



CULTURAL FACTS

*about the English language
and the English-speaking world*

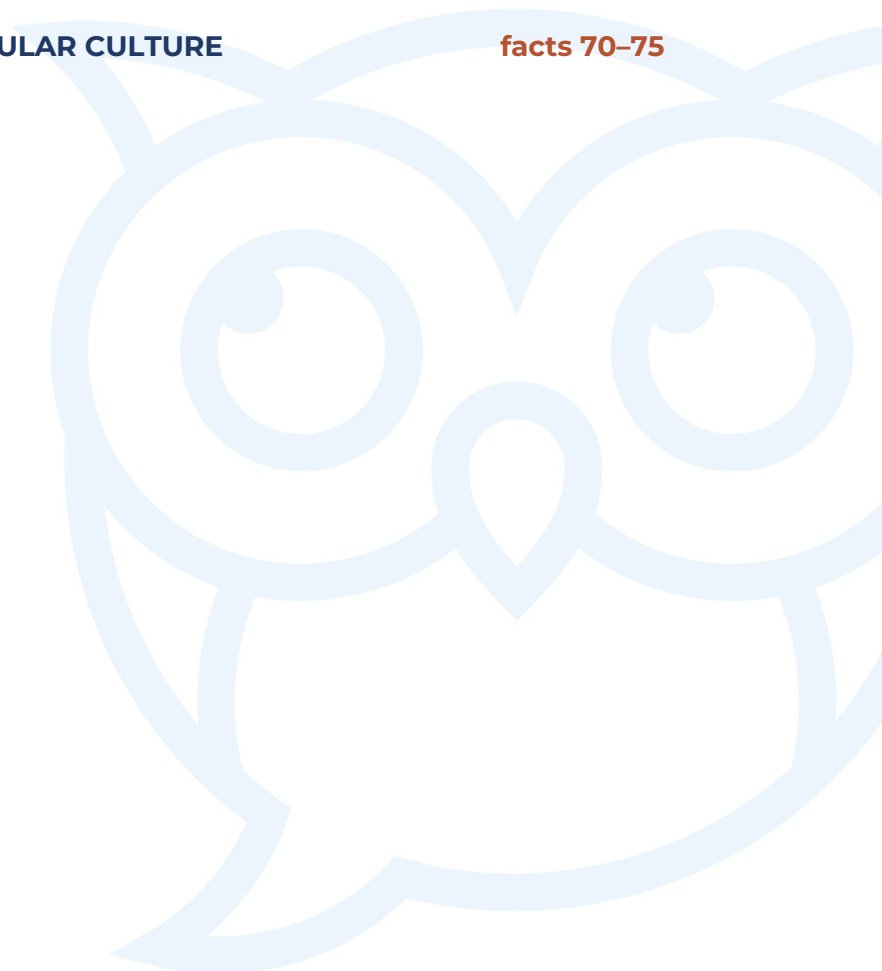


- **THE UNITED KINGDOM** • **IRELAND** •
- **THE USA** • **CANADA** •
- **AUSTRALIA** • **NEW ZEALAND** •

Towarzystwo Edukacyjne Sokrates
Szkoła Języków Obcych

Contents

I. THE UNITED KINGDOM AND IRELAND	facts 1–26
II. THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA	facts 27–45
III. AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND	facts 46–51
IV. ENGLISH WORDS AND WHERE THEY COME FROM	facts 52–69
V. TRADITIONS, HOLIDAYS AND POPULAR CULTURE	facts 70–75
Alphabetical index	



I.

THE UNITED KINGDOM AND IRELAND



1. England, Great Britain, the UK, the British Isles – what is the difference?

These four names are not the same, and confusing them is one of the most common mistakes learners make. England is one country. Great Britain is the name of the largest island, and it contains three countries: England, Scotland and Wales. The United Kingdom is the state, and its full name is the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland – so it includes Northern Ireland as well. The British Isles is a geographical term for the whole group of islands, including the Republic of Ireland, which is an independent country and not part of the UK. Many people in Ireland avoid the term “British Isles” for exactly that reason and say “Britain and Ireland” instead.

KEY VOCABULARY **state** – a country as a political unit · **term** – a word used with a precise meaning · **independent** – not controlled by another country · **confuse** – to mix two things up by mistake

2. Why do people in Britain drive on the left?

Driving on the left has very old roots. One popular explanation goes back to the age of horses and swords: travellers kept to the left so that their right hand – usually the sword hand – was closer to anyone coming towards them. Later the custom became law. An act of 1756 ordered traffic on London Bridge to keep left, and the Highway Act of 1835 made it the rule across the country. During the age of the British Empire the system spread to many colonies. That is why people still drive on the left in the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, India and dozens of other places.

KEY VOCABULARY **custom** – a traditional way of doing something · **act** – a law passed by parliament · **colony** – a country ruled by another country · **spread** – to reach more and more places

3. Why are London buses red?

In the early twentieth century London buses were not all one colour. Different companies painted their vehicles in their own colours to stand out on busy streets. The London General Omnibus Company chose a strong red, which was easy to see and quickly became connected with city transport. When the network was later brought under one organisation, red stayed. Today the red double-decker is one of the best-known symbols of London, along with the black cab and the red telephone box.

KEY VOCABULARY **vehicle** – a car, bus or other machine for travelling · **stand out** – to be easy to notice · **network** – a connected system of routes · **cab** – a taxi

4. Why are London taxis black?

London black cabs are almost as famous as the red buses, but black was never a legal requirement. Until the middle of the twentieth century taxis came in several colours. From 1948 the Austin FX3 became the standard London cab, and black was the colour the manufacturer supplied as standard; any other colour cost the owner

extra, so most chose black and the look became fixed. Officially a London taxi is a hackney carriage – a name that comes from an old word for a type of horse, not from the London district of Hackney. Drivers must still pass a famously difficult examination called the Knowledge, which tests their memory of thousands of London streets.

KEY VOCABULARY **requirement** – something that must be done · **manufacturer** – a company that makes goods · **carriage** – a vehicle pulled by horses · **examination** – an official test

5. Is Big Ben the name of the tower?

Not exactly. Big Ben is the traditional nickname of the largest bell inside the clock tower at the Palace of Westminster. For years people used the name for the whole tower, but since 2012 the tower has officially been called the Elizabeth Tower, renamed for the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II – sixty years on the throne. Before that it was simply called the Clock Tower. So when tourists say “Big Ben”, they usually mean the famous London landmark; strictly speaking, the name belongs to the bell.

KEY VOCABULARY **nickname** – an informal name · **bell** – a metal object that rings · **jubilee** – an anniversary of an important event · **landmark** – a well-known building or place

6. Why is tea so important in British culture?

Tea reached England in the seventeenth century and was at first an expensive luxury for the rich. As trade grew and prices fell, it became a drink for everyone. By the nineteenth century, drinking tea was part of daily routine, social visits and hospitality at home. Milk is usually added to strong black tea because it softens the taste. There is an old debate about the order – milk first or tea first? One explanation is that milk was poured in first to protect delicate china cups from the hot liquid. For most British people today a cup of tea is not a ceremony at all: it is a break, a comfort, or simply a reason to talk.

KEY VOCABULARY **luxury** – something expensive and not necessary · **hospitality** – friendly treatment of guests · **delicate** – easily broken · **comfort** – a feeling of relief

7. Is “five o'clock tea” a real British thing?

Five o'clock tea is a real English expression, but an old-fashioned one. In the nineteenth century it was widely used for a fashionable afternoon gathering over tea, and English writers of the period use it freely. Today, however, the normal British term is afternoon tea, and it is not tied to exactly five o'clock – around four is more usual. Be careful with high tea as well: it does not mean a more elegant version. Historically it was a substantial evening meal eaten by working families after work, with hot food rather than tiny cakes. If you want to sound natural, say afternoon tea – or just tea.

KEY VOCABULARY **phrase** – a group of words used together · **old-fashioned** – no longer in common use · **substantial** – large and filling · **scone** – a small plain cake eaten with jam

8. Why do British people say “sorry” so often?

In British English, sorry does not always mean “it was my fault”. It is a very useful word for softening what you say and keeping a polite tone. A British person may say sorry when they want to pass you, when they did not hear something, when they are about to ask an uncomfortable question – and even when somebody else walks into them. This use is connected with the strong role of indirect politeness in British communication. So translating every sorry as a real apology can lead to misunderstandings.

KEY VOCABULARY **soften** – to make gentler · **apology** – words saying you are sorry · **indirect** – not said openly · **misunderstanding** – a mistake about what someone means

9. What does the name “England” really mean?

The name England comes from Old English Engla land, “the land of the Angles”. The Angles were one of the Germanic peoples – together with the Saxons and the Jutes – who began to settle in Britain after Roman administration withdrew in the fifth century. Their name gradually became attached to a large part of the country and then to the kingdom of England. The word English comes from exactly the same source. So both the country and the language still carry the memory of migrations from more than fifteen hundred years ago.

KEY VOCABULARY **settle** – to start living in a new place · **withdraw** – to leave or move back · **gradually** – slowly over time · **migration** – the movement of people to a new area

10. Are the flag of England and the flag of the UK the same?

No. The flag of England is the red cross of St George on a white background. The Union Jack, the flag of the United Kingdom, combines several traditions: the cross of St George for England, the diagonal white cross of St Andrew for Scotland, and the diagonal red cross of St Patrick, added in 1801 for Ireland. Wales has no separate element on the Union Jack, because it had already been politically joined to England when the first version of the flag was created in 1606. That is why the Welsh red dragon does not appear on the UK flag.

KEY VOCABULARY **background** – the surface behind a design · **diagonal** – going from corner to corner · **combine** – to join together · **element** – one part of a whole

11. Why does Wales have three national symbols?

Wales is unusual: it has more than one national symbol. The red dragon, y Ddraig Goch, appears on the Welsh flag and goes back to early medieval legends about British kings. The leek is an old emblem, linked by tradition to a battle in which Welsh soldiers are said to have worn leeks so that they could recognise each other. The daffodil became popular much later. It flowers around St David's Day on 1 March, its Welsh name is close to the word for leek, and politicians such as David Lloyd George promoted it in the early twentieth century. On St David's Day people traditionally wear a leek or a daffodil, while the red dragon flies on the flag.

KEY VOCABULARY **leek** – a long white and green vegetable · **daffodil** – a yellow spring flower · **emblem** – an object used as a symbol · **recognise** – to know who someone is

12. Why are British police officers called “bobbies”?

The nickname bobbies comes from the first name Robert. Sir Robert Peel, a British politician and Home Secretary, played the key role in creating the Metropolitan Police in London in 1829. Officers were soon called bobbies after his first name, and peelers after his surname. Peelers disappeared, but the nickname bobbies survived and is still used today, especially in historical or humorous contexts. Peel is so strongly connected with modern policing that a well-known set of principles about professional, civilian police work is named after him.

KEY VOCABULARY **surname** – a family name · **officer** – a member of the police or army · **humorous** – funny · **principle** – a basic rule or belief

13. Why is the London Underground called “the Tube”?

The Tube is the everyday name for the London Underground. It comes from the deep lines, whose tunnels were dug as relatively narrow cylinders – tubes. The oldest sections, from the 1860s, were built by a different method: workers dug a trench, built the tunnel and covered it again. From 1890, however, deep tunnelling became possible, and the picture of a “tube” was so clear that the name spread to the whole network, even to lines that run above ground. Both names are correct; the Tube simply sounds more informal and more British.

KEY VOCABULARY **tunnel** – an underground passage · **trench** – a long narrow hole in the ground · **cylinder** – a tube-shaped object · **informal** – used in everyday speech

14. Why do the King's guards wear huge fur hats?

The tall ceremonial hats are called bearskins. Similar hats were once worn by grenadiers in several European armies: they made soldiers look taller and more impressive. After the defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo in 1815 the bearskin became part of the tradition of selected British guards regiments. Today we connect them above all with the soldiers on ceremonial duty outside royal palaces. A bearskin is about forty-five centimetres high, which is why it is such a striking part of British parades and of the Changing of the Guard.

KEY VOCABULARY **ceremonial** – used at official occasions · **regiment** – a large group of soldiers · **duty** – work you must do · **striking** – very noticeable

15. Who are the Beefeaters?

Beefeaters are the Yeomen Warders, the guards of the Tower of London. Nobody knows for certain where the nickname comes from. The most likely explanation is practical: these royal servants were well fed and received generous rations of meat, including beef, which was a real privilege at the time. A popular theory connecting the word with the French buffetier is generally considered unlikely. Today the Yeomen Warders work as guides, take part in ceremonies and look after the famous ravens of the Tower – legend says the kingdom will fall if the ravens ever leave.

KEY VOCABULARY **ration** – a fixed amount of food · **privilege** – a special advantage · **bodyguard** – a person who protects someone · **raven** – a large black bird

16. Why is the unicorn the symbol of Scotland?

The unicorn appears in Scottish heraldry from the Middle Ages and was linked to the Scottish monarchy long before the United Kingdom existed. In medieval imagination it stood for strength, purity, pride and independence, and it was believed to be impossible to tame. That suited royal symbolism perfectly. In Scottish coats of arms the unicorn is often shown crowned and in chains. After the union of the crowns in 1603 it appeared beside the English lion in the royal arms of the monarch who now ruled both countries. Today it is recognised as the national animal of Scotland.

KEY VOCABULARY **heraldry** – the study and design of coats of arms · **purity** – the state of being pure · **tame** – to make a wild animal obedient · **coat of arms** – an official design representing a family or country

17. What is on the coat of arms of England?

The traditional arms of England show three gold lions on a red background. In the language of heraldry they are three lions passant guardant: the animals walk sideways, with one front paw raised and the head turned towards the viewer. The symbol became established in the Middle Ages, especially under the Plantagenet kings, and it is still one of the most important signs of England. The three lions also appear in the royal arms of the United Kingdom and in sport – for example in the badge of the England football team. Do not confuse them with the lion and the unicorn that hold up the UK royal arms.

KEY VOCABULARY **paw** – an animal's foot · **viewer** – a person looking at something · **established** – accepted and fixed · **badge** – a small design showing membership

18. Why is the harp the symbol of Ireland?

The harp has been connected with Irish court culture, music and the tradition of bards for centuries. Harpers held a special position at the courts of Irish rulers, and the instrument gradually came to stand for the country itself. The harp was already recorded as the arms of the king of Ireland in the thirteenth century, in a French roll of arms known as the Wijnbergen Roll. It was later adopted and widely used by the Tudor monarchy and by the Kingdom of Ireland, and from 1603 it formed one quarter of the royal arms. The modern state emblem is based on a medieval instrument preserved at Trinity College Dublin, traditionally called the Brian Boru harp. You can see the harp on Irish euro coins, passports and official documents. Ireland is unusual because its state emblem is a musical instrument.

KEY VOCABULARY **bard** – a traditional poet and singer · **ruler** – a person who governs a country · **adopt** – to accept and start using · **emblem** – an official symbol

19. Why are the Irish famous for storytelling?

Ireland has an exceptionally strong tradition of oral storytelling. For centuries an important role was played by professional storytellers called seanchaí, who passed on legends, family histories, local anecdotes and tales of ancient heroes. What mattered was not only the content but also rhythm, humour, the ability to build tension and contact with the listeners. Rich Celtic mythology and later literary culture strengthened this image. Small Ireland has produced many outstanding writers – among them Oscar Wilde, W. B. Yeats, James Joyce, George Bernard Shaw and Samuel Beckett – which has made the reputation of the Irish as great storytellers even stronger.

KEY VOCABULARY **oral** – spoken, not written · **anecdote** – a short interesting story · **tension** – exciting uncertainty · **outstanding** – extremely good

20. Who is a leprechaun?

A leprechaun is a figure from Irish folklore, one of the supernatural beings known as the fairy folk. In traditional stories he is a small man who lives alone and works as a shoemaker. He is famous for being clever and unfriendly towards people who try to take his treasure. The motif of hidden gold, and the idea that a captured leprechaun must reveal where it is or grant a wish, appears in many later versions of the legends. Today's image – green clothes, red beard, hat, shamrocks and a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow – was shaped mainly by popular culture, especially outside Ireland.

KEY VOCABULARY **folklore** – traditional stories and beliefs · **supernatural** – beyond the natural world · **treasure** – valuable gold or jewels · **grant a wish** – to make someone's wish come true

21. Why is the thistle a national symbol of Scotland?

The thistle has been associated with Scotland for centuries, and a famous legend explains why. According to the story, Norse warriors tried to approach a Scottish camp silently at night. One of them stepped barefoot on a sharp thistle and cried out, which woke the Scots in time to defend themselves. We do not know whether this really happened – it is above all a national legend. But the symbol fits well: a plain, tough plant with sharp spines suited the image of a proud country that is hard to conquer. The thistle also gives its name to the Order of the Thistle.

KEY VOCABULARY **warrior** – a fighter in past times · **barefoot** – with nothing on the feet · **spine** – a sharp point on a plant · **conquer** – to take control by force

22. Why is St Andrew the patron saint of Scotland?

The cult of St Andrew appeared in Scotland in the early Middle Ages and became closely linked with the identity of the country. According to legend, a monk called St Regulus brought part of the relics of the apostle Andrew from Patras in Greece to the place later named St Andrews. The historical truth of this story is uncertain, but the town itself became an important religious centre. By the late Middle Ages Andrew was widely seen as the protector of Scotland. His symbol is the diagonal X-shaped cross – the Saltire – which appears on the Scottish flag.

KEY VOCABULARY **patron saint** – a saint who protects a country or group · **relics** – remains of a saint · **apostle** – one of the first followers of Christ · **uncertain** – not known for sure

23. Why is St Patrick the patron saint of Ireland, and what is the shamrock?

St Patrick probably lived in the fifth century and was a Christian missionary in Ireland. He was not Irish by birth – he came from Roman Britain – but his work later became one of the great symbols of the Christianisation of the island. Many legends grew around him. According to one, he used a three-leaved shamrock to explain the idea of the Holy Trinity; according to another, he drove all the snakes out of Ireland. The shamrock became a national symbol because of that story, and it is worn especially on 17 March, St Patrick's Day, which has grown from a religious day into a global celebration of Irish culture. Note the difference: a four-leaf clover means luck, while the shamrock has three leaves and an Irish meaning.

KEY VOCABULARY **missionary** – a person sent to spread a religion · **Trinity** – the Christian idea of God in three persons · **drive out** – to force to leave · **clover** – a small plant with three leaves

24. Why is St George the patron saint of England?

St George was probably a Christian soldier and martyr who lived in the Roman Empire around the end of the third and the beginning of the fourth century. He did not come from England, and his cult reached the country many centuries later. In the Middle Ages, especially during the Crusades, George became a model of courage, chivalry and defence of the faith. English kings and soldiers began to treat him as a special protector of the country. The famous legend of his fight with a dragon and his rescue of a princess is connected with him. His red cross on a white background is the flag of England today.

KEY VOCABULARY **martyr** – a person killed for their beliefs · **Crusades** – medieval religious wars · **chivalry** – the code of behaviour of knights · **faith** – religious belief

25. Why is Britain historically Protestant and Ireland Catholic?

The difference has its roots in the sixteenth-century Reformation and in Tudor politics. Henry VIII broke with the Pope and created an independent Church of England, and under later monarchs Protestantism became firmly established. In Scotland the dominant reformed tradition was Presbyterianism. In Ireland, however, the Reformation was not widely accepted by the local population, which mostly remained Catholic. In time Catholicism also became connected with Irish identity and with resistance to English rule. The picture is not black and white: in Ulster, after the plantations of the seventeenth century, large Protestant and Catholic communities lived side by side.

KEY VOCABULARY **Reformation** – the sixteenth-century religious movement · **Pope** – the head of the Catholic Church · **resistance** – opposition to power · **community** – a group of people living together

26. Who were the Celts, and who are their descendants today?

The Celts were not one nation or one state but many societies of ancient Europe who spoke related languages and shared some cultural patterns. In the British Isles, Celtic languages survived longest in the west and the north. The Celtic languages today include Irish, Scottish Gaelic, Welsh, Cornish and Manx. That is why Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Cornwall and the Isle of Man are described as areas with a strong Celtic heritage. This does not mean their inhabitants are “pure descendants of the Celts” – the population of the islands has mixed for thousands of years, and modern Celtic identity is above all linguistic and cultural.

KEY VOCABULARY **related** – belonging to the same family · **heritage** – traditions passed down · **inhabitant** – a person who lives in a place · **descendant** – a person related to someone who lived earlier

II.

THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA



27. Where does the name “New York” come from?

Today's New York began as the Dutch settlement of New Amsterdam, part of the colony of New Netherland. In 1664 the English took the town and renamed it New York in honour of the Duke of York, later King James II. The name York comes from the English city of York, so the name of the American metropolis has direct British roots. European settlers often gave new places the names of the places they had left, which is why the map of the United States contains Boston, Cambridge, Manchester, Birmingham, Oxford, Plymouth and Worcester. Sometimes they added New, as in New York or New Hampshire. Of course American place names also come from Native American, Spanish, French and Dutch sources, which makes the map a record of migration.

KEY VOCABULARY **settlement** – a place where people start to live • **in honour of** – to show respect for • **metropolis** – a very large city • **record** – written or lasting evidence

28. Why is New York called the Big Apple?

The nickname was made popular in the 1920s by John J. Fitz Gerald, a journalist who wrote about horse racing for the New York Morning Telegraph. He heard African American stable hands in New Orleans call the New York racetracks “the big apple” – the biggest prize a horse could run for – and he borrowed the phrase as the title of his column. Jazz musicians of the 1930s used it in a similar way: to play in New York was to play the big apple. The name then faded, but in the 1970s a city tourism campaign brought it back, and it has been part of the image of New York ever since.

KEY VOCABULARY **stable hand** – a person who looks after horses • **racetrack** – a place where horse races are held • **column** – a regular article in a newspaper • **fade** – to become weaker or less used

29. Why is the US president's home called the White House?

The president's residence in Washington has had a light-coloured exterior from the beginning: the sandstone was protected with a white coating that kept out damp and frost. The name White House was already used informally in the nineteenth century, alongside President's House and Executive Mansion. In 1901 President Theodore Roosevelt began using White House as the official name on documents and official paper. The building has become one of the best-known symbols of the American presidency. One point worth remembering: the house was burned in 1814 and rebuilt afterwards, but the name did not appear only because of the fire.

KEY VOCABULARY **residence** – an official home • **exterior** – the outside of a building • **coating** – a thin layer covering a surface • **damp** – unwanted water in a building

30. Where does American Thanksgiving come from?

Modern Thanksgiving grew out of older European and North American traditions of giving thanks for the harvest. The best-known story concerns a meal shared by the settlers of Plymouth and members of the Wampanoag people in 1621. In popular culture this event has often been presented as a simple story of friendship, but real relations between colonists and the native population were far more complicated and later tragic. The holiday took its present form over the following centuries. In 1863 President Lincoln proclaimed a

national day of thanksgiving on the last Thursday of November, which set a lasting precedent; Congress made it a legal holiday in 1870, and a law of 1941 finally fixed it on the fourth Thursday of November. Today Americans connect it above all with family, a shared meal and gratitude.

KEY VOCABULARY **harvest** – the gathering of crops · **settler** – a person who moves to a new land · **relations** – the way groups treat each other · **gratitude** – the feeling of being thankful

31. Why do Americans say “soccer” when the British say “football”?

The word soccer was not invented in the United States. It was born in Britain as student slang, a short form of association football, used to tell that game apart from rugby football. In the same style, rugby was jokingly called ruggie. In Britain football later became the usual word, while in the USA football came to mean American football. Soccer therefore turned out to be a convenient way of telling the two sports apart, and it survived in American English. It is an interesting example of a word created in one country but used mainly in another.

KEY VOCABULARY **slang** – very informal language · **tell apart** – to see the difference between · **jokingly** – not seriously · **convenient** – easy and useful

32. Why is the bald eagle not really bald?

The bald eagle has a head covered with white feathers, so from today's point of view the name sounds strange. The explanation lies in the history of the language. An older meaning of the word bald referred not only to a lack of hair but also to a white patch or a pale marking on the head – the same idea survives in the word piebald. The name therefore describes the contrast between the white head of the adult bird and its dark brown body. In Polish the bird is called bielik amerykański, which describes it far better.

KEY VOCABULARY **feather** – one of the light parts covering a bird · **patch** – a small area different from the rest · **marking** – a coloured pattern on an animal · **contrast** – a clear difference

33. Why did the bald eagle become the symbol of the United States?

The bald eagle lives naturally in North America, so the creators of the new country thought it was a great symbol of independence from Europe. The bird represented strength, freedom, and courage. In 1782, it was placed on the Great Seal of the United States holding an olive branch and arrows in its claws – symbols of peace and readiness to fight. For over two centuries, everyone considered the bald eagle to be the national bird. However, it became an official national symbol under US law only in December 2024, when a special act formally confirmed its status.

KEY VOCABULARY **independence** – freedom from the control of another country · **claws** – short curved nails on the bird's feet · **confirm** – to state that something is definitely true or official.

34. Who is Uncle Sam?

Uncle Sam is the personification of the government of the United States: a tall older man with white hair, a small beard and clothes in the colours of the flag. The name is usually traced to Samuel Wilson, a meat supplier from Troy, New York, who sent barrels of beef to the army during the War of 1812. The barrels were stamped U.S., and soldiers joked that the letters stood for Uncle Sam. Congress officially recognised Wilson as the origin of the figure in 1961. The best-known image is a recruiting poster from 1917 by James Montgomery Flagg, in which Uncle Sam points straight at the viewer.

KEY VOCABULARY **personification** – a person representing an idea · **supplier** – a person who provides goods · **barrel** – a large round wooden container · **recruiting** – finding new members for an army

35. Why do so many American streets have numbers instead of names?

Many American cities grew in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries according to a regular plan based on a grid. Streets and avenues crossing at right angles made it easier to mark out new plots, to find your way and to extend the city. Numbering was practical: instead of inventing hundreds of new names, you could simply continue a logical sequence. The best-known example is Manhattan, where numbered streets cross numbered avenues. Not every city is so regular, however – older places such as Boston grew organically, and their street network is far less orderly.

KEY VOCABULARY **grid** – a pattern of crossing lines · **right angle** – an angle of 90 degrees · **plot** – a piece of land · **sequence** – things following in order

36. Why do Americans write dates differently?

In the United States the usual order is month-day-year, for example 08/16/2026, while in Britain and most of Europe the order is day-month-year. The American form matches the common spoken construction August 16, 2026, in which the month comes first. This was not one conscious invention: different conventions existed side by side in the English-speaking world for a long time, and the USA kept one of them. The problem appears with ambiguous dates: 03/07/2026 can mean 7 March in the USA and 3 July in Europe. In international communication it is safest to write the month in words.

KEY VOCABULARY **convention** – an accepted way of doing something · **conscious** – deliberate and planned · **ambiguous** – having more than one possible meaning · **construction** – a way of putting words together

37. Where does the word “dollar” come from?

Although the dollar is associated above all with the United States, its name has Central European roots. In the sixteenth century large silver coins called Joachimsthaler were struck in Joachimsthal – today Jáchymov in the Czech Republic. The name was shortened to thaler, and its various forms spread across Europe, for example as daler. In English the form dollar appeared. In the American colonies people commonly used Spanish silver coins known as dollars. When the young United States created its own currency, it kept this familiar name. So the American dollar has its etymological roots in today's Czech Republic.

KEY VOCABULARY **coin** – a piece of metal money · **strike** – to make a coin by pressing metal · **currency** – the money used in a country · **etymological** – relating to word origins

38. Where does the name “teddy bear” come from?

The name teddy bear is connected with President Theodore “Teddy” Roosevelt and a hunting trip in Mississippi in 1902. Roosevelt's companions caught a bear and tied it up so that the president could shoot it. He refused, saying that this was unsporting. The story reached the press and appeared in a popular cartoon. Soon a New York shopkeeper named Morris Michtom made a soft toy bear and called it Teddy's bear, referring to the president. At the same time the German company Steiff was producing similar toys. The name teddy bear quickly became the general English word for a soft toy bear.

KEY VOCABULARY **companion** – a person who travels with you · **unsporting** – unfair, against fair play · **cartoon** – a humorous drawing in a newspaper · **refer to** – to mention or point to

39. Why were Native Americans called “Indians”?

The word Indians comes from a European geographical mistake. When Christopher Columbus reached the Caribbean in 1492, he believed he was near Asia, in the region Europeans called the Indies. He therefore called the local people Indios. The term survived for centuries, even though it soon became clear that the Americas were separate continents. Today Native Americans is often used in the USA. It is worth remembering, though, that American Indian still appears in the names of institutions and is preferred by some native people. The most precise choice is the name of the particular nation, for example Cherokee, Lakota or Navajo.

KEY VOCABULARY **region** – a large area · **term** – a word with a special meaning · **institution** – an established organisation · **precise** – exact

40. Why do the UK and the USA use different systems of measurement?

The United States inherited the old British units: miles, feet, inches, pounds and gallons. After independence it kept its own version of them. Britain, on the other hand, reorganised its units in 1824 and created the Imperial System, which was no longer identical with the American one. That is why the mile and the pound are essentially the same today, but the British imperial gallon holds about 4.55 litres and the US gallon about 3.79 litres. Later Britain largely adopted the metric system, while the USA kept US customary units in everyday life.

KEY VOCABULARY **inherit** – to receive from those who came before · **unit** – a standard amount used in measuring · **identical** – exactly the same · **adopt** – to start using officially

41. Why do Americans measure temperature in Fahrenheit?

The Fahrenheit scale was developed at the beginning of the eighteenth century by Daniel Gabriel Fahrenheit, a maker of precise thermometers. By the time the United States was founded, the scale was already well known in the English-speaking world and firmly rooted in everyday measurement. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries most countries gradually moved to the Celsius scale as the metric system spread, but the USA never carried out full compulsory metrication. Fahrenheit therefore remained the standard in American weather forecasts and daily life. On this scale water freezes at 32°F and boils at 212°F, and 68°F is exactly 20°C.

KEY VOCABULARY **scale** – a system of measuring · **rooted** – firmly established · **compulsory** – required by law · **freeze** – to turn into ice

42. Why is there a Groundhog Day in the United States?

Groundhog Day, on 2 February, grew out of European beliefs about the weather connected with the feast of Candlemas. German-speaking communities had folk traditions of watching animals – badgers, for example – that were supposed to “predict” how long winter would last. German settlers in Pennsylvania brought the custom to America, where the role of animal weather forecaster was taken over by the common groundhog. According to tradition, if the animal sees its shadow, winter will last another six weeks; if not, spring will come early. The most famous groundhog is Punxsutawney Phil. This is folklore, not scientific forecasting.

KEY VOCABULARY **belief** – something people accept as true · **feast** – a religious festival · **predict** – to say what will happen · **shadow** – a dark shape made by blocking light

43. Why is Canada called Canada?

The name Canada has native origins. In the sixteenth century the French explorer Jacques Cartier heard the word kanata from people living near the St Lawrence River; in their Iroquoian language it meant a village or settlement. At first the word referred to one particular place, but Cartier began to use it for a larger area as well. Over time Europeans extended the name until it covered an enormous territory and finally a whole country. It is one of many examples in which the name of a modern country preserves a trace of the language of the native peoples of North America.

KEY VOCABULARY **explorer** – a person who travels to unknown places · **extend** – to make larger · **territory** – an area of land · **preserve** – to keep something safe from change

44. Why is the maple leaf the symbol of Canada?

Maples are strongly connected with the landscape of Canada and have long had economic and cultural importance. The maple leaf appeared as a Canadian symbol as early as the nineteenth century, on badges, in songs and in the signs of organisations. When Canada was looking for a new flag in the 1960s, the distinctive red leaf became a recognisable compromise, linked directly neither to Britain nor to France. The present flag with one stylised maple leaf was officially adopted on 15 February 1965. Since then the symbol has been associated with Canada almost everywhere in the world.

KEY VOCABULARY **landscape** – the natural scenery of an area · **distinctive** – easy to recognise · **compromise** – an agreement between different sides · **stylised** – shown in a simplified artistic way

45. Why is maple syrup so popular in Canada?

Sugar maples grow in eastern Canada, and their sap can be collected in early spring. Temperature changes are the key: frosty nights and warmer days make the sap move inside the tree. The first people to use it were the native peoples of North America, who knew how to collect and thicken the sap long before Europeans arrived. Settlers took over this knowledge and developed the production of maple sugar and syrup. In time maple syrup became a characteristic product of Canada, and especially of Quebec. Natural conditions, history and the symbolism of the maple leaf together turned it into a culinary sign of the country.

KEY VOCABULARY **sap** – the liquid inside a plant · **frosty** – very cold, below freezing · **thicken** – to make less watery · **culinary** – connected with cooking

III.

AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND



46. Where does the name “Australia” come from?

For centuries European geographers believed that a great southern land must exist to balance the continents of the north. They called this imagined place Terra Australis Incognita – “the unknown southern land” in Latin. When Europeans actually reached the continent, the Dutch first called it New Holland. The English explorer Matthew Flinders, who sailed around the whole continent in the early nineteenth century, argued strongly for the shorter name Australia, and it was officially adopted in the 1820s. So the country is named after an idea that existed on maps long before anybody had seen it.

KEY VOCABULARY **geographer** – an expert on the Earth's surface · **balance** – to make equal on both sides · **imagined** – existing only in the mind · **argue for** – to speak in support of

47. Why does Australia have so many unusual animals?

Australia was geographically isolated from other continents for tens of millions of years. This isolation meant that local species evolved largely independently of the animals of Eurasia or the Americas. That is why the continent has so many endemic species – animals found naturally nowhere else. Especially characteristic are marsupials, such as kangaroos, koalas and wombats, and monotremes, the mammals that lay eggs: the platypus and the echidnas. Australia also has many unusual birds, reptiles and insects. Its wildlife is a living record of the geological history of the continent.

KEY VOCABULARY **isolated** – separated from others · **species** – a type of living creature · **evolve** – to develop slowly over generations · **marsupial** – a mammal that carries its young in a pouch

48. Who are the Aboriginal Australians and the Māori?

Australia and New Zealand had populations long before Europeans arrived. Aboriginal peoples have lived on the Australian continent for more than 60,000 years, which makes theirs one of the oldest continuous cultures in the world; their traditions include complex art, ceremony and the body of law and stories often called the Dreaming. Torres Strait Islander peoples are a separate group with their own languages and culture, and their traditional lands are the islands and waters between Australia and New Guinea. Together the two groups are known as Australia's First Peoples. The Māori reached New Zealand much later, around 700 years ago, from other Pacific islands. Their language, te reo Māori, is an official language of New Zealand, and Māori words, place names and the greeting kia ora are part of everyday life there. Waitangi Day on 6 February marks the treaty signed between Māori chiefs and the British Crown in 1840.

KEY VOCABULARY **continuous** – going on without stopping · **complex** – having many connected parts · **treaty** – a formal agreement between peoples · **chief** – the leader of a people or tribe

49. Why does “kiwi” mean three different things?

In New Zealand the word kiwi means three different things, and only the context tells you which. First, the kiwi is a small, brown, flightless bird that is active at night and is the national symbol of the country. Second, Kiwi with a

capital letter is a friendly informal name for a New Zealander – people use it about themselves with pride. Third, the kiwi fruit was originally called the Chinese gooseberry; New Zealand growers renamed it in the 1950s to help sales abroad, choosing a name that connected the fruit with their country. If you mean the fruit, it is safer to say kiwi fruit.

KEY VOCABULARY **flightless** – unable to fly · **context** – the situation in which a word is used · **grower** – a person who produces plants for sale · **rename** – to give a new name

50. What is the haka, and why do the All Blacks perform it?

The haka is a traditional Māori ceremonial dance performed by a group, with strong rhythmic movement, stamping, gestures and shouted words. It is not simply a “war dance”: haka are performed at welcomes, funerals, weddings and celebrations as a way of showing respect, emotion and unity. The best known abroad is Ka Mate, performed by the All Blacks, the New Zealand rugby team, before international matches. A New Zealand Native team already performed haka before matches on its tour of 1888–89, and the 1905 “Originals”, the first side widely known as the All Blacks, helped make it a lasting part of New Zealand rugby. For many New Zealanders the haka is a serious cultural expression rather than entertainment, and performing it carelessly is considered disrespectful.

KEY VOCABULARY **stamping** – hitting the ground hard with the feet · **unity** – the state of being joined together · **expression** – a way of showing feelings or ideas · **disrespectful** – showing a lack of respect

51. Why is New Zealand associated with hobbits?

New Zealand became the film version of Middle-earth thanks to the trilogies The Lord of the Rings and The Hobbit, directed by Peter Jackson. The productions used extremely varied New Zealand landscapes: mountains, lakes, hills, forests and volcanic country. One of the best-known locations is Hobbiton near Matamata, where the hobbit village was preserved and opened to visitors. The films had an enormous effect on the tourist image of the country – so much so that New Zealand deliberately used the connection with Middle-earth in its promotion for years. For many fans of Tolkien it has become almost a real version of his fictional world.

KEY VOCABULARY **trilogy** – a set of three related works · **varied** – of many different kinds · **location** – a place where a film is shot · **deliberately** – on purpose

IV.

ENGLISH WORDS AND WHERE THEY COME FROM



52. Where does the word “sandwich” come from?

The name sandwich comes from John Montagu, the fourth Earl of Sandwich, who lived in the eighteenth century. According to the popular story, the earl did not want to interrupt a card game for a full meal and asked for meat to be served between two slices of bread so that he could eat without cutlery. Other players are said to have started ordering “the same as Sandwich”, and the aristocrat's title became the name of the food. Historians point out that people had of course been putting food between pieces of bread long before – what was new was not the idea but the English name, which spread quickly because it was fashionable.

KEY VOCABULARY **interrupt** – to stop something in progress • **slice** – a thin flat piece cut from something • **cutlery** – knives, forks and spoons • **fashionable** – popular at a particular time

53. Where does the word “OK” come from?

The explanation most often accepted leads to the American press of 1839. Boston at that time had a fashion for humorous abbreviations made from deliberately misspelled phrases. OK was supposed to stand for oll korrekt instead of all correct. A year later the abbreviation became even more popular thanks to the election campaign of President Martin Van Buren, whose nickname Old Kinderhook also gave the initials O.K. The word turned out to be extremely convenient: it is short, easy to pronounce and can mean agreement, acceptance or simply that everything is fine. Today OK is one of the most international words in the world.

KEY VOCABULARY **deliberately** – on purpose, intentionally • **misspell** – to write incorrectly • **initials** – the first letters of names • **acceptance** – agreeing to something

54. Did the word “hello” exist before the telephone?

Yes. Hello and earlier forms such as hallo or hullo existed before the telephone, but they were often used to attract someone's attention rather than as an everyday greeting. The invention of the telephone made the word far more popular. Thomas Edison suggested starting a telephone conversation with hello. Alexander Graham Bell reportedly preferred the more nautical ahoy, but Edison's idea won in practice. As telephones spread, hello became one of the most basic English greetings. It is an interesting example of technology that did not create a word but radically changed how often and in what way it is used.

KEY VOCABULARY **attract attention** – to make someone notice you • **greeting** – words used when meeting someone • **nautical** – connected with ships and sailing • **radically** – completely and dramatically

55. Why does English have so many loanwords?

The history of English is a history of constant contact between languages. The core of the language is Germanic, but after Roman influence, Scandinavian invasions and the Norman conquest of England, the vocabulary gained an enormous number of words from Latin, Norse and French. Later, trade and colonial expansion brought words from hundreds of further languages – among them Hindi, Arabic, African, Caribbean and Native American

languages. That is why English often has several words with a similar meaning but a different origin and register, for example ask, question and interrogate. Its dictionary is to a large extent a record of cultural contact.

KEY VOCABULARY **core** – the central part · **invasion** – entering a country by force · **conquest** – taking control by war · **register** – the level of formality of language

56. Where does the internet word “spam” come from?

SPAM was originally the name of a tinned meat product made by the Hormel company and introduced in the 1930s. The connection with the internet came through a sketch by the comedy group Monty Python, in which the word SPAM is repeated so persistently that it drowns out normal conversation. When unwanted, repeated messages began appearing in early internet communities, users started calling them spam – precisely because they flooded communication with something unwanted and repetitive. In time spam became a standard technical term. Today we use it not only about email but also about messages, comments and automatic content on social media.

KEY VOCABULARY **tinned** – sold in a metal can · **sketch** – a short comedy scene · **persistently** – again and again without stopping · **drown out** – to be so loud that something else cannot be heard

57. What does Google have to do with mathematics?

The name Google plays with the mathematical word googol, which means ten to the power of a hundred – a one followed by a hundred zeros. The term googol was invented in the twentieth century by the young nephew of the mathematician Edward Kasner as a name for an unimaginably large number. The founders of the search engine wanted the name to suggest the huge amount of information the system was meant to organise and make available. The spelling we know today came from a mistake. During a brainstorming session at Stanford in 1997, a fellow student checked whether the name was free and typed google.com instead of googol.com; Larry Page liked the shorter version and registered it that evening. Today the name is so common that many languages have formed verbs from it, such as English to google.

KEY VOCABULARY **power** – how many times a number is multiplied by itself · **unimaginably** – too much to imagine · **founder** – a person who starts a company · **brand** – a company name used in marketing

58. Why are jeans usually blue?

Classic jeans owe their colour to the dye indigo. In the nineteenth century denim was used to make hard-wearing work clothes, and the blue dye worked well both practically and visually. A characteristic feature of indigo is that it does not penetrate the fibres in the same way as many other dyes; it sits mainly on their surface. That is why denim wears and fades in a characteristic way, creating natural marks. Blue jeans first became a symbol of physical work and of the American West, and in the twentieth century a symbol of youth culture, rebellion and everyday fashion all over the world.

KEY VOCABULARY **dye** – a substance used to colour material · **hard-wearing** – lasting a long time in use · **fibre** – a thin thread in cloth · **fade** – to lose colour

59. What does the sign @ mean?

In English the sign @ is read as at. Long before the internet it was used in trade and accounting as a short way of writing a unit price, for example 5 items @ £2 – five items at two pounds each. In 1971 the programmer Ray Tomlinson used @ in electronic mail addresses because the sign was available on the keyboard and was not a normal part of user names. He used it to separate the name of a person from the name of a computer or system: user@host. Thanks to email, @ became one of the most recognisable symbols of the digital age, although its history is much older than the internet.

KEY VOCABULARY **accounting** – recording money and business · **unit price** – the price of one item · **separate** – to keep apart · **recognisable** – easy to identify

60. Why does the word “queue” have so many letters?

Queue is pronounced exactly like the name of the letter Q. The other four letters are silent, which makes the word a favourite example of the oddities of English spelling. Its history leads through French to the Latin cauda,

meaning “tail”. The meaning “line of people” developed from the image of people standing one behind another like a tail. The spelling keeps traces of the French history of the word, although the pronunciation has become much simpler. Queue shows a typical feature of English: spelling often stores information about origin, even when modern pronunciation has gone a different way.

KEY VOCABULARY **silent letter** – a letter that is written but not pronounced · **oddity** – a strange feature · **trace** – a small sign of something from the past · **store** – to keep for later

61. Why do the British say “lift” and Americans “elevator”?

Both words mean the same machine, but they became established in different varieties of English. British lift refers directly to the verb to lift. American elevator comes from the verb to elevate and sounds more technical. In the nineteenth century, when machines for vertical transport began to appear in buildings, competing names spread on both sides of the Atlantic. In time lift became standard in British English and elevator in American English. There are many similar pairs: flat and apartment, lorry and truck, pavement and sidewalk, petrol and gasoline. The differences are part of the natural development of regional varieties.

KEY VOCABULARY **variety** – a regional form of a language · **vertical** – going straight up and down · **competing** – trying to win against each other · **regional** – belonging to one area

62. Where does the word “penguin” come from?

The etymology of the word penguin remains uncertain, which is itself an interesting fact. One of the best-known theories connects the name with the Welsh pen gwyn, “white head”. The difficulty is that the name may originally have referred to the great auk, a bird of the northern seas that is now extinct, and only later have been transferred to birds of the southern hemisphere. Another theory links it with the Latin pinguis, meaning “fat”. Linguists are not fully certain which hypothesis is right. It is a good example of how even the origin of a very ordinary English word can remain a matter of debate.

KEY VOCABULARY **extinct** – no longer existing · **transfer** – to move from one thing to another · **hemisphere** – one half of the Earth · **hypothesis** – an idea that has not been proved

63. Who is a bookworm?

Bookworm would literally mean “a worm that lives in books”, but in modern English it is above all a person who loves reading and spends a lot of time with books. The word is usually friendly or humorous. Interestingly, bookworm could once also mean real insects or their larvae that damaged paper and bindings. The metaphor later moved to people who “devour” books. Like the Polish expression *mol książkowy*, the English word shows how easily the name of a small pest can turn into a compliment for a lover of literature.

KEY VOCABULARY **larva** – the young form of an insect · **binding** – the cover holding a book together · **devour** – to eat or read eagerly · **pest** – a creature that causes damage

64. Where does the word “goodbye” come from?

Goodbye is a shortened and changed form of the old phrase God be with ye, meaning “may God be with you”. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the phrase began to be written in shortened forms, which gradually changed under the influence of existing greetings and farewells such as good day and good night. The result is modern goodbye. Today most speakers of English do not connect the word with its religious origin at all, because it works as a completely neutral farewell. It is a good example of a word whose everyday form hides a very old phrase and a history of sound change.

KEY VOCABULARY **shortened** – made shorter · **influence** – the effect of one thing on another · **farewell** – words said when leaving · **neutral** – neither formal nor informal

65. Why does English have so many silent letters?

English spelling is far more conservative than pronunciation. Over the centuries the sound of words changed, but the written form often stayed the same. That is why in words such as knight, write, know and lamb we see letters we no longer pronounce. Sometimes a silent letter preserves a trace of an older pronunciation: the k in knight and know and the w in write were once spoken aloud. Sometimes a letter was added for etymological

reasons and never pronounced in English at all, like the b in debt, which points back to Latin debitum. The growth of printing helped to fix spelling at a time when pronunciation was still changing quickly. The Great Vowel Shift is another major reason why modern spelling and pronunciation often differ, although it affected mainly vowels. The result is that English spelling works as a historical archive of the language.

KEY VOCABULARY **conservative** – slow to change · **preserve** – to keep unchanged · **printing** – producing books by machine · **archive** – a store of historical records

66. Where does the word “alphabet” come from?

Alphabet was formed from the names of the first two letters of the Greek alphabet: alpha and beta. The Greeks took an earlier writing system from the Phoenicians and adapted it to their own language, among other things by introducing signs for vowels. The combination alpha plus beta came to be used as a name for the whole set of letters, and through Latin it reached many European languages. That is why English alphabet, Polish alfabet, French alphabet and German Alphabet all share one source. It is a fine example of a word that literally means something like “alpha-beta” – simply the beginning of an ordered set of signs.

KEY VOCABULARY **adapt** – to change something to fit a new use · **vowel** – a sound such as a, e, i, o, u · **combination** – two or more things joined · **ordered** – arranged in a fixed sequence

67. Why do we use £ for pounds and lb for weight?

Both the British currency sign £ and the abbreviation lb for the unit of weight have a common Latin origin. The Latin libra meant a balance or a unit of weight. From its first letter L developed the stylised sign £, while lb is simply an abbreviation of libra. The old expression libra pondo meant roughly “a pound by weight”, and it is from pondo that the English word pound comes. That is why modern English has an apparently illogical combination: the word pound begins with p, but its abbreviation is lb. The history of money and measures has preserved traces of Latin in very everyday symbols.

KEY VOCABULARY **abbreviation** – a shortened written form · **balance** – an instrument for weighing · **stylised** – drawn in a simplified way · **apparently** – seemingly, on the surface

68. Why do the British and Americans spell some words differently?

Differences such as colour and color, centre and center, travelling and traveling, defence and defense became established gradually on both sides of the Atlantic. In the United States an important role was played by the lexicographer Noah Webster, who at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries promoted a more regular and distinctly American spelling. Some of the forms he proposed, such as color without u and center with -er, were widely accepted. Others did not survive. British spelling had not been completely uniform earlier either, so it is wrong to think that Americans simply “spoiled” a finished system. Both norms are today fully valid varieties of standard English.

KEY VOCABULARY **lexicographer** – a person who writes dictionaries · **promote** – to encourage the use of · **uniform** – the same everywhere · **valid** – acceptable and correct

69. Why is Shakespeare called one of the fathers of modern English?

William Shakespeare wrote during the Early Modern English period, at the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when the language was changing very quickly. He was an extremely creative user of the language: he readily made new combinations of words, used existing words in new functions and made striking phrases popular. Expressions associated with his work include wild-goose chase, heart of gold and in a pickle. Be careful, though, with the claim that he “invented thousands of words” – very often his text is simply the oldest surviving example of a particular use. He was not literally the father of modern English, but his influence on the culture of the language is enormous.

KEY VOCABULARY **creative** – producing new ideas · **function** – the role something plays · **striking** – unusual and memorable · **surviving** – still existing today

V.

TRADITIONS, HOLIDAYS AND POPULAR CULTURE



70. Where does Halloween come from?

Halloween has a complex origin and combines several traditions. People often point to the Celtic festival of Samhain, held at the turn of autumn and winter, when according to old beliefs the border between the world of the living and the world of the dead was especially thin. Later the Christian tradition of All Hallows' Eve – the evening before All Saints' Day – was added to these customs. Over the centuries, local practices involving disguise, fortune-telling and visiting houses developed in Ireland, Scotland and other regions. In the nineteenth century immigrants brought many of them to North America, where Halloween gradually took its present form.

KEY VOCABULARY **disguise** – clothes that hide who you are · **fortune-telling** – predicting the future · **custom** – a traditional practice · **immigrant** – a person who moves to another country

71. Why do people carve pumpkins at Halloween?

The tradition of the jack-o'-lantern travelled to America from Ireland and Scotland, but at first the lanterns were made mainly from turnips and swedes. Faces were cut into them and a light was placed inside; such lanterns were linked with ghost stories and with the legend of Stingy Jack, a man condemned to wander for ever with a burning coal. When Irish immigrants settled in the USA, they discovered that local pumpkins were bigger, softer and much easier to hollow out than a turnip. In time the pumpkin completely took over the custom and became one of the most important visual symbols of Halloween.

KEY VOCABULARY **carve** – to cut a shape into something · **turnip** – a round white root vegetable · **condemned** – forced to suffer a punishment · **hollow out** – to remove the inside of something

72. What is Guy Fawkes Night?

On 5 November Britain celebrates Bonfire Night, also called Guy Fawkes Night. It remembers the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, when a group of Catholic conspirators tried to blow up the Houses of Parliament and kill King James I. Guy Fawkes was caught guarding the explosives in a cellar under the building, and the plot failed. For centuries people have marked the date with bonfires, fireworks and figures called “guys” burned on the fire; children used to ask passers-by for “a penny for the guy”. The traditional rhyme begins: “Remember, remember the fifth of November”.

KEY VOCABULARY **plot** – a secret plan to do something wrong · **conspirator** – a member of a secret plan · **blow up** – to destroy with an explosion · **bonfire** – a large outdoor fire

73. Why is 26 December called Boxing Day?

Boxing Day, on 26 December, has nothing to do with the sport of boxing. The name comes from boxes – most probably the Christmas boxes with money, food or small gifts that employers and wealthy households traditionally gave to servants, workers and tradespeople on the day after Christmas, when those people finally had time off. Another explanation points to charity boxes opened in churches at this time of year. Today Boxing Day is widely observed in the UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, and it is known above all for sport, family visits and shop sales. In the Republic of Ireland 26 December is also a public holiday, but it is officially called St Stephen's Day.

KEY VOCABULARY **employer** – a person who gives people work · **servant** – a person employed in a house · **tradesperson** – a skilled worker such as a baker or butcher · **charity** – help given to people in need

74. Why is Hollywood called Hollywood?

The name Hollywood is older than the film industry. It was given in 1887 by Daeida Wilcox, the wife of a property developer, to their land near Los Angeles; despite the name, the area was not covered with holly. The film industry arrived about twenty years later, and it had good reasons. Southern California offered sunshine almost all year round, which mattered when films needed natural light; mountains, desert, sea and city all lay within a day's journey; and the distance from the East Coast made it easier to avoid the patent company that controlled film equipment in New Jersey. Hollywood the place soon became Hollywood the idea.

KEY VOCABULARY **property developer** – a person who builds on land for profit · **holly** – an evergreen bush with red berries · **patent** – a legal right to an invention · **equipment** – the tools needed for an activity

75. Why is the Academy Award called “the Oscar”?

The official name of the award is the Academy Award of Merit. Nobody is quite sure where the nickname Oscar came from, and at least three stories compete. In the best-known one, the Academy librarian Margaret Herrick said that the golden figure looked like her uncle Oscar. Another version credits the actress Bette Davis, and a third the journalist Sidney Skolsky, who used the word in print in the 1930s. The Academy accepted the nickname officially in 1939. The statuette itself shows a knight holding a sword and standing on a reel of film, and it has hardly changed since 1929.

KEY VOCABULARY **award** – a prize given for achievement · **librarian** – a person who works in a library · **statuette** – a small statue · **reel** – a wheel on which film is wound

ALPHABETICAL INDEX

Numbers refer to facts, not to pages.

A

Aboriginal peoples **48**
 Academy Awards **75**
 afternoon tea **7**
 All Blacks **50**
 All Hallows' Eve **70**
 alphabet **66**
 Angles **9**
 at sign **59**
 Australia, name **46**
 Australian animals **47**

B

bald eagle, name **32**
 bald eagle, symbol **33**
 bearskins **14**
 Beefeaters **15**
 Big Apple **28**
 Big Ben **5**
 black cabs **4**
 bobbies **12**
 Bonfire Night **72**
 bookworm **63**
 Boxing Day **73**
 Brian Boru harp **18**
 British and American English **61**
 British Isles **1**
 buses, London **3**

C

Canada, name **43**
 Canadian flag **44**
 Cartier, Jacques **43**
 Celtic languages **26**
 Celts **26**
 Changing of the Guard **14**
 Church of England **25**

coat of arms of England **17**

D

daffodil **11**
 dates, writing **36**
 denim **58**
 dollar **37**
 double-decker **3**
 dragon legend **24**
 driving on the left **2**

E

Early Modern English **69**
 Edison, Thomas **54**
 Elizabeth Tower **5**
 England, name **9**

F

Fahrenheit **41**
 First Peoples **48**
 five o'clock tea **7**
 flag of England **10**
 Flinders, Matthew **46**
 folklore, Irish **20**
 football, American **31**

G

gallon **40**
 goodbye **64**
 Google **57**
 googol **57**
 great auk **62**
 Great Britain **1**
 Great Seal **33**
 Great Vowel Shift **65**
 Groundhog Day **42**
 Gunpowder Plot **72**
 Guy Fawkes Night **72**

H

hackney carriage **4**
 haka **50**
 Halloween **70**

harp **18**
 hello **54**
 high tea **7**
 Highway Act **2**
 Hobbiton **51**
 Hollywood **74**

I

imperial system **40**
 Indians, term **39**
 indigo **58**
 Ireland, symbols of **18**
 Irish writers **19**

J

Jáchymov **37**
 jack-o'-lantern **71**
 jeans **58**

K

kiwi **49**

L

lb **67**
 leek **11**
 leprechaun **20**
 libra **67**
 lift and elevator **61**
 Lincoln, Abraham **30**
 loanwords **55**
 London Underground **13**

M

Manhattan **35**
 Māori **48**
 maple leaf **44**
 maple syrup **45**
 marsupials **47**
 measurement **40**
 Metropolitan Police **12**
 milk in tea **6**
 Montagu, John **52**
 Monty Python **56**

N

Native Americans **39**
 New Amsterdam **27**
 New York **27**
 New Zealand, film **51**
 Norman conquest **55**

O

OK **53**
 Order of the Thistle **21**
 Oscars **75**

P

Peel, Robert **12**
 penguin **62**
 Phoenicians **66**
 place names, American **27**
 platypus **47**
 politeness **8**
 pound sign **67**
 pumpkins **71**
 Punxsutawney Phil **42**

Q

Quebec **45**
 queue **60**

R

ravens **15**
 red dragon **11**
 Reformation **25**
 Roosevelt, Theodore **38**

S

Saltire **22**
 Samhain **70**
 sandwich **52**
 Scotland, symbols of **16**
 seanchaí **19**
 Shakespeare, William **69**
 shamrock **23**
 silent letters **60, 65**
 soccer **31**

sorry **8**
spam **56**
spelling, British and American **68**
St Andrew **22**
St Andrews **22**
St George **24**
St Patrick **23**
St Patrick's Day **23**
St Stephen's Day **73**
Stingy Jack **71**
storytelling **19**
street grid **35**

T

tea **6**
teddy bear **38**
temperature **41**
Terra Australis **46**
thaler **37**
Thanksgiving **30**
the Dreaming **48**
the Knowledge **4**
thistle **21**
three lions **17**
Tomlinson, Ray **59**
Torres Strait Islanders **48**
Tower of London **15**
Tube, the **13**

U

Ulster **25**
Uncle Sam **34**
unicorn **16**
Union Jack **10**
United Kingdom **1**

V

Van Buren, Martin **53**

W

Waitangi Day **48**
Wales **11**

Wampanoag **30**
Webster, Noah **68**
White House **29**
Wijnbergen Roll **18**
Wilson, Samuel **34**

Y

Yeomen Warders **15**

SOKRATES to szkoła języków obcych, która łączy ambitne cele, przyjazną atmosferę i długofalowe planowanie edukacji językowej.



Szkoła istnieje od 2002 roku – co roku uczy się u nas ponad 1000 słuchaczy.



Przygotowujemy do matury z języka angielskiego, polskiego i niemieckiego oraz francuskiego, hiszpańskiego i włoskiego.



Nasz zespół tworzy 60 doświadczonych lektorów, którzy są z nami od lat. Stabilna kadra jest gwarancją przewidywalnych efektów.



Uczymy w małych grupach, a dobór kursu poprzedzamy rzetelną i bezpłatną diagnozą poziomu.



Posiadamy Znak Jakości PASE i akredytację Kuratorium Oświaty; jesteśmy zarejestrowaną placówką oświatową oraz centrum egzaminacyjnym PEIC Young Learners.



Nad pracą lektorów czuwa doświadczony zespół metodyczny.



Skutecznie przygotowujemy do B2 First, C1 Advanced i C2 Proficiency. Jesteśmy oficjalnym centrum przygotowującym do egzaminów Cambridge i współpracujemy z British Council.



Oprócz dzieci i młodzieży uczymy także dorosłych.



Wykorzystujemy programy edukacyjne National Geographic Learning: naukę języka łączymy z wiedzą o świecie i budowaniem kompetencji przyszłości.



Nasze placówki znajdują się tuż przy stacjach metra Kabaty i Natolin – zajęcia są prowadzone w komfortowych i dobrze wyposażonych salach.



Skutecznie przygotowujemy do egzaminu ósmoklasisty z języka angielskiego, a także polskiego i matematyki.

Chcesz rozwinąć swoje umiejętności językowe?

Zadzwoń i umów się na bezpłatne spotkanie diagnostyczne z metodykiem w wybranym oddziale naszej szkoły. Sprawdzimy Twój poziom językowy, porozmawiamy o Twoich potrzebach i zaproponujemy optymalną ścieżkę nauki.

Serdecznie zapraszamy!

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