The Commonwealth of Nations

The countries that were once part of the **British Empire** have always had a common bond. Even though they are scattered all around the world, their links with each other enable them to cooperate. This relationship continues today through membership of **the Commonwealth of Nations**. The Commonwealth works for **equal rights** of men and women, and for **world peace**. It aims to reduce ignorance, disease and poverty in its member countries.

The Commonwealth of Nations has 53 member countries. A total of 2.2 billion people of different races, religions, languages, and colours live in these countries. The 60th anniversary of the London Declaration was marked on 26 April 2009 when the modern Commonwealth was born. Some Commonwealth countries are rich, and some are poor, but all share certain traditions and skills. Every four years the **Commonwealth Games** is held in one of the member countries. The Commonwealth is divided into five sections which are: American, Africa, Asia, Pacific, and Europe.

The Commonwealth of Nations began in **1947**. The head of the Commonwealth is **Queen Elizabeth II**. In 1965 the Commonwealth Secretariat was set up, to supply information to the member states and arrange special meetings. It also helps to coordinate activities. For example, if one country needs someone with specials skills, the Secretariat finds someone with that skill and arranges contact between the two countries. It also arranges for students to travel from one country to another for specialist training.

The first members of the Commonwealth were the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, the Irish Free State and Dominion of Newfoundland.

The head of the Commonwealth Secretariat is the **Secretary-General**, who is elected by the Commonwealth member states. Each country provides money to keep the Secretariat running. The head of the member states meet regularly, at a special Commonwealth Conference called the
Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) attended by the Queen.

The Commonwealth has a **special interest** in its **young people**, and in showing them how important it is to **work together**. The interest is celebrated on Commonwealth Day on the **second Monday in March.** On this day, schools of member countries learn more about the Commonwealth through assemblies, projects and guest speakers. A special message from the Queen is read out to the school children.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Date: _____

1. Write TWO things the Commonwealth works for. [2]

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2. What is the aim of the Commonwealth of Nations? [2]

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3. When did the Commonwealth of Nations begin and how many member countries does it have today? [2]

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4. Give ONE reasons why the Commonwealth Secretariat was set up. [1]

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5. Who is head of the Commonwealth of Nations? [1]

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6. Name THREE countries that were the first to join the Commonwealth of Nations. [3]

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7. Explain how the Secretary-General is elected [1]

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8. When is Commonwealth Day celebrated? Explain TWO things that happen on this day. [3]

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