

# Chapter 5

## United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

### Chapter Preview

#### People

King James VI of Scotland, Queen Elizabeth II, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher

#### Places

England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales, English Channel, London, Edinburgh, Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds, Liverpool

#### Terms

Gulf Stream, Great Smog of 1952, Industrial Revolution, acid rain, Parliament of Great Britain, British Commonwealth of Nations, Brexit, prime minister, House of Lords, Life Peerages Act, House of Commons, constitutional monarchy, Scottish Parliament, National Health Service (NHS), British pound (£), embassy, British-American Business Council of Georgia

**Top:** Much of the United Kingdom's land is good for grazing and farming.

**Background:** The Westminster area is the center of government for the United Kingdom. The Elizabeth Tower, with its chiming clock called Big Ben, stands at the north end of the Palace of Westminster.

Considering that the United States began its history in a war against Great Britain, it may seem odd that the United States and Britain are such good friends today. In fact, the United States fought against Britain twice in its early years—the American Revolutionary War and the War of 1812. Times have changed, however, and the two nations are now strong friends. Their histories have been tied together, but the United Kingdom is much older than the United States.

The UK, as it is often called, has provided many ideas that we might take for granted today. One of those ideas was that a monarch does not have absolute power. The English had the idea of a parliament that limited the monarch's power and spread the power to make government decisions. Other important ideas can be traced to the United Kingdom: providing a person accused of a crime with a proper trial by a jury of peers; forbidding the monarch from taking people's property without paying for it; and the right to bear arms.

Americans have long been entertained and influenced by British literature, music, movies, and television. British musicians include Adele, the Beatles, Coldplay, One Direction, and the Rolling Stones. Musician Elton John has a home in Atlanta, Georgia, but he is also British. Authors include J. K. Rowling (Harry Potter books), J. R. R. Tolkien (*The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*), Charles Dickens (*A Christmas Carol*), C. S. Lewis (the Narnia series), A. A. Milne (Winnie-the-Pooh books), and Beatrix Potter (Peter Rabbit books) to name just a few. Television from Britain includes the *Doctor Who* series, which ran for more than 35 seasons. Millions of viewers around the world watched Britain's *Downton Abbey*.

Britain's symbols are easy to recognize. Their famous royal family has its home in Buckingham Palace. Their Parliament meets under the Elizabeth Tower and its famous chiming clock known as Big Ben. The Union Jack, the nickname for Britain's flag, flies not only in the United Kingdom but in colonies and on military bases around the world.

Soccer, called football in other countries, has its roots in the United Kingdom, but it has spread in popularity around the world. David Beckham is one of the sport's most famous British players.

In a political, military, cultural, and economic sense, the United States has no closer ally than the United Kingdom, and British foreign policy emphasizes close cooperation with the United States. This cooperation reflects the common language, ideals, and democratic practices of the two nations.

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*In war and in peace, in prosperity and times of economic hardship, America has no better friend or more dependable ally than the United Kingdom.*

- Louis Susman,  
former  
United States  
ambassador  
to the United  
Kingdom

**Above:** Tower Bridge, which spans the Thames River in London, was completed in 1894. Its name comes from its nearness to the Tower of London.



# PASSPORT



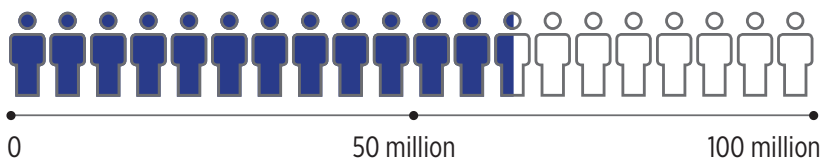
**Official Name:** United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland  
**Capital:** London  
**Form of Government:** parliamentary constitutional monarchy; a Commonwealth realm  
**Head of Government:** Prime Minister  
**Head of State:** Monarch  
**Suffrage:** 18 years of age; universal  
**Currency:** British pound (£)



**Top:** The flag of the United Kingdom is often called the Union Jack. **Middle:** Boris Johnson became prime minister of the United Kingdom in 2019. **Bottom Left:** The currency of the United Kingdom is the British pound (£). **Bottom Right:** The UK's Parliament meets at the Palace of Westminster.

# CULTURE CONNECTION

## POPULATION

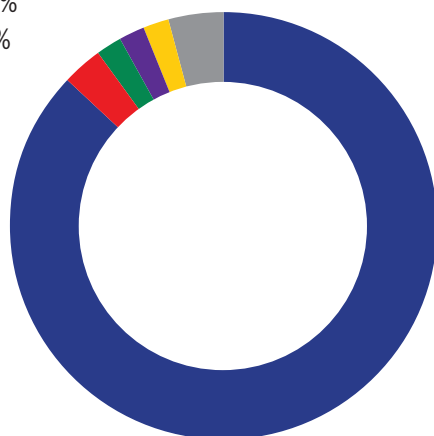


**United Kingdom**  
64,430,428 (est. July 2016)  
Population Rank 22

**United States**  
324,386,000 (est. 2017)  
Population Rank 3

## ETHNIC GROUPS

- White 87%
- Black/African/Caribbean/Black British 3%
- Asian/Asian British: Indian 2%
- Asian/Asian British: Pakistani 2%
- mixed 2%
- other 4%



## FUN FACTS

Britons who reach their 100th birthday can receive a birthday card from the monarch!

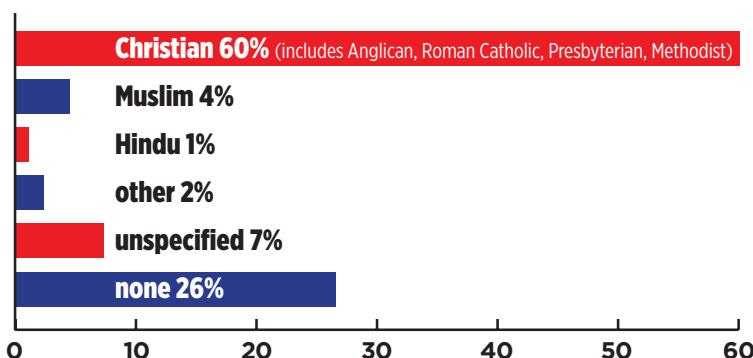
### Official Language:

English

Terms different from American English

- Apartment building** – block of flats
- Checkers (game)** – draughts
- Cookie** – biscuit
- Cotton candy** – candy floss
- Crosswalk** – zebra crossing
- Diaper** – nappy
- Elevator** – lift
- French fry** – chip
- Hood (front of a car)** – bonnet
- Potato chips** – crisps
- Second floor (of a building)** – first floor
- Sprinkles (for ice cream)** – hundreds and thousands
- Trunk (of a car)** – boot
- Vacation** – holiday
- Z (the letter)** – zed

## RELIGION



## LIFE EXPECTANCY

**Average** 80.7 years  
**Male** 78.5 years  
**Female** 83 years



## EDUCATION

**Education Expenditures** 5.8% of GDP  
**Rank** 36

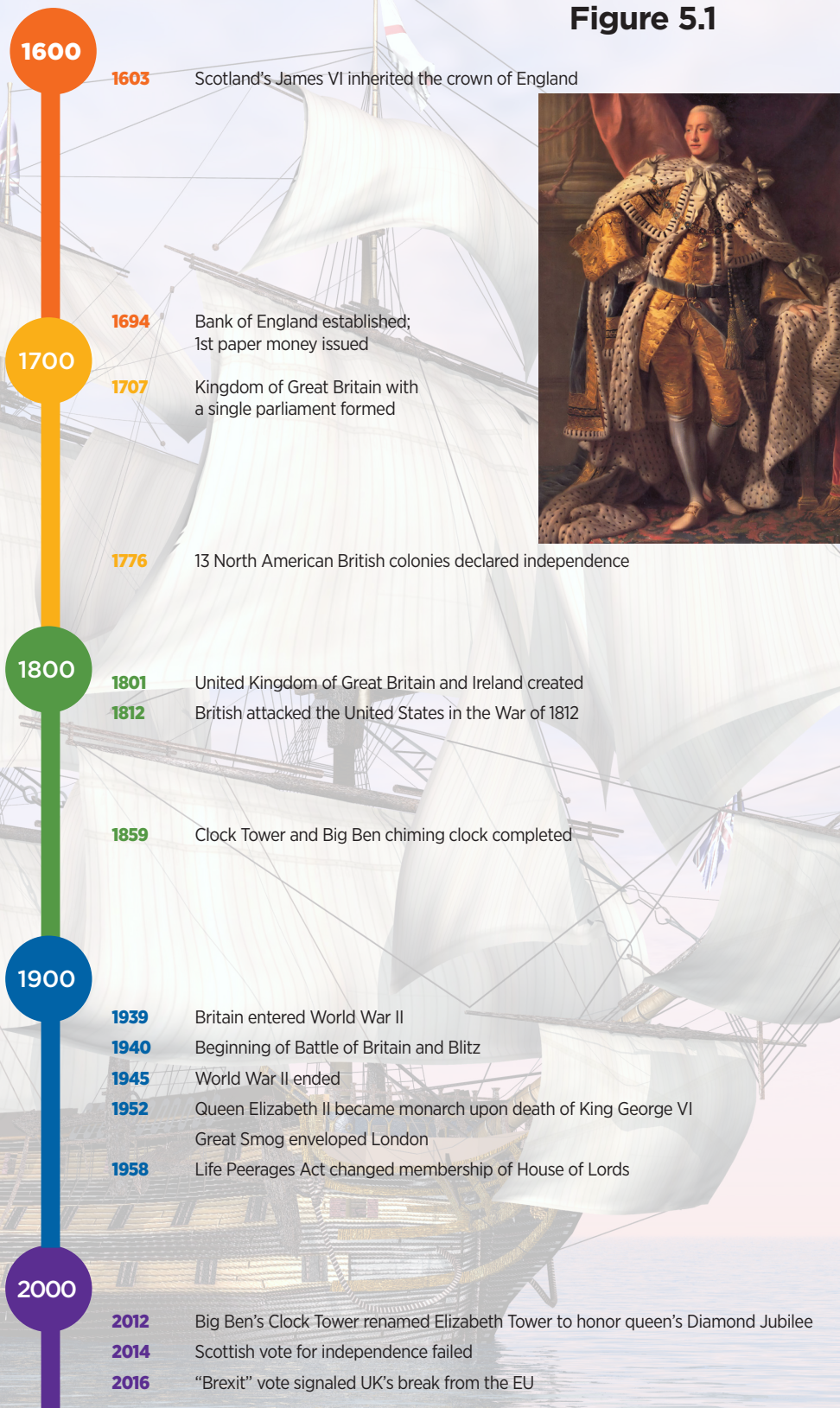
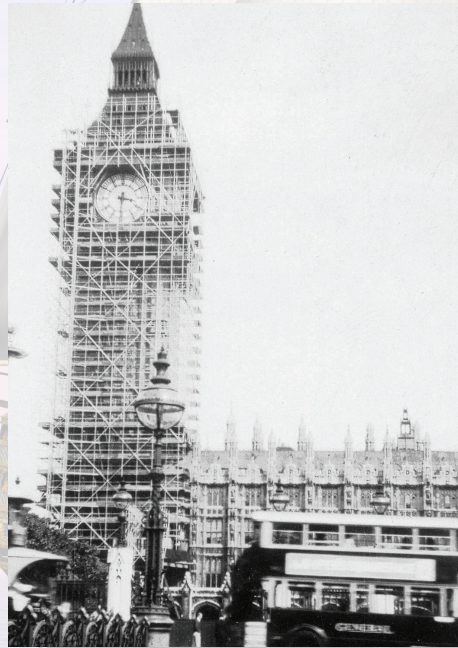
**Background:** HMS *Victory*. **Top Right:** George III was the British king when the North American colonies declared independence. **Middle Left:** US General Andrew Jackson defeated British troops at the Battle of New Orleans in the War of 1812. **Bottom:** Big Ben and its clock tower have been repaired a number of times since its completion in 1859.

# TIMELINE

## OF UNITED KINGDOM HISTORY



Figure 5.1





**Map 5.1**  
**United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland**

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**Map Skill:** What bodies of water surround the United Kingdom?

**Area:** 94,058 sq mi

**Area Rank:** 80

**Natural Resources:** coal, petroleum, natural gas, iron ore, lead, zinc, gold, tin, limestone, salt, clay, chalk, gypsum, potash, silica sand, slate, arable land

**Environmental Issues:** continues to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; by 2005 the government reduced the amount of industrial and commercial waste disposed of in landfill sites to 85 percent of 1998 levels and recycled or composted at least 25 percent of household waste, increasing to 33 percent by 2015

## Section 1

# The Geography of the United Kingdom

## DID YOU KNOW ?

The prime meridian (0° longitude) passes through Greenwich, England. This line separates the eastern and western hemispheres.



### As you read, look for

- ▶ the importance of location for the United Kingdom;
- ▶ the effect of the Gulf Stream on the climate of the United Kingdom;
- ▶ causes of air pollution in Britain;
- ▶ ways the British have worked to improve air quality;
- ▶ terms: **Gulf Stream, Great Smog of 1952, Industrial Revolution, acid rain.**

## In *Other* Words

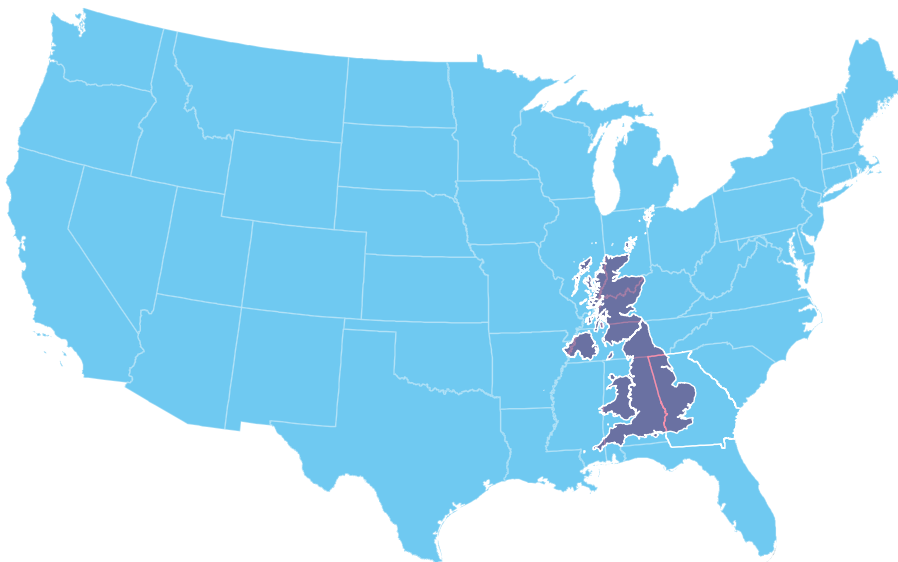
The term United Kingdom, or UK, is the correct way to refer to this country, but often people incorrectly use Great Britain, Britain, or England to mean the United Kingdom.

## Location and Size of the United Kingdom

The United Kingdom is a country of islands off the northwest coast of mainland Europe. It is in the northern hemisphere. Most of the United Kingdom is in the western hemisphere, but a small portion of it is in the eastern hemisphere, along with most of Europe. It lies along latitudes that usually have a colder climate than the United Kingdom such as those in Canada, Russia, and the southern tip of Alaska.

The country consists of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. The location of the United Kingdom makes it a hub for trade with other countries. Directly across the English Channel from the

United Kingdom is France, west across the Irish Sea is the Republic of Ireland, northeast across the North Sea is the Scandinavian Peninsula, and to the east are Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany. As an island country with numerous ports and harbors, the United Kingdom once dominated world trade. Today, there are ten major ports along the coast.



The airspace around the UK's capital, London, is among the busiest and most crowded in the world. Heathrow is the busiest airport with about 75 million passengers passing through per year. When you include London's other airports, the city has more than 155 million air passengers in a year.

Location can be the key in success. Location has helped the United Kingdom become an international banking and insurance center. Between London, England, and Edinburgh, Scotland, the United Kingdom has more foreign bank branches than any country in the world. Businesses of all types—from clothing to cars to computers—trade goods within the borders of the United Kingdom and sell goods all over Europe. Its location on the Atlantic Ocean helps it trade with the United States, the UK's number-one trading partner.

### Climate of the United Kingdom

The United Kingdom has a mild climate with rainfall occurring throughout the year. Almost no section goes without rain for longer than three weeks. The southeastern parts of Great Britain are protected by mountains from the wind blowing in from the Atlantic, so they are the driest areas. The rest of the country has mild, wet weather. The highlands of Scotland are the wettest. The temperature changes with the seasons. Winters are mild and wet. Snowfalls are not very deep and usually occur in the mountains. Summers are warmest in the south. The warm climate keeps ports free of ice and open for trade all year. This is important for businesses as they never have to close down for seasonal weather. They are free to trade and work in all seasons. Warm waters and winds from the **Gulf Stream** affect the climate of the United Kingdom. The Gulf Stream moves warm water along the coast of North America. It crosses the Atlantic Ocean and warms Ireland and the western coasts of England, Scotland, and Wales. Other areas of the world along the same latitude as the United Kingdom have cold and harsh winters. The Gulf Stream makes UK winters much milder. The climate is good for farming. The land is good, or arable, for farming too. Much of the land is used for grazing and agriculture because of the mild climate, but less than 2 percent of the people earn their living as farmers.

**Bottom:** The Gulf Stream crosses the Atlantic Ocean and warms Ireland and the western coasts of England, Scotland, and Wales.

**DID YOU KNOW ?**

Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport is the world's busiest with over 100 million passengers in 2016.

**In Other Words**

People in the United Kingdom may be described as British, but they are not all English. There are also Scots, Irish, and Welsh people in the United Kingdom.





## DID YOU KNOW ?

The city of London has a population of about 8.7 million. That is only 1.4 million less than the entire state of Georgia.

## Distribution of People in the United Kingdom

Long ago, most people in the United Kingdom lived in small villages or farms. Even today, the countryside of Britain has many small farms and villages. Today, however, most people live in urban areas where jobs are more available. About 83 percent of UK citizens live in urban areas, and that percentage is on the rise. The state of Georgia is less urban than the United Kingdom at about 75 percent urban.

With an area of about 93,000 square miles and a population of 60 million, the United Kingdom has a population density of about 645 people per square mile. That makes the United Kingdom much more densely populated than Georgia's 171 people per square mile. In the United Kingdom, Scotland has the least dense population and England the most. The highest concentrations of people are in the metropolitan areas of London, Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds, and Liverpool.

Access to good ports and available workers can cause a city's population to rise. The city of Liverpool is one example. Liverpool is a port city with easy access for immigrants to enter as workers. Manufacturing companies need workers and a way to import materials and export their finished goods. Other factors can encourage a city's growth such as good roads, attractive parks, access to clean water, and a cultural life that others want to join.



**Above:** The streets of densely populated London are often crowded with workers, residents, and tourists.

**Bottom:** Though most UK residents live in urban areas, the British countryside still has many small villages like this one.

## Natural Resources of the United Kingdom

The United Kingdom has many valuable natural resources within its borders. Coal, petroleum, natural gas, and iron ore are all important resources that are found in the United Kingdom. These resources form the backbone of the country's industry: auto production, steel manufacturing, and shipbuilding. Other UK natural resources include lead, zinc, gold, tin, limestone, salt, clay, chalk, gypsum, potash, sand, and slate.

Today, manufacturing is declining because these natural resources are being used up and industry is shifting to cleaner forms of energy. Competition with other countries has also increased. This has led to a loss of manufacturing jobs in the United Kingdom. Many people who once held jobs in mining and manufacturing are being retrained for jobs in service industries. In the United Kingdom, nearly 80 percent of the people work in service industries. These include tourism, health care, education, banking, and insurance. Often people must move to more urban areas to find new jobs and must work for lower wages than previous jobs provided.

Fishing is profitable along the shores of the United Kingdom. The fishing industry provides catches of crabs and other shellfish, cod, herring, and mackerel. These are used in popular UK dishes or exported to other countries.

Nearly 25 percent of the country has land that is suitable for growing crops. Over half of the land in the United Kingdom is used for farms. A large amount of arable land means the country can produce about 60 percent of its own food. Farms with herds of sheep, beef cattle, dairy cattle, and pigs are dependent on the land to keep their businesses going. Crops grown in the United Kingdom include wheat, barley, oats, potatoes, and sugar beets.



**Top:** The United Kingdom drills for oil and natural gas in the North Sea.

**Above:** This coal-burning power station serves the city of Nottingham, England.

## Environmental Issues of the United Kingdom

London has had a problem with air pollution. In fact, the word *smog* (fog mixed with smoke) was first used in 1905 to describe the air in London. Smog is air pollution caused by sunlight acting on the gases from factory exhausts. It sometimes hangs over cities in the United Kingdom. Thick London smog happens when water in the air mixes with smoke particles from a coal fire. In the **Great Smog of 1952**, the smog was so dense that, for four days, the people in London could not see what was in front of them. Transportation slowed, crime increased, and thousands of people died from the harmful pollution. People around the world suddenly were frightened. They began to worry about the quality of the air they were breathing.

The United Kingdom's major natural resources are oil, natural gas, and coal. Much of the kingdom's manufacturing burns these fossil fuels. The **Industrial Revolution** (the major change in the economy marked by the introduction of power-driven machinery) began around the coalfields where fuel was cheap and available. These coalfields provided jobs for many people in the United Kingdom. Today, coal from these fields still fuels the country's power plants. It also burns in fireplaces and stoves in many homes. The modern use of coal is giving way to a more favorable clean source of energy. Therefore, this means fewer jobs for workers in the coal mining industry.

In the past, the major source of air pollution was smoke and sulfur dioxide from burning coal or other fossil fuels. Today, exhaust from gasoline- and diesel-powered vehicles is the major problem. Asthma and pneumonia are linked to vehicle emissions. This makes people concerned about the link between air pollution and health. Air pollution burns the lungs, nose, and eyes and endangers human life. High air pollution keeps children and senior citizens indoors. Air pollution also blackens buildings and threatens wildlife. As far back as the 1300s, King Edward I tried to solve the problem by banning coal fires.



**Top:** Nelson's Column in London's Trafalgar Square was almost hidden from view by the Great Smog of 1952.

**Above:** London policemen, who are called "Bobbies," had to wear masks to protect themselves from the smog. **Right:** During the Great Smog, transportation slowed, crime increased, and thousands of people died.





After the Great Smog, the government created smokeless zones in London where only smokeless fuels could be used. Cleaner coals and an increased use of electricity and gas for heating have reduced air pollution. Today, the government sets limits for industry. Laws have forced automakers to build vehicles that produce less harmful exhaust. The government reg-

ularly checks air quality. It also asks citizens to drive less and use cleaner forms of energy. Londoners no longer experience the blackout smog of the 1950s. Although the United Kingdom still ranks among the top ten in the world in harmful industrial emissions, air quality has improved. Air pollution blows eastward from the United Kingdom and continues to cause acid rain in many countries in Western Europe. **Acid rain** is rain with increased acidity that is caused by air pollutants and other environmental factors.

Another environmental concern in Britain is loss of habitat for native plants and animals. Expanding urban areas take more land. As human populations increase, more land is needed for farming. Both of these actions put a strain on the environment. It is estimated that at least 500 species have become extinct in Britain in the past 200 years. Currently, over 900 species are listed as at risk for extinction in Britain.

## Reviewing the Section

1. How is the United Kingdom's location a good one for business?
2. How does the warm water of the Gulf Stream along the coast of North America affect temperatures in the United Kingdom?
3. How have declining deposits of natural resources begun to change Britain's manufacturing industry?
4. What has been the main cause of air pollution in Britain? What has the country done to correct these problems?
5. Deeper Thinking: With the variety of jobs and resources available in the United Kingdom, how does the climate affect where people live and where they work?

## DID YOU KNOW ?

To reduce traffic and lower pollution, a fee of about \$14 per day is charged to drive a car into central London.

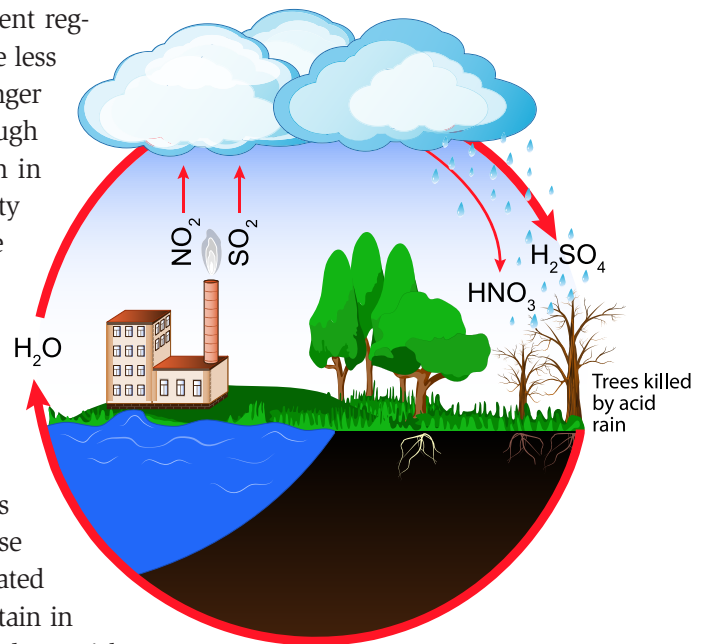


Figure 5.2

Acid Rain

**Top:** The harmful chemicals in acid rain can damage sculptures and buildings.

**Below:** One of two replicas of the *Golden Hind*, the first English ship to sail around the world, can be found in Brixham Harbour, Devon.

## Section 2

# A Brief History of the United Kingdom

Setting a Purpose

### As you read, look for

- ▶ how the British Empire grew over time;
- ▶ the effects of the world wars on the United Kingdom;
- ▶ the importance of the United Kingdom as a world leader;
- ▶ terms: **Parliament of Great Britain, British Commonwealth of Nations, Brexit.**

## The Age of Exploration and Colonization

The history of the United Kingdom as a unified country began in 1603 when King James VI of Scotland also inherited the crown of the Kingdom of England, which included Wales. For the next 100 years, the two countries shared a monarch but had different parliaments. In 1707, a single **Parliament of Great Britain** was established along with an official name change to the Kingdom of Great Britain. With the addition of the Kingdom of Ireland in 1801, the country became the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.





The British Empire once covered the largest territory in history. At its peak, the United Kingdom controlled Canada, Australia, India, much of eastern Africa, and numerous islands around the world. North America came under the control of Great Britain and France during the 18th century, but Great Britain won the rivalry and gained control of North America. After the United States became an independent country following the American Revolutionary War, Britain maintained control over Canada until the 20th century when Canadians also gained independence.

Great Britain colonized the continent of Australia and many islands along its trade routes. During the 19th century and into the early 20th century, Britain's influence grew. By the 1920s, almost one-fourth of the world's population was under British control. The British Empire spanned so much of the globe, the sun was literally shining upon some part of the Empire every moment of a 24-hour period. People would say that "The sun never sets on the British Empire."

## The Effects of World War II

In World War II, the Soviet Union, Nationalist China, and the United States joined Britain as the Allied powers. Britain and its Empire fought a successful war against Germany, Italy, and Japan. The cost was extraordinary and Britain no longer had the wealth to maintain its territory, so it granted independence to most of the Empire. The new independent nations joined together as the **British Commonwealth of Nations**. Today, the United Kingdom is a leading member of the UN and NATO. As one of five permanent members of the UN Security Council and a founding member of NATO and of the Commonwealth, the United Kingdom pursues a universal approach to foreign policy and maintains vested interests in many aspects of the worldwide community.

**Top Left:** Queen Victoria reigned from 1837 to 1901. The Victorian era was marked by a great expansion of the British Empire. Victoria added "Empress of India" to her list of titles.

# special Feature

## The London Blitz

During 1940, Germany was continuing to conquer land in Europe as part of World War II. The United Kingdom was one of the main countries that were still able to fight the German Nazis. The Battle of Britain, which was an air battle, raged over the English Channel. The waterway was all that separated the British Isles from the Nazi army. The Luftwaffe, or German air force, focused on bombing airfields and radar stations in England. However, in September 1940, their strategy changed. Hitler decided that the Luftwaffe should start bombing London in an effort to frighten the people. He hoped this action would encourage Britain to pull out of the war.

On September 7, 1940, 348 bombers launched the first air strike on London. In fact, it was not just one attack but two! The first attack started in the late afternoon and lasted for two hours. The next attack came later at night. About 480 people were killed in the first attack and many more were wounded. This was the start of 57 days straight of bombings in London. It was called the Blitz as a shortened version of the German word *Blitzkrieg*, which means “lightning war.” The targets in London included St. Paul’s Cathedral, the Palace of Westminster where Parliament meets, Buckingham Palace, and the West End. Other cities—like Bristol, Nottingham, Liverpool, and Plymouth—were also bombed. Hitler, however, spared the city of Oxford because he planned to make that the capital of England once he had conquered it.



**Background:** The photograph *St. Paul's Survives* shows St. Paul's Cathedral in London surrounded by smoke and fire. The photo became a symbol of British resilience in the Blitz. **Top:** London's Underground (subway) stations served as bomb shelters for up to 177,000 people each night of the Blitz. **Middle:** In the first mass German air raid on London during World War II, Tower Bridge stands out against a background of smoke and fire.



The effects of the Blitz were devastating. Over one-third of London was destroyed, including 19 churches. In the first 30 days alone, over 6,000 people were killed and over 12,000 seriously wounded. Over 30,000 bombs were dropped on London and other cities between September and November. The citizens were forced to take shelter wherever they could, which often ended up being in the Underground, or subway, stations. At this point, there were 79 tube (Underground) stations, and some of them served as bomb shelters for up to 177,000 people each night.

The spirit of the British people would not be broken. In fact, the unofficial motto during this time was “We can take it.” They placed 400 million sandbags in front of buildings to protect them and distributed 40 million gas masks. Many children were sent to rural areas where they would be safe from the bombings. Volunteers worked continuously to rescue people from the rubble and put out fires. People planted victory gardens in bombed-out areas to grow food. The Blitz ended on May 11, 1941. Hitler changed strategies again. He realized that the Blitz was not demoralizing the people. Additionally, he needed the Luftwaffe support as Germany prepared to invade the Soviet Union. While this is a tragic period in British history, it also shows the resilience of the British people. Can you recall a time in your life when you have had to show resilience?



**Top and Above:** Over one-third of London was destroyed in the bombing.



**Below:** The 2016 referendum to leave or stay in the European Union brought out citizens on both sides of the issue who were passionate about their point of view. In the end, the people voted to leave the EU in a move called the Brexit.

## Changing Relationships

Since the 1990s, however, independence movements in Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales have brought into question the degree of unity of this union. Although voters in a 2014 referendum on Scottish independence rejected the proposal with 55 percent voting to remain part of the United Kingdom, there are many who believe Scotland will one day vote for independence. The United Kingdom has also been a leading member of the European Union (EU). However, in 2016, the people of the United Kingdom voted to break away from the European Union. This move is commonly called the **Brexit** (a quick way of saying the words *Britain* and *exit*). The overall UK turnout for the vote was almost 72 percent of voters, with 52 percent of people voting to leave the European Union and 48 percent voting to remain. England and Wales voted strongly for Brexit, but Scotland and Northern Ireland both voted to remain in the European Union. The Brexit vote shocked many people in the European Union and the United Kingdom. The actions to remove Britain from the European Union were expected to take several years to complete.

## Reviewing the Section

1. How was the size of the British Empire described in this section?
2. What countries make up the United Kingdom?
3. What effect did World War II have on the British Empire?
4. How has the United Kingdom maintained an important role in world affairs? How do strong allies assist the United Kingdom in being a powerful force in the 21st century?



## Section 3

# The Government of the United Kingdom



### As you read, look for

- ▶ different membership and duties of the two Houses of Parliament;
- ▶ the role of the monarch in the UK's constitutional monarchy;
- ▶ different court systems in England and Wales, Northern Ireland, and Scotland;
- ▶ how citizens participate in electing members of the House of Commons;
- ▶ terms: **prime minister, House of Lords, Life Peerages Act, House of Commons, constitutional monarchy, Scottish Parliament.**

### Structure of Government

The government of the United Kingdom consists of several parts. There is the monarch, who serves as head of state in mostly ceremonial and symbolic roles. There is a **prime minister**, who enforces the laws and manages the day-to-day operation of the country as head of government. There is a lawmaking body called the Parliament of Great Britain. There is also an independent court system.



**Above:** Boris Johnson became prime minister in 2019 when Theresa May resigned after her party called for her to step down. He has been a strong advocate for a swift Brexit. **Bottom:** Number 10 Downing Street is the headquarters of the Government of the United Kingdom and the official residence of the prime minister.

**Below:** The House of Lords and the House of Commons meet in the Palace of Westminster, London. **Middle:** Interiors of the Scottish Parliament. **Bottom:** The Scottish Parliament meets in this postmodern building in Edinburgh, which was completed in 2004.



The Parliament is composed of the House of Lords and the House of Commons. These bodies compare to the United States Senate and House of Representatives. The **House of Lords** is made up of members who are appointed by the monarch upon recommendation from the prime minister. Historically, to obtain a seat in the House of Lords, a person had to have a title of Lord bestowed by the monarch. Once the seat was given, it was passed down from generation to generation in a family line. In 1958, the **Life Peerages Act** was introduced to include members from various professions and to include more women. Because these are no longer inherited positions, a life peer must be nominated by the prime minister. If there is no challenge from the opposing political party, the monarch appoints the new members to the House of Lords. There are about 760 members of the House of Lords. Most are appointees by the monarch, but there are about 90 members who have retained their seats from their family lines. The House of Lords has little actual lawmaking power. Instead, it can make suggestions of ways to improve a bill that is on its way to becoming law.

The other house of British Parliament is the **House of Commons**. The 650 members of this house are directly elected by voters for five-year terms. The power of the House of Commons comes from its control of the budget. Although traditionally considered the lower house, the House of Commons has the majority of power for taxes, spending, and money measures, and has more actual legislative power than the House of Lords.

Queen Elizabeth II is the longest-reigning monarch in British history. The monarch is considered a part of Parliament too as the head of state. The United Kingdom is classified as a **constitutional monarchy** because the country is ruled by a monarch (a king or queen) whose power is limited by a constitution. Day-to-day government business operates under the parliamentary system with the prime minister as the chief executive.

Scotland has its own unicameral Parliament consisting of 129 elected officials called Members of Scottish Parliament (MSPs). In 1997, the Scottish people voted to restore their **Scottish Parliament**, which had been dissolved in 1707. At the time, other UK countries voted for conservative members of Parliament with whom the Scottish disagreed. In 1999, the Scottish Parliament met for the first time in almost 300 years, and the Scottish people continue to gain political influence. Now the Scottish National Party (SNP) has become the largest political party in Scotland and the third-largest party in the British Parliament's House of Commons.

The courts of the United Kingdom are separated into Courts of England and Wales, Courts of Northern Ireland, and Courts of Scotland. There is a Supreme Court of the United Kingdom that is the nation's highest court. The different court systems have slight differences in law based on their traditions and customs. The courts operate independently from the monarch even though they are called "Her Majesty's Courts."

## Citizen Participation

Citizens of the United Kingdom elect members of the House of Commons in a general election. Of the 650 members, 533 are from England, 40 from Wales, 59 from Scotland, and 18 from Northern Ireland. After the election, the leader of the political party with the most members in the House of Commons is asked by the monarch to form a government and select a prime minister who will be the head of the government and run the government on a day-to-day basis.

As the official head of state, the monarch is a symbol of the country and is sometimes referred to as “the crown.” The monarch’s duties are mostly ceremonial and are restricted by the laws of the United Kingdom.

Citizens in the United Kingdom have personal freedoms like those in the United States. All citizens are treated equally and have the right to worship as they choose. British citizens have freedom of speech, the right to a fair trial, the right to own property, and the right to security. Their lives are very similar to our lives in the United States. They can choose where to work and live and can vote in important elections to select the lawmakers for the country.



## Reviewing the Section

1. What type of democracy does the United Kingdom have?
2. How is the chief executive of the government chosen?
3. What is the difference between the head of state and the head of government in the United Kingdom?
4. How do the citizens determine the leaders of the government in the United Kingdom?
5. How do the members of Parliament gain their seats? Compare the House of Commons and the House of Lords. From which house is the prime minister elected?
6. **Deeper Thinking:** Even though the monarch is a ceremonial leader, do you think the crown has any influence over the governing bodies in the United Kingdom? How closely do the head of state and chief executive work together?

**Above:** Both the “Vote Leave” and “Britain Stronger in Europe” sides campaigned heavily before the Brexit referendum of June 2016. These “Vote Leave” advocates handed out information in the town of St. Ives in Cambridgeshire.

# special Feature

## Her Majesty the Queen

Elizabeth the Second (Elizabeth II) has served longer than any monarch in British history. She began her reign in 1952 and has



continued into the 21st century. Born in 1926, Princess Elizabeth was well educated and learned about life in the royal court, but she was not expected to become the monarch. It was believed she would have a somewhat normal life as a member of the United Kingdom's larger royal family. However, when her uncle abdicated, or gave up, the role

of king, Elizabeth's father took over. That put Elizabeth next in line to be monarch after her father.

During World War II, Elizabeth became a military truck driver and mechanic. These were important roles that surprised and inspired

many people. It was unusual for a woman, much less a princess, to take on this type of work. After the war, Elizabeth married Prince Philip of Greece and Denmark. Their marriage in 1947 was followed by the birth of three sons and a daughter.



# EIIIR

**Background:** Princess Elizabeth served as a military truck driver and mechanic in World War II. **Top:** Princess Margaret and Princess Elizabeth (sounding the whistle) rode aboard the Royal Train during a Royal Visit to South Africa in 1947. **Middle:** The coronation of Queen Elizabeth II took place in London's Westminster Abbey in 1953. **Bottom:** Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip rode in the Queen's Birthday Parade in 2015.



After the death of her father King George VI in 1952, Elizabeth became queen. During the late 20th and 21st centuries, the United Kingdom's relationship with some of its colonies was changing. In many European countries, royal families were removed from power. In some cases, they were asked to leave their countries. Even in England, some people were wondering if having a sovereign made sense when the country elected all of its other government leaders. Elizabeth's example as a hard-working woman dedicated to helping her people has made her a popular leader, however. Efforts to change the laws to remove the sovereign in the United Kingdom have not been successful.

As the monarch of the United Kingdom, Elizabeth is also sovereign to a number of other countries. These countries were once colonies of Great Britain, just as the state of Georgia once was. Her official title as British sovereign is Elizabeth II, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and of her other realms and territories Queen, Head of the Commonwealth, Defender of the Faith. The "Commonwealth" is the Commonwealth of Nations. This is a group of 52 nations that were once British territories but are now independent. The exact relationship between Elizabeth and these countries varies. The queen serves as the symbolic leader in all Commonwealth nations, but she is queen of Canada, Australia, and New Zealand as well as Jamaica, Barbados, the Bahamas, Grenada, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Belize, Antigua and Barbuda, and Saint Kitts and Nevis.



**Top Left:** Queen Elizabeth celebrated her Diamond Jubilee in 2012. **Top Right:** US President Ronald Reagan and Queen Elizabeth II rode together in 1982. **Bottom:** Crowds gather in front of Buckingham Palace when Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip make an appearance on the balcony of their London home.

**Below:** London's skyline contains many distinctive skyscrapers. The unusual cone-shaped building is informally called "The Gherkin" because of its similarity to the Gherkin pickle.

## Section 4

# The Economy of the United Kingdom

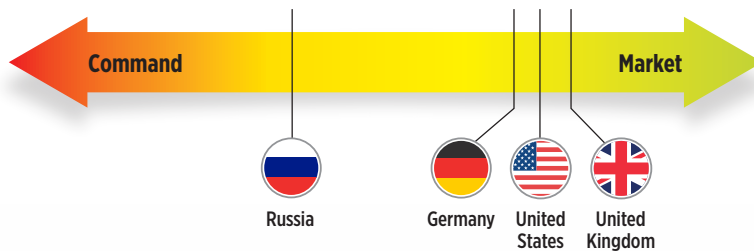
Setting a Purpose

### As you read, look for

- ▶ the type of economy found in the United Kingdom;
- ▶ how the United Kingdom encourages economic growth;
- ▶ the standard of living of the people in the United Kingdom;
- ▶ terms: **National Health Service (NHS)**, **British pound (£)**.

**Figure 5.3**

### Economic Systems in Europe



## The Economic System Today

A society's economic system is determined by the rules people and governments use to make decisions about what to produce, how to produce, and for whom to produce. The United Kingdom is considered to be one of the freest market economies in the world. It is one of the

few countries in Europe that can boast about its economy in the trillions each year. Since the 1990s, the government and citizens have worked together to find what works best for their country.

Citizens of the United Kingdom have the freedom to choose where they can work, what they spend their money on, and what property they own. There is

little government regulation to interfere with daily decisions for consumers. The legal system of the United Kingdom enforces the rule of law and guarantees the rules of economic contracts. It has a reputation for honest and fair decisions.

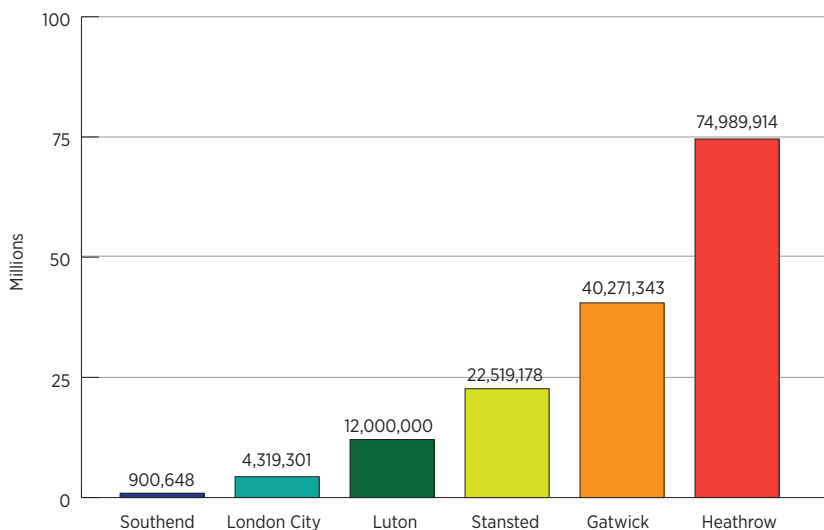
Another important part of being economically free is the ability to be an entrepreneur and start one's own business. Laws in the United Kingdom allow any individual to begin a business. For people who are creative, innovative thinkers and who are willing to risk their natural, human, and capital goods in hopes of earning a profit, the United Kingdom supports entrepreneurship.

## Trade

Import and export transactions in the United Kingdom are a large part of the country's \$2.6 trillion Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Items such as machine tools, railroad, ship, and aircraft equipment, motor vehicles and parts, electronics, and communications equipment are manufactured in the United Kingdom and provide many jobs for its citizens. These products are then exported all over the world, including to the UK's largest trading partners: the United States, Germany, and France. These products are responsible for almost \$470 billion of income for the United Kingdom, and only about 18 percent of people in the United Kingdom work in labor forces such as manufacturing. About 80 percent of the UK's workforce is in the service industry, such as banking services that are used worldwide.

Trade also involves products coming into the country. Imports are purchased from other countries to supply what the United Kingdom cannot make and provide for itself. Germany and the United States are important sources of goods for the United Kingdom. The majority of UK imports are food and fuels.

The United Kingdom is a leading trading power and a global financial center. It has the third-largest economy in Europe after Germany and France. Agriculture is thorough, highly mechanized, and efficient by European standards, producing about 60 percent of their food needs using less than 2 percent of the labor force. The United Kingdom has large coal, natural gas, and oil resources, but its oil and natural gas reserves are declining and the United Kingdom has been a large importer of energy since 2005. Services, particularly banking, insurance, and business services, are key factors of British GDP growth. Manufacturing has declined in importance but still accounts for about 10 percent of economic production.



**Figure 5.4**

**Annual Passengers at London's Airports**

**Above:** Air travelers line up at Passport Control in London's Heathrow Airport. The British aviation hub is the busiest in the European Union by passenger traffic.



**Below:** Britain's National Health Service provides free health care to all British citizens. A national tax pays for this service.

In 2008, the global financial crisis hit the economy particularly hard due to the importance of the UK banking system to the overall economy. Falling home prices, high consumer debt, and the global economic slowdown made Britain's economic problems even worse, pushing the economy into recession. The government began several programs to stimulate the economy and stabilize the financial markets.

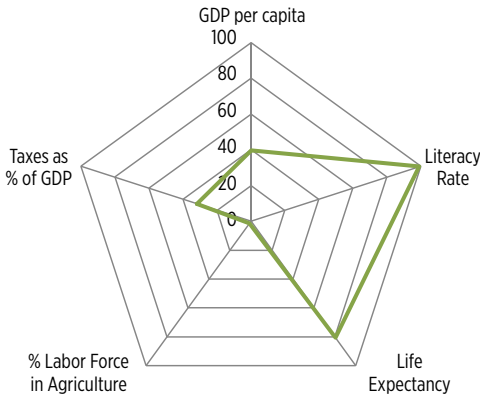
## Standard of Living

One definition of the standard of living can be described as the amount of goods and services an average family views as necessary. As an educated and industrialized country, the United Kingdom has a good standard of living. Education, health status, and social activities all rank above average for European countries. The British are particularly proud of the health care system. The **National Health Service (NHS)** was introduced after World War II. The goal was to provide comprehensive and free health care to all British citizens. The program is paid for by a national tax and provides most of the medical treatments a person would ever need.

The Gross Domestic Product per capita of a country is the total value of all the final goods and services produced in a country in one year divided by the number of people in the country. The GDP per capita is one way to determine the wealth of people in a country. The per capita GDP of Great Britain is around \$42,000. This is less than Germany (about \$46,000) and the United States (\$53,000) per year. However, more than 33 million people have jobs in the United Kingdom. These workers earn good wages to provide for themselves and their families. Citizens of the United Kingdom are considered to have a standard of living that is very high in the world.

Raising the per capita GDP of the country can mean a higher standard of living for its people. To increase the per capita GDP, countries must invest in education, training and skills, and the health of workers. Businesses must also invest in new technology, improve their factories, and provide workers with the tools they need. Governments must invest in the public infrastructure needed to get goods to international markets. With the high percentage of people working outside the home, a higher education is required to obtain and keep a job.

**Figure 5.5**  
**UK Spider Graph**



## Currency

Even as a member of the European Union, the United Kingdom did not choose to adopt the euro as currency. The currency of the United Kingdom, the **British pound (£)**, is one of the most stable in the world. It has existed for about 1,000 years. The modern British pound has evolved from pre-England times in which coins were divided into increments that equaled one pound of silver. The ancient Roman monetary system used a form of the pound that divided the 16 ounces of silver into coins of 20 shillings or 240 silver pennies, each adding up to the approximate weight of one pound.

The earliest minting (production of coins) of silver pennies was credited to an Anglo-Saxon king in the late 8th century. Although the weights were not always exact, the practice was still the same as in Roman times: 20 shillings or 240 pennies were equal to one pound of currency. The coins were then traded in markets and marked with royal symbols of the time period. In 1971, the British changed to a simpler decimal system—with one pound divided into 100 new pence.

The first paper money did not arrive until 1694 when the official Bank of England was established. Each note was handwritten for its value. It is hard to imagine a bank writing out what each bill is worth today!



## Reviewing the Section

1. How has a market economy affected the UK economy?
2. How has UK investment in capital goods affected the economy?
3. How does the economy affect the standard of living in the United Kingdom?
4. What goods make up a majority of goods traded for export? For import? What countries are trading partners with the UK?
5. Deeper Thinking: How have the economic freedoms of citizens increased trade in the United Kingdom? How has the investment in education, training, and capital goods affected the region?

## DID YOU KNOW ?

In 2016, the Bank of England began issuing £5 notes made of thin, flexible plastic. They are expected to stay cleaner, be harder to counterfeit, and last 2.5 times longer than previous paper banknotes. US bills are still printed on paper, but that material is made of cotton and linen, not wood pulp like regular paper.

**Left:** The United Kingdom kept its own currency instead of adopting the euro when it joined the European Union. The British pound (£) is one of the most stable currencies in the world.

## Section 5

# US-United Kingdom Relations



Setting a Purpose

### As you read, look for

- ▶ evidence of a long friendship between the United Kingdom and the United States;
- ▶ the amount of trade between the United Kingdom and the United States;
- ▶ ways the United States and the United Kingdom work together;
- ▶ terms: **embassy, British-American Business Council of Georgia.**

## DID YOU KNOW?

In the War of 1812, British soldiers burned Washington, DC, including the White House.

### The Long Friendship

The United States declared its independence from Great Britain in 1776. The American Revolutionary War ended in 1783 when Great Britain recognized US independence. The two countries were at war again in the War of 1812, but by 1815, peace was achieved and the two countries began the process of becoming partners in world events.

Today, the United States has no closer ally than the United Kingdom, and British foreign policy emphasizes close cooperation with the United States. This cooperation reflects the common language, ideals, and democratic practices of the two nations. Relations were strengthened by the United Kingdom's alliance with the United States during both world wars and the Korean conflict.

Toward the end of the Cold War, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and President Ronald Reagan became personal friends. Their partnership was very strong in dealing with the Soviet Union and Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev. Their teamwork helped to end the Soviet Union and the Cold War.



**Right:** The partnership between US President Ronald Reagan and the first female UK prime minister, Margaret Thatcher, helped end the Cold War.

Later, the two countries' military forces partnered in the Persian Gulf War, in Operation Iraqi Freedom, and in Afghanistan. The United Kingdom and the United States continually cooperate to help solve problems around the world.

The two countries work together as part of the United Nations (UN), the UN Security Council, the World Bank, the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the World Health Organization (WHO). Both countries are a part of the G8, or Group of Eight. Leaders of the eight countries meet each year to discuss economic growth, security, energy, and terrorism. The United Kingdom has an **embassy** (the official residence and offices of an ambassador) in Washington, DC, with an ambassador to represent the United Kingdom in the United States.

## Bilateral Economic Relations

The United Kingdom is a major international trading power. It is one of the largest markets for US exports and one of the largest suppliers of US imports, making the relationship between these two countries beneficial and somewhat dependent on each other. Currency between the two countries is easily traded. Americans have invested nearly \$600 billion in companies in the United Kingdom. Investors from the United Kingdom have over \$400 billion invested in US companies.

Groups such as the **British-American Business Council of Georgia** promote trade between Georgia, the other states, and the United Kingdom. There are over 300 UK companies in Georgia. The state exports over \$1.6 billion to the United Kingdom including jet engines, aircraft, and electrical machinery. Georgia imports over \$2.1 billion in goods from the United Kingdom, which include lift trucks, automobiles, and pharmaceutical, optical, and medical equipment.

The United Kingdom is a large source of foreign tourists visiting the United States. There are over 800 flights per week between the two countries that can seat more than 200,000 people. In total, about 4 million Americans visit the United Kingdom each year, and the same number of British people visit the United States.



## Reviewing the Section

1. How does their trading relationship affect the United Kingdom and the United States?
2. What examples are given to show that the United States and the United Kingdom work together?
3. How is Georgia's economy connected to that of the United Kingdom?

**Above:** Logo of the British-American Business Council of Georgia, which helps businesses and individuals connect, learn, and grow through a thriving network of executives across the United States and the United Kingdom.

# Chapter Review

## Chapter Summary

### Section 1: The Geography of the United Kingdom

- The United Kingdom (UK) consists of the countries of England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Great Britain is the geographical name of the largest island.
- Because Great Britain is an island close to mainland Europe, it has many ports for shipping in Europe and across the Atlantic to the United States.
- The United Kingdom has mild weather and arable land, which has encouraged a pastoral lifestyle. In recent history, the population has clustered in urban areas where there are more jobs.
- The United Kingdom has many natural resources including coal, petroleum, and iron. These helped fuel the Industrial Revolution that provided many mining and manufacturing jobs.
- Because it has burned fossil fuels for an extended time, the United Kingdom has had severe problems with air quality. It now works on clean energy solutions, especially in London.

### Section 2: A Brief History of the United Kingdom

- King James VI of Scotland first united Scotland, England, and Wales in 1603. The current United Kingdom of Great Britain and (Northern) Ireland was officially formed in 1801.
- The British Empire colonized enormous territories including North America, Australia, and India. By 1920, it had colonies around the globe.
- After World War II, many of the colonies were granted independence and joined together to become the British Commonwealth of Nations.
- Recently the United Kingdom has appeared less unified internally with Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland rallying for independence and with the contentious Brexit campaign in 2016.

### Section 3: The Government of the United Kingdom

- The United Kingdom's government includes the monarch, prime minister, British and Scottish Parliaments, and court systems.
- The British Parliament is bicameral and composed of the House of Lords and House of Commons.
- The House of Commons, unlike the House of Lords, is made up of elected members who serve five-year terms and have the most parliamentary power.
- The United Kingdom is a constitutional monarchy where the monarch is the head of state with limited power and the prime minister is the head of government.

### Section 4: The Economy of the United Kingdom

- The United Kingdom has one of the largest economies in Europe and offers its citizens freedom to produce, consume, and become entrepreneurs as they please.
- As an international hub, the United Kingdom relies on frequent and plentiful trade to export their goods and provide service jobs especially in banking, insurance, and business services.
- The standard of living is very high for citizens. They have access to the National Health Service (NHS), high paying jobs, and efficient public infrastructure.
- The British pound is one of the most stable and valuable currencies in the world. The United Kingdom kept its own currency when it joined the European Union.

### Section 5: US-United Kingdom Relations

- Although the United States and United Kingdom began as enemies, the two countries are now close allies and trading partners.

- In recent history, the leaders of both countries have worked together through two world wars and the Cold War, and as partners in international groups such as the United Nations.
- The two economies rely on each other to sell their exports. Frequent tourism between the countries boosts the service industries and encourages more trade.

## Activities for Learning

### Reviewing People, Places, and Things



Imagine you are a journalist. Using your knowledge of the United Kingdom, write a realistic headline for each of the words below.

United Kingdom  
Gulf Stream  
Brexit  
smog  
monarch  
prime minister  
British pound  
British Commonwealth of Nations

### Understanding the Facts



1. The United Kingdom is composed of what four countries?
2. Why does the United Kingdom have such mild weather for its latitude?
3. What is smog?
4. Who was the first monarch of both Scotland and England?
5. What is the British Commonwealth of Nations?
6. Which house of the British Parliament has members who are elected?
7. Which countries are the United Kingdom's largest trading partners?
8. As natural resources decrease, what sector of jobs is replacing jobs in manufacturing?

### Developing Critical Thinking



1. After being dissolved in 1707, the Scottish Parliament met again in 1999. Why do you think it is important to the Scottish people to have their own parliament? How well are Scottish people represented in the British Parliament's House of Commons?
2. The United Kingdom relies heavily on foreign trade and banking to keep its high GDP and standard of living. How might Brexit affect trading relationships with European countries and the United States?

### Writing across the Curriculum



Write a short report describing how important you think the House of Lords is to the United Kingdom's government. Be sure to include examples to support your opinions.

### Applying Your Skills



Create a timeline with at least five historical events important to understanding the United Kingdom today.

### Exploring Technology



Go to <https://consultations.tfl.gov.uk/environment/air-quality-consultation-phase-2/?cid=airquality-consultation>. Read about why it is still important to improve the air quality in London and what is being done to fix it. Based on your knowledge of the United Kingdom, what current tactics do you think are working the best to improve air quality?