



by Magdalena Rowecka

Copyright © Towarzystwo Edukacyjne Sokrates 2018

Opracowanie merytoryczne: Magdalena Rowecka

Konsultacje językowe: Micheal McCabe

Projekt graficzny: Michał Czartoszewski

Nakład: 1000 egzemplarzy

# ENGLISH-SPEAKING COUNTRIES IN A NUTSHELL

## PART 1: GREAT BRITAIN

### General information

Great Britain is the name for England, Wales and Scotland. The United Kingdom (UK) is England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and it has got a population of about 65 million people. Great Britain is the largest island in Europe and the ninth largest island in the world. The earliest known name of Great Britain is Albion. The name 'Britain' comes from the Latin word Britannia or 'the land of the Britons'.



### Some history

Britain was first populated by Celtic tribes. In 43 AD the Romans invaded the island and established the province of Britannia. The Romans ruled there for almost 400 years, and when they left Britain in the 5th century AD, the island was invaded by Germanic tribes- the Angles, Saxons and Jutes. The Anglo-Saxon tribes united in the 10th century to form the Kingdom of England. The Angles also gave their name to England.

In 1066 England was invaded by the Normans, and Norman kings ruled in the country for about one century. The kingdom of England grew in power and then it took control of Wales and Ireland. In 1707 England and Scotland united and formed the Kingdom of Great Britain. By the 1800s, Great Britain was one of the most powerful countries in the world.

England is a country that is part of Great Britain. It was a separate state till May 1707 when the Kingdom of Great Britain was created. The capital of England is London.

Scotland is a country in the north of Great Britain. The country's capital is Edinburgh. The Kingdom of Scotland was an independent state until May 1707.

Wales was originally a Celtic land. In the 16th century Henry VIII incorporated Wales into the Kingdom of England. Wales became part of the Kingdom of Great Britain in 1707 - and then of the United Kingdom in 1801. The capital of Wales is Cardiff, which is also the biggest Welsh city. The people of Wales call their country Cymru (pronounced /'kəmri/) in the Welsh language. About 20% of the people in Wales speak Welsh as their first language.

Northern Ireland is situated in the north-east of the island of Ireland. Belfast is its capital and the largest city.

### The flag



The national flag of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is called the Union Jack.

### London

London is the capital of the United Kingdom, and it is the largest city in the European Union with a population of about 8.6 million people. The city was built by the Romans in 43 AD, and at first it was called Londinium. In September 1666 big parts of the city were burnt in the Great Fire of London.

The most famous tourist sights today are:

- the Tower of London – which was a fortress, a royal palace and a prison;
- Buckingham Palace – where the British monarch lives;
- Westminster Abbey – a large church which is the traditional place of coronation and burial for British kings and queens;
- the Houses of Parliament and Big Ben. Big Ben is the name of the bell that rings in the clock tower in the Houses of Parliament in Westminster. However, most people, including those that live in London, call the tower 'Big Ben'.

### Food

People eat sandwiches all over the world but not everybody knows that the word 'sandwich' comes from Britain. It was named after an English aristocrat, John Montagu, 4th Earl of Sandwich, who liked this form of food because he could eat it and continue playing cards.

In the past, the people in Britain ate a lot of red meat and they also usually ate at home. Now they prefer white meat such as chicken or fish, and most people want quick and easy meals. They buy ready-made meals from supermarkets and take-away meals from fast food restaurants. Fish and chips are a very popular British meal but many people prefer foreign food. There are a lot of Indian and Chinese restaurants in every British town. The British are famous for drinking a lot of tea. Afternoon tea, however, is a small meal, not a drink.

### Pets

The British are animal lovers. There is a pet in more than 50% of the homes in the UK, and cats are the most popular pets.

### Sports

Football is the sport which people most enjoy watching on TV. There are a lot of football clubs in Britain and Manchester United is probably the most popular one. The sport which most people enjoy doing is walking. The 2012 Olympic Games were held in London.

### British holidays

Guy Fawkes' Day, also known as Bonfire Night, is celebrated on the 5th November. On that day in 1605, Guy Fawkes with a group of other plotters tried to kill the king and blow up the Houses of Parliament. He was not successful – the plot was discovered and Guy Fawkes was executed. The day became a holiday because people were happy that the king was saved.

Christmas Day (25th December) is a holiday in Britain. On that day children open their Christmas presents and in the afternoon people eat Christmas dinner, which is usually turkey with vegetables, and a Christmas pudding. 26th December is called Boxing Day. The name comes from a 19th century tradition when rich people gave boxes with food and Christmas gifts to the poor.

### The Union Jack

The history of the British flag, also known as the Union Jack, started in 1606, when king James VI of Scotland became king James I of England. When the two kingdoms united, it was decided that the union should be represented by a new flag – a combination of the flags of England and Scotland.

In 1801 Great Britain and Northern Ireland were united and the flag was changed again: the Irish cross of Saint Patrick was added, and the Union Jack as we know it today was created.



The cross represented in each flag is named after the patron saint of each country: St. George, the patron saint of England, St. Andrew, the patron saint of Scotland and St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland.



And what about Wales, the fourth country of the United Kingdom?

Well, the Welsh dragon was not incorporated because when the first version of the Union Flag was designed in 1606, Wales was then part of England.

### National emblems and patron saints of the UK

Each of the four countries of The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland has its own flag, patron saint and a floral emblem.

The symbol of England is the red Tudor rose, and its patron saint is St George. The patron saint of Northern Ireland is St Patrick, and the country's national flower is the shamrock. The patron saint of Wales is St David, and the country has got two floral emblems- the leek and the daffodil. The patron saint of Scotland is St Andrew, and its floral emblem is the purple thistle.

The floral emblems have been combined in the Royal Badge of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (even though for some reason there is no leek or daffodil in it). There are interesting legends which explain how the plants became the countries' national emblems!





### St George and the dragon

St George is commonly identified with England but in fact he wasn't English. He was born in Turkey in the 3rd century AD and his parents were Christian. As a teenager he became a Roman soldier and he served under the pagan Emperor Diocletian. He was a brave man and when the Emperor started killing Christians, George pleaded with him to spare their lives. George was imprisoned and tortured for his beliefs but he refused to renounce his faith. He was sentenced to death and beheaded on 23 April 303 AD – and that is why St George's Day is celebrated on 23 April.

St George has been immortalised in a legend according to which there was a cruel dragon that lived in a lake near the city of Silene in Libya. The beast had to be fed two sheep a day or otherwise it would hurt the local people. When the people ran out of sheep, they had to give their children to the dragon. Since no parent wanted to sacrifice their kids, they had to be chosen by lottery, and one day the lot fell on the king's daughter. The king

was desperate but since the decision was final, there was nothing he could do: the princess was dressed in a wedding gown and sent to be fed to the beast.

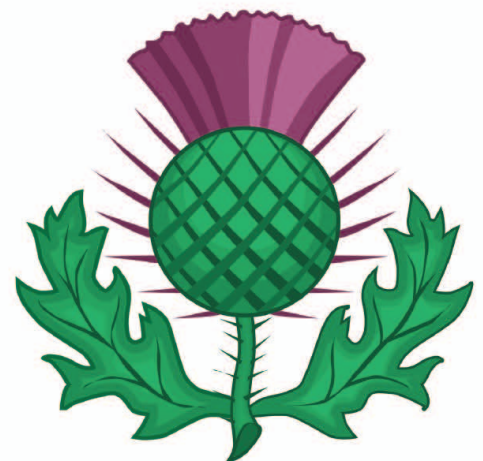
While she was awaiting her fate, St George happened to be riding by and he saw the weeping princess. He asked her what was wrong, and she told him about the cruel dragon. She begged George to go away and save himself, but just then, the evil dragon emerged from the lake. The brave knight drew his sword, made the sign of the cross, and struck the beast, wounding it severely. He then asked the princess to throw him her belt, and he put it around the dragon's neck. When he did so, the dragon became as meek as a lamb and followed them on a leash to the city. The people of Silene were terrified when they saw the beast, but George offered to kill it if they agreed to become Christians. According to the legend, fifteen thousand men and the king accepted the Christian faith, and George killed the dragon, as he had promised.

The legend of St George and the dragon became very popular during the Middle Ages and it spread all over Europe. St George was admired by medieval knights and his emblem was adopted by Richard the Lionheart and brought to England in the 12th century. King Edward III made St George the country's official saint when he came to the throne in the 14th century. Apart from England, St George is also the patron saint of many other countries, including Canada, China, Greece, Russia, Portugal, Palestine, Ethiopia, Serbia, Montenegro, and Georgia, which was even named after him. Interestingly, it is believed that William Shakespeare was born on St George's Day in 1564, and died on St George's Day in 1616.

### Scotland and the thistle

The purple thistle is said to be the oldest national flower on record and the legend of how it was adopted as the symbol of Scotland goes back to the 13th century.

For hundreds of years much of Scotland was part of the Kingdom of Norway, which seemed to have had little interest in this territory. However, in the summer of 1263 King Haakon of Norway decided to reclaim it, and he set off with a massive fleet of longships for the Scottish coast. According to the legend, the Norsemen wanted to attack at night to surprise the sleeping Scots. In order to move quietly under cover of darkness, the attackers took off their shoes, but as they were walking barefoot, they came across an area covered in thistles. When Haakon's men stood on the prickly plants, they cried out in pain. The noise awakened the Scottish warriors who defeated the Norsemen at the Battle of Largs and saved Scotland. The important role that the thistle had played in the victory was recognised, the purple plant became the 'Guardian Thistle' and it was chosen as Scotland's national emblem. Interesting as it sounds, it's widely considered to be just a legend. The Battle of Largs has been described in literature as a great Scottish victory, but in fact, it only involved a small part of the Norwegian fleet. What really helped the Scots was the fact that king Haakon fell ill and died during his campaign against Scotland.



### St Andrew and the Scottish flag

St Andrew is the patron saint of Scotland and his day, celebrated on November 30th, is a bank holiday and an official



flag day. St Andrew was a fisherman who lived in Galilee in the 1st century AD. He was baptized by John the Baptist and together with his brother, Simon Peter, he became one of the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ. Andrew was crucified by the Romans on an X-shaped cross in 60 AD and this is represented on the Scottish flag as the white cross in a blue sky.

The flag of Scotland, also known as the Saltire or the Saint Andrew's Cross, is the oldest flag in Europe. Legend has it that in 832 AD an army of Picts and Scots, led by king Angus MacFergus, was surrounded by a far more numerous army of Angles. King Angus was afraid that his army might lose and so he started to pray to St Andrew for help. The saint appeared to Angus in a dream, and the king promised St Andrew that if he helped him win the battle, then he would become the patron saint of his country. The following morning a strange cloud appeared in the blue sky, forming a white diagonal cross, which looked like the cross on which the saint had been crucified. King Angus and his army believed this was a good omen for them, but the Angles were scared of it: they lost heart, and they lost the battle. King Angus kept his promise and St Andrew's cross has been the Scottish flag ever since. Picts and Scots were united in 843 AD by Kenneth MacAlpin, the new kingdom was called Scotland, and St Andrew became its patron saint.

### St David – the patron saint of Wales

St David, also known as Dewi Sant in Welsh, is the only native-born patron saint of the countries of Britain and Ireland. The exact date of his birth is unknown, but David is believed to have been born around the year 500 AD. According to legend, the circumstances of his birth were quite dramatic as his mother gave birth to him on a cliff during a fierce thunderstorm.

As a young man, David became a monk, an abbot and later a bishop, who spread Christianity in Wales and across other parts of the British Isles. He was a very good speaker and soon became a well-known preacher with many followers.

St David was a vegetarian and his monks also followed a simple, ascetic life. He was reputed to have lived on a diet of leeks and water – which may be the reason why the leek became a national symbol of Wales. It is also believed that during a battle against the Saxons, David advised Welsh soldiers to wear leeks in their hats so that they could be distinguished from their enemies- which may be another explanation for the special status this vegetable enjoys as one of the emblems of Wales.

Legend has it that David was a miracle worker. He was said to have restored a blind man's vision and to have brought a dead boy back to life. However, the most famous of David's miracles took place while he was preaching to a large crowd.

Some people started complaining that they could not hear him. At that moment, a white dove sent from heaven, landed on David's shoulder and the ground on which he was standing rose up and formed a hill so that David could be seen and heard by everybody.

St David is believed to have died on 1 March in AD 589. After his death, his influence spread far and wide. In 1120, David was canonised as a saint and later he was declared Patron Saint of Wales. St David's Day has been celebrated on 1 March since the 12th Century.



### The kilt

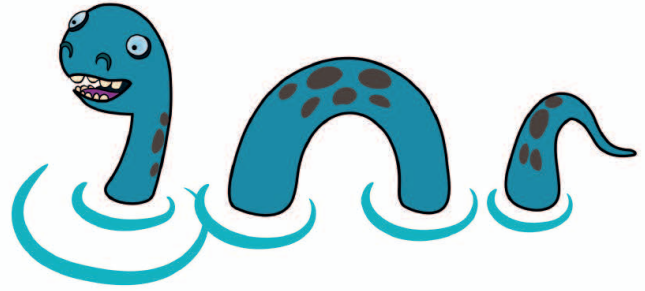
The kilt is the national dress of Scotland and Scottish people wear it with pride. The kilt was easy to make and use and it had many advantages in the Highland climate and terrain. There were almost no roads in the Highlands and people often travelled across the damp grassland on foot. The kilt was very practical there because it was almost completely waterproof and it dried out a lot more quickly than trousers. Interestingly, the kilt was banned in the second half of the 18th century, and the punishment for wearing it was up to seven years captivity (prisoners were sent to penal colonies in America and Australia). Anyway, many people took the risk and the kilt instantly became an icon of Scotland.

### The Loch Ness Monster

Loch Ness is a large and deep freshwater lake in Scotland and it is believed to have a famous resident: the Loch Ness Monster. The monster, also known as 'Nessie', is often described as a large dinosaur-like creature, with a long neck, two humps, four flippers and a tail.

According to legend, Nessie was first spotted around AD 565 by a monk named St Columba. The monster was said to have eaten a local farmer, before being forced back into the water by St Columba himself. Over the years, rumours about a strange creature living in Loch Ness spread far and wide. In 1934, a London surgeon named R. K. Wilson took a photo that appeared to show a head and neck rising above the surface of the water. The same year, the first big search for the monster was organised but nothing was found. Nevertheless, Nessie had hit the headlines and has remained the topic of fierce debate ever since.

About 20 sightings are reported every year but to this day, there is no conclusive proof that the monster really exists. Some people say it's a myth, others believe it's a dinosaur or even a sea snake that swam into the lake before it became separated from the ocean. Whether real or not, Nessie is one of the things – aside from kilts and bagpipes – that Scotland is famous for and in a survey in 2006, Nessie was even declared the most famous Scot!



### Robin Hood

Robin Hood is one of the most popular heroes in English folklore. The legendary outlaw from Nottinghamshire, who stole from the rich and gave to the poor, became a popular figure in the late medieval period. Legend has it that he was a skilled archer who lived during the 12th or 13th century in Sherwood Forest with his 'Merry Men'.

He is usually pictured as a young man armed with a longbow, wearing green clothes and a hood. He was outlawed for poaching deer from the royal forests. Under the cruel laws of that time, killing the king's deer was punishable by death. He committed the crime and escaped to the woods. His enemies were rich and corrupt, especially the evil Sheriff of Nottingham. Despite his efforts, the Sheriff did not manage to capture Robin Hood until the return of king Richard the Lionheart from the Crusades. Although Robin was a thief and a rebel, he supported the rightful king and was pardoned when king Richard returned to England. That is the legend, but did Robin really exist? Well, no one has been able to prove beyond doubt that Robin Hood was a real person and some people

believe that he was just a fictional character. Others claim that he was not one person but a combination of a few people, as several men named Robin Hood existed at different times. Also, 'Robin' or 'Robert Hood' was a nickname given to petty criminals from the middle of the 13th century and it is not very surprising that the name 'Robin' sounds similar to 'robbing'. Whether he was a real person or not, his legend continues to this day.

## PART 2: THE USA

### General information

The United States of America (or the USA), the fourth largest country in the world, is situated mostly in central North America. The country is composed of 50 states (Alaska is the largest American state) and it has got a population of about 325 million people. American society is a mixture of all races- white, black (called 'Afro-American'), Latino and Asian. Each year more than 1.1 million immigrants come to the US from all over the world.

Washington, D.C. (the District of Columbia) is the capital of the United States. The President of the United States is the head of state and the government. Barack Obama is the first Afro-American President in history.

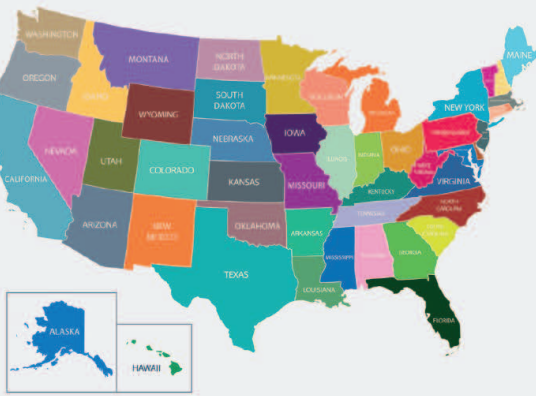
### The flag



The American flag consists of thirteen horizontal stripes (7 red and 6 white stripes) representing the first 13 colonies which became the first states, and fifty small white stars which represent the present 50 US states. The flag is sometimes called The Star-Spangled Banner – which is also the name of the national anthem.

### Some history

In 1492 Christopher Columbus, an Italian-born explorer who wanted to find a new way to India, reached a place near



America. Because of his mistake, people started to use the word 'Indians' for Native Americans. The name America comes from the name of an Italian explorer, Amerigo Vespucci. After Columbus, more Europeans travelled to America - which was then called the 'New World.' In 1620, 102 people came to America from England on a ship called the Mayflower. They were called Puritans and they went to America because they wanted some religious freedom that they did not have in Britain. Then, more and more people from England followed and most of them lived in the Northeast of the country. They had to pay taxes to the English king, but they did not like that. As a result, they fought a war with England and the Americans won it in 1776. That's how the country was born. The country's first president was George Washington, whose face is on the one dollar bill.

### New York City

New York is the largest American city with 8.5 million inhabitants. It consists of five districts, and Manhattan with its skyscrapers is probably the most famous one of them. New York was founded by Dutch colonists in 1624. At first it was called New Amsterdam. New York served as the capital of the United States from 1785 until 1790.

Many landmarks in the city have become world-famous, for example the Statue of Liberty, Wall Street – a global financial centre – and some of the tallest buildings in the world, including the Empire State Building and the twin towers of the World Trade Centre which were destroyed in terrorist attacks. New York is sometimes called 'The City that Never Sleeps' or the 'Big Apple'.

### Food

There are many different kinds of food in the USA because many people make foods from their old countries – Mexican, Italian and Chinese food is especially popular. 'Fast food' such as hamburgers or hot dogs began in America and McDonald's or KFC are known all over the world. Most Americans eat too much and more than 60% of them are overweight.

### Sports

Baseball is the national American sport. It possibly started from an old English game but now many Americans think it is the most American sport. American football, basketball, and ice hockey are the country's three other most popular sports. American football is a very dangerous sport and some players are very big. European football is called soccer in the USA. It is not as popular as in Europe but many children play it.

Basketball was invented in the USA in 1891 by a teacher from Massachusetts who wanted a new game for his students. At first the children threw a ball into a fruit basket. Many people loved the new sport and it soon became very popular.

### Americans and cars

Americans love cars and the car is one of the American symbols. There are over 262 million cars on the roads and in most states people can drive when they are 16 years old. Some towns and cities do not have any trains or buses and most people drive everywhere. There are even some stores where you can shop without getting out of your car and there are cinemas where you can watch a movie in your car!

### Music

Many Americans like country music - which was actually born in the USA. The centre of country music is Nashville. Some of the most famous American singers were Elvis Presley and Michael Jackson.

### Holidays

On July 4th, Americans remember the beginning of their country. It's called Independence Day and most people have a party on that day. Halloween is another big holiday. On October 31st children dress in funny clothes and go trick-or-treating. In November Americans celebrate Thanksgiving. It is a harvest festival - a time to give thanks for the harvest and express gratitude. Families and friends meet on that day and have a big Thanksgiving dinner.



## Halloween

Halloween is one of the oldest and most popular holidays celebrated today. Some people view it as a time for fun, trick-or-treating and parties, while others view it as an evil pagan ritual. How did it all begin?

Halloween was originally a Celtic festival known as Samhain which dates back to over 2000 years ago. It was celebrated on October 31st – the last day of the Celtic calendar. Celts believed that the spirits of the dead returned to walk the earth on that day, and they left food and wine for the ghosts so that they would not hurt the living or destroy their crops. They built sacred bonfires and put on costumes consisting of animal heads and skins. Over time, when Christianity came to

Europe, the church wanted to convert pagans and replace their pagan celebrations with new Christian holidays. In 1000 AD the church made November 2nd All Souls' Day – a day to honor the dead. All Hallows Eve is the evening before All Saints Day and it was celebrated similarly to Samhain, with big bonfires, parades, and dressing up in costumes as saints, angels and devils. All Saints Day was also called All Hallows and the night before it was called All Hallows Eve, and later Halloween.

Halloween became popular in America in the second half of the 19th century, when due to widespread famine in Ireland, the USA was flooded with Irish immigrants who brought their traditions with them. Americans began to dress up in costumes and go from house to house asking for sweets or money, and the practice eventually became today's 'trick-or-treating'.

Nowadays, Americans spend about \$6 billion a year on Halloween sweets and costumes, making it the second largest commercial holiday after Christmas.



### The history of the Jack O'Lantern

Every October before Halloween, people all over the world decorate their windows and doorsteps with carved pumpkins called Jack O'Lanterns. Pumpkins have become a symbol of the holiday and it is actually hard to imagine Halloween without the big orange vegetable. However, it may be interesting to know that the Jack O'Lantern has deep historical roots and originally did not even involve a pumpkin. In fact, the tradition comes from an old Irish legend about a man named Stingy Jack, the devil and a turnip.

According to the legend, Stingy Jack was an old drunk who liked playing tricks on other people- and even the Devil himself. One day he invited the Devil to join him for a drink. Stingy Jack didn't want to spend his money, so he convinced the Devil to turn himself into a coin that Jack could use to pay for the drinks. The Devil did so but Jack decided to keep the money and put it into his pocket next to a silver cross, which stopped the Devil from changing back into his original form. Jack eventually freed the Devil, but he made him promise that he would

not seek revenge for a year and that he would not take Jack's soul after his death.

A year passed and the Devil returned - and then Jack played another trick on him. He talked him into climbing a tree to pick an apple. While the Devil was up in the tree, Jack carved a cross on the tree's bark. Unable to touch it, the Devil was stuck in the tree until he promised Jack not to bother him for another ten years.

When Jack died, as the legend goes, God did not allow the old drunk and sinner to enter heaven. The Devil, upset by the tricks Jack had played on him, did not let him enter hell, either. Now Jack had nowhere to go. The Devil gave him a piece of burning coal and Jack put it into a carved-out turnip. Legend has it that he has been roaming the Earth ever since without a resting place, lighting his way with the makeshift lantern. When people saw Jack's ghost carrying the lantern, they called him 'Jack of the Lantern', and then shortened the name to 'Jack O'Lantern'.

Making vegetable lanterns was an old tradition in the British Isles, and carved-out turnips, beets, and potatoes were stuffed with coal or candles as lanterns to celebrate the harvest and to frighten away Stingy Jack and other evil spirits. Interestingly, pumpkins were not used for this purpose because the orange vegetables were not grown or known in Europe at that time.

Immigrants from Ireland and Britain brought the custom to the United States- and soon they discovered that pumpkins were bigger and easier to carve out. Thus, they started using them to make Jack O'Lanterns, and this is how it all began.

## Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving Day in the United States is celebrated on the fourth Thursday in November. It is a day when Americans give thanks for all the blessings received during the year and honor the early settlers and their first harvest feast.

The holiday started in New England and it dates back to 1621- the year after the Pilgrims arrived in North America. In 1620, the Pilgrims left Plymouth in England on a ship called the Mayflower. The ship's 102 passengers were religious separatists looking for a new home in America, where they could practice their religion freely. On December 11, 1620, after 66 days at sea, the Pilgrims reached a place in North America which they called Plymouth Rock. The first winter was very difficult for the settlers. They had little food, many of them got sick and about half of them died before spring. The survivors turned for help to the local Indians, who were very friendly and taught the settlers how to build shelters, hunt and catch fish, plant corn, pumpkin and other crops. Things got better for the Pilgrims in 1621 when the harvest turned out to be abundant and so they decided to celebrate and give thanks to God.

In the fall of 1621, the Plymouth colonists invited the Indians to their harvest feast, which lasted for three days. The custom of celebrating Thanksgiving soon spread from Plymouth to other New England colonies, and in 1863 Abraham Lincoln officially set aside the last Thursday of November as the national day for Thanksgiving. In many American households today, Thanksgiving is mainly a family celebration. Traditional Thanksgiving food usually includes roast turkey, mashed potatoes and pumpkin pie. It is estimated that about 46 million turkeys are killed in the United States each year for Thanksgiving. Interestingly, since the first half of the 20th century, presidents of the United States have 'pardoned' or saved the life of one or two Thanksgiving turkeys each year, sending the birds to a farm for retirement.



## Independence Day

The fourth of July, also known as Independence Day in the USA, honours the Declaration of Independence on July 4th, 1776. The Declaration was adopted during the American Revolutionary War between Great Britain and the thirteen original colonies, which declared independence as the United States of America.

The conflict started in April 1775 in Massachusetts. The main reason for it was that the colonists did not like being taxed and governed by the British government, and they were angry that they had no say in the decisions that affected them and the colonies. However, Britain was not willing to give up its territories and influence in America, and attempted to crush the rebellion with its great army. It took 8 years before Americans won the war. The War of Independence formally ended on September 3, 1783, marking the end of British rule and the beginning of the new nation- the United States of America.

Interestingly, the Declaration of Independence was actually a letter explaining the reasons why the American colonists voted to declare independence from Great Britain, written by Thomas Jefferson and sent to the British King George on July 4th, 1776. The date is now celebrated as the birth of American independence.



## Groundhog Day

Groundhog Day, celebrated on February 2nd, is a popular tradition in the United States. On this day a groundhog named Phil comes out of his hole in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, after his long winter sleep to look for his shadow.

If Phil sees his shadow, we're supposed to have six more weeks of winter. If he doesn't see it, winter is supposed to end earlier.

Interestingly, February 2nd has long been celebrated in different cultures. The American tradition dates back to the end of the 19th century, and although the origins are unclear, it shares some similarities with Candlemas Day, which is also on February 2.



### Uncle Sam

Uncle Sam (U.S.) is one of the most popular American icons and a common national personification of the American government, the US Military and the United States in general. He is portrayed as an elderly gentleman with white hair and a goatee, wearing a top hat with white stars on a blue band, a blue tailcoat and red and white striped trousers.

It is believed that Uncle Sam was an actual person called Samuel Wilson. He was an entrepreneur who supplied beef to the US Army during the war of 1812. The name was then picked up by soldiers and became a familiar nickname for the USA.

### The Statue of Liberty

The Statue of Liberty, also known as 'Lady Liberty', is a famous monument that has stood on Liberty Island in New York Harbor for nearly 130 years. It is a symbol of freedom and America and it wasn't always green!

The statue was a gift from France, completed and presented to America on July 4th, 1884 as a sign of friendship between the two nations. It was designed by Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi, a French sculptor, and built by Gustave Eiffel, the designer of the Eiffel Tower. The Statue of

Liberty represents Libertas- the Roman goddess of freedom. However, it is said that the statue's face was modelled on the sculptor's own mother.

The exterior of the statue is made of copper, which was originally brown and has become light green over time. In her right hand Lady Liberty holds a torch which represents the enlightenment of the world. In her left hand she holds a tablet representing the law that bears the date of the American Declaration of Independence (July 4, 1776). She also has a crown with seven rays which symbolize the seven continents of the world. From top to bottom the statue measures 93 metres, and when it was erected in 1886 it was the tallest iron structure ever built. It is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the United States with around 4 million visitors each year. In 1984, the statue was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



## PART 3: CANADA

### General information

Canada is the second largest country in the world and is situated in the north of North America. It borders the United States and is surrounded by the Pacific, Atlantic and Arctic oceans.

Canada is a huge country but its population is rather small - about 36 million, with only 3 people living per square kilometre! Almost 50% of the people in Canada were born in other countries and 81 % of all Canadians live in cities. The biggest Canadian cities include Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton and Ottawa – the capital of Canada. Interestingly, Montreal is the world's second largest French speaking city after Paris.

Canadians work hard to protect the native wildlife: the country has 41 national parks and almost half of its area is covered with forests. 10% of all the world's forests are in Canada. The country's lakes and rivers, which contain about 20% of all fresh water on Earth, are full of fish such as trout and salmon.



### Some history

The name Canada comes from a misunderstanding by Jacques Cartier, a 16th century French explorer. When Cartier was visiting the new world, the native people wanted to invite him to visit their village. The word for 'village' in their language was 'kanata'. Cartier thought they were talking about the whole country and when he returned to Europe he referred to the new land as 'Canada'.

The first people in Canada came from Asia between 15,000 and 30,000 years ago. Canada is one of the most multi-cultural countries in the world but less than 500 years ago the only people living there were the Aboriginal people or 'the people who were here first'. Today all the native people of Canada call themselves 'the First Nations' and they

make up about 4% of the population. There are many different cultural groups and each group has a name and their own language – for example, the Inuit, also known as Eskimos.

John Cabot, an Italian-born English explorer and navigator (also known as Giovanni Caboto), sailed to Canada in 1497 at the request of King Henry VII of England. He landed near Labrador, and claimed the land for England. Before Cabot, the east coast of Canada was settled by Vikings around 1000 AD. In the 16th century, French and British settlers arrived and later the British took control of Canada, but French influence is strong even today and both French and English are official languages in the country.

Canada officially became an independent country on July 1, 1867 when the British Parliament passed the British North America Act.

### The flag



The national flag of Canada replaced the Union Jack (the UK flag) in 1965. It is a red maple leaf on a white square. White is the symbol of peace and red is a symbol of Canadian sacrifice during World Wars.

### Famous Canadians

Famous Canadian celebrities and musicians include Justin Bieber, Michael Buble, James Cameron, Celine Dion, Ryan Gosling, Ryan Reynolds, Bryan Adams, Paul Anka, Leonard Cohen, Keanu Reeves and Jim Carrey. Famous Canadian authors include Lucy Maud Montgomery who wrote Anne of Green Gables.

### Sports

Hockey and lacrosse are Canada's national sports. Ice hockey, football and baseball are Canada's favourite spectator sports. Ice hockey started in Canada where it was played by Native Americans.

Canada has hosted the Olympic Games 3 times: 1976 in Montreal, 1988 in Calgary and 2010 in Vancouver.

### Interesting facts

- Canadian inventions include basketball and the snowmobile.
- Canada has got the longest street in the world – Yonge Street, which is almost 2000 kilometres long.
- Officially, the British monarch is still the Canadian Head of State.

## Part 4: IRELAND



### General information

Ireland is a country in Western Europe situated on an island in the Atlantic Ocean, which has the same name and is described as 'the Emerald Island' because of its green countryside. The island of Ireland is separated from Great Britain by the Irish Sea.

Ireland is called Éire in Irish and it is also known as the Republic of Ireland. The Republic covers five-sixths of the island and the rest is Northern Ireland, which is part of the United Kingdom.

The country has a population of about 4.75 million people and it is estimated that over 80 million people of Irish origin live outside Ireland, in countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Argentina, New Zealand, Mexico, South Africa and continental Europe.

Irish, or Gaelic, is the country's first official language and children have to learn it in all schools up to secondary level, however the second official language – English – is more commonly spoken. Shamrock (a type of clover) is the national symbol of Ireland.

### The flag



The flag of Ireland was designed in 1848 and its colours have a special meaning: the green represents Irish Catholics, the orange represents the island's Protestants and the white represents the hope that the two religions will live together in peace.

### The capital

Dublin is the capital and largest city of Ireland with a population of about 1.3 million people. It was founded as a

Viking settlement which then grew and became more important and in 1922 Dublin became the capital of Ireland. Dublin is a very green city with lots of parks and green spaces. Over 25% of the total population of Ireland live in Dublin.

### The shamrock

Even though the harp is the official symbol of Ireland, the shamrock is associated with the Emerald Isle more than any other emblem. It has been a symbol of Ireland since the 18th century, just like the red Tudor rose in England, the thistle in Scotland and the daffodil in Wales, and in 2003 it was even registered by the Irish government as an international trademark.

The word 'shamrock' comes from the Irish 'seamrog', which means 'a summer plant'. The plant has always enjoyed a special status in Ireland. The Celtic druids believed that three was a perfect number and that it had special powers – and so they attributed special importance to the three-leafed shamrock. Also, St Patrick is believed to have explained the concept of the Holy Trinity to the pagans with the help of the shamrock, as a symbol of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit existing both separately and as one. Nowadays the shamrock is universally associated with Ireland and all things Irish.



### St Patrick

St Patrick was born in Roman Britain around the 5th century AD into a family of Roman clergymen. When he was 16, he was kidnapped by Irish pirates and brought to Ireland as a slave, where he worked as a shepherd and looked after animals. Despite his difficult circumstances, he learned to love the Irish, mastering their language and learning about their customs.

He managed to escape after six years in slavery, but later he returned to Ireland as a missionary with the aim of converting the pagans to Christianity. Known as the 'Apostle of Ireland', within thirty years of his missionary work, Patrick had converted most of Ireland to the Christian faith and the communities he founded gave rise to many villages and cities, which Ireland did not have before.

Legend has it that St Patrick exterminated all of the island's snakes by driving them into the sea where they drowned, and because of that there are no native snake species in Ireland to this day. This has become a popular myth that is believed by almost everyone. It is also completely untrue because Ireland never had any snakes due to its separation from mainland Europe. So how did the legend of St Patrick and the snakes originate? Most scholars agree that snakes symbolize evil and paganism, which St Patrick also banished from the island.

St Patrick's Day is Ireland's official national holiday and it is celebrated on the 17th of March in Ireland and in many other countries around the world



### Leprechauns

According to Irish folklore, leprechauns (pronounced: 'leprəkɔ:nz) are solitary bearded creatures who make and mend shoes, and enjoy playing practical jokes. They are rather old and they usually wear a green coat, buckled shoes and a pointed hat. They are mischievous and cannot be trusted because they will deceive people whenever possible. If they are captured, they often grant three wishes in exchange for their freedom.

When they find a gold coin, they put it in a special pot, which they hide at the end of a rainbow. Unfortunately, rainbows do not have a real end, so the treasures may be difficult to find!

### Interesting facts

- Famous Irishmen include Jonathan Swift, who wrote Gulliver's Travels, Pierce Brosnan, Colin Farrell and Bono, who is the lead singer of U2.
- Many Irish family names start with 'Mac' or 'O!...', which means respectively 'son of ...' and 'grandson of ...' in Gaelic.
- Halloween comes from a pagan Irish festival called Samhain.
- The Titanic, the famous ship which sank on its first voyage, was made in Ireland.

## Sports

Sports play a big role in Ireland and Gaelic football is the most popular sport in the country. Irish people usually call it 'football', but it is different from real football or soccer. The main difference is that the players can carry the ball with their hands. Hurling is another popular Irish sport and it is a Gaelic sport as well. It is quite similar to field hockey and it is a very fast game. Rugby and golf are also popular and Ireland has some of the best golf courses in the world. Of course, traditional football is very important too.

## Part 5: AUSTRALIA



### General information

Australia is a large, rich country which consists of the Australian continent (the smallest continent in the world), the island of Tasmania and a number of small islands. It is the sixth largest country in the world – after Russia, Canada, the USA, China and Brazil. The name Australia comes from the Latin name Terra Australis which means 'southern land'. Australia is flat, hot and dry. Over 60% of its territory is desert. In the north, half of the year is wet – with heavy rains – and the other half is dry. Australia is situated in the southern hemisphere and the seasons there are different than in Europe: December is in summer and June is in winter. Christmas in Australia is celebrated in the middle of summer and people often spend it on the beach!

Even though Australia is a huge country, there are only about 24,5 million people – about 3 people per square kilometre. Most Australians live on the coast, in the east and south of the country with the best weather.

### The flag



The Australian National Flag has three elements on a blue background. A white Commonwealth Star has seven points which represent the states and territories of Australia. The seventh point was added in 1908. The Southern Cross is connected with Australia's geography: it is a constellation of five stars that can only be seen from the southern hemisphere. The Union Jack commemorates Australia's historical links with Britain.

### Some history

The first Australians were the Aborigines who migrated from Asia about 40,000 years ago. The name 'aborigine' comes from Latin and it means 'original inhabitants.'

Chinese explorers visited Australia some 2,500 years ago and Europeans from Holland sailed to the continent in the 17th century. In 1770 Captain James Cook sailed to Australia and from then on the continent was a British territory. Britain had a lot of prisoners but not enough prisons and soon it started sending them to Australia. It was so far that they could not escape and they had to work very hard building roads, cities and farms. Later, ordinary people started to arrive from Britain to make a new life there, and when gold was discovered in Australia in 1851, thousands more came from North America, Britain, Ireland and China.

In 1901 six Australian states (New South Wales, South Australia, Western Australia, Victoria, Queensland and Tasmania) became one country.

### Sydney

Sydney is the oldest and biggest city in Australia with the famous Harbour Bridge and the Opera House. It is an important business centre but at the same time it has got lots of beautiful beaches. Many people think Sydney is the capital of Australia but the capital city is Canberra – one of the newest cities in the country. The name Canberra is an Aboriginal word and it means 'a meeting place'.

### The outback

The outback is the flat and hot centre of Australia, which is a very hard place to live. It covers almost 70% of the continent but has very few inhabitants. The children who live there usually do not go to school but they learn from home using the Internet and the Schools of the Air. They only meet other children from their 'class' once a year when they spend a week together.

## Sports

Sport is an important part of the Australian culture and the most popular sports are cricket, Australian rules football, rugby and horse racing.

## Australian wonders

Uluru or Ayers Rock is one of Australia's top attractions. It is a huge red rock in the middle of a desert and it is a special place for aboriginal people. A lot of tourists travel to Australia each year to see the Great Barrier Reef – the world's longest coral reef with hundreds of different species of colourful fish. Australia also has a lot of unusual animals which only live there – such as the kangaroo, the koala or the platypus with its wide and flat tail.

## Famous Australians

The most famous Australians are Mel Gibson, Russell Crowe, Nicole Kidman, Cate Blanchett and Kylie Minogue.

## Part 6: NEW ZEALAND

### General information

New Zealand is located in the south-western Pacific Ocean about 1,500 km east of Australia. It consists of two main islands – the North Island and the South Island – and a number of smaller islands.

Due to its remote location, New Zealand was one of the last groups of islands to be discovered and settled by humans. It is also widely considered to be one of the most beautiful places on earth with a unique range of flora and fauna. The country is similar in size to the UK, but is sparsely populated with only 4.59 million inhabitants. Most New Zealanders have European roots – mainly British and Irish – and around 15% of the country's population are Māori – the islands' first settlers.

New Zealand has three official languages: English, Māori and New Zealand Sign Language. English is the main language but Māori is also taught in Māori schools.

The country's national symbol is the kiwi – the flightless bird which is native to New Zealand.



### Some history

The first inhabitants of New Zealand were the Māoris who migrated from other Pacific islands – probably between the 10th and 13th century AD.

Abel Tasman, a Dutch explorer, was the first European to discover New Zealand in 1642. He actually thought it was an island off South America and he called it Staten Landt (Southern Lands) because it was a bit similar to the south of Holland, his own country. When his findings became known, Dutch mapmakers gave the islands the Latin name 'Nova Zeelandia' after the Dutch province of Zeeland (meaning 'sea land'). The islands were later visited by the British explorer James Cook on three separate expeditions in the late 1700's. He changed their name to New Zealand and claimed them for Britain.

In 1840 New Zealand became a British colony. It was ruled by a British governor, but European settlers wanted to have their own government. In 1947 New Zealand gained full independence from Britain, however Queen Elizabeth II is still the country's official head of state.

### Wellington

Wellington is the capital and second largest city of New Zealand, located at the southern tip of the North Island. The city takes its name from Arthur Wellesley, the first Duke of Wellington, who is most famous for winning the Battle of Waterloo. About 496,000 people live in the Wellington region, which is over 10 % of the country's population.

Wellington is the southernmost capital city in the world. Because of its geographic location, it experiences very strong winds and is often called the world's windiest city.

The largest city in New Zealand is Auckland. Other major cities include Christchurch and Hamilton.

### The flag

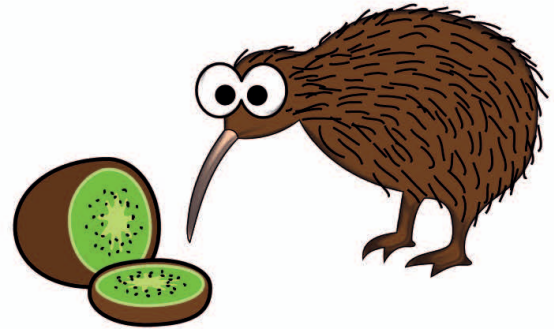


The flag of New Zealand has two elements: the Union Jack in the upper left quarter, and the four-star southern cross on the right. The stars are red with a white outline. The constellation can only be seen in the Southern Hemisphere and it was a useful navigational tool for sailors up to modern times.

### Flora and fauna

Due to its location and isolation, New Zealand has got unique animals and plants. The native flora includes some of the world's oldest plants that do not grow anywhere else.

Apart from seals and two species of bats, New Zealand has no native mammals. All other mammals were introduced by Māori and European settlers. Interestingly, there are no native snakes in New Zealand. There are many national parks and forests, glaciers, volcanoes, lakes, mountains and beaches.



### Interesting facts

- New Zealand is 13 hours ahead of the UK. This means that when it is 1:00 am in London, it is 2:00 pm in Wellington. New Zealand is one of the first places in the world to observe the New Year – when the clock strikes midnight on New Year's Eve in London, it is 1 pm on January 1st in Wellington.
- New Zealand is located in the southern hemisphere, so winter starts in June, which is also when the ski season begins there. If you feel like skiing in June, New Zealand is the place to go!
- 'The kiwi' is not the fruit but New Zealand's native flightless bird and a popular nickname for a New Zealander. Kiwis call the fruit 'kiwifruit' and it is not actually native to New Zealand. It comes from China and it was named after the kiwi bird, which looks a bit similar.
- There are 9 sheep per person in New Zealand so the country exports a lot of mutton (the meat from a sheep) and wool.
- In New Zealand people drive on the left side of the road, like in the UK, Ireland and Australia.
- Rugby is the most popular sport in New Zealand. Other sports such as football, cricket, netball, golf, hiking and kayaking are also popular.
- New Zealand was the first country in the world to give women the right to vote in 1893.

### Famous Kiwis

The most famous New Zealanders, or Kiwis, include:

- Ernest Rutherford, known as the father of nuclear physics, who won the Nobel Prize in chemistry for splitting the atom.
- Sir Edmund Hillary – the first man to reach the peak of Mount Everest.
- Peter Jackson, a film director and producer who made the Lord of the Rings trilogy.

## The English language



### William Shakespeare

William Shakespeare was born in 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon as the third child of a local glove maker. His father was quite an important person in his hometown but later he got into debt and William, who was then a young teenager, had to leave school and start working to help the family make ends meet.

In 1582, when he was only 18, Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway who was 8 years older than him, and was expecting their first child. A few years later, Shakespeare decided to become an actor and he moved to London with his wife and three kids. Watching plays was a popular pastime at that time, and London with its many theatres was the centre of theatrical life. Each theatre needed a regular supply of new plays, which probably encouraged Shakespeare to start writing plays and poems in the 1590s. His first plays turned out to be very successful and soon he became the most famous playwright in London.

Shakespeare was also a skilled entrepreneur and his works made him a very wealthy man. His theatre, The Globe, could hold as many as 2500 people, and it



was so popular that it performed for Queen Elisabeth I.

Scholars believe that Shakespeare died on his birthday on April 23 in Stratford-upon-Avon at the age of 52.

Shakespeare is widely regarded as the greatest English writer who had a lot of influence on the development of the English language. In his day, English grammar, spelling and pronunciation were not standardised and his use of language helped shape modern English. Shakespeare also made up many words that he needed for his plays. He is credited with introducing around 3000 new words into English and many of the expressions that he created have found their way into everyday English – and into other languages. Some of the phrases he coined include: ‘fair play’, ‘break the ice’, ‘love is blind’, ‘laughing stock’, ‘all of a sudden’, ‘naked truth’, ‘a heart of gold’ and many, many others.



### How the days of the week got their names

English is a Germanic language, which developed from the dialects of the Angles and Saxons – the Germanic tribes that invaded Britain in the 5th and 6th century AD. Like many other peoples of that time, they worshipped celestial bodies such as the sun and the moon, as well as a number of gods who gave their names to the days of the week.

Sunday comes from ‘Sunnandæg’, which means ‘sun’s day’. Sunna was the sun goddess. Monday comes from ‘Mōnandæg’ and it was named after Máni, or the moon. Tuesday comes from the Old English ‘Tīwesdæg’. Tiw was a one-handed god of war. Wednesday derives from the Old English ‘Wōdnesdæg’ and it means ‘Wōden’s day’. Wōden, or Odin, was the ruler of all the gods. Thursday, comes from Old English ‘Thor’s day’. The day was named after Thor, the god of thunder who was usually portrayed with his great hammer. Friday was named after the wife of Odin whose name was Frigg or Freya. As for Saturday, it comes from the Anglo-Saxon word ‘Sæturnesdæg’, which was actually borrowed from Latin. ‘Saturday’ translates into ‘Saturn’s day’ and it is a result of the four centuries of the Roman presence in Britain.

### Polish words in English

Many words in the English language come from other languages – and some of them were borrowed from Polish! One such word is SPRUCE, which entered the English language from the Polish name of Prussia, or Prusy – which is part of Poland today.

How did it happen? When merchants from Prussia, who sold lumber in England, were asked where the type of wood had come from, they usually replied: ‘z Prus’ – which means ‘from Prussia’. It sounded like ‘spruce’ in English and eventually became the English name of this particular type of tree. Other English words of Polish origin include: babka, bigos, kielbasa, konik, ogonek (as in a and e) and, of course, pierogi.



abundant – obfity	discomfort – niewygodna	native – rdzenny
act – ustawa	discover – odkryć	numerous – liczny
actual – prawdziwy, rzeczywisty	drought – susza	olympic games – olimpiada
added – dodany	dry – suchy	petty criminal – drobny przestępca
advantages – zalety	Dutch – holenderski	platypus – dziobak
ancestry – pochodzenie, rodowód	emerge – wyłonić się	plot – spisek
anthem – hymn	enlightenment – oświecenie	plotters – spiskowcy
appear – pojawić się	entrepreneur – przedsiębiorca	poaching – kłusownictwo
archer – łucznik	erected – wzniesiony	population – ludność, populacja
background – tło	escape – uciec	preach – wygłaszać kazanie
banned – zakazany, zabroniony	estimated – szacowany	reef – rafa
banner – sztandar	evil – zły	renounce – wyrzec się
bark – kora	express – wyrazić	replace – zastąpić
basket – koszyk	fall – jesień (American English)	request – prośba
beef – wołowina	famous – sławny, słynny	Roman – rzymski
bill – banknot	flat – płaski	rumours – pogłoski
blessing – błogosławieństwo	forest – las	sacred – święty
blow up – wysadzić	Georgia – tu: Gruzja	sacrifice – poświęcić
bonfire – ognisko	glacier – lodowiec	sail – żeglować
border – granica, graniczyć	golf course – pole golfowe	salmon – łosoś
bountiful – obfity	gratitude – wdzięczność	sank – zatonał
burial – pogrzeb, pochówek	harvest – żniwa, plony	sculptor – rzeźbiarz
capital – stolica	hemisphere – półkula	seasons – pory roku
capture – schwycić	heritage – dziedzictwo	settlers – osadnicy
celebrate – świętować	hope – nadzieja	shelter – schronienie
circumstances – okoliczności	hosted – gościł	slave – niewolnik
clover – koniczyna	huge – wielki, ogromny	species – gatunki
coast – wybrzeże	government – rząd	spruce – świerk
common – powszechny, popularny	independent – niepodległy, niezależny	stingy – skąpy
consists of – składa się z	inhabitants – mieszkańcy	square kilometre – kilometr kwadratowy
consolidate – zjednoczyć	instantly – natychmiast	surrounded by – otoczony przez
contain – zawierać	invade – najechać	tail – ogon
incorporate – włączyć	invention – wynalazek	taxes – podatki
convert – nawrócić	isle, island – wyspa	thistle – oset
copper – miedź	kidnapped – porwany	tourist sights – atrakcje turystyczne
corrupt – skorumpowany	landmarks – charakterystyczne obiekty	trout – pstrąg
crops – uprawy	Latin – łaciński	voyage – podróż
crusades – krucjaty	leash – smycz	weeping – płaczący
custom – zwyczaj	leek – por	Welsh – walijski
damp – wilgotny	makeshift – prowizoryczny	wet – mokry, wilgotny
desert – pustynia	measure – mierzyć	wildlife – dzika przyroda
diagonal – ukośny; przekątna	misunderstanding – nieporozumienie	world heritage – światowe dziedzictwo



