

The British Isles

What You Will Learn...

Main Ideas

1. Invaders and a global empire have shaped the history of the British Isles.
2. British culture, such as government and music, has influenced much of the world.
3. Efforts to bring peace to Northern Ireland and maintain strong economies are important issues in the British Isles today.

The Big Idea

Close cultural and historical ties link the people of the British Isles today.

Key Terms and Places

constitutional monarchy, p. 454
 Magna Carta, p. 454
 disarm, p. 455
 London, p. 456
 Dublin, p. 456

TAKING NOTES As you read, take notes on the history, culture, and issues of the British Isles today. Use a graphic organizer like the one below to organize your notes.



If YOU lived there...

You have family and friends that live throughout the British Isles. On visits you have discovered that the people of England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales share the same language, use the same type of government, and eat many of the same foods.

Why might culture in the British Isles be similar?

BUILDING BACKGROUND The people of the British Isles have had close ties for thousands of years. As a result, the people of England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales share many of the same culture traits. Similar religions, languages, literary traditions, and even holidays are common throughout the British Isles.

History

Two independent countries—the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom—make up the British Isles. The United Kingdom is a union of four small countries: England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Throughout their history, the people of the British Isles have been closely linked together.

Time Line

History of the British Isles

1558–1603

England becomes a world power during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I.



3100 BC

Ancient settlers in England build Stonehenge.

1600



Early History

The history of the British Isles dates back thousands of years. Early settlers built Stonehenge, an ancient monument, some 5,000 years ago. Around 450 BC, the Celts (KELTS) arrived in the British Isles and settled Scotland, Wales, and Ireland. Britain was even part of the ancient Roman Empire.

In the Middle Ages a series of invaders ruled the British Isles. The Angles, Saxons, and Vikings all established small kingdoms in Britain. Finally, in 1066, the Normans from northern France conquered England and established a strong kingdom there.

Over time, England grew in strength and power. It soon overshadowed its neighbors in the British Isles. By the 1500s strong rulers like Queen Elizabeth I had turned England into a world power.

Rise of the British Empire

A strong economy and mighty navy helped England build a vast empire. Over time, England joined with Wales and Scotland to create the United Kingdom of Great Britain. Eventually, Ireland was annexed too. England also launched an overseas empire. By the 1800s Britain had colonies in the Americas, India, and Australia.

BIOGRAPHY



Sir Winston Churchill

(1874–1965)

One of Britain's greatest leaders, Sir Winston Churchill, guided the United Kingdom through the dark days of World War II. Churchill was appointed prime minister shortly after the

beginning of World War II. He inspired the British to continue fighting despite Germany's defeat of much of Europe. During the Battle of Britain, Churchill gave fiery speeches. He encouraged British citizens to "never surrender." His creation of an alliance with the Soviet Union and the United States led to Germany's eventual defeat. Churchill's determination helped the Allies win the war.

Evaluating Do you think Churchill was important to British history? Why or why not?

The United Kingdom's economy soared in the 1700s and 1800s, thanks to the Industrial Revolution. Industries like iron, steel, and textiles, or cloth products, helped make the United Kingdom one of the world's richest countries.

Not everyone benefited, however. In the 1840s a severe food shortage devastated Ireland. Lack of support from the English government during the famine increased tensions between the two countries.

FOCUS ON READING

What does the word textiles mean? How can you tell?

1730–1860

The Industrial Revolution brings great wealth to England.

1940

London is bombed during the Battle of Britain in World War II.

1700

1800

1900

2000

1858–1947

The British Empire controls India, its most valuable colony.

ANALYZE SKILL

READING TIME LINES

About how many years ago was Stonehenge built?

By the late 1800s the British Empire spanned the globe. Africa, Asia, Australia, and the Americas were all home to British colonies. At its height, the British Empire was the largest empire in history.

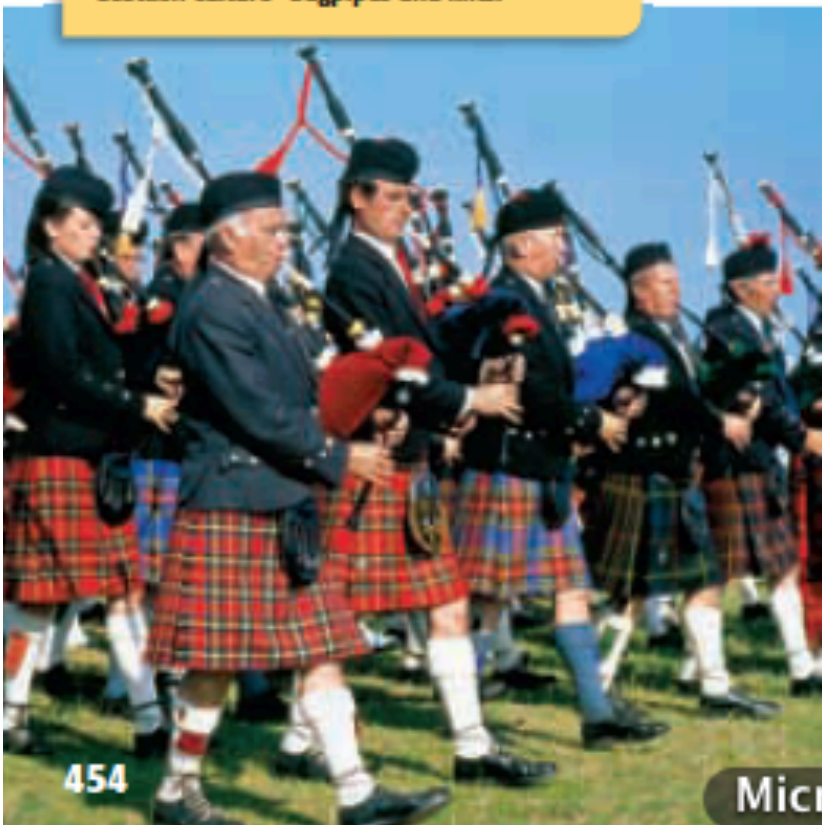
Decline of Empire

In the 1900s the British Empire began to fall apart. Both World War I and the Great Depression hurt the British economy. Rebellions in Ireland forced Britain to grant self-rule to all but the northern part of Ireland. In 1949 the Republic of Ireland gained full independence. Movements for independence also emerged in Britain's overseas colonies. After World War II, Great Britain gave up most of its colonies. The British Empire was no more.

READING CHECK **Sequencing** What major events mark the history of the British Isles?

Culture

People in different regions of the British Isles hold fast to regional traditions and customs. Here, Scots proudly display two symbols of Scottish culture—bagpipes and kilts.



Culture

For years the British ruled much of the world. As a result, the government, people, and popular culture of the British Isles have influenced people all around the globe.

Government

The government of the United Kingdom is a **constitutional monarchy**, a type of democracy in which a king or queen serves as head of state but a legislature makes the laws. The English first limited the power of monarchs in the Middle Ages. A document known as **Magna Carta**, or Great Charter, limited the powers of kings. It also required everyone to obey the law. Today, a prime minister leads the British government. Most members of Britain's legislative body, known as Parliament, are elected.

The Republic of Ireland has a president as head of state. The president, who has limited powers, appoints a prime minister. Together with the Irish parliament, the prime minister runs the government.

People

For hundreds of years, the countries of the British Isles have had close ties. As a result, the countries share many culture traits. One similarity is their common heritage. Many people in the British Isles can trace their heritage to the region's early settlers, such as the Celts, Angles, and Saxons. Sports like soccer and rugby are another shared trait among the people of Britain.

Although people in the British Isles share many culture traits, each region still maintains its own unique identity. This is particularly true in Ireland and Scotland. Unlike the rest of the British Isles, most Irish are Roman Catholic. Irish Gaelic, a Celtic language, is one of the country's official languages. The people of Scotland have also maintained their unique culture.

It is not unusual in Scotland to see people wearing kilts and playing bagpipes on special occasions.

Immigrants from all corners of the world have settled in Britain. Many immigrants from former British colonies, such as India and Jamaica, add to the rich culture of the British Isles.

Popular Culture

British popular culture influences people all around the globe. For example, English is the language of business, education, and the Internet in many places. British music and literature are also popular. Millions of people around the globe listen to music by bands like Ireland's U2 and England's The Beatles and read works by British authors like William Shakespeare.

READING CHECK Summarizing What parts of British culture have spread around the world?

British Isles Today

The British Isles face some challenges. Efforts to bring peace to Northern Ireland and to maintain a powerful economy are key issues in the British Isles today.

Northern Ireland

One of the toughest problems facing the British Isles today is conflict in Northern Ireland. Disputes between the people of Northern Ireland have a long history.

In the 1500s Protestants from England and Scotland began settling in Northern Ireland. Over time, they outnumbered Irish Catholics in the area. When Ireland became a separate state, Northern Ireland's Protestant majority chose to remain part of the United Kingdom.

Since then, many Catholics in Northern Ireland believe they have not been treated fairly by Protestants. Some Catholics hope



to unite with the Republic of Ireland. For years the two sides have waged a bitter and violent struggle. In the late 1990s peace talks between the two warring sides began. An **agreement** eventually led to a ceasefire and the creation of a national assembly in Northern Ireland. However, the refusal of some groups to **disarm, or give up all weapons**, stalled the peace talks. Recently, however, hopes are once again high that peaceful relations between the groups will bring about a long-lasting peace.

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

agreement
a decision reached by two or more people or groups



The largest city in the British Isles, London serves as one of Europe's major financial centers.

The Economy

The economies of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland are among Europe's strongest. **London**, the capital of the United Kingdom, is a center for world trade and industry. North Sea energy reserves have made the United Kingdom a major producer of oil and natural gas. In Ireland, computer equipment and software have become major industries, especially near **Dublin**, Ireland's capital. The economies of

the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland also rely on service industries like banking, tourism, and insurance.

READING CHECK **Summarizing** What has been the cause of conflict in Northern Ireland?

SUMMARY AND PREVIEW You have learned about the rich history and culture of the British Isles. Next, you will learn about the countries of Scandinavia.

Section 2 Assessment

Reviewing Ideas, Terms, and Places

- Identify** What peoples invaded the British Isles?
 - Make Inferences** How did the Industrial Revolution strengthen the British Empire?
- Describe** What elements of British culture are found around the world?
 - Explain** How did **Magna Carta** affect British government?
- Define** What does **disarm** mean?
 - Analyze** What are the central issues of the conflict in Northern Ireland?
 - Elaborate** Why do you think the economy of the British Isles is so strong?

Critical Thinking

- Summarizing** Using your notes and a graphic organizer like the one here, summarize the history and culture of the British Isles in your own words.



FOCUS ON WRITING

- Writing about the British Isles** What information about the British Isles do you think is most interesting? Take notes on what you could include in a letter to someone who has never visited the area.

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Online Quiz

KEYWORD: SJ7 HPB