10 British culture

AIMS: Vocabulary related to Britain • Understanding text organization • Understanding the topic of paragraphs • Matching headings

Part 1: Vocabulary

1a **Quiz: Match these names of buildings in London with their descriptions.**

1	City Hall	**a**	This building is also known as London's Central Criminal Court or Justice Hall, and was named after the road it was on.
2	The Old Bailey	**b**	This is the building where the two houses of Parliament of the United Kingdom, the House of Lords and the House of Commons, are based.
3	The Gherkin	**c**	This building is home to the Mayor of London, and the regional administrative authority, consisting of over 600 members of staff. It is located near the River Thames, where it contrasts strongly with more traditional looking buildings.
4	The Palace of Westminster	**d**	This is an office building, based at 30 St Mary Axe. It got its name because it is shaped like a vegetable.

1b **Label the pictures with the names of the buildings in exercise 1a.**



1 .....



2 .....



3 .....



4 .....

2 **Complete the text below. You can look at the words in the box below, but only if you need to.**

In England, 'Put the (1) ..... on' is a phrase heard often, as people enjoy stopping for a (2) ..... of tea and perhaps a biscuit. This daily ritual becomes much more formal in a (3) ..... or hotel setting. If you go out for cream tea, you may get loose tea, brewed in a (4) ..... and served at your table. This is accompanied by scones with cream and (5) ..... . There are different regional (6) ..... about how cream tea is served. In Devon, they tend to put the cream on the scone first, with strawberry jam on top, whereas in Cornwall they spread (7) ..... on the

LIVEWORKSHEETS

scone first and put the jam on before the cream. A traditional afternoon tea would also be accompanied with delicate (8) ....., such as cucumber, egg, ham and smoked (9) ....., as well as cakes. However you choose to accompany it, remember that in England, ordinary tea is always drunk with (10) .....

butter cup customs tearoom jam kettle milk salmon sandwiches teapot

3a **Copy and complete the table by writing the following words in the right categories. Use a dictionary or check the meanings in the Answer key.**

Cornish pasty bitter duck-duck-goose scones haggis
hopscotch scotch rarebit leek British bulldog

food	drink	activity

3b **Two of the items in exercise 3a are typically associated with Scotland, two with Wales, and two with England. Which ones are they?**

Scotland	Wales	England

Watch out!

Do you know the difference between the United Kingdom, England, Great Britain and the British Isles? Which ones include Scotland and Wales? If you don't know, you may misunderstand exactly what an author is writing about. You could also cause offence to people in certain areas by using the wrong word! Check the Answer key to the next exercise if you are confused.

4 **Identify the following on the map:**

- England
- Scotland
- Wales
- Northern Ireland
- Ireland
- Republic of Ireland
- Great Britain
- the UK



LIVEWORKSHEETS

Exam information | Matching headings

In the exam, you may be given a list of headings, and a text divided into sections. The headings will be in the form of short statements which summarize the information in a section. You will need to read the text sections and decide which of the headings best fits that section. This type of task tests whether you understand the organization of texts and can identify the main idea or topic in a paragraph.

1a **To focus on this type of task, underline the main point in box A (the introduction). Then check your answer in the key before continuing.**

1b **Read all the paragraphs that follow and underline any evidence that links to this main point. Notice how one main theme is developed throughout the text.**

1c **Explain how the meaning of each of the following phrases is related to the overall theme of the text. The first one is done for you.**

moreover (in A): introduces another reason why it is difficult to compare styles/periods

first of all (in B)	secondly (in B)	last but not least (in B)
despite (in C)	then again (in C)	moreover (in C)
unsurprisingly (in D)		

1d **We can say that each of the paragraphs B–D exemplifies the general theme with an example of a particular period. What is the example in each of these paragraphs?**

1e **The text has no conclusion. Look at the following suggestions for the conclusion of this text and cross out any that are not suitable.**

The conclusion could:

a pick up the point about how easy it is to be confused (i.e. the fact that different words refer to the same period and that the same words can refer to different periods)

b refer back to the three main examples in paragraphs A–D

c mention that non-British people may find it harder to understand the vocabulary relating to artistic styles

d give information about another period (e.g. introduce the Elizabethan period)

e include a personal opinion or comment relating to the main idea, or its consequences (e.g. visitors to the UK may need more information about tourist attractions than we might think)

A

It is not easy to compare the artistic styles and periods of different countries, especially as they may use different words to refer to the same features, and perhaps occasionally also use the same words with a slightly different meaning. Moreover, particular styles and periods overlap.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

B

An example of this is the 'Victorian' period in Britain, which has a style that is often described as romantic. First of all, the name of this period links it immediately with British royal history, which potentially creates confusion to non-British people who may not be aware that the reign of Queen Victoria relates to approximately the second half of the 19th century. Secondly, despite the fact that Queen Victoria died in 1901 the style itself continued into the 20th century. And last but not least, it can be argued that there are distinctly different styles which can all be referred to as Victorian, e.g. the use of flower motifs and pastel colours.

C

Despite Victorian times being characterized by romanticism, the famous British romantic poets belong to the period before Queen Victoria. These are poets such as Robert Burns, William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and John Keats. From the same era date famous writers such as Jane Austen and Mary Shelley (who wrote Frankenstein), and great architects such as James Wyatt and John Nash. The great painters Gainsborough, Reynolds, Turner and Constable can also be categorized in this period. But who outside of Britain could label this era? And, even if we know they can all be described as Georgian artists, which King George does this refer to? Actually, it refers to four of them (George I, George II, George III and George IV), and thus spans a long period incorporating most of the 18th century and some of the 19th. But then again, there was a Georgian revival in the 20th century, which means the label can also relate to that. Moreover, the style itself incorporates previous styles, including gothic, and has its own subdivision, Regency style, which describes the period of George IV.

D

The period after the Victorian era is referred to as Edwardian, after Edward VII who reigned from 1901 to 1910, when he died. Nobody is sure whether 1910 is the correct end point for the period, with some people suggesting it should be 1912, when the Titanic sank, the start of World War I (1914), its end (1918), or the signing of the post-war peace treaty of Versailles (1919). Elsewhere in Europe, the Art Nouveau era ended around the same time, and unsurprisingly, Art Nouveau is also used to describe the style which was common in Britain at that time. Floral motifs were very common ... now where have I heard about that before?

2 **Read the following paragraphs about British castles. Choose the best heading from the options.**

Beaumaris castle is an impressive castle, built by King Edward I. It is considered one of the most beautiful medieval castles in Wales, probably because of its symmetrical shapes, but its purpose was military, the pretty geometrical shapes being rings of defense. Work started as early as 1295, but although it was done at a fast speed, it was never completed because of lack of money.

a Beaumaris: a castle of contrasts
b Beaumaris: a typical medieval castle
c Beaumaris: the oldest Welsh castle

Scotland is right to be proud of Edinburgh castle. It dominates the city of Edinburgh from high up on its rock. The history of Castle Rock goes back all the way to the late Bronze Age (900 BC), when there were already people living there. In the middle ages it became a royal castle, and this lasted until the 17th century. In the 18th century it became an army base, but it is now mainly known as a visitor attraction.

a Is Edinburgh the oldest castle in Britain?
b Edinburgh Castle: Scotland's pride and joy
c Edinburgh Castle and its many roles

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Part 3: Exam practice

1 **The reading passage has five sections, A–F. Choose the correct heading for sections A–F from the list of numbered headings below. Write the correct number i–x next to sections A–F.**

List of headings

i the disappearance of traditional playground sports
ii the disappearance of classic playground games
iii the dangers of the playground
iv the best traditional games in Britain
v possible explanations for the bans
vi not a very British bulldog
vii no real support for the bans
viii differing opinions about the bans
ix different ways of playing
x a closer look at some traditional games

Sections

Section A: .....
Section B: .....
Section C: .....
Section D: .....
Section E: .....
Section F: .....

Is this the end of traditional British playground pastimes?



Section A

A survey has suggested that traditional pastimes are increasingly being banned at break times in primary schools. Number one on the list is chasing game British Bulldog, followed by leapfrog and conkers.

Section B

Despite its name, British Bulldog is a game that does not involve animals, and is played all over the world in a number of variations. In its basic form it involves runners trying to get to the other side of the playground without being caught by the chaser, the 'bulldog'. If caught, they become a bulldog too, until there is only one person left: the winner of the game. 'Conkers' on the other hand, is genuinely British, as it is a game that was invented in England. The players bring their own 'conker': a horse chestnut attached to a thick piece of string that goes through the middle of the nut and is knotted underneath. Players pair up, wrap the string around one of their hands and try up to three times to hit the other person's conker by swinging their hand back and forth. They take this in turns until one of the conkers is destroyed. That could be the end of the game, or the winner could go on to 'fight' others. There are different types of scoring methods in place. The game is also played outside the school playground, with a world championship taking place in England every year.

Section C

It will come as no surprise that people have had accidents resulting in a broken arm or leg while playing British Bulldog, or by simply walking across the playground when a game is taking place! It is also not difficult to imagine that many conker players manage to hit their opponent's hand rather than their conker. Horse chestnuts are very hard and being hit with one hurts, as many school children will – proudly – tell you.

Section D

This whole situation is not new. In the past, we have also heard stories about the banning of kiss chase and of musical chairs. There is also anecdotal evidence that some schools ban marbles, and even hopscotch, duck-duck-goose and skipping. The main reason for forbidding these games is again fear of injury. Sometimes the justifications are stranger and perhaps not actually true. For example, kiss chase, a chase game where the person who has been caught receives a kiss before becoming the chaser, may pass on germs. And conkers might also be a problem for children with nut allergies.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Section E

Sporting activities are also becoming rarer on the playground, often because there is a lack of staff available to supervise them. Apart from banning these, there are also more original solutions, such as allowing students to play touch rugby only – a form of rugby where tackles are not allowed, and playing football with a soft ball rather than the traditional leather one. Having said that, these activities are often not popular with the kids, and this may discourage them from playing at all.

Section F

Your comments:

This is just ridiculous! Illnesses and injuries are part of growing up! *Sean, Watford*

I used to play all these games, and more. I think I split my lip once when I fell over during a circle game, but so what? It can't compete with the hours of fun I had with my friends. *Susan, Bournemouth*

I don't think it's wrong to question whether we should allow violent games in schools. After all, violence should not be tolerated in an educational environment. Perhaps this is something that could lead to healthy group discussions involving teachers and pupils about rules and behaviour, but in my opinion this should not result in a ban of healthy running games such as circle, tag or chase games. Otherwise all P.E. and sports activities should also be banned on health and safety grounds, which would be mad: it's just not necessary to do any of this. *Kiran, Cardiff*

Let's ban active playground activities. Let's keep the kids inside the classrooms during break times and pay extra staff to stay indoors to supervise them and keep them safe. Let's watch them become very fat and very boring adults! *A. Watson, Sheffield*

Allowing children to play games that involve the occasional risk, such as British Bulldog, teaches them to make intelligent decisions about their safety. *Mohammed, Scotland*

I blame lawyers and society: we always feel somebody should be to blame if anything goes wrong, so we can sue them for a lot of money. *Alison, London*

Glossary

leapfrog: a game that children play, in which a child bends over, while others jump over their back. • *a horse chestnut:* the nut of a horse chestnut tree (a large tree which has leaves with several pointed parts and shiny reddish-brown nuts) • *marbles:* a children's game played with small balls, usually made of coloured glass, in which you roll a ball along the ground and try to hit an opponent's ball

Progress check

How many boxes can you tick? You should work towards being able to tick them all.

Did you ...

skim-read the sections first, one by one? ☐

underline key words? ☐

consider the main point of each paragraph? ☐

consider the overall text organization? ☐

LIVEWORKSHEETS