



Otázka: Great Britain and London

Jazyk: Angličtina

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The United Kingdom is situated on the north-west part of Europe and it consists of England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the many small islands, such as Isle of Man, Isle of Wight, Orkneys, Shetlands Islands and many others. Great Britain is separated from continental Europe by English Channel (Channel la Manche) and it is only 35 km far to France.

The coasts between the biggest islands are surrounded by the Irish sea, eastern cost by the North sea and northern part of Great Britain by the Atlantic ocean. Great Britain is the insular country, so they have any real neighbours, only Republic of Ireland.

It covers an area of 245,000 square km, only three times larger that the Czech Republic. The physical geography is varied with the highest mountains in Wales and Scotland (Ben Nevis 1,343 m). But the eastern and southern parts of England are lower.

The longest river Thames passes through London. There is also a network of canals in Britain which were very important for inland freight traffic in 19th century.(The wood was tied to the rafts and sent down the river with goods...) Lakes are to be found in the Lakes District in north-east England and in the Highlands of Scotland. There is the most famous lake is Loch Ness for its monster. There are very few forests in Britain, but there are many moorlands.

The weather is one of the most well-known things which are typical for Great Britain, it is a main talking point among the British at first meeting because it is unpredictable and there rains very often. Its variability is caused by the temperate maritime climate. Winters are milder than they would normally be for the latitude because of the warming effect of the North Atlantic drift (The Gulf Stream). Summers are occasionally hot but the sky is overcast half of the year.



History and literature

And now, let's to start with a basic facts about British history with connection to literature.

One of the most important moments in British history was certainly in 43 BC when the Romans invaded the country and stayed there until the 5th century. There isn't recorded literature from this period. But the earliest Irish and Welsh texts, such as the Taliesin poems and pagan Irish stories were probably being passed down by word of mouth.

The Anglo-Saxons from Northern Europe pushed Romans out. They bring their own literature with them. Around 800 AD Vikings begin to raid the coast, finally settling and ruling the north of England and parts of Scotland and Ireland.

Beowulf, the first epic poem in English literature, was written. It has all necessary features – war, women, wine and the supernatural. But there are a lot of doubts around it, because it isn't clear place of composing, it might be written in Denmark, Netherlands or England.

The other landmark was in 1066 when William the Conqueror, Duke of Normandy, defeated the English King Harold at Hastings. (French influence is still seen today particularly in the English language.) there is connection with Anglo-Saxon's poetry and religious texts, but only tiny craps survive.

The following centuries were in the spirit of the growing power of the Crown and disputes with France over French territories. Canterbury Tales (1370) by Geoffrey Chaucer described situation in this periode, it mocked medieval society, including the Church. They are still read today.

In 15th century, a new dynasty, the Tudors, gained the throne, because they prevail in war of the Roses between House of York and House of Lancaster.

The Anglican Church was founded during the reign of Henry VIII and the rule of his daughter Elizabeth I was marked by great cultural development. It is connected with the most spectacular playwright William Shakespeare, pride of England. It is known as "The Golden Age of Poetry".

But let's come back, (But to the topic) in 1536, Wales was joined to England by the Act of Union.



In 1611, The King James Bible was published – this is the first English translation.

The power of the Parliament successively grew and during the English Revolution (1649 – 1660) the monarchy was temporarily replaced with a series of republics and protectorates, led by Oliver Cromwell. For this century was important Paradise Lost by John Milton, the work of art goes back to Book of Genesis.

The 18th century was significant turning point due to writers Daniel Defoe and his Robinson Crusoe, Gulliver's Travels by Jonathan Swift and last but not least Jane Austen, Lord Byron or Bronte sisters and political issues. Great Britain became a major colonial and industrial power; especially the sunny reign of Queen Victoria (ruled 1837 – 1901) is associated with the greatest expansion and economic growth. In 1707, Scotland was joined to England and the new unit was called Great Britain. Northern Ireland was merged with Great Britain in 1801.

In the 19th century, The Commonwealth (the countries which used to be or in some cases still are a part of the British Empire) arise and as a result, this small country continues to have political and financial influence abroad. Charles Dickens described conditions in this century. And Oscar Wilde become famous because of The Picture of Dorian Gray and his witty conservation plays, Arthur Conan Doyle due to detective fiction about Sherlock Holmes, H. G. Wells due to The Time Machine, which is science fiction.

In 20th century, writers followed up their forerunner. James Joyce with his Ulysses – in the foreground with thoughts instead of a description. Or T. S. Eliot published The Wasteland, which interpreted own time and Virginia Woolf reflected it too.

The UK is a founding member of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation). The UK has been a member of the European Union since 1973.

It is clear, that literature reflects historical events.

Government

The United Kingdom is a parliamentary democracy and constitutional monarchy with a monarch, currently Queen Elizabeth II, but she don't have real power, it has only representative and symbolic meaning (she is also Head of the Protestant Church of England)(anglican).

A parliament is consisted of the elected House of Commons and the unelected House of Lords,



its main function is to make and revise laws and to check the work of the government. Members of Parliament (MPs) represent their interests in the House of Commons.

Parliament sits for five years unless it is disbanded sooner.

There are two main political parties in the United Kingdom: the Conservative Party, which is traditionally centre-right, and the Labour Party, traditionally more left-wing. The executive power of the Crown is exercised by the cabinet, headed by the Prime Minister, currently David Cameron from Conservative Party.

Recently, there has been a process called devolution. This means that Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland now have their own parliaments.

Towns and places of interest

There are a lot of places of interest in Britain, which are worth seeing. The white chalk cliffs of Dover and Dover Castle might be the first sights to see when you approach Britain by sea.

Canterbury, the seat of the Archbishop, is not far from Dover. It is pilgrimage place, which is well-known owing to Canterbury Tales by Geoffrey Chaucer.

The other attractive towns are definitely Oxford and Cambridge. Both of them have prestigious universities with global acclaim.

Stratford-upon-Avon is probably the second most visited town in England. It is birthplace of William Shakespeare, pride of England.

York is the residence of the Archbishop of the Anglican Church of the Northam Province with magnificent Gothic cathedral, York Minster.

Hastings is famous since 1066 when William the Conqueror defeated the English King Harold.

And not far along the coast lies Brighton, the most visited seaside and health resort.



The other important city is Liverpool which is famous as a cradle of music geniuses called the Beatles, it is old industry town with many factories. Similar describes is used for Manchester – center of textile industry.

Capital city of Wales is Cardiff – old historical town, center of industry too.

Capital in Scotland is Edinburgh – tradition Scottish town and seat of kings, bigger then Edinburgh is Glasgow – industry town, center of commerce and services.

Finally capital of Northam Ireland is Belfast – city, where Titanic was built.

The industries areas are Birmingham, Newcastle, Glasgow and Cardiff.

The Lake District and the National Parks of Dartmoor, Exmore are worth seeing for their breathtaking landscape.

Stonehenge, a huge circle of standing stones was built by the early settlers from Europe. The purpose of this megalithic monument is unknown but might have been ritual.

Hadrian's Wall is a part of the Roman fortifications which drags 185 km from Wallsend to Maryport.

Wales is sometimes called the land of castles. I think, it's true, because many old castles can be found here. The land of Wales is full of mystery and beauty. The biggest cities of this region are Cardiff, Newport and Swansea.

Scotland is a historical and cultural separate country from England. It has its own legal and educational systems and currency. Scotland is the land of many special traditions which cannot be found elsewhere in the world. I can name playing the bagpipes or wearing kilts made of tartan. The biggest city is Glasgow, the cultural centre and the hearts of the arts in Scotland.

Industry



Great Britain is one of the richest country in the world. The economy and infrastructure is highly developed.

During 20th century can we notice that British industry changed from heavy industry with traditional branches as shipbuilding, car and train building, engineering. In this dominate chemical, steel industry and production of consumable electronics (televisions, radios, equipment for home).

But 30 percent of land is arable and the main agricultural products are grains, sugar, beet, fruit and vegetables. (Agriculture is highly developed too, England is nearly to be independent in cultivation of utility plants).

Sports

We can say that Great Britain is one of the most sport-loving nation. Horse-racing, cricket, rugby, tennis and football (or soccer) are most well-liked (famous, favourite) sports by British. In spite of the fact that many people find soccer as England's national sport owing to his popularity, the national sport is cricket.

People

The population of the UK is more than 60 million, taking into account emigration and immigration. About 7 million live in London. To live in Britain means that you could enjoy a very good standard of living with life expectancy for men being nearly 76 years and 81 years for women. Unemployment is low (4.8%). On the negative side, 17% of the population is living below the poverty line.

Struggle – boj;

turning point – mezník;

unit – jednotka, oddíl;



in the spirit of – v duchu něčeho;

remarkable – zajímavý

LONDON

London is the capital of the United Kingdom. It is the ninth largest city in the world, its population is above 10 milion (with suburbs). London is situated in South-East England on the River Thames and we can divide it to two parts – the oldest part The City and junger Westminster. ??

London is typical for its double-deckers, which you can see everywhere, but there are more types of transport, Underground, train or taxies. There are also three airports in London. The most important are Heathrow and Gatwick.

Yes As I said earlier, it was founded as a Roman settlement. The Great Fire destroyed almost all the city in 1666.

In spite of there are many places of interest and I would like to desrcibe at least some of them.

Let's start with The Houses of Parlament, which were built in Gothic style between 1840-52 after the old building had burnt down. The only part which resisted the fire was Westminster Hall. There is also a famous clock-tower with Big Ben with its characteristic bell-ringing. The HsP are the seat of the British Parliament.

One of the most well-known palaces in England is Buckingham Palace, has been used as a royal residence since 1837, when queen Victoria ascended the throne. Near the Buckingham palace is the St. James' Park – the oldest park in London. The Hyde Park is another famous park in London.

The National Gallery, located on Trafalgar Square, has one of the greatest collection in the world, showcasing painting from Early Renaissance to the Post-impressionists.



The other place, which I want to mention, is Westminster Abbey. It was founded in 11th century by Edward the Confessor as a Benedictine abbey. Britain's Kings and Queens since William the Confessor – with exception of Edward V and Edward VIII have been crowned there.

St. Paul's Cathedral has dominated the City of London for several centuries. This great Renaissance dome with the second largest dome is the work of the famous architect Christopher Wren and it was built in the 17th century after the Great Fire.

The Tower of London is the oldest building on London, dating back to the Norman Conquest. It has rich history and various purpose, it was used as a fortress, a prison, a treasury or a royal residence.

Tower Bridge has been a characteristic landmark of London since end of the 19th century. It is the gateway to London from the sea. The drawbridge was designed to harmonize with the Tower of London in Victorian Gothic. It can open in the middle and let large ships go through. It can let pass

Greenwich Observatory is important for geography, where the Zero meridian passes.

Tower of London is known as a prison. There was imprisoned Mary Queen of Scots. She was executed there too.

In London there are a lot of shops. The Queen's department store is Harrods. London is remarkable (appealing) city, where is connected old Victorian architecture with modern and progressive style. And I would like to visit it.

