

THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN

It is a monarch state situated in the North-west of Europe.

The UK is made up by four countries: England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. These states are also part of the Commonwealth of which the Queen is Head of State.

The UK is surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean, the North Sea and the English Channel, which separates the UK from the continent, but it is also linked to France and Europe by the Channel Tunnel.

The **Union Flag**, also known as the **Union Jack**, is the flag of the United Kingdom.

It is composed of the union of three flags:

- St. George's Cross (the national flag of England)
- St. Andrew's Cross (the national flag of Scotland)
- St. Patrick's Cross (the national flag of Northern Ireland)

The red dragon, the national flag of Wales, is not part of the Union Jack because because when the first Union Flag was created Wales was already united with England.

ENGLAND

England is the largest country of the United Kingdom. It borders with Scotland in the north and Wales in the south-west. The Head of State is Queen Elizabeth II who is also the Head of the Commonwealth. Many important people come from England such as Shakespeare, Tolkien and Newton. It is a protestant country and the monarch is the Head of the Church of England.

The capital city of England is London. The main river is the Thames.

One of the most famous places in England is Stonehenge, a prehistoric monument, composed of stones.

SCOTLAND

Scotland is one of the four countries of the United Kingdom. Edinburgh is the capital city, but the largest city is Glasgow. Scotland has its own Church, the Church of Scotland, which is Presbyterian. Bagpipes and kilts are typical of Scotland. William Wallace is one of the most famous Scots together with Sean Connery. Famous musicians of Scotland include Annie Lennox, Wet Wet Wet, Travis and Simple Minds Scotland is famous for medieval castles and Loch Ness lake (a legend tells about a mysterious monster in the depths of the water).

WALES

Wales is situated in the south-west of the UK and borders only with England. Cardiff is its capital city. Wales's main languages are Welsh and English. The largest religion is Christianity. Saint David is the patron saint of Wales. Catherine Zeta Jones and Tom Jones are from Wales.

The national flag of Wales is the red dragon. The dragon is a very old Welsh symbol. In the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff there are rugby matches, football matches and concerts. Conwy Castle is in North Wales. It's 800 years old and it's got eight towers. The smallest house in Britain is in Conwy. There's one room upstairs and one room downstairs. Love spoons are the main symbols in Wales: they stand for friendship and good luck.

NORTHERN IRELAND

It is part of the UK, but it is not situated on the Island of Great Britain. It borders only with the Republic of Ireland which is an independent country and is not part of the UK. Belfast is Northern Ireland capital and largest city. For many years Northern Ireland has been split in two and there have been many battles, wars and deaths. This violence has been for religious reasons. Saint Patrick is the Patron Saint.

READING COMPREHENSION

UK is composed of four countries. What are they?

Between which seas does UK lie?

How many countries border with England?

Who is the Head of Commonwealth and of the UK?

What religion does England have?

Which is the main river?

What is the capital of Scotland?

What is the largest city of Scotland?

What are typical things of Scotland?

Which is the country that borders with Wales?

What are the main languages in Wales?

Which country borders with Northern Ireland?

Is the Republic of Ireland part of the UK?

Which is the capital of Northern Ireland?

LONDON

London is the **capital** of England and of the United Kingdom.

It is the largest metropolis in Europe with a population of 14 million people. Its population is very cosmopolitan.

London is a major **tourist attraction**. It has 5 international airports (Heathrow is the biggest).

The most famous tourist attractions are the Big Ben, the Houses of Parliament and the Queens Palace, Buckingham Palace. The **Houses of Parliament** is where the two Houses of the Parliament (Houses of Commons and Lords) meet for political purposes. **Big Ben** isn't the clock on the tower, but just the bell inside it. **Buckingham palace** is the official home of the British Monarch in London. It is also a famous tourist attraction because of the Queen's Royal guards. Every morning at half past eleven people all over the world come to see the changing of the guards. The guards protect the Queen day and night. They wear red uniforms and black bearskins.

London is a green city with lots of **parks**. The most famous parks are Hyde Park (where people love swimming, fishing and going out in boats on the Serpentine, the river in Hyde Park), St James's Park (with birds and squirrels, great for picnics) and Greenwich park. People often have lunch in the parks, spend their free time and children can enjoy themselves in many pools and little lakes.

The **London Eye**, also known as the Millennium Wheel, was built in 1999 and is a giant wheel (the biggest observation wheel in the world). It is 170 m high and you can see the beautiful London skyline from the top. In **Madame Tussaud's** waxworks museum there are wax statues of famous people.

The **Tower of London** is a historic tower in the centre of London. It is 900 years old. William the Conqueror built the White Tower in 1067 by the River Thames. It was a fortress, a royal palace, and a prison. Many prisoners were executed in this tower. Now you can see the crown jewels in the Tower of London.

London has many important **museums** such as the British Museum and the National Gallery. The British museum contains Egyptian collections of mummified skeletons found in the pyramids, and Greek sculptures from the Parthenon in Athens. The National Gallery is one of the most important art galleries in the world.

READING COMPREHENSION

What is the capital of the United Kingdom?

How many people live in London?

How many airports are there in London?

Which is the biggest international airport?

What are the most famous attractions in London?

Who meet at the Houses of Parliament?

What is Big Ben?

Where does the Queen live?

What time do the guards change?

Which are the most famous parks?

What is the Serpentine?

What is the London Eye?

Where is the Tower of London?

What is in the Tower now?

What is the National Gallery?

Where are Greek sculptures from the Pantheon?
