

## BRITISH & US CULTURE – LECTURE 1

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### The UK facts:

1\_the United Kingdom Is a country of countries it is also called the UK It Is a country of Islands cause It consists of a group of islands It Is an archipelago.It consists of the following countries:England, Scotland,Wales and Northern Ireland.

2\_ Republic of the Ireland Is also a British Island but is not a part of United Kingdom .

3\_the official name is the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland .

4\_the name Britain Is sometimes used to refer to the UK as Houle.

5\_The head of the government is the prime minister Boris Johnson the head of the state is Queen Elizabeth II.

6\_the currency of the UK Is pound sterling.

7\_Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland were separated in 1920 and Northern Ireland was formed in 1921.

8\_the current population of UK is 68334304 according to the last data provided by World Meter website.

9\_Uk ranks 21 in the list of countries by population.

10\_England Is the largest country by population in the UK (54million).

11\_The median age is 40.5.

12\_the weather in UK Is most often associated with rain which can come at any time of the year. It is not related to a specific season. The weather in the UK is unpredictable. In one morning or afternoon one can enjoy sunrise with the snowball fight and at the same time experience some wines with drizzling rain. In summer the average temperature ranges from 9 to 20 degrees celsius and it can go beyond to reach 30 degrees celsius If there is a heat wave. In winter it is between 2 and 7 degrees celsius and it can go to just be low 0 degrees celsius. That's why most houses, busses, trains and cars have good heating system.

13\_The UK is famous for its being a land of culture. It is known for its art spaces like London's National Gallery and modern where people can enjoy sell-out shows and paintings dating back to the 13th Century. The UK has a rich literary heritage which dates back to over a 1000 years it is known for its theatrical performances which feature the works of such great playwrights and dramatists as William Shakespeare (1564-1616). Other names of famous British authors poets and dramatists are : Geoffrey Chaucer (1344-1400), Jane Austen (1775-1817), George Orwell (1903-1964) and Kazuo Ishiguro. The UK is also known for music. Some of the world's largest venues of music are in the UK .

14\_Some of the major names of rivers in the UK, Thame river, Severn river and Spey river .

15\_Some major mountains in the UK are Ben Nevis mountains.

## **Introduction**

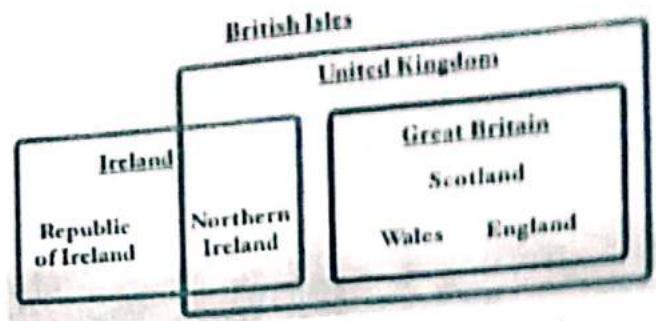
Britain has a rich heritage that dates back to the prehistoric stages of human history. It has been an arena where great historical events related to politics, religion, economy, society and science have happened. Britain's mineral wealth and geographical location have always magnetized many people from different socio-ethnic groups throughout its history. It has always been a mixed, multi-racial society. In the distant past, Romans, Celts, Saxons, Vikings and Normans settled in it, making of it a socio-cultural, inter-religious and inter-racial melting pot.

This part of module 16 seeks to tap into the British history, society and culture as an important way to develop knowledge of the English language and raise awareness about its importance in linking the past with the present and future. This language has never existed in a vacuum. It has evolved as a result of a gamut of historical and socio-political events. It has been a carrier of British culture and heritage. Being acquainted with British history and culture is an important leap forward towards helping students to develop their linguistic and communicative competence.

## **The UK: General Information**

### **Geography**

- The United Kingdom is an island country located in the Northwest of Europe. It consists of a group of islands known as the British Isles which include England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. They all form an archipelago. Republic of Ireland is also a British Isle, but it is not part of the UK. Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland were separated in 1920. Northern Ireland was formed in 1921. The following diagram and map illustrate the main countries which constitute the UK.



- The UK is geographically recognized as a country of countries. Each country consists of a number of islands. Scotland, for example, is a country with 790 islands.
- Its official name is the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland;
- The name “Britain” is sometimes used to refer to the UK as a whole;
- Countries, capitals and land areas:

Country	Capital	Land area (km2)
The UK	London	About 241.930
England	London	About 130.279
Scotland	Edinburgh (the largest country is Glasgow)	About 80.240 km2
Wales	Cardiff	About 20.779 km2
Northern Ireland	Belfast	About 14.130
Republic of Ireland	Dublin	About 70.273

## ➤ Some rivers, mountains and weather

Major rivers	Major mountains	Weather
Thames/ /	Ben Nevis/	➤ Most often associated with the rain which can come at any time of the year. It is not related to a specific season.
Tyne/ Tay/	Mourne	
Spey/	Mountains/	
Clyde/	Scafell Pike	➤ The weather is unpredictable. In one morning or afternoon, one can enjoy amazing sunshine with a snowball fight and experience some winds and drizzling rain;
Severn/		➤ In Summer, the average temperature ranges from 9 to 18 degrees Celsius and it can go beyond to reach 30 degrees Celsius if there is a heat wave;
Wye		➤ In Winter, it is between 2 and 7 and it can sometimes drop to just below 0 degrees Celsius. Most houses, buses, trains and cars have good heating systems;

## Demography

- Based on Worldometer elaboration of the latest United Nations data on Tuesday, October 5, 2021, the current population of the United Kingdom is about 68,334,304. It ranks 21 in the list of countries by population.
- England is the largest country by population in UK (close to 54 million, about 84% of the UK population).
- The median age in the UK is 40.5.

## **Language**

- English is the de facto national language in the UK. It is the main language used by the overwhelming majority of the British.
- There are other languages and dialects also used in some parts of the UK such as Scots in Scotland, Ulster Scots in Northern Ireland, Irish in Northern Ireland and some English cities, Welsh in Wales, Scottish Gaelic in Scotland and Cornish in Cornwall.
- English, Scots and Ulster Scots are Germanic languages while Irish, Welsh, Scottish Gaelic and Cornish are Celtic ones.

## **Culture**

- The UK is famous for its being a land of culture. It is known for its art spaces like London's Tate Modern and the National Gallery where people can enjoy sell-out shows and paintings dating back to the 13th century. Glasgow's Kelvingrove Art Gallery showcases a number of artistic shows which, for example, give an idea about life in Glasgow and sketchings from Italy.
- The UK has a rich literary heritage which dates back to over a thousand years. It is also famous for theatrical performances which feature the works of such great playwrights and dramatists as Shakespeare (1564-1616). Famous names of British authors: Geoffrey Chaucer (1340-1400), William Wordsworth (1770-1850), Jane Austen (1775-1817), Charlotte Brontë (1816-1855), George Eliot (1819-1880), George Orwell (1903-1950), Ian Fleming (1908-1964) and J K Rowling (1965-present).
- Some of the world's largest music venues are in the UK, such as the O2 Arena in London and the world-famous Glastonbury festival. Cinema movies

## **Religion**

- The UK is most often described as a secular state, which means that it is neutral in matters of religion. It supports neither religion nor irreligion (non-religion). It treats all citizens equally regardless of religion. There is no

official religion in the UK. Citizens have freedom to do their religious practices. The dominant religion is Christianity. The Church of England is a Christian Church.

- According to recent statistics conducted at the beginning of this new millennium, there is a decline in church memberships. For example, the Church Statistics covering the period 2005-2015 shows that UK Church membership has dropped from 10.6 million in 1930 to 5.5 Million in 2010 (from about 30% to 11.2%). In 2013, it dropped to 5.4 million (10.3%). If current trends continue, membership will fall to 8.4% of the population by 2025.
- There are different religious affiliations in the UK such as Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism and Judaism. Christians are the largest religious group and Muslims are the second. The number of irreligious (non-religious or secular or atheist people) is growing.

### **Education**

- In the UK, the educational system consists of pre-primary education (early years), primary education, secondary education, further education and higher education. Schools are either government schools where students study for free or independent ones where parents are charged fees. The compulsory school age ranges between 5 (4 in Northern Ireland) and 16.
- At their parents' choice, kids in the UK may attend pre-primary schools (pre-compulsory education) until the age of five. These schools are also called nurseries. There are also childcare buildings for the babies and young children of working parents. Childcare and nursery schools work toward helping kids to develop their emotional, social and cognitive skills and preparing them for primary education.
- In primary government schools, education is free. They are also called elementary schools. The age of kids who attend these schools ranges from 5

(4 in Northern Ireland) to 11. Once they finish, they go to secondary education.

- In the UK, secondary education starts at the age of 11 and finishes at either 16 or 18 depending on whether the secondary school offers post-16 education.
- Students aged more than 16 can take further education courses at a college or a secondary school which offers post-16 education. Further education is also called post-compulsory or pre-university education.
- Higher education is the level which follows secondary education. Once the secondary education is over, students must sit for a standard exam to decide if they are eligible or not for the higher education level. The UK is reputed for some famous universities such as the Oxford University, Cambridge University, Edinburgh University, Bristol University, Warwick University and Manchester University.
- In the UK, there is a difference between a college and a university. The first is a further education institution which prepares students to get a degree. The second is a licensed higher education institution where students get a degree.

### **Form of Government**

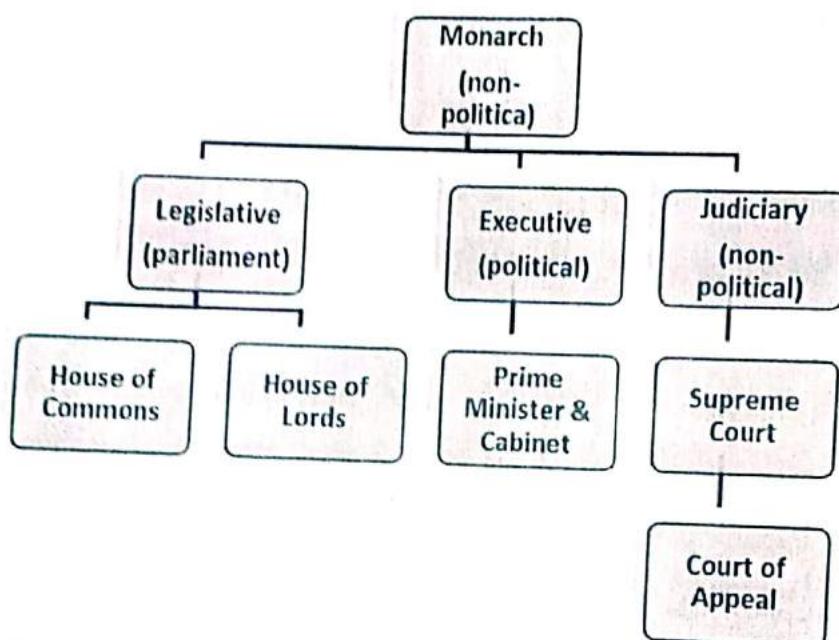
- The UK is a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary system. The constitution limits the power of the monarch. The Queen is the Head of State, but she is not the only source of power. There is a government led by a Prime Minister. There is also an elected parliament whose role is to make and pass legislation.
- Bogdanor (1995, p. 1) defines “a monarchy” as “a state ruled by a single absolute hereditary ruler.” This absolute monarch holds all power and exercises absolute control over all people and over every aspect of their lives. “A constitutional monarchy, however, is a state headed by a sovereign who

rules according to the constitution" (1). The sovereign reigns but does not rule.

- The Queen plays an important role in the life of the British nation, but she does not interfere in political matters. She no longer has a political role. She does not only represent national identity, security, stability, pride and unity but also guarantees continuity. She encourages success, supports excellence and boosts experiences of voluntary work.
- The UK parliament has two main Houses: House of Lords and House of Commons. They are charged with the task of checking and challenging the work of Government, making and shaping effective laws which can help organize and facilitate the lives of citizens and debating key issues in the country. There are 650 Members in the House of Commons. These Members consider and propose new laws. They have the right and power to scrutinize and question the work of the Government. They can ask ministers questions about current issues either in the Commons Chamber or in Committees.
- The House of Lords plays a vital role in examining bills, questioning the work of the government and investigating public policy. It is called the upper house of the UK parliament. The members are those who have done something important to the nation. Membership is by appointment, heredity or official function. Both Houses meet in the Palace of Westminster.
- The UK political system is most often described as a two-party system. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, two political parties have dominated the political scene: the Conservative Party and the Labor Party.
- Until the First World War, all European countries were monarchies except France, Portugal and Switzerland (1). Today, the majority of them are republics. The European monarchies are: Britain, the three Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Norway and Sweden), the Low Countries (Belgium,

Luxembourg and the Netherlands) and Spain where monarchy was restored in 1975 after the death of General Franco) (1).

- In the vast majority of constitutional monarchies, the constitution is coded and written, but in other countries like Britain and New Zealand, it “remains ‘unwritten’ and uncodified” (Bogdanor, p. 1).
- The following diagram sums up the basic structure of UK Central Form of Government:



### **Key Events in British History: A Brief Chronology**

Oakland (2002: xiv, xv, xvi, xvii and xviii) documents the chronological flow of key events in British history in this way:

#### **Early history**

- Prehistory      British-Irish islands once part of European land mass/ warmer conditions alternated with Ice Ages
- 500,000 BC      earliest human bones found in southern England
- 250,000 BC      nomadic Old Stone Age (Palaeolithic) peoples
- 50,000 BC      warmer climate encouraged the arrival of distant ancestors of the modern populations
- 10,000 BC      end of Ice Ages. Population consisted of hunter-gatherers and

fishers

- 5000 BC contemporary islands gradually separated from continental Europe
- 3000 BC New Stone Age (Neolithic) peoples populated the western parts of the islands. Farming was introduced.
- 2400 BC Beaker Folk (Bronze Age) settled in southeast and eastern England
- ca 600 BC settlement of the Celts (Iron Age) began
- 55–54 BC Julius Caesar's exploratory expeditions
- AD 43 Roman conquest of England, Wales and (temporarily) lowland Scotland by Claudius/ Christian influences
- 200–400 the Scots from Ireland colonized western Scotland
- 122–38 Hadrian's Wall built between Scotland and England
- 409 Roman army withdrew from Britain
- 410 Germanic (Anglo-Saxon) invasions began; Anglo-Saxon kingdoms created from the 450s in England. Mainly Celtic peoples in Wales, Ireland, parts of Scotland and Cornwall
- 430 Existing Christianity in Ireland later spread by St Patrick and others in Ireland and Scotland
- 597 St Augustine converted Anglo-Saxons to Christianity
- 664 Synod of Whitby chose Roman Catholic church model
- 789–95 Scandinavian (Viking) raids began
- 820 the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms dominated by Wessex
- 832–60 union of the Celts (Scots and Picts) in Scotland to form most of the eventual kingdom of Scotland
- 878 Vikings defeated in England by King Alfred of Wessex
- 954 the Kingdom of England formed
- 1014 Vikings defeated in Ireland
- **The early Middle Ages**
- 1066 William the Conqueror defeated King Harold at Hastings and

ascended the English throne. Feudalism was introduced

- 1086 Domesday Book (tax records) compiled in England
- 1169 Henry II invaded the east coast of Ireland
- 1215 King John signed Magna Carta, which protected English feudal (aristocratic) rights against royal abuse
- c. 1220 first Oxford and Cambridge colleges created
- 1258 and 1264 first English parliamentary structures
- 1275 the Model Parliament (first regular English Parliament)
- 1282 much of Wales controlled by England under Edward I
- 1296 the Scots defeated by Edward I
- 1297 first Irish Parliament
- 1314 battle of Bannockburn regained Scottish independence
- 1326 first Scottish Parliament
- **The late Middle Ages**
- 1337 Hundred Years War between England and France began
- 1348–49 Black Death (bubonic plague) destroyed a third of the islands' population
- 1362 English replaced French as the official language
- 1381 Peasants' Revolt in England
- ca 1387– ca 1394 Geoffrey Chaucer wrote The Canterbury Tales
- 1400–10 Failed Welsh revolt by Owain Glyndwr against English
- 1407 the House of Commons became responsible for taxation
- 1411 the first university in Scotland founded (St Andrews)
- 1415 the Battle of Agincourt; England defeated France
- 1455–87 Wars of the Roses between Yorkists and Lancastrians
- 1477 first book printed in England, by William Caxton
- **Towards the nation state (Britain)**
- 1509 accession of Henry VIII

- 1534–40 English Reformation; Henry VIII broke with Papacy and became Head of the English Church (Roman Catholic)
- 1536–42 Acts of Union integrated England and Wales
- 1547–53 Protestantism became official religion in England under Edward VI
- 1553–58 Catholic reaction under Mary I
- 1558–1603 Elizabeth I. Protestant ascendancy
- 1558 Calais, England's last possession in France, lost
- 1560 creation of Protestant Church of Scotland by John Knox
- 1584 first English colony (Virginia) in North America
- 1587 Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots, executed in London
- 1588 defeat of Spanish Armada
- ca 1590– ca 1613 plays of William Shakespeare written
- 1600 East India (trading) Company founded
- 1603 union of the two crowns under James VI of Scotland (James I of England)
- 1607 Plantation of Ulster with Scottish and English settlers
- 1611 the Authorized (King James) Version of the Bible issued
- 1642–48 Civil Wars between King and Parliament
- 1649 execution of Charles I, monarchy abolished
- 1653–58 Oliver Cromwell ruled as Lord Protector
- 1660 monarchy restored under Charles II
- 1665 the Great Plague in England
- 1666 the Great Fire of London
- 1679 Habeus Corpus Act passed. Party political system grew
- 1688 The Glorious Revolution: accession of William III and Mary II to the throne
- 1689 the Declaration of Rights
- 1690 Irish defeated by William III at the Battle of the Boyne

➤ **The eighteenth century**

- 1707 Acts of Union joined England/Wales and Scotland (Great Britain)
- 1715 Scottish Jacobite rebellions crushed
- 1721 Walpole became Britain's first prime minister
- 1739 War with Spain
- 1742 War with France
- 1745 Failed Scottish rebellion under Bonnie Prince Charlie
- 1760s–1830s Industrial Revolutions
- 1761 opening of the Bridgewater Canal began the Canal Age
- 1769 the steam engine and the spinning machine invented
- 1775–83 American War for Independence; loss of 13 Colonies
- 1793–1815 Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars

➤ **The nineteenth century**

- 1801 Act of Union joined Great Britain and Ireland (United Kingdom)
- 1805 Battle of Trafalgar. Nelson defeated the French navy
- 1807 abolition of the slave trade in the British Empire
- 1815 Napoleon defeated by Wellington at Waterloo
- 1825 opening of the Stockton and Darlington Railway, the world's first passenger railway
- 1829 Catholic emancipation (freedom of religious worship)
- 1832 First Reform Act extended the male franchise (vote)
- 1838 the People's Charter and the beginning of trade unions
- 1839 The Durham Report on dominion status for some colonies
- 1845 disastrous harvest failure in Ireland
- 1851 first trade unions appeared
- 1853–56 The Crimean War
- 1868 Trades Union Congress (TUC) established
- 1870 elementary state school education introduced

- 1871 legal recognition of trade unions
- 1899 The Boer War (South Africa)
- **The twentieth century**
- 1901 death of Queen Victoria (born 1837)
- 1911 political power of the House of Lords restricted
- 1914–18 First World War
- 1916 Easter Rising against Britain in Dublin
- 1918 all men over twenty-one receive the vote
- 1921–22 Irish Free State established; Northern Ireland remained part of the United Kingdom
- 1924 the first Labour government
- 1926 the General Strike
- 1928 votes for all women over twenty-one
- 1931 the Commonwealth officially formed
- 1939–45 Second World War (W. Churchill, Prime Minister 1940)
- 1944 the Butler Education Act: compulsory secondary school education
- 1945 United Nations formed
- 1947 Independence for India and Pakistan
- 1948 National Health Service created
- 1949 Irish Free State became Republic of Eire. NATO created
- 1952 accession of Elizabeth II
- 1956 the Suez Canal Crisis
- 1965 death penalty abolished
- 1965–69 oil and gas discoveries in the North Sea
- 1968 protest and violence erupted in Northern Ireland
- 1972 direct rule from Westminster in Northern Ireland
- 1973 Britain entered European Economic Community (now EU)
- 1975 referendum on Britain's continued membership of EEC

- 1979 Margaret Thatcher: Britain's first woman Prime Minister
- 1982 the Falklands War with Argentina
- 1994 the Channel Tunnel between France and Britain opened
- 1997 referendums on devolution for Scotland and Wales
- 1999–2000 devolution structures in Scotland (a Parliament) and Wales and Northern Ireland

### Dating System in the UK

- The following table sums up the main dating abbreviations that a reader of British history may come across:

Abbreviation	Meaning
A.D.	It's Latin for "in the year of the Lord." It refers to the birth of Jesus Christ.
C.E.	Christian Era or Common Era
B.C.	It's Latin for "before Christ" or "before the birth of Christ."
B.C.E.	Before the Christian Era or Before the Common Era
C. or C.A.	It's Latin for "around" or "approximately."
A.U.C.	It's the Latin phrase for "from the founding f the city" of Rome.

- Throughout its history, the UK has adopted three main calendars: the Roman calendar, Julian calendar and Gregorian calendar. The following table sums up the main points related to each calendar:

Roman calendar	Julian calendar	Gregorian calendar
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is a lunar calendar as it is based on the monthly cycles of the Moon's phases;</li> <li>• It was developed in</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It was a reform of the Roman calendar;</li> <li>• It is a solar calendar;</li> <li>• It was named in memory of Julius</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is also a solar calendar which has come as an alternative to the Julian calendar.</li> <li>it is named after</li> </ul>

Rome before the Christian era;	Caesar;	Gregory XIII who wanted to change the Julian calendar which ran a few minutes long each day. It is currently used in most parts of the world;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It originally consisted of 10 months and of a year of 304 days. Then, two months were added by Julius Caesar in the year 46 B.C.;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It was made official in c. 46 B.C.;</li> <li>It consists of 12 months and of 28-31 days each and of an average year of 365.25 days;</li> <li>It is used mainly by the Orthodox Christians;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Great Britain changed to the Gregorian calendar in c. 1752;</li> <li>It consists of 12 months and of an average year of 365.2425 days;</li> <li>It is used by the Catholic Church to determine their holidays;</li> </ul>

## Early Settlement of the British-Irish Isles

The British-Irish Isles have been a preferable destination for people from different spots in the world throughout history. They have come to these Isles as invaders or settlers or immigrants. Contemporary British society is known for its diverse ethnic descent patterns which are actually the result of having people with mixed roots. Taking these diverse ethnicities into account can help better understand the people in the Britain of today. They are individuals with multi-ethnic family backgrounds because of the intermarriage between

not only the English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish, but also immigrants. This makes of the contemporary British society a multi-national place.

Britain's prehistory is worth considering. It is the period humans know the least about because it was characterized by the absence of written records. Oakland (2002, 38) refers to the difficulty to draw a clear picture of the early settlements in British history: "There is no accurate picture of what the early settlement of the British-Irish Isles was actually like, and there were long periods when the islands were uninhabited." The identity of the very first people to come to Britain is still a mystery. Nothing is dead certain about this period. Recent archeological finds and the use of such developed scientific ways of analysis as Isotopic and DNA to study more the animal and human remains have overturned some of the ideas already held about this period. Oakland (2002, 38) states that "The earliest human bones found (1994) in Britain are 500,000 years old." Different species visited pre-historic Britain according to archeological research (e.g., *Homo heidelbergensis*, Neanderthals, Hominids or Hominoids).

## **Britain's Prehistory**

The artefacts, henges, hillforts and burial sites discovered by archeologists give an important glimpse about the people of prehistoric Britain. To better cast light on the different spans of time related to prehistory, these archaeologists divide it into geological ages: the Ice Age, the Stone Age, the Bronze Age and the Iron Age. Each Age is subdivided into other ages. Really important to note here is that such materials of nature as ice, stone, bronze and iron gave a meaning to the prehistoric British people. They constituted integral parts of their identity. They got their primacy at a critical juncture in the life of prehistoric British people when burning questions about how to survive popped up. The value of these natural objects has been sustained and reworked from one generation to another.

Talking about these geological ages and how British people and society transformed through time and space show that prehistoric societies in the past are like contemporary ones in that they were not static entities. Rather, they were dynamic. They were in constant change as they moved from Age to another and from one phase of development to another. They were creative in the sense that they were able to use the means at their hands to survive, develop and make their life conditions better.

### **Britain in the Ice Age**

- This age was generally known for the advances of glaciers (i.e. large bodies of ice covering mountains, valleys or surface lands) and the alternation between cold and warm temperatures. The time marked by cold temperature and glaciers is called a glacial (i.e., glacial period). When there is an interval warmer time between two glaciers, it is known as an inter-glacial (i.e., inter-glacial period). Ice Age began about 2.6 million years ago and still continues today. About 11,500 years ago, glaciers melted rapidly causing this weather oscillation from cold to warm conditions, bringing into existence what is known today as the Holocene interglacial phase.
- During the glacial period, the UK was covered with sheets of ice. The country swung back and forth between cold and warm weather conditions. This means that it knew colder and warmer episodes. All of Scotland, for instance, was covered with ice sheets at times of intense glacial movements. The first Britons struggled to survive in a dramatically changing climate environment. They had to adapt to these unstable and difficult living conditions. These extreme climatic changes drove people out of the land. They could not bear this harsh and hard icy environment.
- During the Ice Age, hunting and fishing would have been the main source of food for the early inhabitants of Britain due to the very cold weather which could not have helped the growth of fruits and other plants.

## **Britain in the Stone Age**

- The arrival of the first people in Britain can possibly date back to the Paleolithic Era or the Old Stone Age (about 2.5 million years ago) when they used stone to make tools that could help them lead an easy life. They were nomads who traveled from mainland Europe to Britain by land and sea. They found stones with cutting edges in nature and used them for hunting. They got fire to cook their food just by rubbing stones together. They ate plants and meat. They may have also eaten flesh of animals they may have slaughtered or they may have found dead and left by some predators.
- During the Mesolithic period - the Middle Stone Age (about 15000 years ago), they may have moved to the act of sharpening stones to do well in hunting. They may have consumed the meat of the animals they may have hunted, and the fruits and nuts they may have gathered. They may also have eaten fish and berries.
- In the Neolithic period- New Stone Age (about 11000 years ago), they started learning about agriculture. This era marked the beginning of cultivating the land with the aid of herded animals and of producing grains, fruits and vegetables from seeds. Such materials as stones, wood and antlers were used to prepare their food.

## **Britain in the Bronze Age**

- This period lasted for about 1700 years (from about 2500 BC to 800 BC). It was preceded by the Stone Age and followed by the Iron Age. During this age, Britain got involved in the crafting of bronze. Such mines as “copper and bronze [...] were introduced to Britain from an early age, and local production probably developed quite rapidly” (Edmonds, 2003: 179). The act of making and safekeeping artefacts persisted in the Early Bronze Age: “When we look at the evidence from Neolithic and Early Bronze Age, what

is astounding is the sheer persistence of particular traditions of making, using and depositing artefacts” (12).

- “During the Bronze Age there emerged a truly international network of metal trade and exchange, making all regions dependent upon each other” (Kristiansen & Larsson, 2005: 4 & 5). This era was “characterized by a widespread flow of foreign people and goods (so-called imports or imitations) throughout Europe” (12). It was a period of travels, transmissions and transformations, known for interesting economic activities. Hoards of dirks, rapiers, axe heads, daggers and lances dating back to this prehistoric period have been discovered in Britain (214 & 215).
- We cannot talk about the Early Bronze Age without mentioning what is historically known as the Beaker Folk “who descended the Rhine [and] settled in Great Britain” (Childe, 1980: 153). They were given the name of Bell Beaker Folk because they were able to make distinctive bell-shaped pottery drinking beakers. They are thought to be the first to bring Bronze to Britain. They invaded the country and introduced their own habits there. For example, they introduced the “habit of individual burial under a round barrow in contrast to the collective interments under a long barrow” in “family vaults” (153 & 154). They contributed to the development of the Bronze industry. They “probably introduced the knowledge of metallurgy or the organizing ability needed to make that knowledge effective” (154).
- In later Bronze Age, textile production was also under way. Women, for instance, could wear long woolen skirts and short tunics, and men could wear knee-length skirts as well as tunics and cloaks. This period was also marked with the development and use of pottery-making skills and techniques.

### **Britain in the Iron Age**

- The Stone Age began about 12000 years ago in Britain and lasted until the coming of the Romans in c. 43 AD.

- During this period, the knowledge of iron-making and iron-working techniques were introduced to Britain by Europeans who had already started the first blast furnaces (i.e., furnaces that produce liquid metals). This period was also marked with the burgeoning metallurgy. These Europeans were later known as the Celts. The defense technique used by the Britons to protect themselves from the attacks of enemies was mainly building forts and besieging them with walls and long trenches dug into the ground known as ditches.
- During this era, people consumed such crops as wheat, barley, peas and flax seeds. They also ate fish, meat, berries, fruits, honey, cereals, vegetables and milk products. Their clothes were made of wood and dyes with nature vegetable dyes.
- Farmers invented an iron plough to turn over their land. This plough was named "an ard." It was an alternative for the wooden or bronze one. Another invention was the rotary iron-quern which was used to grind grains for flour.

### **The Celts (c. 600 BC- 43 AD)**

- The Celts settled in Britain during the Iron Age from c. 600 BC to c. 43 AD. They were a developed society because they learned how to make weapons from iron. They lived in areas such as Cornwall and Wales. They were not called the Celts until the 1700's. They were divided into tribes ruled by monarchs. Most of them worked mainly as farmers and lived in houses which were round and not square.
- There were three main branches of the Celts: Brythonic (also called Britons), Gaelic and Gaulic. The Celts built groups of houses on hills known as hill forts which were used as defensive positions, meeting places, herd spaces and grain stores. They were courageous people, but their courage was not enough to face the invading power of the Romans.

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مشهد العروبة - تونس  
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- The Celts were tied by similar language, religion, and cultural expression. They were warriors who were excellent at both battling and plundering. They are said to have been less organized. They were fragmented, primitive and barbaric.
- The coming of iron had amazing repercussions on Celtic Britain. Iron was cheap and available in comparison to bronze. Thanks to the use of iron, trade flourished and local independence was fostered.
- The Celts were famous for two main activities: fighting in wars or farming. They were famous for being excellent farmers. They invented the iron plough known as an “ard” which made it possible for the first time to cultivate the rich valley and soil.
- Celtic life was based on a clan-oriented mode of thinking and behaving. A Clan as an extended family and each Clan had its own social structure, customs, and even Gods. In matters of religion, the Celts were Pagans who believed in Statues and worshipped them. They also believed in superstition and in the power of demons, curses, and the unknown.

### **The Romans (43 AD- 410)**

- The first attempt to invade Britain was in 55 BC by a famous Roman General named Julius Caesar who resolved to conquer Britain for different reasons. First, he wanted to take vengeance against the British people who helped the Gauls in France in their fight against the Romans. France was named Gaul at that time. He also thought this invasion could make him look good back in Rome. He wanted to burnish his reputation in Rome. None from Rome had travelled to Britain before. It was a strange place for the Romans. Another reason was that he had heard that there was a great treasure in Britain and he wanted to find it for himself. The mineral wealth of Britain was boundless. In addition, the Britain’s geographical location and climate were appealing to invaders. Its soil was suitable for better agricultural activities.

- Julius Caesar tried to invade Britain twice, in 54 BC and 55 BC, and his army did defeat the tribes that were waiting for him. Unfortunately, on both occasions, his boats were destroyed by storms and he went home. This means that the first attempts to conquer Britain failed due to bad weather conditions and the tough resistance of some tribes. The Romans did not return to Britain for almost a century (c. 90 years).
- The second invasion took place in c. 43 AD and was led by Emperor Claudius who was determined to invade Britain again. He sent his troops and gradually conquered most of the country. This invasion was gradual because the troops were afraid of the attacks of the tribes who lived there. In order to frighten people, he brought elephants over to Britain. These elephants were scary because they were unusual, unknown creatures for the Britons at that time.
- The Roman army was well-organized, well-disciplined and well-trained. The generals and troops were harsh, violent, cruel and strong fighters. They fought to have political superiority in Britain, dominate every part of it and control its mineral wealth.
- Some Celts reacted to the Roman invasion by having decided to make peace with the Romans in return for keeping their kingdoms and lands. These people were named client kings. The agreement was founded on the idea that once these Celts died, the Romans could take over their lands and kingdoms.
- After the conquest of most of Britain, there was some enforced peace among people. The country became peaceful.
- While the Romans were in Britain, they did so many great things. For instance, they introduced the Britons to the culture of brick and stone building. They constructed towns and cities, villas, roads and defense forts. Britain became a flourishing country in the Roman Empire. It became an important exporter of such products as corn, lead and tin.

- In c. 367 AD, Britain was attacked by the Picts, the Scots and the Saxons. This combined attack pushed the Britons to start doubting the shaky power of the Romans. People's trust in the Roman's ability to defend Britain withered. Thus, the Roman army was forced to withdraw from Britain in 410 AD.

## The Anglo-Saxons and Vikings (410- 1066)

### The Dark Ages

- This period is said to have lasted from approximately the fifth to the fifteenth centuries. It falls between the fall of the Roman Empire and the Renaissance Era. It coincided with the coming of the Saxons and Vikings to Britain.
- It has been called the Dark Ages because it witnessed little scientific and cultural progress. Little was written about the Saxon invasion of Britain. There was a gap in this historical period. There were some possible violent genocides and bloody wars against the ingenious people in Britain, but little was written about them.
- English literature makes a reference to this gap in British history and the necessity to fill it in with conjectures to draw attention to what exactly happened in this period and encourage historians, archeologists and researchers to investigate more into the events of this era. Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Buried Giant* (2015) is a novel which fictionally refers to the Dark Ages through the use of conjectural history.

## The Anglo-Saxons (410- 1066)

- The Anglo-Saxon presence in Britain lasted for about six centuries after the breaking up of Roman Britannia into several Kingdoms. The British Islands were left defenseless. The Romans could no longer defend Britain.
- The Saxons were very good at farming and cultivating lands; that's why they showed no interest in the villas and palaces that the Romans had built. The fresh water to be used in cultivation, good soil and good climate encouraged

them to invade Britain. Warmer weather meant productive agricultural activities. It meant better crops.

- The Anglo-Saxons did not invade Britain in the same way as Romans had done. They did not have a big army as the Romans had. They just came like very simple warriors in the form of raids. They first came with the idea of plundering and then leaving. They wanted to take what they needed and then leave), but later on they decided to settle in Britain. The Angles and Saxons were Germanic-speaking peoples who came to Britain in small invading parties. The invasion was slow and piecemeal. Another fact about the Saxons was that some of them worked as mercenaries (i.e., hired soldiers) who had fought in the Roman army in Britain. This means that Britain was not a strange land to the Anglo-Saxons.
- At the beginning of the invasion, the Anglo-Saxons met little resistance led by the legendary king named King Arthur. There have been doubts about the real presence of this ruler.
- In matters of religion, the Anglo-Saxons were basically Christian. They brought the German language with them.
- During the period stretching from c. 650 to c. 800 AD, Britain was divided into seven kingdoms: Wessex, Essex, Sussex, Northumbria, Kent, Mercia and East Anglia. Each kingdom is ruled by a different king. By c. 850 AD, these kingdoms were grouped into three big kingdoms: Northumbria, Mercia and Wessex.

### **The Vikings (793- 1066 AD)**

- The Vikings were invaders who came from homelands in Scandinavia and settled in Britain, using their longboat. They were called the “Danes” who came namely from the present day Norway, Sweden and Denmark. Though they were welcomed in Britain, they did such bad things as stealing from the Church. They were very violent with the local people and burnt their

buildings to the ground. They used long swords and axes. In 793 AD, a small band of Vikings attacked a monastery named Lindisfarne and killed the monks who were there.

- The Vikings are thought to have been the most ferocious, violent and barbarian people who attacked Britain. When they got into a place, they completely ruined it. With the Anglo-Saxon Invasion, Britain was Christianized, but with the Viking invasion, the old Celtic Christianity and all forms of religion were wiped out. Churches and Monasteries were attacked.
- But this does not mean that all the Vikings were bad people. Some of them came to Britain peacefully to settle and not to fight.
- After the attack on the Lindisfarne monastery, a big military force of the Vikings wanted to invade the whole country. The Anglo-Saxons called this force the Great Heathen Army. The Vikings are thought to have been irreligious, uncultured and uncivilized. They were Heathens and not Christians.
- In 860 AD, an army of the Vikings started to battle against the Anglo-Saxons. By 874 AD, this army took control of all the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms except Wessex which was ruled by King Alfred the Great who defeated the Viking army, but he did not manage to drive the Vikings out of Britain. He was called the savior, but his victories did not last long after his death. The fight between the Vikings and King Alfred ended with a peace agreement.
- In c. 1066 AD, the Battle of Hastings took place. It ended with the defeat of Harold II of England and the victory of William, Duke of Normandy. This victory marked the coming of the Normans as new rulers of England.
- They were similar to the Anglo-Saxons in that they both came from the same region (North-West Scandinavia). They were both attracted by the wealth of Britain in terms of land and food. They also came in the form of raids.

### **The Normans (1066- 1154)**

- The Norman Invasion of Britain was led by William, duke of Normandy after his victory at the Battle of Hastings in 1066 against King Harold. They both claimed the right to the British throne.
- Thus, both Harold Gonwinson (Britain) and William of Normandy (France) were waiting for Edward the Confessor's death to take his place on the British throne. The problems between the two parties developed into the Hastings Battle. Harold had to do two things at the same time. He had to ward off a final Viking attack in the north, and, meanwhile he had to hurry back to the south to fight William of Normandy. Harold was defeated because his army was tired due to the last Viking attack. His position as a monarch was shaky and William took advantage of it. Harold passed away in the battlefield leaving William the Conqueror to rule Britain.
- William the Conqueror is said to have purchased both divine and earthly support. He built his throne on the help of people of religion. He sent a mission to Rome to get papal support for the invasion of Britain. He considered this invasion an expression of God's will and a moral reaction to an errant king.
- William the Conqueror introduced the feudal system in which a few ruled and owned the rest of the country. The main power was in the hands of the king. He formed the Domesday Book which recorded the wealth and properties of estate and land owners in two volumes. He also introduced the French language which became the main means of communication for the ruling class.
- William the Conqueror ruled England from 1066 until his death in 1087. His third son, William II, took over from 1087 till 1100. Henry I, the fourth son, reigned from 1100 to 1135. He was succeeded by Stephen of Blois who

stayed in power from 1135 till 1154. Stephen's reign was marked by the Anarchy (i.e., a civil war in England and Normandy).

- The Normans did some good things during their conquest of Britain. They built many towers (e.g., the Tower of London) and castles (e.g., Dover Castle).
- Like the Romans, the Normans came with a strong, well-organized, well-trained and well-disciplined army. They were also similar to the Anglo-Saxons in that they settled in Britain and intermixed with local people.

## **The Plantagenet Dynasty (1154- 1485)**

The first ruler was Henry II who held the throne in 1154 and the final one was Richard III who died in 1485. This means that the House of the Plantagenets ruled for about 331 years. Their dynasty can be divided into three main parts: Angevins (1154- 1216), the Plantagenets (1216- 1399) and the Houses of Lancaster and York (1399- 1485).

### **Angevin Dynasty (1154- 1216)**

- The three monarchs were Henry II (1154-1189), Richard I (1189- 1199) and John I (1199- 1216). Henry II inherited a bloody realm from the Normans and did his best to transform it into an empire. He ruled for about 35 years. He owned kingship of England from his Norman mother Matilda and his wife Eleanor, Duchess of Aquitaine. Richard I was nicknamed "Lion Heart" as he was known for his courage and bravery in battles. He had no sons; that's why the next king was John I who was responsible for the Magna Carta, the Great Charter, which paved the way to England to be a democratic State and to the coming of what is known today as Human Rights.
- Magna Carta is a charter of freedom and political rights obtained from King John I in 2015 AD. It is also known as the Great Charter. The purpose was to make peace with rebel barons. It laid the foundation for the respect of rights

including the right of religion, inheritance for widows and their heirs, marriage, protection from illegal imprisonment and justice.

### **The Plantagenets (1216- 1399)**

- Henry III ruled from 1216 till 1272. He was crowned king when he was just 9 years old. He did not take control of the country until 1227 at the age of 20. During his reign, Oxford and Cambridge Universities were founded. Many Cathedrals, including Salisbury Cathedral, were built.
- Henry III was succeeded by his son Edward I who ruled from 1272 till 1307. Edward I was renowned as a castle builder. His successors were Edward II (1307- 1327), Edward III (1327- 1377) and Richard II (1377- 1399).

### **The Houses of Lancaster and York (1399- 1485)**

- Henry IV, who was the son of Edward III, ruled from 1399 till 1413. He came to power by force as he made his cousin, Richard II, renounce the throne. He died of leprosy in 1413. He was succeeded by his son, Henry V, in 1413. Henry V was just 14 years old when he fought his first battle. He died of dysentery in 1422 at the age of 35.
- Henry VI, Henry V's son, came to power at the age of 9 months in 1422. He set a record as the youngest monarch in British history. During his first twenty years of his reign, his uncle and many others governed for him. He became also the king of France after the death of his maternal grandfather, Charles VI, King of France. The French did not accept the idea of being ruled by England. As a result, a French peasant girl named Joan of Arc led the French army to many victories against the English in 1429. However, she was finally caught, charged for being a witch and then burnt alive.
- During the period stretching from 1455 to 1487, there were many civil wars between two royal houses (i.e., the House of Lancaster and the House of York) over the throne. These wars have been known as the Wars of Roses. These wars started when many barons hated the way the Lancaster monarchs

(i.e., Henry IV, Henry V and Henry VI) came to power as Henry IV got the throne by force. According to the barons, the York family, cousins of the Lancaster, had the full right to the throne. These wars were called the Wars of Roses because the Lancaster emblem was a red rose and the York emblem was a white one.

- In 1461, Edward IV defeated the Lancastrians at the Towton Battle and crowned himself king. Henry VI fled into exile. When he returned, he was captured by Edward IV in 1465. Henry VI did not give up. He managed to get the throne back in 1470, but just for a short time. Edward IV was exiled, but, upon his return in 1471, he took the crown again and stayed in power until 1483. Henry VI was possibly killed on the orders of Edward IV.
- During the reign of Edward IV, the first printing press was established in Westminster by William Caxton. He was succeeded by his elder son, Edward V, who ruled for a very short period of time (i.e., about 2 months and 17 days). He is thought to have been killed with his son in the Tower of London on the orders of Richard III who ruled from 1483 till 1485. Richard III was killed at the Battle of Bosworth Field in 1485. He was succeeded by Henry VII (1485- 1509), and this marked the beginning of the Tudor Dynasty.

### The Tudor Dynasty (1485- 1603)

- There were five kings and queens who constituted an English royal dynasty known as the House of Tudors: Henry VII (1485- 1509), Henry VIII (1509- 1547), Edward VI (1547- 1553), Mary I (1553- 1558) and Elizabeth I (1558- 1603). These Tudor monarchs, who ruled England from 1485 to 1603, have attracted the attention and interest of historians. Lady Jane Grey, cousin of Edward VI, reigned England just for nine days from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> of July, 1553. That's why she is remembered as the "Nine-Day Queen" whose life ended tragically as she was headed for death. She was arraigned for high treason by her successor Mary I and then beheaded on February 12, 1554.

with her husband. Lady Jane's father was also executed 11 days later. Mary I also prosecuted many Protestants. She is known as Bloody Mary.

- The Tudor era is known for the great religious changes in England. King Henry VIII quarreled with the Pope and decided to close the monasteries. He broke with the papacy (the Roman Catholic Church) in c. 1530s and became the head of the Church of England. He transformed England from an entirely Catholic nation into a Protestant one.
- The Tudors are said to have been originally from Wales. They were not of royal origins. The Tudor dynasty dates back to the clandestine marriage between Catherine of Valois, King Henry V's widow, and a royal attendant named Owen Tudor who was a courtier in an English royal house.
- Owen Tudor was the grandfather of Henry VII, the founder of the Tudor dynasty whose legitimacy was questioned. This dogged Henry VII (1485-1509) and his successors all throughout their ruling time. It was a source of problems and difficulties for them.
- The pre-Tudor period was marked with non-stop warfare. The Tudor dynasty is said to have brought peace to England and shaped modern Britain. A strong English navy was built. Different forms of art flourished. The predominant types of art forms were literature, architecture, portraiture, tapestries and metalwork. Music and painting also got the interest of Tudor kings, namely Henry VIII. The plays of William Shakespeare were explored during this period. America as a new world was discovered.

### **The Stuart Dynasty (1603- 1714)**

- The Stuart dynasty started with James I after the last Tudor queen, Elizabeth I, who was childless. James I was also James VI of Scotland. He ruled from 1603 to 1625. He conjoined the two long-warring countries of England and Scotland thanks to the Union of Crowns in 1603. He is said to have been a

shrewd and wise king because he played a crucial role in establishing and maintaining peace at home and abroad.

- James I was succeeded by his young son, Charles I, who ruled from 1625 to 1649. Charles I and Parliament came into conflict with one another. They struggled over power. He reigned from 1629 to 1640 without Parliament by means of a royal decree. In addition to this, he levied taxes on people and suppressed the Puritans. He imposed religious reforms and refused to give power to the Parliament. As a result, people got exasperated and civil wars broke out in c. 1642.
- Because of these wars, the Stuart era has been described as bloody. The people who died in England, Scotland and Ireland in these wars are said to be more than those who passed away in the First World War. Charles I was imprisoned by the Parliament's New Model Army in c. 1647. He secretly managed to provoke a second civil war in 1648. This war ended with another victory of the Parliament over Charles I who was executed in 1649. The beheading of this king marked the beginning of an eleven-year interregnum (1649- 1660).
- Thus, this dynasty which lasted from 1603 to 1714 was interrupted for about 11 years from 1649 to 1660. During these 11 years, the Commonwealth was founded, the throne was vacant after the condemnation and execution of Charles I and England became a republic with no monarch. During his interregnum, this republic became the English Commonwealth. Charles II tried to invade it, but in vain. He was defeated; he fled to France. In c. 1653, the Parliament was dissolved, and Oliver Cromwell became Lord Protector from 1653 until his death in 1658. It was the period of the Commonwealth and Protectorate. Oliver Cromwell used military force to keep peace and maintain stability, but about 18 months after his death, Charles II restored the throne in 1660 and ruled until 1685.

- Charles II was succeeded by James II (1685- 1688). Mary II and her husband William III ruled from 1688 to 1702. They are thought to have brought peace to England at a time when there were still some conflicts and fights in Ireland and Scotland. Mary II's sister Anne took over from 1702 to 1714. The most important thing to remember about her reign was the Act of Union with Scotland in 1707. Thanks to this Act, England and Scotland, two separate kingdoms at that time, united into the Kingdom of Great Britain.
- The Stuart era witnessed much instability, chaos, upheavals, plagues, fires and wars. It was an era of intense religious debates and political conflicts. The main parts involved in these debates and conflicts were the monarchy, Parliament and Church. Meanwhile, during this epoch, too much importance was attached to theatres and art in general, and to architectural advances and scientific discoveries. The Stuarts with their predecessors, the Tudors, are said to have contributed to the shaping of modern Britain. For instance, they had a hand in developing the ideas of flushing toilet, eating with the fork and getting yourself painted.

## **The House of Hanover (1714- 1901)**

### **Georgian Britain: (1714- 1837)**

- The Georgian era marked the coming of the House of Hanover to the throne in 1714. This period began with riots by Jacobite and High Church mobs against Hanoverian succession. Hanoverian monarchs were: George I, George II, George III and George IV.
- Jacobites were the supporters of the exiled king James II and his descendants after the Glorious Revolution, also known as “the Revolution of 1688” and “Bloodless Revolution,” which resulted in the overthrow of the Catholic King James II and the coming of his Protestant daughter Mary II and her husband William III.

- George I (1714 to 1727), the first monarch of the House of Hanover, is said to have spent most of his ruling time in Germany. He could scarcely speak English. He is also said to have contributed to the creation of the anti-Spanish Triple Alliance which included France, the Dutch Republic in addition to Great Britain in 1717. In 1718, this Alliance became the Quadruple Alliance as the Holy Roman Empire was added.
- The second Hanoverian king was George II (1727- 1760), the son of George I. He defended his monarch against the person believed to have been the last Jacobite pretender in history, Charles Edward Stuart, in 1746. This victory over the Jacobites led to the final acceptance of the Hanoverian dynasty as representing the dreams, ambitions and security of the kingdom. He loved military uniforms and enjoyed the company of military men.
- George III ruled from 1760 to 1820. He was nicknamed “Farmer George” because he loved agriculture. He is said to have been the first Hanoverian king to be born in England and use English as his first language. He was the first king to study science as part of his education. During his reign, Britain lost some of its colonies in North America as a result of the American War of Independence which lasted from 1775 to 1783.
- George IV, the son of George III, took over in 1820 and his reign lasted until 1830. He was very much concerned about his physical appearance. He was an extravagant dandy. He was a big lover of pageantry. He was a patron of new forms of style, fashion and leisure. Windsor Castle was rebuilt and Buckingham Palace was remodeled during his ruling time. His life was tarnished with scandals and family problems. He was seen as selfish and irresponsible.
- William IV, the third son of George III, ruled from 1830 to 1837. He was the penultimate king of Britain’s House of Hanover. He is said to have been

more approachable, humble and down-to-earth than his brother, George IV.

He did everything he could to endear himself to people

- The Georgian era was marked by what is known as the Seven Year's War, the name given to the final phase from 1756 to 1763 in the long struggle between Great Britain and France over supremacy in the world and the dominance of North America. This war ended with the victory of Great Britain and its allies.

### The Victorian Age (1837-1901)

- Queen Victoria came to power in 1837 at the age of 18 after the death of William IV who ruled from 1830 to 1837. She stayed in power until her death in 1901. Her reign lasted for about 63 years and 7 months, which was one of the longest in British history. The Victorian Era was named after her. She was the last of the House of Hanover.
- During her reign, Britain became a powerful nation. Culture flourished and more political rights were granted to people, namely the right to vote. Franchise was expanded and Britain had a stable government. Its economy blossomed thanks to its industrializing power and imperial holdings (e.g., products, stocks and funds).
- Victorian Britain was hierarchical in nature. This hierarchical organization was based on such aspects as race, religion, region, occupation, gender and class.
- Victorian gender ideology was founded on the premise that men were physically stronger than women. Men and women did not see sex in the same way. While sex was central for men, it was, it was peripheral for women who saw reproduction as central. Women were regarded as more religious than men. At the level of social and political roles, men got well-paid jobs and participated in politics. They were independent. On the contrary, women were dependent as their main role was to run households and raise children.

- The working-class families were required to survive on a single male wage or salary since women, according to the Victorian gender ideology, could not go out to work. This is to say that this ideology did not mesh with the lives of this class.
- In the Victorian society, class was both economic and cultural. The aspects which determined belonging to a certain class were income, occupation, family, property, education, political engagement as well as recreation activities.
- The middle class in the Victorian period included everyone between the working class and the upper class. Members of this middle class were mainly industrialists and bankers. They grew rapidly and formed a group of moral leaders. Their culture was premised on a set of values such as the careful management of money (i.e., thrift), the good sense of responsibility and the importance of self-reliance. Success in the Victorian society was contingent upon personal efforts, perseverance and energy.
- The upper class dominated all aspects of the British society at that time. The members of this class were small in number, but they were wealthy. They had large incomes in addition to large properties. They possessed most of the land in Britain. They controlled political life at the local, national and imperial levels.
- In terms of religion, most Victorians were Christian, but there was a room for some religious diversity. Britain was also home to Protestants, Roman Catholics, Hindus, Jews, Muslims and even atheists.
- The Victorian Age was marked with the development of Charles Darwin's Theory of Evolution and with the emergence of such disciplines as psychology and physics of energy.

## **The UK in the Twentieth and Twenty-first Centuries (1901- Now)**

### **Edward VII (1901- 1910)**

- During the period stretching from 1901 until 1910, Britain was ruled by Edward VII.
- During the reign of Edward VII, who came to throne after his mother Queen Victoria, Britain witnessed the growth of middle-class as a pivotal component of the British society. He was also the Emperor of India from 1901 to 1910. He was famous for his role in the modernization of the British Home Fleet (a fleet of the Royal Navy) and the reorganization of the British Army after the Second Boer War of 1899- 1902.

### **The Windsor House (1910- Now)**

- The monarchs of the House of Windsor were George V (1910- 1936), Edward VIII (1936), George VI (1936- 1952) and Elizabeth II (1952- now).
- With the outbreak of World War I, the issue of conscription (i.e., compulsory enrolment of people for military service) was hotly debated in the British society. The voluntary system failed to find men who could fill in gaps in the British army. As a result of this, the Military Service Acts introduced conscription in 1916, first for single men and then for all men between the ages of 18 and 40. Women replaced conscripted men in the workplace.
- Many British people stood up against war and conscription. Conscripts were granted the right to appeal for exemption from military service by resorting to local tribunals. The members of these tribunals were charged with the task of studying the cases of conscripts to decide whether they were right in their claim or were just afraid of the war.
- During the wartime, people suffered a lot. Their lives were controlled not only by conscription but also by increased taxation and censorship. George V was the monarch during the First World War. Many monarchies and empires collapsed at that time (e.g., the German and Austro-Hungarian Empires in

1918, the Russian Empire in 1917 and the Ottoman Empire in 1922), but he managed to bolster the reputation of the royal family at times of war and peace.

- Britain went through hard times after the First World War: the Anglo-Irish Wars (1919- 1921), economic recession, general strike in 1926 and the Wall Street Crash of 1929. All these hardships hamstrung economic recovery and reconstruction in the post-war Britain.
- Adolf Hitler, the leader of the Nazi Party, was appointed chancellor of Germany in 1933. With his appointment, fears of a new European war stamped the 1930's.
- Edward VIII ruled just for about 325 days from January to December of the year 1936. As a monarch, he found himself in a situation where he had to choose between his love for Mrs. Wallis Simpson, a married American woman, and the throne. When she got her second divorce in 1936, he relinquished the throne and married her.
- Edward VIII was succeeded by George VI who ruled from 1936 till 1952. During this period, Britain found itself at war with Nazi Germany under the leadership of Adolf Hitler in 1939. It was the beginning of the Second World War. At wartime, Britain stood unified behind Churchill who was appointed prime minister twice (1940- 1945 and 1951- 1955).
- In 1943, Britain joined the alliance dominated by the USA and the Soviet Union. In 1944, the allied forces (i.e., UK, USA, Soviet Union and China) launched the D-Day landings, also known as the battle of the D-Day 1944, to liberate north-west Europe from Nazi occupation. This battle pushed Hitler to surrender. The bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan ended World War II and paved the way to the beginning of the atomic era.
- Winston Churchill (1874- 1965) was not only a prominent politician, but also an accomplished painter, orator and author. As a prime minister, he is

remembered for his ability to rally the British people during World War II. He intelligently led his country from the brink of defeat to victory. They all had a common cause which was to get victorious by defeating Nazi Germany. He allied with Franklin Roosevelt and Joseph Stalin against Hitler during the war. He is also remembered for alerting the west to the expansionist threat of the Soviet Union.

- The current monarch of the UK is Elizabeth II, who came to throne in 1952 after the death of her father, King George VI. She is known for favoring simplicity and taking an informal interest in government issues. Among the difficulties she faced was the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, from the injuries in a car crash in the Pont de l'Alma tunnel in Paris on the 31<sup>st</sup> of August, 1997. She was also troubled by the highly publicized marital problems of two of her sons. She lost both her mother and her sister in 2002, which was really sad for her and for the whole royal family. She has become the longest reigning monarch in the British history since 2015. She is also known as the head of the Commonwealth and the Defender of Faith. She is the supreme governor of the Church of England.
- One of the leading political figures in British history is Margaret Thatcher (1925- 2013), the first woman to be a prime minister not just in Britain but also in Europe from 1979 to 1990. She was the leader of the Conservative Party at that time. She was nicknamed the Iron Lady due to her uncompromising approach to politics and to her leadership style as a strong leader. She was known for her advocacy of the individuals' independence from the State to put an end to the government's excessive interference in the economy especially in matters related to the privatization of state-owned enterprises. She also supported the reductions in expenditures on such social services as health care, education and housing. She legally restricted trade

unions. She was also famous for moral absolutism and strict nationalism. Her policies and beliefs have been categorized under the term of 'Thatcherism.'

➤ Brexit, a portmanteau of "British exit," refers to the withdrawal of the United Kingdom (UK) from the European Union (EU) on the 31st of January, 2020 after voting for it in a referendum held in June, 2016. The Leave Vote was due to different reasons. First, for the pro-Brexit voters, it is a matter of sovereignty. It is a way to take back control of borders, funds and law. It gives the UK the chance to control the flow of immigrants and better watch its borders. Britain has been very much concerned about the risks of a large-scale unrestricted immigration, especially with the growing number of refugees seeking asylum in Europe. Brexit is a reaction to the migrant crisis in Europe and the world at large. Another important factor to consider is that the historical relationship between Britain and the EU has been depicted as unclear and half-hearted. Britain has seen the USA as a powerful partner, namely in defense and political issues. It has been interested in showing itself as an intermediary between the USA and the EU. Brexit Vote was also a response to the nationalistic feelings sweeping the UK and calling for its independence from the EU.

## Conclusion

This part of module 16 does not claim to be comprehensive and inclusive. Due to the constraint of time, it simply provides a brief and general outlook about British history, culture and society. It focuses on the key pre-historical and historical data as well as the main politico-and-socio-cultural events in the UK. Students are required to read more to learn more about the UK and its multi-ethnic society. It's important to reiterate that learning the English language necessitates learning about the culture and heritage of its native speakers. Language and culture are two inseparable spheres. The first is the carrier of the second.

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