Understanding the UK

E1-E2 Reading comprehension

Name _____ Date _____

The United Kingdom

The United Kingdom (UK) has four countries. Each country has its own culture and identity.

Source: https://www.ukposters.co.uk/united-kingdom-map-uk-map-with-borders-in-different-color-f85980822

England

The capital of England is London. It is in the south of the country. Other big cities include Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, Liverpool, and Newcastle.

England has many small towns and villages surrounded by open countryside, lakes, rivers, forests, and farms. It is surrounded by the sea on three sides.

Scotland

Scotland's capital is Edinburgh. Scotland has many lochs (the Scottish word for lake), hills, and mountains.

Scotland is part of the UK, but it has its own laws and school system. English is the main language, but some people also speak Scottish Gaelic.

Wales

Cardiff is the capital of Wales. Wales is famous for its coast, mountains, and national parks like Snowdonia.

Some people speak Welsh as well as English, and they have their own traditions and culture.

Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland is in the northern part of the island of Ireland. It is a different country from the Republic of Ireland. Belfast is the capital of Northern Ireland.

People speak English, but some also speak Irish Gaelic.

These four countries together make up the United Kingdom. They have different cultures, languages, and traditions, but they share a common language, government and a close relationship.

Some things like the NHS, police and fire services, and the army are the same in all four countries.

Health Services - NHS

The National Health Service (NHS) provides healthcare in the UK. You can see a doctor (also called a GP) if you are sick or hurt. You need to register with a local GP and dentist when you arrive.

People who work pay a tax called *National Insurance Contributions* (NIC) to fund the NHS for everyone.

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Name _____ Date _____

Education

Children in the UK go to school from the age of 4 or 5 until they are 18. Schools are divided into primary and secondary education. There are also nursery schools for most 2 to 3-year-olds. Education is free for children. School usually starts around 8:30 am and finishes around 3:30 pm.

For higher education (age 18+) there are colleges and universities. You have to pay to go to some of them.

Work

People usually work or go to school from Monday to Friday. The workday often starts at 9 am and ends at 5 pm. Some people work shifts and at different times of day. Weekends are free for rest and fun activities.

The UK has many job opportunities in different sectors like technology, healthcare, education, and finance. It's important to have a good CV and cover letter when applying for jobs. Many people find jobs through online job boards, agencies or Job Centre Plus.

The benefits system

The benefit system is not free. It provides financial help to people who cannot work. People who work pay National Insurance from their wages to help pay for benefits like Universal Credit, Retirement Pension and Sick Pay. People who claim Universal Credit are expected to look for work.

Manners

People in the UK often greet each other with a smile and a "hello". It is common to say "please" and "thank you". Neighbours sometimes chat and help each other. There are also community centres and clubs where people can meet and make friends.

Emergency and other important UK numbers

In the UK, there are different numbers to call if you need help.

999

The **main emergency number** in the UK is 999. You can call this number if you need urgent help from the police, fire brigade, ambulance service, or coastguard.
This number is free to call and available 24/7.

NHS 111

Use this number for non-emergency medical help or advice.
It is free to call and is open 24/7. It is for:

- fast medical help that's not a life-threatening emergency
- advice on where to go for treatment
- health information.

101

Call this number for non-emergency issues that need police help, such as reporting a crime that is not happening right now.

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Name _____ Date _____

A		A
B		B
C		C
A		A
B		B
C		C
A		A
B		B
C		C
A		A
B		B
C		C
A		A
B		B
C		C
A		A
B		B
C		C

Image source: https://x.com/999DayUK/status/1609498043245551617/photo/1

Look at the images.

A. Write the correct vehicle name next to each picture:
lifeboat / helicopter / van / fire engine / police car / ambulance

B. Write the name of the emergency service next to each image.

C. Write the emergency number next to each image.

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Entry 1 questions

Questions about page 1

Circle the correct answer

1. How many countries are part of the UK? 3 4 5
2. The capital of England is Manchester. True / False
3. English is the main language in Scotland. True / False
4. The capital of Wales is Snowdonia. True / False
5. Northern Ireland is also called the Republic of Ireland. True / False

Questions about page 2

6. It is good manners to say ‘please’ and ‘thank you’. True / False
7. Children can go to school at age 4. True / False
8. You can phone 999 for anything. True / False
9. Call 111 if there is an emergency. True / False
10. There are two emergency numbers in the UK. True / False

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Entry 2 Questions

1. Write the names of the four countries in the UK.

2. Which country do you live in?

3. What is a loch?

4. The Irish mainland has two countries.

   True / False

5. English is the main language of the UK. What other languages are spoken?

6. The NHS is free.

   True / False

7. What days do people usually work in the UK?

8. What words do people use to show good manners in the UK?

9. How many emergency numbers are there?

10. Can you list two important **non-emergency** numbers?