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## PART 1

### READING

#### 1.- THE FORMATION OF THE U.K.

School Wikipedia Selections (2008-09). “*History of the UK.*” Retrieved online from:

[https://www.cs.mcgill.ca/~rwest/link-suggestion/wpcd\\_2008-09\\_augmented/wp/h/History\\_of\\_the\\_United\\_Kingdom.htm](https://www.cs.mcgill.ca/~rwest/link-suggestion/wpcd_2008-09_augmented/wp/h/History_of_the_United_Kingdom.htm)

The **United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland** is the sovereign state comprising England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The state began on 1st May, 1707, as agreed in the Treaty of Union and put into effect by the Acts of Union in 1707. This united the separate countries of England (including Wales) and Scotland into a united Kingdom of Great Britain under a single parliament. A further Act of Union in 1800 added the Kingdom of Ireland to create the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. In 1922, the territory of what is now the Republic of Ireland gained independence, leaving Northern Ireland as a continuing part of the United Kingdom. As a result, in 1927 the United Kingdom changed its formal title to "The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland", usually shortened to "the United Kingdom", "the UK" or "Britain".

#### **The formation of the United Kingdom and the rest of the 18th century**

The creation of the united Kingdom of Great Britain in 1707 was the result of the Treaty of Union which had been negotiated between England and Scotland and put into effect by the passing of the Acts of Union 1707. At the time, England controlled Wales, which had been conquered in 1282 and formally annexed by the Laws in Wales Act 1535, and Ireland, which had been reconquered in 1536. Though England and Scotland were separate, sovereign states, they had shared monarchs since 1603 when James VI of Scotland had become James I of England on the death of the childless Elizabeth I.

#### **Acts of Union 1707**

Deeper political integration had been a key policy of Queen Anne (reigned 1702–14), and a Treaty of Union was drawn up, and negotiations between England and Scotland began in earnest, in 1706. The parliaments of Scotland and England each approved Acts of Union that put the provisions of the Treaty into effect which in turn received royal assent. Thereafter, political unification occurred on May 1st, 1707 on which day the two kingdoms were combined into a single kingdom and the two parliaments were merged into a single parliament.

The circumstances surrounding Scotland's acceptance of the Bill are to some degree disputed. Scottish proponents of union believed that failure to accede to the Bill would result in the imposition of union under less favourable terms. Months of fierce debate on both sides of the border followed. In Scotland the debate on occasion dissolved into civil disorder, most notably by the notorious 'Edinburgh Mob'. The prospect of a union of the kingdoms was deeply unpopular among the Scottish population at large but,

following the financially disastrous Darien Scheme, the near-bankrupt Parliament of Scotland reluctantly accepted the proposals. Financial incentives to Scottish parliamentarians also played their part in the vote.

Anne became formally the first occupant of the unified British throne and Scotland sent 45 MPs to the new parliament at Westminster. Perhaps the greatest single benefit to Scotland of the Union was that Scotland could enjoy free trade with England and her colonies overseas. For England's part, a possible ally for European states hostile to England had been neutralised while simultaneously securing a Protestant succession to the British throne.

The Acts of Union provided for the renaming of Scotland and England as 'North Britain' and 'South Britain' respectively. However, the change failed to take hold and fell into disuse fairly quickly. In England and abroad the terms 'England' and 'Britain' often continue to be used interchangeably, though this error is not mirrored in Scotland.

However, certain aspect of the former independent kingdoms remained separate. Examples of Scottish and English institutions which were not merged into the British system include: Scottish and English law which remain separate, as do Scottish and English banking systems, the Presbyterian Church of Scotland and Anglican Church of England also remained separate as did the systems of education and higher learning.

Having failed to establish their own empire, but being better educated than the average Englishman, the Scots made a distinguished and disproportionate contribution to both the government of the United Kingdom and the administration of the British Empire.

### **Jacobite risings**

The early years of the new united kingdom were marked by major Jacobite Risings, called 'Jacobite Rebellions' by the ruling governments. These Risings were the consequence of James VII of Scotland and II of England being deposed in 1688 with the thrones claimed by his daughter Mary II jointly with her husband, the Dutch born William of Orange. The 'Risings' intensified after the House of Hanover succeeded to the united British Throne in 1714 with the "First Jacobite Rebellion" and "Second Jacobite Rebellion", in 1715 and 1745, known respectively as "The Fifteen" and "The Forty-Five". Although each Jacobite Rising had unique features, they all formed part of a larger series of military campaigns by Jacobites attempting to restore the Stuart kings to the thrones of Scotland and England (and after 1707, the united Kingdom of Great Britain). They ended when the "Forty-Five" rebellion, led by 'the Young Pretender' Charles Edward Stuart was soundly defeated at the Battle of Culloden in 1746.

### **British Empire**

Lord Clive meeting with Mir Jafar after the Battle of Plassey, by Francis Hayman (c. 1762).

The Seven Years' War, which began in 1756, was the first war waged on a global scale, fought in Europe, India, North America, the Caribbean, the Philippines and coastal Africa. The signing of the Treaty of Paris (1763) had important consequences for Britain and its empire. In North America, France's future as a colonial power there was effectively ended with the ceding of New France to Britain (leaving a sizeable French-speaking population under British control) and Louisiana to Spain. Spain ceded Florida to Britain. In India, the Carnatic War had left France still in control of its enclaves but with military restrictions and an obligation to support British client states, effectively leaving the future of India to Britain. The British victory over France in the Seven Years War therefore left Britain as the world's dominant colonial power.

During the 1760s and 1770s, relations between the Thirteen Colonies and Britain became increasingly strained, primarily because of resentment of the British Parliament's ability to tax American colonists without their consent. Disagreement turned to violence and in 1775 the American Revolutionary War

began. The following year, the colonists declared the independence of the United States and with economical and naval assistance from France, would go on to win the war in 1783.

The loss of the United States, at the time Britain's most populous colony, is seen by historians as the event defining the transition between the "first" and "second" empires, in which Britain shifted its attention away from the Americas to Asia, the Pacific and later Africa. Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, published in 1776, had argued that colonies were redundant, and that free trade should replace the old mercantilist policies that had characterised the first period of colonial expansion, dating back to the protectionism of Spain and Portugal. The growth of trade between the newly independent United States and Britain after 1783 confirmed Smith's view that political control was not necessary for economic success.

During its first century of operation, the focus of the British East India Company had been trade, not the building of an empire in India. Company interests turned from trade to territory during the 18th century as the Mughal Empire declined in power and the British East India Company struggled with its French counterpart, the *La Compagnie française des Indes orientales*, during the Carnatic Wars of the 1740s and 1750s. The Battle of Plassey, which saw the British, led by Robert Clive, defeat the French and their Indian allies, left the Company in control of Bengal and a major military and political power in India. In the following decades it gradually increased the size of the territories under its control, either ruling directly or indirectly via local puppet rulers under the threat of force of the Indian Army, 80% of which was composed of native Indian sepoys.

In 1770, James Cook had discovered the eastern coast of Australia whilst on a scientific voyage to the South Pacific. In 1778, Joseph Banks, Cook's botanist on the voyage, presented evidence to the government on the suitability of Botany Bay for the establishment of a penal settlement, and in 1787 the first shipment of convicts set sail, arriving in 1788.

At the threshold to the 19th century, Britain was challenged again by France under Napoleon, in a struggle that, unlike previous wars, represented a contest of ideologies between the two nations. It was not only Britain's position on the world stage that was threatened: Napoleon threatened invasion of Britain itself, and with it, a fate similar to the countries of continental Europe that his armies had overrun.

## 19th century

### Ireland joins with the Act of Union (1800)

The Flag of the United Kingdom is based on the flags of England, Scotland and Ireland

The second stage in the development of the United Kingdom took effect on January, 1st, 1801, when the Kingdom of Great Britain merged with the Kingdom of Ireland to form the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.

Events that culminated in the union with Ireland had spanned the previous several centuries. Invasions from England by the ruling Normans from 1170 led to centuries of strife in Ireland and successive Kings of England sought both to conquer and pillage Ireland, imposing their rule by force throughout the entire island. In the early 17th century, large-scale settlement of the province of Ulster by Protestant settlers from both Scotland and England began, which saw the displacement of many of the native Roman Catholics Irish inhabitants of this part of Ireland. Since the time of the first Norman invaders from England, Ireland has been subject to control and regulation, firstly by England then latterly by Great Britain.

After the Irish Rebellion of 1641, Irish Roman Catholics were barred from voting or attending the Irish Parliament. The new English Protestant ruling class was known as the Protestant Ascendancy. Towards

the end of the 18th century the entirely Protestant Irish Parliament attained a greater degree of independence from the British Parliament than it had previously held. Under the Penal Laws no Irish Catholic could sit in the Parliament of Ireland, even though some 90% of Ireland's population was native Irish Catholic when the first of these bans was introduced in 1691. This ban was followed by others in 1703 and 1709 as part of a comprehensive system disadvantaging the Catholic community, and to a lesser extent Protestant dissenters. In 1798, many members of this dissenter tradition made common cause with Catholics in a rebellion inspired and led by the Society of United Irishmen. It was staged with the aim of creating a fully independent Ireland as a state with a republican constitution. Despite assistance from France the Irish Rebellion of 1798 was put down by British forces.

Possibly influenced by the War of American Independence (1775–1783), a united force of Irish volunteers used their influence to campaign for greater independence for the Irish Parliament. This was granted in 1782, giving free trade and legislative independence to Ireland. However, the French revolution had encouraged the increasing calls for moderate constitutional reform. The Society of United Irishmen, made up of Presbyterians from Belfast and both Anglicans and Catholics in Dublin, campaigned for an end to British domination. Their leader Theobald Wolfe Tone (1763–98) worked with the Catholic Convention of 1792 which demanded an end to the penal laws. Failing to win the support of the British government, he travelled to Paris, encouraging a number of French naval forces to land in Ireland to help with the planned insurrections. These were slaughtered by government forces, but these rebellions convinced the British under Prime Minister William Pitt that the only solution was to end Irish independence once and for all.

The legislative union of Great Britain and Ireland was completed under the Act of Union 1800, changing the country's name to "United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland". The Act was passed in the British and therefore unrepresentative Irish Parliament with substantial majorities achieved in part (according to contemporary documents) through bribery, namely the awarding of peerages and honours to critics to get their votes. Under the terms of the merger, the separate Parliaments of Great Britain and Ireland were abolished, and replaced by a united Parliament of the United Kingdom. Ireland thus became part of an extended United Kingdom. Ireland sent around 100 MPs to the House of Commons at Westminster and 28 peers to the House of Lords, elected from among their number by the Irish peers themselves (Catholics were not permitted peerage). Part of the trade-off for Irish Catholics was to be the granting of Catholic Emancipation, which had been fiercely resisted by the all-Anglican Irish Parliament. However, this was blocked by King George III who argued that emancipating Roman Catholics would breach his Coronation Oath. The Roman Catholic hierarchy had endorsed the Union. However the decision to block Catholic Emancipation fatally undermined the appeal of the Union.

### Napoleonic wars

Hostilities between Great Britain and France recommenced on May 18, 1803. The Coalition war-aims changed over the course of the conflict: a general desire to restore the French monarchy became closely linked to the struggle to stop Bonaparte.

The series of naval and colonial conflicts, including a large number of minor naval actions, resembled those of the French Revolutionary Wars and the preceding centuries of European warfare. Conflicts in the Caribbean, and in particular the seizure of colonial bases and islands throughout the wars, could potentially have some effect upon the European conflict. The Napoleonic conflict had reached the point at which subsequent historians could talk of a "world war". Only the Seven Years' War offered a precedent for widespread conflict on such a scale.

In 1806, Napoleon issued the series of Berlin Decrees, which brought into effect the Continental System. This policy aimed to eliminate the threat of the United Kingdom by closing French-controlled territory to

its trade. The United Kingdom's army remained a minimal threat to France; the UK maintained a standing army of just 220,000 at the height of the Napoleonic Wars, whereas France's strength peaked at over 1,500,000 — in addition to the armies of numerous allies and several hundred thousand national guardsmen that Napoleon could draft into the military if necessary. The Royal Navy, however, effectively disrupted France's extra-continental trade — both by seizing and threatening French shipping and by seizing French colonial possessions — but could do nothing about France's trade with the major continental economies and posed little threat to French territory in Europe. In addition France's population and agricultural capacity far outstripped that of the United Kingdom. However, the United Kingdom possessed the greatest industrial capacity in Europe, and its mastery of the seas allowed it to build up considerable economic strength through trade. That sufficed to ensure that France could never consolidate its control over Europe in peace. However, many in the French government believed that cutting the United Kingdom off from the Continent would end its economic influence over Europe and isolate it. Though the French designed the Continental System to achieve this, it never succeeded in its objective.

### QUESTIONS:

- 1.- Explain briefly how the U.K. became the U.K.**
- 2.- The changes commented above also resulted into changes in the flag. Do you happen to know the evolution of the Union Jack?**
- 3.- The British empire undeniably had a great power in the world. Explain how it started and expanded.**

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