

The Island Country

Can you name the country that is home to Shakespeare, the Beatles, and the 2012 Olympics? If England is your answer, then you are correct. England, along with the countries of Wales and Scotland are part of the island of Great Britain. This northeastern European country is no bigger than the U.S. state of Alabama. Although small in size, England has had an enormous impact on world history. Many of the world's laws and governments were based on British ideas. English traders, settlers, and explorers influenced almost all parts of the world. In fact, the first permanent settlers to America came from England.

The history of England began with the Pict settlers about 10,000 years ago. The Celts came from Europe and drove the Picts north into Scotland. The Celts were followed by the mighty Roman Empire in A.D. 43. Tribes of German people known as Angles, Saxons and Jutes began moving in during the sixth century. From the 900s to the 1400s, the Norse people invaded England. After an English civil war in the fifteenth century, the Tudor family took over. One of England's most famous rulers, Queen Elizabeth I, lived from 1485 - 1603. She was the daughter of the infamous King Henry VIII and the last of the Tudor dynasty. Next, King James I from Scotland was crowned king. Some historians say King James I never took a bath during his lifetime!

The size of England is 50,302 square miles. The landscape includes mountain ranges, deep valleys, and rolling, green hills. Several major rivers include the Tyne, Severn, and the Thames (pronounced Tims). England's climate is mild and varied. One part of the day may be warm and sunny, while the afternoon may turn cold and rainy. England is heavily populated with more than 51 million people. Most of the nation's people live around major cities such as the capital city of London.

The pounds sterling is the money used. It is similar to the U.S. dollar and is represented with the pound sign: £. England interests tourists with many historical and architectural interests that include ancient Stonehenge, Big Ben and the Roman bath houses. England is also famous for literature and sports. Rugby, cricket, soccer, boxing and golf were all invented on this island. Many of history's greatest writers come from England, including Charles Dickens, C.S. Lewis, and J.K. Rowling, the writer of the Harry Potter books.

The government of England is both a Constitutional Monarchy and a Parliamentary Democracy. The Constitutional Monarchy means a king or queen rules over the country but does not actually run the government. For example, Queen Elizabeth II is the current head of state but she does not run the country. Similar to the U.S. Congress, the Parliamentary Democracy is a government which represents the people at elections. Like our U.S. President, England's Prime Minister is chosen when the people hold an election.

Throughout history and even in present times, England is definitely an interesting country to learn about.

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1. Which of the following sentences best states the main idea of paragraph 2?
- a. The history of England has included many different people and rulers.
 - b. Queen Elizabeth was an important ruler of England.
 - c. The Picts settlers settled in England years ago.
 - d. Rulers and settlers are important to the history of a country.

2. Which of the following would be the best heading for paragraph 3?
- a. Where Do People Live in England?
 - b. England's Major Cities
 - c. Geography and Climate
 - d. Landscape

3. Which sentence from paragraph 5 best states the main idea of that paragraph?
- a. The Constitutional Monarchy means a king or queen rules over the country but does not actually run the government.
 - b. The government of England is both a Constitutional Monarchy and a Parliamentary Democracy.
 - c. Similar to the U.S. Congress, the Parliamentary Democracy is a government which represents the people at elections.
 - d. Like our U.S. President, England's Prime Minister is chosen when the people hold an election.

4. Write a 2-3 sentence summary using these key words: England, history, size, landscape, climate, currency, culture, government
