He kept on catching all sorts of infections and spent a lot of time in bed. Staying in bed was boring, so he read a lot. When he grew up, Jack went to Harvard university. He was an average student, but his writing and thinking skills were outstanding.

In 1937 John's father was appointed ambassador to Great Britain and the family moved to London. John travelled to many countries in Europe and became interested in politics. When Japan attacked the American military base at Pearl Harbour, Hawaii, the United States joined World War II. Many young men enlisted, and so did John, who was accepted into the US Navy. When his boat was destroyed, he refused to leave a badly wounded soldier behind, and swam with him for five hours until they reached an island where they got help. He became a war hero and returned home.

In 1946, Jack ran for Congress, representing the Democratic Party, and he won. After 5 years as a congressman he ran for Senate and won again. When he was 42 years old, he decided to run for president. Many people thought he was too young and many did not like the fact that he was Catholic. However, he was truly interested in ordinary people and believed that they needed more support than big businesses. This won him many votes and at the age of 43, he became the youngest American president in history. During his inauguration ceremony he made a famous speech, which went down in history. He said: *'...ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country'*.

JFK was married to Jacqueline Lee Bouvier- Jackie, with whom he had two children, John and Caroline. Jackie, who had a great sense of style, redid the White House and turned it into a place of culture and art.

John suffered from terrible backache as a result of an old injury, and it was sometimes so bad that he needed to use crutches. Despite his health problems, he was a great fan of sports and physical activity. He also supported space exploration and thanks to his efforts, in 1969 Americans set foot on the Moon. Unfortunately, John Kennedy did not live to see this great achievement as he was shot and killed during his visit to Dallas, Texas, in 1963.

As president, he was committed to the cause of equal rights for African-Americans, which was a source of deep division in the USA and may have been the reason why he was assassinated. During his presidency, which lasted for only 3 years, John F. Kennedy created the Peace Corps and sent aid to Third World countries, where people were starving. He also managed to avoid a nuclear crisis during the Cold War, when the world was on the brink of another military conflict.

John F. Kennedy is remembered as a brave, compassionate and fair leader who promoted equality, cared for his nation and inspired people to achieve great things.

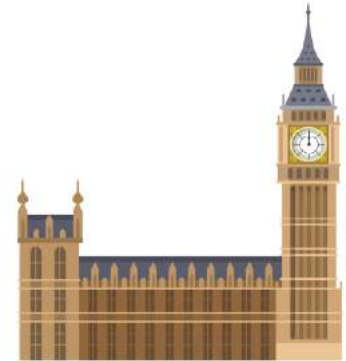
UK AND US GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS

The British Parliament

The British Parliament is the legislative body of the United Kingdom, responsible for making laws, discussing important political and economic issues as well as deciding how much tax people and businesses should pay. It is composed of three parts: the Queen (or king), the House of Commons and the House of Lords.

The Queen (the sovereign) does not have any real political power and her role is mainly ceremonial. She summons and dissolves Parliament, gives royal approval to new laws, and she formally appoints prime ministers, senior ministers, diplomats and judges.

The House of Commons is often referred to as 'the Commons'. It makes new laws and its members are called Members of Parliament or MPs. The MP who presides over parliamentary debates is called the Speaker. Most Members of Parliament are full-time politicians and they receive a salary for their work in Parliament, even though they are not paid very much. They are elected in democratic elections held every 5 years and there are 659 MPs, representing the so-called constituencies or districts in Britain. If an MP resigns or dies, a by-election is held in his or her constituency. Interestingly, even though there are 659 MPs, there are only 400 seats in the House, so there are not enough places for everybody!



The House of Lords does not have much real power. Nowadays, its role is mainly advisory and consultative. Members of the House of Lords are known as 'peers', and they are not allowed to pass new laws or reject laws passed by the House of Commons. However, they can propose some amendments or changes.

As the name suggests, the members of the House of Lords were originally aristocrats. Some of them were also senior bishops of the Church of England. The positions were hereditary, which means they were passed down from father to son. This changed during the second half of the 20th century and 'peerage' or membership of the House is now offered to distinguished senior politicians, for example former prime ministers or ministers, who no longer want to be as busy as MPs or members of the government, but still want to be involved and express their opinions on important public issues. The House of Lords has about 1200 members.

The term 'Parliament' comes from the French word '*parley*', which means '*a discussion*'. The origins of the name and the institution go back to the 13th century and the meetings between King Henry III and the Great Council. At that time noblemen had to pay for the government and the wars fought by the country, and the Great Council, which was composed of members of the nobility, discussed important political and financial issues with the king and approved tax increases proposed by the monarch. Over time, the Great Council became the House of Lords, and representatives of towns and counties formed the House of Commons.

Due to its long history, Parliament has preserved some old traditions. For example, when MPs vote for or against a proposal, they say 'Aye' – which means 'yes'. Those who are in favour are 'the Ayes', and those who are against are 'the Noes'. Journalists and members of the public can watch and listen to the debates from the Strangers' Gallery.

The White House

The White House is the home and office of US Presidents, located at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington D.C. The name 'White House' is also used to refer to the US President and his advisors.

The building was commissioned by George Washington as the house for American presidents in the new city of Washington that was to become the capital for the United States. Designed in 1800 by an Irish architect, James Hoban, it was built of light brown sandstone and originally it was not white at all.

Unfortunately, George Washington never lived there. The construction took 8 years, and he died one year before it

was completed. Initially, the White House was smaller than it is nowadays. When Thomas Jefferson moved in, he added two wings, and he also changed the landscape around it. Later, other presidents made some other changes, too. Nowadays, all the changes have to be approved by a special historical committee and new presidents are only allowed to change the furniture in the Oval Office.



In 1812, when the United States and Britain were at war, British soldiers took over Washington and burned the White House. The fire destroyed most of the building. Only a few walls remained intact, so it had to be rebuilt. When it was reconstructed, the walls were painted white to cover the stones blackened by the fire, and from then on people started calling it 'the White House'. In 1901, President Theodore Roosevelt decided that would be the building's official name.

From 1948 till 1952 the White House was renovated – it was so decrepit that it was dangerous to live there, so President Truman had to move out. Jackie Kennedy redecorated the building again in 1961 and she furnished it with beautiful furniture, paintings, sculptures and other works of art. She believed the White House was not just the place where presidents lived, but also a symbol of the nation that belonged to the people of the USA.

Today, the White House has 132 rooms, 35 bathrooms, a movie theatre, and a bowling alley. There is also a music room, a gym and a swimming pool. The US president's office is called the Oval Office. As the name suggests, it is oval in shape.

People can visit the White House and tours of the White House are very popular, but in order to do so, they need a special permission. There are also annual Easter Egg Rolls that are open to the public, and so many people want to take part in them, that a lottery is held for tickets.

The US Congress

The Congress is one of the three branches of the federal government, the legislative branch, and it is responsible for making new laws and deciding how public money will be spent. It consists of two houses: the Senate and the House of Representatives. These two houses were created because the founders of the nation believed that power should be shared among all units of government to prevent dictatorship.

The Senate is the upper house and it has 100 members. There are two senators representing each state, and they are elected by all voters of their state for a term of 6 years. The Senate is responsible for foreign policy, and it also advises the President.

The House of Representatives is the lower and larger house and it has 435 representatives who are elected every two years. The number of representatives representing each state depends on its population, but each state has at least one representative. The House of Representatives represents the will of the people more closely than the Senate. They are elected every two years, and in order to be elected, they maintain close personal contact with their local communities, and represent their interests in Washington.

Both senators and representatives must be residents of the state from which they are chosen. In addition, a senator must be at least 30 years of age and must have been a citizen of the United States for at least 9 years. A representative must be at least 25 years of age and must have been a citizen for at least 7 years.



FAMOUS CITIES AND PLACES

London

London, the British capital, the largest European metropolis and one of the most exciting cities in the world, has not always been called London. The name comes from 'Londinium', established around 43 AD by the Romans as a port and a commercial centre on the banks of the Thames which the Romans named Tamesa- 'the flowing one'.

It is unlikely that the Romans came up with the name of Londinium out of nowhere. According to some medieval texts, it was derived from the name of King Lud who allegedly had founded the city and named it after himself. Another theory suggests that it comes from the name of a local chieftain or the Celtic word 'lond' meaning 'wild'.

For four centuries, Londinium was an important city in Roman Britain. It even had its own colosseum where gladiator fights took place. When the Roman Empire crumbled at the beginning of the 5th century, the Romans left Britain and Londinium, became a ghost town. However, thanks to its favourable location on the banks on the River Thames, it gradually regained its importance when Anglo-Saxons took over the area and established a colony there. Documents from the 7th and 8th century name it as 'Lundenwic' or 'Lundenburh'. After the Norman Conquest in the 11th century the city was referred to by its modern name, or similar versions such as Lundin, Lunden and Londen.



When William the Conqueror became king of England, he had three castles built in London. One of them was later expanded and became the Tower of London. In the 12th century London replaced Winchester as the capital of England. Interestingly, for many years England had no official capital city and there is no specific date when London became the capital of Britain.

Over time, the city's population grew, and it was becoming increasingly polluted, which caused diseases to spread easily. The Black Death epidemic in 1348 killed around 40,000 people – almost half of London's population. In 1665 London suffered another outbreak – the Great Plague which killed between 70,000 and 100,000 people. To make things worse, one year later, in 1666, the city was almost completely destroyed by the Great Fire of London, which began at a baker's shop. Surprisingly, only 8 people lost their lives, but thousands lost their homes.

The destruction caused by the fire was a new beginning for London. The city was rebuilt and to make it more fireproof, stone and bricks were used instead of wood and many important buildings, which have survived to our times, date from that period, for example the magnificent St Paul's Cathedral. By the end of the 17th century London had over one million inhabitants. The city became more elegant and many institutions, such as the Royal Society, colleges, banks and museums were established.

Guy Fawkes and the Gunpowder Plot: how London was only a few minutes away from destruction!

You have probably heard about King Henry VIII, the king who liked to kill his wives? So you may also know a little bit about the birth of Anglicanism in the United Kingdom, which replaced Catholicism in the 16th century. Since King Henry VIII was the creator of Anglicanism, the kings and queens after him did not really like Catholicism, and Catholics in the United Kingdom had quite a difficult life. When the King James I took the throne, people thought that things might get better for Catholics, but unfortunately they did not, and many Catholics felt very unhappy.

One of them was so unhappy that he wanted to destroy not only the king, but the whole British government! His name was Guy Fawkes. On 5th November 1605, Fawkes and his followers planned the 'gunpowder plot'. They filled a wooden barrel with gunpowder and rolled it into a basement under the Houses of Parliament. They were waiting for the perfect opportunity to blow up the building, but only a few minutes before they wanted to make the

explosion, a guard noticed Guy Fawkes and stopped the attack. Fawkes and his followers were arrested and taken to the Tower of London and later executed, and London was saved from what could have been a very deadly explosion!

King James I ordered the people of the United Kingdom to celebrate this attack being stopped, and they have done so for over 400 years now. On the 5th November, or Bonfire Night, people take lots of wood into their garden, or a field, and burn it (this is called a 'bonfire'). There is often a model of Guy Fawkes in the middle of the bonfire, made from straw and old clothes. You may hear the phrase 'Remember, remember the 5th of November,' in the United Kingdom, and the reason for this is remembering Guy Fawkes' unsuccessful gunpowder plot, to destroy the Houses of Parliament.



During the Industrial Revolution millions of people came to London in search of jobs. Such a dynamic expansion of the city brought about many problems, such as dire poverty, crime and pollution. The Thames was so polluted that in the summer it produced such a bad smell that parliamentary sessions had to be suspended. Thousands died of diseases caused by contaminated water and air, malnutrition and a lack of suitable housing. The terrible conditions poor Londoners lived in were described in the novels written by Charles Dickens.

The city's health situation improved when new sewers were built and waste was carried out of London to the sea. Nowadays, despite the brownish colour caused by the mud from the riverbed, the Thames is surprisingly clean and many kinds of fish, including salmon and eels, live there.

London had always attracted migrants from other parts of the British Isles, and by the end of the 19th century 6 million people lived there. After World War II during which it was bombed by the Germans in a series of air raids known as 'The Blitz', it became home to new waves of immigrants from all over the world. Today it has a multi-ethnic and multicultural community of over 9 million people. It is also an important cultural and financial centre.

Washington, D.C.

New York and Philadelphia were the first capitals of the USA, but the nation's Founding Fathers decided that the capital should be separate from the states, to make sure it would be neutral and independent. The new location was selected by George Washington in 1790 and a city, named after its founder, was built there from scratch when Maryland and Virginia donated 100 square miles of land to create the new District of Columbia. The name 'Columbia', derived from explorer Christopher Columbus, was commonly used during the American Revolution as a poetic name for the United States.

In 1791, President Washington appointed a French architect, Pierre Charles L'Enfant to plan the new capital. L'Enfant came up with a design for a modern city inspired by Paris, with the Capitol building in its centre. However, L'Enfant's vision was later revised by other architects.

In 1800, the seat of the US government was moved to Washington. To this day the main buildings and institutions of the American government are located there.

During the War of 1812 much of the city, including the White House, the Capitol and the Library of Congress with all its books, was burned to the ground by the British army. Washington was later rebuilt, but it remained relatively small until after the Civil War. When slaves were freed, many of them settled in the capital. The city still has a big and vibrant black community and African-Americans make up around 66% of its population.

Washington has about 700,000 inhabitants and it is home to many museums and national monuments, and also America's most-visited national park- the National Mall. Located in the heart of Washington, the park is the place where the US Capitol Building, the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial can be seen. There are 177 foreign embassies and headquarters of many international organisations. It is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world, visited by 20 million tourists per year.

New York City

New York City (NYC) is located in New York State in the northeast of the United States. It is sometimes called a Melting Pot because it is home to people from almost every country in the world! The city also has other nicknames, including The Big Apple or The City That Never Sleeps, because it is a really busy place. New York is the biggest American metropolis. It has about 8.6 million inhabitants and nearly 60 million tourists visit it every year.



The city has a long and interesting history, which started some 400 years ago on the island of Manhattan. The first people who lived there were Native Americans, and the name Manhattan comes from their language. In the 17th century, settlers from Holland bought Manhattan from the native people. They built a city there and they called it New Amsterdam. Later, the British took it over and changed its name to New York. The city grew very fast and from 1785 to 1790 it was the capital of the United States.

There are five boroughs in New York City: Manhattan, the Bronx, Queens, Brooklyn and Staten Island. It is estimated that Manhattan has a population of 1.63 million people- all living in an area of just a little less than 60 square kilometres, which makes it one of the most densely populated urban areas on Earth.

There are two rivers in New York: the Hudson River and the East River. The East River is actually not a river but part of the Atlantic Ocean, and its water is salty. All the boroughs are linked by bridges and the subway system.

Brooklyn Bridge

The Brooklyn Bridge, which connects Manhattan and Brooklyn, is a little more than a mile long and it takes about 30 to 45 minutes to cross it on foot, depending on how fast you walk. The bridge was built in the years 1869-83 and it was a wonder of modern engineering and the longest suspension bridge in the world. However, many people had doubts about its stability, and in 1884 twenty-one elephants were walked across the bridge to prove that it was safe. Nowadays, it carries smaller vehicles, bicycles and pedestrian traffic, while commercial vehicles are banned from it in order to avoid damage to the structure. Since its opening, the Brooklyn Bridge has been a landmark of New York and one of the most popular tourist attractions in the United States of America.



Central Park

Central Park, sometimes referred to as 'the green lungs of New York', is located in the centre of Manhattan and it is one of the largest urban parks in the world. It is about 4 km long and 800 meters wide, which makes it bigger than Vatican City.

Although Central Park looks very natural, it is actually all landscaped. There are 25,000 trees, three lakes, acres of woodlands and lawns, 58 miles of walking paths, over 30 bridges and arches, a castle, a skating rink and a zoo. It was established in 1857 and before it was built, the area was a swamp. The ground was not suitable for vegetation and it required 500,000 cubic feet of soil to be transported from New Jersey before any trees could be planted.

Since 1962, Central Park has been a National Historic Landmark and each year it has about 40 million visitors.

Interestingly, about 30 people claim it is their home. It is one of the most filmed locations in the world and it has starred in many movies.

Times Square and Broadway

Times Square is one of the most popular places in New York City. It stretches between Broadway and Seventh Avenue, and it is where people meet to celebrate New Year's Eve and watch the famous New Year's Eve Ball, which drops down a flagpole at midnight on December 31st.



The name of the square comes from The New York Times, which used to have its headquarters there. In 1913 The New York Times moved its offices to a new location, but the name remained. The newspaper also started the New Year's Eve Ball tradition and the ball drops from the top of their old building. Times Square draws millions of tourists and visitors and is estimated that 360,000 people visit it each day.

Broadway is the name of a long street in Manhattan, which gave its name to the most famous theatre district in the world. There are forty theatres where one can see great shows and musicals with world-famous actors.

New York skyscrapers

The word 'skyscraper' comes from a type of sail on a sailing ship and New York is a city of skyscrapers. There are almost 6,000 high-rise buildings there, and most of them are in Manhattan. The tallest building in NYC is 541 m tall, and it is called One World Trade Center.

It has the same name as one of the twin towers that were destroyed in the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Two other famous skyscrapers are the Empire State Building (381 m) and the Chrysler Building (319 m). For many years the Empire State Building was the tallest and most famous building in the world. Interestingly, it was built during the Great Depression in the USA and at that time nobody was interested in renting office space there, so people made jokes and called it The Empty State Building.

Stonehenge

Stonehenge is an iconic, ancient landmark of the United Kingdom, and because of its age, it is surrounded by many mysteries. It is the largest ancient stone structure in the world, located near Salisbury in southern England, and was probably built between 3000 and 1500 BC by the Neolithic people.



It consists of two rings of large stones, one inside the other and we know today that the original monument was 15 times the size of what can be seen today.

Why is Stonehenge so special? It was built without any kind of technology used in the 21st century and some of the stones are up to 9 meters tall, and weigh up to 22.6 tons each. The biggest rocks were carried uphill for around 32 kilometres, and some of the smaller ones around 200 km from as far as Wales. It was a huge undertaking and thousands of people must have been involved in transporting the heavy stones, shaping and erecting them.

Many theories have been put forward to explain why Stonehenge was constructed. Scientists suspect that it was to study the stars and planets or to worship the sun as every stone was lined perfectly according to the stars. Some people also claim that it was built by aliens!

In 1986 Stonehenge was made a World Heritage Site and it is one of the most famous tourist attractions in the UK.

Buckingham Palace

Located in London, Buckingham Palace has been the home of the British Royal family since 1837, when Queen Victoria moved in. The Buckingham Palace that we know today has looked the same for around 100 years, and its most recent redesign was completed just one year before the start of World War I. Today it has over 200 bedrooms, 92 offices and 78 bathrooms. In total, there are 775 rooms!



Although this is probably the most famous building in the United Kingdom, and is known for being the Queen's home, she does not actually spend much time there. On average, she spends around 100 nights per year there, which is less than 30% of her time. How do you know if the Queen is at Buckingham Palace? If the Royal Standard flag is at the top of the pole, it means that the Queen is at home. If the British flag (called the Union Jack) is at the top, then we know that the Queen is away from home.

Several members of the Royal Family live there permanently, including Prince Philip, and also Prince Andrew and Prince Edward. There are around 800 members of staff employed at Buckingham Palace, though most of those jobs are administrative roles.

Lots of tourists can be seen near the Palace gates every day, taking photos and waiting to watch the change of the guard, however not many people are actually invited into the private areas of the palace. These are mostly celebrities, but also important people who have done something amazing. Others can still see the inside of the Palace, as there is one part that is open to the public.

INVENTORS, SCIENTISTS AND INNOVATORS

Isaac Newton

Isaac Newton was born on Christmas Day 1642 in Lincolnshire, England. He was a premature baby and, in fact, he was so weak and small that nobody expected him to survive. Against all odds, the baby lived, but he was an orphan. Isaac's father, a wealthy and illiterate farmer who could not even sign his name, had died three months before Isaac's birth.

When the boy was three years old, his mother married an Anglican minister. Her new husband did not want to raise the child, so Isaac was left behind with his grandparents and almost never saw his mum. He missed her very much and felt very lonely. Till the end of his life he was a loner and a very secretive person, and did not get on well with other people.

Isaac went to a local village school where he learned to read and write. Since he was very intelligent and the school could not teach him much more, he was soon sent to another school, farther away from home. Unfortunately, he did not like it and he did not find the school subjects interesting.



He was not a very good student at first, but his grades improved after a fight with another student. Isaac wanted to have better grades than he did, so he started working hard and soon became top of the class.

When he was ten, his stepfather died and Isaac's mother moved back. She wanted her eldest son to become a good farmer. However, farming did not interest him at all, and one of his teachers persuaded his mother that such a brilliant student should go to university. She was not very happy about that and even though she agreed to send him to Cambridge, she refused to pay his fees. Thus, Isaac had to work as a servant for the rich students to pay for his education.

Newton did not like many things that were taught at Cambridge, but he loved the library. He read the works of ancient philosophers, Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo and many others. He was also interested in mathematics, astrology and alchemy, which was then considered to be as legitimate as other areas of science. Newton, and many other respected alchemists, searched for the Philosopher's Stone that was supposed to turn other metals into gold, and the Elixir of Life that would make people immortal.

When the plague broke out in England, universities were closed and all the students had to return home. The year and a half that Newton spent on his mother's farm turned out to be very productive. During that period of time Newton invented his own form of mathematics, which is now known as calculus. He studied light and figured out how rainbows are formed. He also started working on the laws of motion and the theory of gravity.

According to a popular story, one day Isaac was sitting under an apple tree and suddenly an apple fell on his head. He started thinking about why objects moved downwards and came up with the idea of a force that pulls them towards the Earth.

When the epidemic ended, Newton returned to Cambridge. He became a lecturer but teaching was definitely not one of his strengths. His classes were boring and almost nobody attended them- but Newton did not care much and preferred to spend time thinking.

His interest in astronomy led him to build a telescope that was much better than anything else used before. Even the king was impressed with Newton's invention and soon he became a member of the Royal Society.

In 1687 he published his famous book '*Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*', which laid the foundation of modern physics and explained the idea of gravity. It also presented Newton's three laws of motion which explained the movement of things in the Universe. In 1703 he became president of the Royal Society. In 1705, in recognition of his great achievements, he was knighted and became Sir Isaac Newton.

Newton's intellect remained sharp till the end of his long life. When he died in 1727 at the age of eighty-five, he was buried in Westminster Abbey, among kings, queens and other great people of England.

Thomas Alva Edison

Thomas Alva Edison was born in 1847 in Ohio. He did not do well at school and his teachers did not think he was a smart kid, so his mother decided to take him out of school and teach him at home.

Young Thomas loved to read books and he was a very curious child. However, his curiosity and a strong desire to experiment often got him into trouble. Once, when he was six, he set fire to his father's barn to see what would happen. Predictably, the barn burned down. Another time he opened a bumblebee's nest to check what was inside. At the age of ten he built his own laboratory to conduct experiments in a more controlled setting.



As a teenager, he started to work as a newsboy with the railroad, and he sold newspapers and snacks to make money for supplies for his laboratory. One day, when Tom was waiting on the platform, he saw that the stationmaster's little son was walking toward the tracks of an approaching train. He rushed over and carried the toddler to safety when the train was about to hit him. The grateful father offered to teach Tom telegraphy. Soon, he learned the Morse alphabet and became a professional telegraph operator.

When he was 22, he moved to New York. He was penniless and he found a job with a telegraph company where he became interested in the phenomenon of electricity.

When his first invention, the ticker-tape machine, earned him quite a lot of money, he decided to focus on inventing and set up an 'invention factory' in Menlo Park, New Jersey. Among many other things, he improved Alexander Bell's telephone, which only worked on short distances; he invented a voice recorder (the phonograph) and the light bulb, which was his most famous invention. Edison also worked on electric cars, but he liked Henry Ford's idea of a gasoline-powered car better. Indeed, Ford's invention was more successful and took the market by the storm.

Edison patented over 1,000 inventions, many of which changed the world. He was the father of electric lighting and he also developed a system for filming and showing moving pictures, thanks to which cinematography was born.

Even though his inventions made him a very wealthy man, Edison remained very modest. He was also very persistent and hard-working and never gave up until he came up with the right solution. His motto was: *'I find what the world needs; then I go ahead and try to invent it'*. He also used to say that *'genius was one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration'*.

Edison died in 1931, at the age of eighty-four. On the day of his funeral, Americans switched off their lights for one minute to honour the man who gave the world the gift of electric light.

NIKOLA TESLA

Nikola Tesla was born in 1856 in Smiljan, Croatia, which was then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. His father, a Serbian Orthodox priest, wanted his son to follow in his footsteps and join the priesthood. However, Nikola was not interested in becoming a priest. What really appealed to him was science, which was probably a result of his mother's inspiration. Apart from running the family farm, Tesla's mum was also an amateur inventor and in her free time she constructed small household appliances.



Nikola studied math and physics at the Technical University of Graz and philosophy at the University of Prague. In 1884, he decided to leave Europe, and emigrated to America. When he arrived in New York, Tesla was hired by Thomas Edison. He worked for Edison for one year, making improvements to his inventions. However, since their personalities were very different, they fell out and Tesla quit. Later, the two inventors became direct competitors.

Tesla wanted to start his own company, but his attempts were not successful. In fact, in order to survive he had to work as a manual worker, digging ditches for 2 dollars per day! Finally, his inventions caught the attention of the wealthy American businessman, George Westinghouse. Thanks to his financial support, in 1895, they developed the first hydroelectric power station powered by Niagara Falls.

Nikola Tesla spent years working on a system designed to wirelessly transmit voices, images and moving pictures. He invented the alternating-current (AC) motor and designed the alternating-current (AC) electric system, which is still used all over the world.

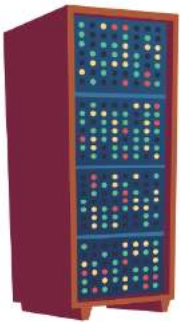
Tesla was an eccentric genius with photographic memory, which meant that he could recall images very precisely. Being able to accurately visualize intricate 3D objects, he worked out his inventions in his imagination and built prototypes with only a few preliminary drawings.

Despite his creative genius and breakthrough ideas, Nikola Tesla was a poor and lonely man. During the final years of his life he suffered from mental problems and spent most of his time feeding and talking to pigeons in the parks of New York. He died in his hotel room in 1943, at the age of 86.

Nikola Tesla is often described as the true father of radio, telephone, mobile phones and television. Even though most of his ideas were patented by other inventors, his legacy lives on in Elon Musk's electric-car company named after Tesla.

Steve Jobs was born in 1955. His mother was a graduate student and his father was a teaching assistant from Syria. They were young and not prepared to raise a baby so they decided to put him up for adoption. The boy's adoptive parents were Paul and Clara Jobs and they lived in Mountain View, California. Later the area became known as Silicon Valley. Paul Jobs was a gifted mechanic and he taught his son how to use different tools. Steve loved electronic gadgets and as a young teenager, he joined Hewlett-Packard's Explorer Club where he first saw a computer.

When he finished high school, he wanted to go to college, but he had no money to pay for it. Thus, he asked the dean of Reed College in Oregon if he could attend classes for free. He would not be able to get a degree but he could learn some things that were of interest to him. The dean agreed and he stayed at Reed for one and a half years, studying eastern religions and calligraphy. After that, he went to India, and later he started working for a company that made computer games.



Steve Jobs believed that one day personal computers would be the future of the electronics industry, so he started working on developing such a machine with his friend, Steve Wozniak. They started a company and they named it Apple. The computers they made were also called Apple. Jobs chose such a name because he ate a lot of fruit and the apple was his favourite kind of fruit. Back then computers were rather user-unfriendly and complicated machines. Jobs wanted to change that and produce a machine that would be easy to use and would look good. Steve Wozniak, Woz, was responsible for the technological improvements while Jobs came up with many ideas for the computer's design. He also believed that in the future all people would use home computers, which was a crazy idea at that time.

The market loved Apple computers and the company started making a lot of money. However, Steve Jobs was not a particularly good boss. Despite being a business visionary, he often behaved like a tyrant. He shouted at people and made them work extremely long hours. He also behaved in a weird way: he did not wear shoes, he only ate apples and he did not take showers, so he smelled bad. Apple grew very fast and the board members disagreed with Jobs on many issues. Eventually, he was forced to leave the company that he had built. Jobs was devastated, but there was nothing he could do. However, a few years later he concluded that getting fired from Apple was one of the best things that had happened to him because it had helped him regain a sense of innovation.

After leaving Apple in 1985, Jobs started another company, NeXT. He gave it such a name because he believed they would be the next step in computers. Unfortunately, the NeXT computers were too expensive and the company was losing money, so Jobs started looking for some other business options and he bought a computer graphics company that he called Pixar. The company was not very successful at first, but then it started working with Disney. When they produced Toy Story, it turned out to be a great hit. It was the first full-length movie completely animated on a computer. The new technology changed the industry and Jobs, who was a millionaire before, became a billionaire.

Meanwhile, Apple had some serious problems and was struggling to make profits. In 1996, the company's managers asked Steve Jobs to return. He was not sure if he should do it, but eventually he agreed and asked for a salary of just one dollar per year.

After returning to Apple, Jobs introduced many changes and launched the company in a new direction. He reduced the range of products and focused on developing new innovative products with a sophisticated design. The iPod, launched in 2001, was a revolutionary portable music device. It was followed by the iPhone in 2007, which became one of the best-selling electronic products in history. In 2010, Apple introduced the iPad – a revolutionary tablet computer.

In 2003, Steve Jobs was diagnosed with cancer and in 2009, he underwent a liver transplant. Unfortunately, two years later serious health problems returned. No longer able to work, Jobs resigned from Apple in 2011 and he died the same year. He is remembered as a technology visionary and a pioneer of the personal computer and smartphone revolution that changed the world.



