UK PLACE NAMES

In many countries, people can tell you the meaning of their town or city, but most people who live in Manchester, Oxford or Birmingham cannot explain what the name of their city means.

CELTS

Two thousands years ago, most people living in Britain were Celts. The word "Britain" is Celtic. Then the Romans arrived and constructed camps that later were cities called "castra". This is why there are so many place names in England which end in "-chester" or "-caster". Like Manchester, for example. The Romans never reached Wales or Scotland and many place names there are Celtic.

ANGLO-SAXONS

After the Romans left Britain, it was attacked by tribes called the Anglo-Saxons who were from the area of Europe that is now Germany and Holland. The names of their villages often ended in "-ham" or "-ton". Some got their name from the leader of the village, so Birmingham, for example, means "Beormund's village". The Anglo-Saxons were farmers and the landscape was very important to them, so we have villages called Upton –meaning "village on a hill", a good place to build a village – and Moreton – meaning "Village by lake", not so good a place, since inundation could make life difficult. Oxford was first occupied in Saxon times as it was a place where oxes could cross – or ford- the river Thames.

VIKINGS

Twelve hundred years ago, the Vikings came to England from Scandinavia. They did business with the Anglo-Saxons but lived in their own villages. These often ended in "-by" or "-thorpe". The name "Kirby" means a village with a church and Scunthorpe was the village of a man called Skuma.

ROMANS

And how about London? Experts cannot agree! The Romans called the city Londinium, but they we're not the first inhabitants. Our best guess today is that the name comes from a Celtic word meaning a fast river. Like a number of British place names, its history is lost in time!.

Adapted from Speak Up 425, año XXXV

Choose the correct option:

1) Choose the best option according with the first paragraph: a) everybody knows the meaning of Manchester b) few people know the meaning of Birmingham C) not so many people from these cities can tell you the sense of their cities' names.

2) The Celts were in Britain: a) 200 years ago b) 2000 years ago c) 1200 years ago

3) The city which means that "animals can pass over is: a) Upton b) Moreton C) Oxford

4) Vikings came to England: a) 12000 years ago B) 1200 years ago D) 200 years ago

5) London: a) was a Roman city b) proceeds from a Celtic word c) comes from Latin

LIVEWORKSHEETS