

Did you know?



Commonwealth Day

Although the United Kingdom may have left the European Union, it still remains central to that bigger association of countries: the Commonwealth.

The Commonwealth evolved (mainly) from the colonies and territories of the British Empire, which at its peak, was so vast, and its territories so widely spread over the world, it was said that the sun never set on the Empire. Founded in 1931, the British Commonwealth of Nations officially came into being with just seven members – United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Newfoundland and the Free Irish State - and in the meantime it has grown to 54 members spread across the globe. These days, this political association of member states is called simply as The Commonwealth.

The Commonwealth is an international organization, membership of which is entirely voluntary, and it extends over 6 continents (North and South America, Europe, Africa, Asia and Australasia) with 54 members with diverse political, social and economic backgrounds. However, the member countries often have shared traditions, institutions, experiences and economic self-interest. The combined population of the Commonwealth is 2.4 billion - almost one third of the global population. All members are treated equally and are seen as having equal status: India with a population of 1.3 billion has equal footing with Tuvalu with a population of 10,000. There is no formal constitution and members support each other and work together towards international goals of friendship and practical cooperation. Educational links are also important – many Commonwealth students study in other member countries and British teachers go and work overseas in other Commonwealth countries. Although most of the members are former dependencies or colonies of the United Kingdom there are two countries who chose to join despite never having been under British rule: Mozambique and Rwanda. The monarch of the United Kingdom – for nearly 70 years, Elizabeth II – is the head of the Commonwealth, although she has no political or executive power. Prince Charles, the Queen's heir, has been nominated as her successor.

Each year, on the second Monday in March, an annual celebration of the Commonwealth is held throughout all the member countries. The theme for Commonwealth Day on 9 March 2020 is 'Delivering a Common Future: Connecting, Innovating, Transforming.' It will be marked by cultural events, debates, assemblies, street parties and multi-faith services.

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Did you know?

If you would like to read more about Commonwealth Day 2020 then click [here](#). General information about the Commonwealth can be found [here](#).

If you would like to use **Commonwealth Day** in your lesson, then we have an activity for you, at B1 level. You will find the activities in the **Teacher's notes** and the **Worksheet**.

Teacher's notes

Commonwealth Day (Level B1 and above, 10+ mins)

- Make a copy of **Commonwealth Day**, one for each student.
- On the board write *Commonwealth* and ask students if they know what it is. (An association of countries who were previously dependencies or territories of the British Empire who maintain ties of friendship and cooperation – plus the United Kingdom.)
- On the board write: *Canada, Chile, France, India, Iran and Jamaica*. Ask students to work in pairs and decide which of these countries are in the Commonwealth. Check answers (*Canada, India and Jamaica are members of the Commonwealth.*)
- Hand out copies of **Commonwealth Day**, one to each student and ask them to work alone and then compare their answers with a partner.
- Check answers together in class. Key: 1b, 2c, 3b, 4c, 5a, 6b, 7a, 8a, 9c, 10a
- Ask students if they have ever visited any Commonwealth countries.

If students are interested, allocate one country to each student and ask them to do some extra research.

Commonwealth countries: Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belize, Botswana, Brunei, Cameroon, Canada, Dominica, Fiji, The Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guyana, India, Jamaica, Kenya, Kiribati, Lesotho, Malawi, Malaysia, Malta, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nauru, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Cyprus, Rwanda, Samoa, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Sri Lanka, St Christopher and Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Swaziland, The Bahamas, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tuvalu, Uganda, United Kingdom, Tanzania, Vanuatu, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Commonwealth Day

The Commonwealth is an organization of countries throughout the world which were associated with the British Empire.

Read the questions below and choose the correct answer.

- 1 How many countries are in the Commonwealth?
a 15 b 54 c 101
- 2 What percentage of the world's population is in the Commonwealth?
A 75% b 50% c 33%
- 3 When was the Commonwealth founded?
A 1911 b 1931 c 1951
- 4 What is the population of Tuvalu, the smallest country in the Commonwealth?
a 100,000 b 50,000 c 10,000
- 5 What is the population of India, the biggest country in the Commonwealth?
a 1.3 billion b 2.3 billion c 3.3 billion
- 6 Which was the last country to join the Commonwealth?
a Pakistan b Rwanda c New Zealand
- 7 Guyana has been a member since 1966. Which of these is true about Guyana?
a It is the only English speaking country in South America.
b The capital city is London.
c The name Guyana means *fish and chips* in an Indian language.
- 8 Canada has the longest street (Yonge Street) in the world. How long is it?
a 2000kms b 1000kms c 500kms
- 9 Every four years the Commonwealth holds a competition. What is the name of the competition?
a Commonwealth Football Championship
b Commonwealth Song Contest
c Commonwealth Games
- 10 The Head of the Commonwealth is
a The Queen b Tony Blair c Prince Andrew

Have you ever visited a Commonwealth country? Tell your neighbour.