Articles and nouns

Nouns are either proper, with a capital letter (*Shakespeare*), or common, without a capital letter (*poet*). Some common nouns are countable and can be singular (*woman*, *poet*) or plural (*women*, *poets*). Other common nouns are uncountable and are not used in the plural (*poetry*, *weather*).

With nouns, we can use an indefinite article (***a*** *poet*, ***an*** *old woman*), a definite article (***the*** *weather*, ***the*** *women*), or no article (*We're studying _ poetry written by _ women*).

1 Read these statements and choose what you think is the best answer.

1 A person is more likely to die in a car accident than an aircraft accident.	True / False
2 It is safer to fly in a newer plane than in an older plane.	True / False
3 A smaller plane is much safer than a larger plane.	True / False
4 The chance of being killed in a major airline crash is close to one in	8 / 18 / 80 million.
5 Airplane accidents rarely occur during the take-off and landing.	True / False
6 The more stops in a flight, the more dangerous it will be.	True / False
7 The likelihood of surviving an aircraft accident is about	8 / 18 / 80 per cent.
8 Natural materials are safer than synthetic materials if there is a fire.	True / False

2 Read through this text and find:

1 another use of the indefinite article *an*
2 a proper noun with the definite article



Flying in modern jets is one of the safest forms of transportation. It has been estimated that travelling by air is twenty-five times safer than travelling by car. This means that you are much more likely to get killed driving to or from the airport than during the flight.

The safest planes are the large modern jets of the major commercial airlines of Europe and the United States. One study showed that the chance of being killed in a commercial airline crash was only one in eight million. Smaller planes, commuter planes and older planes are far more likely to be involved in accidents.

Most airplane accidents occur during the take-off and landing parts of a flight. It follows that a non-stop flight will be safer than a flight with one or more stops. The duration of the flight doesn't seem to be a factor.

It is estimated that eighty per cent of the people involved in an aircraft accident survive. You can increase your chances of survival by knowing what to do before an accident occurs. Keep your seat belt fastened at all times. Identify the nearest emergency exit and count the number of seats between you and the exit. You may have to feel your way to the exit in the dark. Learn how to open the emergency door in case you are the first person to reach it. Wear clothes made from natural fibres such as cotton and wool rather than synthetic materials which may burn or melt on the skin. Think about carrying a smoke hood with you on the plane. If there is a fire, the hood can help protect you against smoke and toxic gases. Above all, don't panic.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Nouns

We begin proper nouns with capital letters and use them as the names of people, places, organizations, days, months and special occasions. Most of them have no article (6). But we use some proper nouns with the definite article in the plural (7) and some in the singular (8).

6 *Elvis Presley, Shakespeare, Denmark, Rome, NATO, Microsoft, Monday, July, Christmas*
7 ***the** Robertsons, **the** Arabs, **the** Alps, **the** Netherlands, **the** United Nations, **the** Middle Ages*
8 ***the** Queen, **the** United Kingdom, **the** BBC, **the** Eiffel Tower, **the** White House, **the** Gulf War*

We use common nouns to categorize or label people and things. They are countable or uncountable. We can use countable common nouns in the singular, with *a/an* and *each* (9), or in the plural, with numbers and *many* (10).

9 *Do you have a black **pen** or a **pencil**? • Each **child** should have a **book**.*
10 *We don't sell **pens** or **pencils**. • There are twenty **children**. • How many **books** will you need?*

We usually use uncountable common nouns when we talk about an abstract concept, an activity, a substance or a material. Uncountable nouns are not used with *a/an* or in the plural. We can use uncountable nouns with no article (11) and *much* (12).

11 *Her poem is about **flying**, **freedom** and bad **luck**.* (NOT … ~~*a bad luck.*~~)
12 *They have **food** and **clothing**, but they don't have much **water**.* (NOT … ~~*waters.*~~)

Uncountable nouns are also called non-count nouns or mass nouns.

3 Complete this table with appropriate examples from the text about flying on page 68.

Proper nouns	**Indefinite article** *a Rolls-Royce* *an Audi*	**Definite article** *the United Kingdom* *the United States*	**No article** *Shakespeare* (1) .....
Common nouns			
Countable: singular	*an accident* (2)	*the shelf* (3)	*(by) bus* (4) .....
Countable: plural		*the books* (5)	*children* (6) .....
Uncountable		*the food* (7)	*clothing* (8) .....

4 Write the numbers of appropriate examples in the spaces.

A/an or *the*

We usually use *a/an* to classify people or things when we mention them first ☐. We use *the* to identify people or things when we think they are already known ☐.

1 *We read **a** story about **a** man, **a** young Irish girl and **a** priceless diamond ring.*
2 *Do you remember **the** story about **the** man who tried to steal **the** ring from **the** Irish girl?*

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A/an: classifying

When we classify something, we are saying that it is a member of a category. We use *a/an* when we classify the kind of thing we're talking about or when we want to talk about any example of the kind of thing we're talking about .

3 *What's that? ~ It's* ***a*** *mouse. • His first film was* ***a*** *comedy.* (NOT ~~*His first film was comedy.*~~)
4 *Do you have* ***a*** *ruler? • I'm looking for* ***a*** *knife.* (NOT ~~*I'm looking for knife.*~~)

We use *a/an* when we classify people by the work they do or the kind of beliefs they have .

5 *I'm* ***a*** *socialist, not* ***a*** *communist. • Isn't your friend Voltra* ***a*** *vegetarian?*
6 *Sheila's* ***an*** *architect. • Stanley talks like* ***an*** *engineer. • I'm* ***a*** *student.* (NOT ~~*I'm student.*~~)

We can use *a/an* when we classify things in definitions , in descriptions of particular features and with a proper noun for one example of the type of thing mentioned .

7 *That painting is* ***a*** *Picasso. • Have you driven* ***a*** *Mercedes? • Is your watch* ***a*** *Calvin Klein?*
8 *The professor had* ***a*** *big nose,* ***a*** *small mouth and* ***an*** *enormous moustache.*
9 *Is* ***a*** *tomato* ***a*** *fruit or* ***a*** *vegetable? •* ***A*** *dolphin isn't* ***a*** *fish, it's* ***a*** *mammal.*

The: identifying

When we identify something, we are treating it as already known. We use *the* when we assume that people are familiar with the same ordinary things as we are in our daily lives and in the physical world outside .

10 *Please don't mention* ***the*** *sun,* ***the*** *sky,* ***the*** *earth,* ***the*** *weather or* ***the*** *environment today.*
11 *Where's* ***the*** *phone? I left it beside* ***the*** *radio on* ***the*** *table in* ***the*** *corner near* ***the*** *window.*

We use *the* when we identify people by their jobs or their unique roles in society . We also use *the* with professional organizations .

12 *Will you wait for* ***the*** *plumber? ~ I can't. • I have to go to* ***the*** *dentist. • Ask* ***the*** *caretaker.*
13 *He's thinking about joining* ***the*** *police or* ***the*** *army. • His brother works for* ***the*** *government.*
14 *Would you recognize* ***the*** *Pope,* ***the*** *Emperor of Japan,* ***the*** *Dalai Lama or* ***the*** *Queen?*

We can use *the* when we want to talk about something as a general concept and we're not referring to a specific example. We do this with inventions and musical instruments and with people, things and animals in generalizations .

15 ***The*** *horse was a symbol of freedom to* ***the*** *Apache. •* ***The*** *customer isn't always right.* (= any customer)
16 *What was life like before* ***the*** *computer? • Can anyone here play* ***the*** *piano or* ***the*** *organ?*

We use *the* when we identify things or parts of things with descriptive phrases after the noun, especially prepositional phrases with *of* and relative clauses . We also put *the* before superlative adjectives and emphasizing adjectives such as *main* or *first* .

17 ***The*** *best part was being* ***the*** *first person to get in. That was* ***the*** *main reason for going early.*
18 *Can I see* ***the*** *book that you bought? •* ***The*** *person who called yesterday said you owed him £20.*
19 *It's* ***the*** *middle of June already and I haven't finished painting* ***the*** *front of my house.*

Complete these descriptions with *a*, *an*, *the* or no article (–).

The Channel Islands are a group of – islands in (1) ..... English Channel near (2) ..... north-western coast of (3) ..... France. They have belonged to (4) ..... Britain since (5) ..... Normans arrived in (6) ..... 11th century, although they are not part of (7) ..... United Kingdom.

Charlie Chaplin was (8) ..... English film actor. He was also (9) ..... director. He did most of his work in (10) ..... USA. Many people consider him (11) ..... greatest comic actor of (12) ..... silent cinema. He appeared in many films as (13) ..... poor man with (14) ..... small round hat, (15) ..... small moustache and (16) ..... trousers and (17) ..... shoes that were too big for him, causing him to walk in (18) ..... funny way.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Complete this news item with *a*, *an*, *the* or no article (–).

There's (1) ..... giant tortoise in (2) ..... Galapagos Islands nicknamed (3) ..... Lonesome George who has never found (4) ..... mate. Recent studies by scientists suggest that (5) ..... lonely tortoise, now living on (6) ..... Pinto Island, actually belongs to (7) ..... species from (8) ..... island of (9) ..... Espanola. (10) ..... scientists plan to bring (11) ..... female from Espanola to see if (12) ..... George will become interested in mating.

A/an or *one*, *a/an* or no article, *the* or no article

A/an or *one*

We can use *a/an* or *one* before a noun to talk about a single thing or person.

1 *In some places, there are graves that are used again after* ***one/a*** *year and* ***one/a*** *day.*

We use *one* to emphasize the number (*only one* or *just one*) (2) or to talk about a particular but unspecified occasion, usually in narrative (3).

2 *We only have room for* ***one*** *passenger.* • *He tried to balance on* ***one*** *leg, but he fell over.*

3 ***One*** *day there was a terrible storm.* • ***One*** *time we almost had an accident.*

We use *one* in exact numbers, especially in phrases with larger numbers (4). We use *a/an* in approximate amounts and fractions (5).

4 *Our first car cost* ***one*** *thousand,* ***one*** *hundred and twenty pounds.* • *Add* ***one*** *cup of flour.*

5 *That trip cost almost* ***a*** *hundred pounds.* • *It took about* ***a*** *day and* ***a*** *half to complete.*

A/an or no article

We use *a/an* when we are thinking of something as a single unit (6). We use no article when something is not a single unit or it is uncountable (7).

6 *Would you like* ***a*** *coffee?* • *We have started* ***a*** *new research project.* • *Look! I caught* ***a*** *fish!*

7 *Do you prefer coffee or tea?* • *He's doing research on fish or shellfish.* (NOT ~~*He's doing a research*~~ …)

We use *a/an* before a noun to talk about a single example or instance of a more general thing (8) and no article when we are talking about the general concept (9).

8 *We bought* ***a*** *cheap wine.* • *I have* ***a*** *terrible fear of heights.* • *The old man had* ***a*** *good life.*

9 *I hate cheap wine.* • *Fear of death can affect anyone.* • *Life is beautiful, so enjoy it!*

The or no article

We use *the* for a specific meaning (10) and no article for a general meaning (11) before plural nouns such as *dogs* and uncountable nouns such as *money*.

10 ***The dogs*** *next door are friendly.* • *The children have already spent* ***the money*** *we gave them.*

11 *My sister is afraid of* ***dogs****.* • *Michelle's boyfriend is always talking about* ***money****.*

We use *the* with nouns such as *history* or *poetry* when they are followed by *of*-phrases (12) and no article in other contexts (13).

12 ***The poetry*** *of Philip Larkin is unusual.* • *We studied* ***the history*** *of Scotland.*

13 ***Poetry*** *isn't their favourite subject.* • *He taught us Scottish* ***history****.* (NOT ~~*He taught us the Scottish history.*~~)

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We can use *the* with nouns to talk about a specific time (14) or place (15) and no article with those same nouns after the prepositions *in* or *at* when we're talking more generally (16).

14 *That was* ***the Christmas*** *before you were born.* • *Did you hear that noise during* ***the night****?*
15 *After you pass* ***the school****, you'll see* ***the church****.* • ***The prison*** *is a big red building.*
16 *Most people would rather be in* ***school*** *or in* ***church*** *than in* ***prison****.* • *I can never study at* ***night****.*

Other prepositional phrases like this include: at Christmas, at university, in town, in winter

We use no article in many prepositional phrases referring to general concepts, as in *going by bus*, where there isn't a particular bus being classified or identified (17). We also use no article when we talk about sports (18).

17 *They came by bus.* • *Let's go to bed.* • *Send it by email.* (NOT ~~*Send it by the email.*~~)
18 *Anwar loves cricket.* • *Tennis is her favourite sport.* • *I don't play golf.* (NOT ~~*I don't play the golf.*~~)

Complete this text with *a/an*, *one* or no article (–).

One time I went out on a blind date with (1)..... man who had just started working in Cathy's office. That was (2)..... big mistake! We went to (3)..... cocktail bar. There was only (4)..... free table, in the darkest corner of the bar. He asked if I'd like (5)..... screwdriver. Well, I know there's (6)..... tool called (7)..... screwdriver, but I'd never heard of (8)..... drink called that. He explained that it was made with (9)..... vodka and (10)..... orange juice. I said I'd rather have (11)..... glass of (12)..... white wine. He said he had (13)..... very special white wine from France in his flat and I would really like it. He gulped back his drink and asked if I was ready for another drink before we left. I said I could only stay for (14)..... drink. When he went to the bathroom, I quickly grabbed my coat and left. Maybe it was called (15)..... 'blind' date, but I could see very clearly where it was going. I had to make (16)..... quick exit.

Complete this news report with *a*, *an*, *one*, *the* or no article (–).

John Millar, who lives near (1)..... Stirling in (2)..... central Scotland, thought he had found (3)..... bargain when he bought (4)..... Volkswagen for just (5)..... thousand, (6)..... hundred and sixty-five pounds at (7)..... auction in (8)..... April this year. Everything was fine for about (9)..... month, then (10)..... day, (11)..... car just stopped. John took it to (12)..... local garage where (13)..... mechanic thought there was (14)..... problem with (15)..... petrol supply. He was really surprised when he discovered (16)..... source of (17)..... problem. He had to remove (18)..... large, tightly-sealed plastic bag from (19)..... petrol tank. Inside (20)..... bag was (21)..... wad of (22)..... hundred pound notes. It amounted to fifteen thousand pounds. Suddenly, (23)..... Volkswagen was (24)..... even bigger bargain than John had imagined. But John is (25).....honest Scot and he reported his discovery to (26)..... police. They are now trying to find (27)..... car's previous owner because they want to know where (28)..... money came from and why it was hidden. John is waiting patiently and hoping that it will eventually be his. When that happens, he won't have to worry about (29)..... money for (30)..... petrol for quite some time.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Nouns: generic, pair, group, plural and singular (+*s*)

Generic nouns

We use nouns as generic nouns when we make general statements about any example (*a/an*), the general concept (*the*) or most examples (no article with plural) of the thing we're talking about (1) rather than real or particular examples (2).

1 ***An orange*** *has lots of vitamin C.* • ***The telephone*** *rules my life.* • ***Women*** *live longer than* ***men.***
2 *I just ate an orange.* • *Cindy's new telephone is pink.* • *I can see about ten women and two men.*

Pair nouns

We use pair nouns such as *scissors* or *trousers* to refer to things made of two matching parts that we use or wear. We usually use them with plural verbs (3). When we put pair nouns after the phrase *a pair of*, we use a singular verb and a plural pronoun (*them, they*) (4).

3 *These* ***scissors*** *aren't very sharp.* • *White* ***trousers*** *don't go very well with black shoes.*
4 *A good* ***pair of scissors*** *is hard to find.* • *There's a nice* ***pair of trousers*** *on sale. You should get them because they're really cheap. In fact, you should buy two pairs!* (NOT ~~*two trousers*~~)

Others include: binoculars, clippers, jeans, pants, pliers, pyjamas, shoes, sunglasses, tights

Group nouns

We can use group nouns to talk about a group of people as a single unit, with singular verbs and pronouns (5), or as several people, with plural verbs and pronouns (6). Group nouns are also called collective nouns.

5 *The* ***public is****n't really interested in what the* ***government is*** *doing unless* ***it*** *increases taxes.*
6 *The* ***public are*** *more likely to complain if* ***they*** *have to pay more taxes.*

Others include: audience, band, club, committee, family, jury, majority, parliament, team
In American English, singular verbs are typically used after group nouns.

We can use some proper nouns as group nouns, with plural verbs, for teams and organizations.

7 *England* ***are*** *ready to play France.* • *British Rail* ***have*** *announced new plans.*

Plural and singular (+*s*) nouns

Plural nouns are words with distinct meanings that are not used in the singular.

8 *He said* ***thanks*** *for looking after his* ***belongings.*** • *Good* ***manners*** *are important.*

Others include: clothes, congratulations, groceries, outskirts, remains, surroundings, troops
Plural nouns that do not end with *-s* include: cattle, clergy, people, police, poultry

Singular (+*s*) nouns are words that end in *-s* and appear to be plural, but are used with singular verbs when we talk about areas of study, activities and disease.

9 ***Statistics was*** *a difficult course.* • ***Aerobics is*** *hard work.* • ***Rabies has*** *become a deadly disease.*

Others include: athletics, billiards, cards, diabetes, electronics, measles, physics, politics

We also use singular verbs after some phrases with nouns in the plural describing amounts.

10 *Five miles* ***is*** *a long walk.* • *Twenty pounds* ***is*** *too much!* • *Two weeks* ***isn't*** *enough time.*

Using a dictionary if necessary, choose an ending (a–f) for each beginning (1–6) and add these nouns plus *is* or *are*.

binoculars *clergy* *fortnight* *mathematics* *outskirts* *press*

1 The ..... of a town.....	a to see things far away.
2 The ..... a general term	b the science of numbers.
3 The ..... people	c called a ..... in Britain.
4 ..... described as	d for newspapers and journalists.
5 ..... used	e the parts that are far from the centre.
6 Two weeks ..... sometimes	f such as priests and ministers.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

The Use of Articles with Geographical Names The Zero Article

With the following types of geographical and place names **there is usually zero (no) article:**

1. **continents**: Europe, Asia, Australia, South / North America, Africa, Antarctica

(but you can say 'the African Continent);

2. **countries:** France, Russia; (however, some names of countries have **the definite article**, in particular **those which contain common nouns**: the United States of America, the United Kingdom; this is the same with abbreviated alternatives: the USA, the UK; **plurals also have the:** the Netherlands, the Philippines;
3. with the names of countries that **have developed from geographical regions** there used to be **two possibilities**, with or without the definite article:

- Sudan – the Sudan
- Yemen – the Yemen
- Argentina – the Argentine
- Cameroun – the Cameroons
- Ukraine – the Ukraine
- Ivory Coast – the Ivory Coast

The tendency is to use the form without the definite article);

4. **villages, towns and cities**: Tonbridge, London (**but the Hague**);
5. **bays**: San Francisco Bay **(**however, where there are two nouns separated by 'of', the definite article is used: the Bay of Bengal, the Bay of Biscay;
6. **lakes:**Lake Michigan (but the Great Salt Lake);
7. **individual islands:** Ireland, Bermuda, Sicily (there are exceptions when two nouns have 'of' in between: the Isle of Man, the Isle of Wight);
8. **individual mountains:**Ben Nevis, Everest.

The Definite Article

You use **the definite article** with the following types of geographical or place names:

1. **groups of islands:**the British Isles, the Hawaiian Islands (sometimes there are alternatives; you can say the Orkney Islands or the Orkneys);
2. **mountain ranges:**the Alps, the Himalayas (sometimes there are alternatives: the Rocky Mountains or the Rockies);
3. **geographical regions:** the Midlands, the Middle East, the Crimea, the South of England;
4. **deserts**: the Sahara, the Gobi Desert;
5. **rivers, seas, oceans, canals, channels, gulfs, straits**: the Thames, the River Severn, the Panama Canal, the Pacific (Ocean), the Baltic (Sea), the Mediterranean (Sea), the English Channel, the Gulf of Mexico, the Strait(s) of Dover.

Note: You use the definite article before a number of nouns which indicate geographical alternatives, for example, the town – the country; the sea – the land. We are not referring to a particular place, for example a particular town or forest. We are talking about the types of landscape or geographical environment where people live, work, or go for holidays. Here are some words you can use like this:

- the city (the town)
- the desert

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- the land
- the country
- the forest
- the sea
- the countryside
- the jungle
- the mountains

The noun '**sea'** is used in certain prepositional expressions without '**the'**: e.g. ... after he'd gone **to sea;** ... the main danger to naval forces and shipping **at sea.**

The use of articles with geographical names

		Zero Article	Indefinite Article	Definite Article
1	***Continents***	1. ***general use*** • Europe; Asia; Antarctica • ***modified by some descriptive attributes in pre-position:*** northern, southern, eastern, western, central, minor, south-west (etc), Latin, ancient, old, new, industrial, medieval, modern • North America • Central Asia	-	***limitation clear from the context***, e.g. It was the Europe of 1600s.
2	***Countries***	1. ***with names that consist of one word*** Ukraine; England; Poland 2. ***modified by some descriptive attributes in pre-position*** *(see above)*. • Ancient Rome • modern London	***indicates some unusual qualities or mood in the given situation*** It was a new Italy Marko did not recognize.	***is used if the names consist of more than one word*** • the United States of America • the United Emirates • the United Kingdom ***indicates traditional use*** • the Argentine (but Argentina) • the Netherlands • (the) Lebanon; (the) Congo; (the) Senegal; (the) Kameroon; (the) Sudan

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3	***Regions and provinces***	Kharkiv Region,	-	***indicates traditional use*** • the Lake District • the Caucasus; the Crimea • the Ruhr; the Tyrol; the Riviera; the Transvaal; the Saar
4	***Cities, towns, villages***	***traditional use*** • London (city) • Broadstairs (town) • Middlemead (village)	***to show some unusual qualities or mood in the given situation*** It was **a** different Paris unknown to him.	1. ***clear from the situation***, usually with a limiting attribute, e.g. It was not the France of his youth. 2. ***with an 'of-phrase'***, e.g. the city of Chester; the village of Amberley 3. ***an exception***- the Hague
5	***Mountains, mountain passes and islands***	***separate mountains, peaks and islands*** • Snowdon • Mount Everest • Cyprus	-	***mountain chains and groups pf islands*** • the Rocky Mountains • the Bahamas • the Saint Gotthard Pass • the Isle of Man (of-phrase)
6	***Lakes***	***with the word 'lake'*** Lake Michigan; Silver Lake	-	***without the word 'lake'*** the Michigan, the Windermere
7	***Oceans, seas, rivers, straights, channels, canals, waterfalls, bays, gulfs***	-	-	• the Indian Ocean • the North Sea • the Trent (a river in England) • the Magellan Straits (the Strait of Magellan) • the English Channel • the Panama Canal • the Niagara Falls • North Bay (but the San Francisco Bay) • the Gulf of Mexico
8	***Peninsulas and capes***	***without the word 'peninsula'*** • Hindustan • Labrador • Cape Horn • Cape Province		***with the word 'peninsula'*** • the Hindustan Peninsula • the Labrador Peninsula **with 'of – phrase'** (traditional use) • the Cape of Good Hope

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9	***Deserts***	-	-	the Sahara Desert
10	***Names traditionally used in the plural***	-	-	• the Midlands • the Netherlands • the Yorkshire Forests
11	***Streets, squares, parks***	• Baker Street • Drury Lane • Brown Close • Sunset Boulevard • Piccadilly Circus • Hyde Park		***traditional use*** • the Strand (in London) • the High Street • The Main Street • the Mall • the Plaza San Marco (in foreign names)

Choose 'the' or 'no article'.

1. I went sailing around_____Lake Geneva.
2. I've been living in_____London for six years.
3. _____Danube runs through many European cities.
4. Wild horses live in_____Gobi Desert.
5. _____Pacific Ocean has many different types of fish.
6. I love swimming in_____ Mediterranean.
7. We spent our holiday on the shore of_____Lake Windermere.
8. _____Nile is a very beautiful river.
9. She stayed in_____Belgrade for several weeks.
10. Her husband comes from_____California.
11. They studied the geology of_____Sahara Desert.
12. They crossed_____Black Sea by boat.
13. He has always wanted to visit_____Rome.
14. She lived in_____Asia for several years.
15. _____Tuscany has many beautiful cities.
16. I spent a year travelling around_____Europe.
17. Her village is near_____Lake Titicaca.
18. Would you like to visit_____South America?
19. They live near_____Thames.
20. I think_____Cornwall is a very beautiful part of England.

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