

# UNIT 3

# British Ties



## **Chapter 8      The Commonwealth of Nations**

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# Chapter 8

## The Commonwealth of Nations

### Chapter Preview

#### *Places*

United Kingdom, Canada, United States, Australia, South Africa, India, Pakistan, Jamaica, Tanzania, Malta, the Bahamas, Belize, Barbados, Rwanda, Mozambique

#### *Terms*

French and Indian War, indigenous, assimilate, British Commonwealth, Commonwealth Games



**Top:** Flag of the Commonwealth of Nations. **Background:** Flags of the members of the Commonwealth in Parliament Square, London.

The United Kingdom, Canada, the United States, and Australia have a lot in common. All of these countries have English as their dominant language, are governed by a form of representative government, and share similar cultural beliefs, values, and practices. Although there are many differences among these countries that make them unique, someone who is familiar with the culture and customs of one will have an easier time adjusting in another.

How is it that these countries, which are separated by oceans and thousands of miles, have so much in common? The answer is colonization. The British Empire was one of the largest empires in modern history. Britain spread its culture and language to its colonies of Canada, Australia, and those that later formed the United States of America. The British held colonies around the world from the 16th century all the way until the mid-20th century. During the 19th century and early 20th century, the United Kingdom's influence increased. By the 1920s, one-fourth of the world's population was under British control.



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*In recent times, European nations, with the use of gunpowder and other technical improvements in warfare, controlled practically the whole world. One, the British Empire, brought under one government a quarter of the earth and its inhabitants.*

-John Boyd Orr,  
Scottish teacher,  
biologist, and  
Nobel laureate,  
December 1949

“

*I have not become the King's First Minister in order to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire.*

-Winston Churchill,  
to the House  
of Commons,  
November 1942

**Middle:** This World War II-era poster depicts servicemen from seven different Commonwealth nations marching together.

**Background:** During World War II, the Eighth Army was made up of units from many different countries in the British Empire and Commonwealth. These soldiers in the 9th Australian Infantry participated in the Second Battle of El Alamein, Egypt. **Top Right:** King James I, ruler of England from 1603 to 1625. **Middle Right:** The Houses of Parliament in London, England.

# TIMELINE

## OF BRITISH HISTORY



Figure 8.1

1500

1542 Wales and England united

1600

1603 King James became king of England in addition to Scotland  
 England and Scotland each kept its own parliament  
 1607 Jamestown established as the first permanent English settlement in North America



1700

1707 Scottish and English parliaments combined to form the Parliament of Great Britain  
 Kingdom of Great Britain formed  
 "British" came into use



1763 Canada became part of the British Empire at the end of the French and Indian War

1776 Thirteen British colonies declared their independence from Great Britain

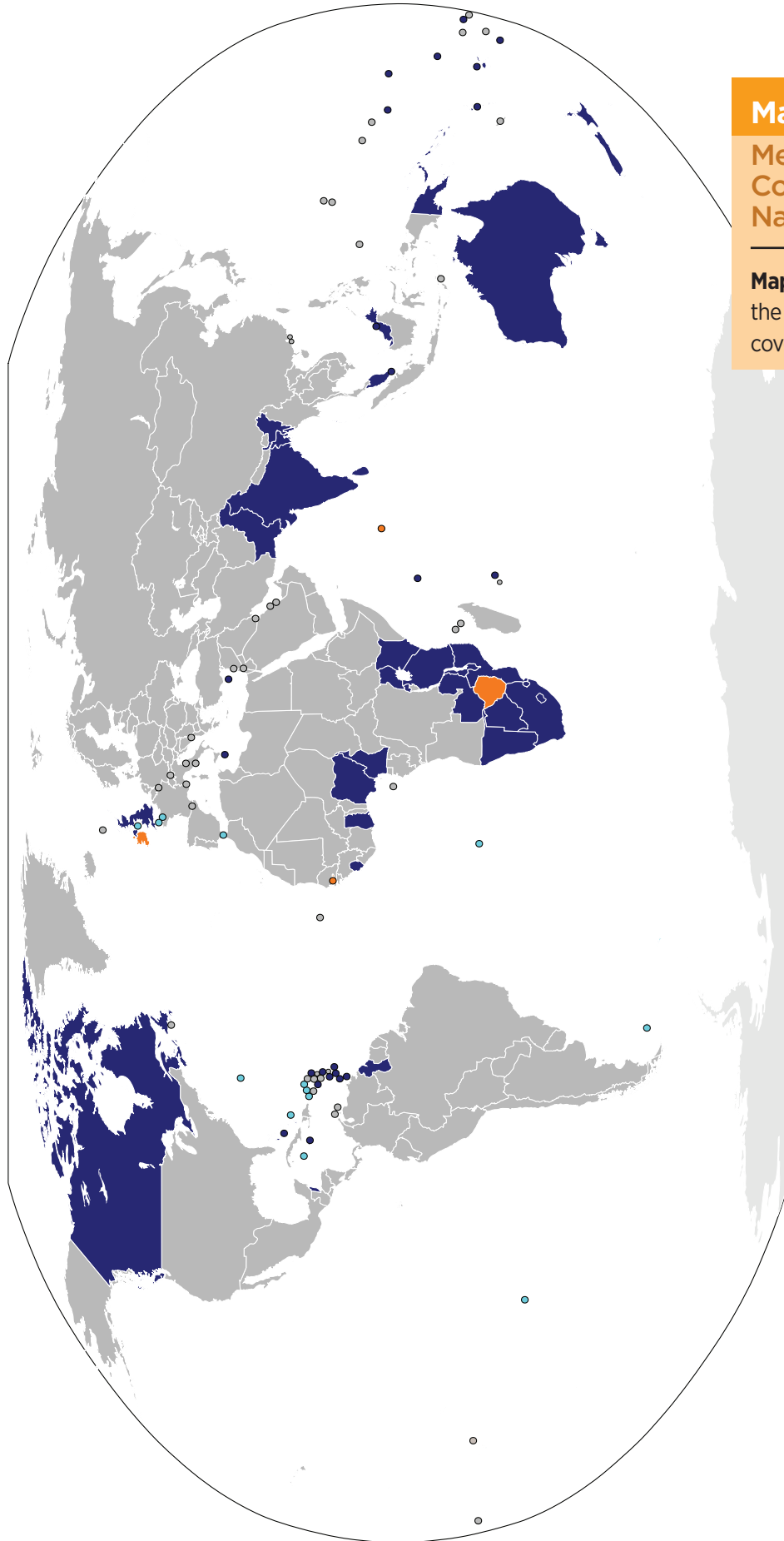
1788 British colonization of Australia began

1800

1801 Ireland united with England, Wales, and Scotland  
 United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland formed

1900

1922 Ireland won independence  
 Northern Ireland formed; it remains with England, Wales, and Scotland  
 United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland formed



### Map 8.1

## Member States of the Commonwealth of Nations

**Map Skill:** Which country of the Commonwealth of Nations covers an entire continent?

- Commonwealth of Nations members
- Former Commonwealth of Nations members (Ireland, The Gambia, Maldives and Zimbabwe)
- British Overseas Territories and Crown dependencies (Ascension Island & Tristan da Cunha, both governed from St Helena, are not shown)



Anguilla



Antigua and Barbuda



Australia



Bahamas



Bangladesh



Barbados



Belize



Bermuda



Botswana



British Antarctic Territory



British Indian Ocean Territory



Virgin Islands



Brunei



Cameroon



Canada



Cayman Islands

## Section 1

# A Brief History of British Colonization

Setting a Purpose

### As you read, look for

- ▶ how the United States, Canada, and Australia gained their independence;
- ▶ the United Kingdom's global reputation;
- ▶ term: **French and Indian War.**

By the mid-1600s there were a number of English colonies in the western hemisphere. Even though other European countries had colonies in North America, the Kingdom of Great Britain won out over its European rivals that included the Dutch, French, and Spanish. Among the original British colonies was Georgia, which was founded in 1733. Canada became part of the British Empire in 1763 as a result of the British victory over France in the **French and Indian War**. In 1788, the British also colonized the continent of Australia and the many islands along their trading routes.



**Outline:** Flags of the Commonwealth nations. **Right:** Prime ministers from Canada, South Africa, the United Kingdom (Winston Churchill), New Zealand, and Australia met in London at the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference in 1944.



In 1776, the Kingdom of Great Britain lost a large part of its empire when 13 North American colonies united in a war for independence. The Revolutionary War led to the formation of the United States. Although Canada too was a British colony, its people did not join the other colonies in forming the United States. The British maintained control over Canada and Australia until the 20th century. Over the years, some British colonies across the world fought for their independence, but other colonies, such as Canada and Australia, were able to peacefully gain their freedom. Countries that peacefully won independence generally maintain stronger ties to the United Kingdom today as part of the British Commonwealth.

The British Empire remained strong until the war-torn 20th century. As you learned in Chapter 5, the United Kingdom received many direct attacks that damaged infrastructure, interrupted the economy, and took many lives during World War II. After the war, most territories and colonies of the British Empire became independent. The battered United Kingdom no longer had the financial resources to maintain its empire and rebuild at home.

## Reviewing the Section

1. Describe how the United States, Canada, and Australia gained their independence.
2. Why do you think the United Kingdom's reputation plays an important role in running an empire?



Christmas Island



Cocos (Keeling) Is.



Cook Islands



Cyprus



Dominica



Falkland Islands



Fiji



Gambia



Ghana



Gibraltar



Grenada



Guernsey



Guyana



India



Isle of Man



Jamaica

**Outline:** Flags of the Commonwealth nations. **Top:** Marlborough House in London is the headquarters of the Commonwealth of Nations and the seat of the Commonwealth Secretariat.



# special Feature

## Great Britain versus United Kingdom

Learning about the United Kingdom can be confusing because there seem to be so many names for the same country. Not all of these names refer to the same thing though. One of the most important things to understand is that some terms are geographical and others are political. For example, Great Britain is the largest island in the British Isles. However, the Kingdom of Great Britain (name used between 1707 and 1801) is a political term. It received this name because all kingdoms on the island of Great Britain had joined together under one government. Throughout history, the official name of this country has changed as its borders have moved.

Today when you hear someone mention the United Kingdom, UK, or Britain, they are referring to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. That is quite a mouthful, which explains why a shortened name is often used. The United Kingdom includes

four countries: England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Having countries within a country is confusing, but this system works because the countries have devolved (some power removed) parliaments that give power to the UK government.

Each country has its own history, identity, and culture, but they have come together to form a stronger country. However, the United Kingdom has a long history and has only been in its current form for about 100 years.



The history of the United Kingdom as a unified country began in the 16th century. Wales was united with England by the Acts of Union of 1536 and 1542. In 1603, Queen Elizabeth I died without an heir to the English throne. Since monarchy is based on a family line, her cousin James, who was the king of Scotland, inherited the crown of England including Wales. He was then known as James I of England and James VI of Scotland—two different titles for two different kingdoms. Scotland and England shared a monarch but had separate parliaments for many years.



In 1707, a single Parliament of Great Britain was established, and the name was changed to the Kingdom of Great Britain. The adjective “British” started being used at this time to refer to the kingdom’s people, who were all from the island of Great Britain even though they had different nationalities (English, Scottish, or Welsh). The island of Ireland came under British control during the 1600s. This led to colonization by British settlers. The country then became the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland once Ireland was formally united with the Kingdom of Great Britain through the Act of Union of 1800.

However, Irish natives fiercely fought for independence after abuse from the British. In 1922, the island of Ireland was split into the two countries of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Ireland is also referred to as the Republic of Ireland. Many people in Northern Ireland were descendants of British colonists and wished to remain in the United Kingdom. The retention of Northern Ireland and the loss of Ireland was the final step to form the modern day United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

**Background:** The flags of the United Kingdom: England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. **Above:** Elizabeth II has reigned as monarch of the United Kingdom since 1952.

## Section 2

## British Culture Abroad

Setting a Purpose

## As you read, look for

- ▶ reasons British colonists recreated their culture in the colonies;
- ▶ how indigenous people in the colonies felt about British culture;
- ▶ terms: **indigenous**, **assimilate**.

So how exactly does colonization explain the similarities we notice today between the United States, Canada, and Australia? Throughout history, the movement of people has resulted in the sharing of languages, religions, and ideas. As British people traveled around the world, they brought their language and culture with them. In many cases, British culture was forced upon **indigenous** (native) people for the comfort of colonists. For example, English is spoken in most former British colonies today because it was the language of the ruling colonists, who required the indigenous people to learn it.

In other cases, the United Kingdom encouraged British people to immigrate *en masse* (as a group) to new colonies in order to secure ownership of the land. These colonists brought their language, religion, and culture with them. This was the only way of life they had known, so they recreated their home abroad. Although they did try to **assimilate** (absorb into their cultural tradition) indigenous people, the British colonists outnumbered indigenous people in many colonies. This was the case with the United States, Canada, and Australia. Although the colonists were spread across the three countries, they all recreated the same place, Britain.

## Reviewing the Section

1. What are two reasons British colonists wanted their culture with them?
2. Why would it be comforting to recreate your home in a foreign place?
3. How do you think indigenous people in the colonies felt about British culture?



Jersey



Kenya



Kiribati



Lesotho



Malawi



Malaysia



Maldives



Malta



Mauritius



Montserrat



Mozambique



Namibia



Nauru



New Zealand



Nigeria



Niue



**Outline:** Flags of the Commonwealth nations. **Above:** Ebenezer Church, established in 1809, is the oldest standing church building in Australia.

## Section 3

# The British Commonwealth

## As you read, look for

- ▶ benefits of being a member of the British Commonwealth;
- ▶ similarities and differences among member nations of the Commonwealth;
- ▶ terms: **British Commonwealth, Commonwealth Games.**



As you learn about Canada and Australia, you are going to hear the phrase **British Commonwealth**. Do you know what that means? Almost all members of the Commonwealth were once British colonies. As the colonies gained their independence throughout the 1900s, some colonies chose to continue their ties with the United Kingdom. Over 2 billion people around the world—one-third of the world's population—live in Commonwealth countries! The land area of the Commonwealth includes about one-quarter of the earth.

The British monarch is the head of the Commonwealth and is also the head of state in 16 countries that are part of the Commonwealth. In order to join the Commonwealth, countries must have equal rights within their country and agree with the Commonwealth's position on unity, peace, equality, and free trade. Countries are able to join or leave at any time. If the Commonwealth decides a country has violated its ideals, it can suspend that country's membership.



Norfolk Island



Pakistan



Papua New Guinea



Pitcairn Islands



Rwanda



Samoa



Seychelles



Sierra Leone



Singapore



Solomon Islands



South Africa



South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands



Sri Lanka



Saint Helena



Saint Kitts and Nevis



Saint Lucia

**Outline:** Flags of the Commonwealth nations. **Left:** The British Commonwealth flag flies near the Peace Tower on Parliament Hill in the Canadian capital of Ottawa.



Saint Vincent and the Grenadines



Swaziland



Tanzania



Tokelau



Tonga



Trinidad and Tobago



Tristan da Cunha



Turks and Caicos Islands



Tuvalu



Uganda



United Kingdom



Vanuatu



Zambia

There are 52 countries around the world that are part of the Commonwealth. Some of the Commonwealth countries include South Africa, India, Pakistan, Jamaica, Tanzania, Malta, the Bahamas, Belize, and Barbados. Today, Australia and Canada are members of the Commonwealth, but the United States has never belonged even though it was once a British colony. The member countries include some of the richest and poorest countries in the world. There are actually two member countries now, Rwanda and Mozambique, that were not even part of the British Empire.

There are several benefits to being a member of the Commonwealth. One of the most important benefits is having diplomatic relationships with other member nations throughout the world. In other words, they have allies around the world. Commonwealth membership also gives smaller countries a voice in the world. While it is not a free trade organization like the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) or the European Union (EU), many member countries have enjoyed increased trade as a result of being part of the Commonwealth. Finally, another benefit of being part of the Commonwealth is the **Commonwealth Games**. Similar to the Olympics, the games are held every four years in a different city around the world.

## Reviewing the Section

1. What is a benefit of being a Commonwealth member?
2. What do most member countries have in common?

**Outline:** Flags of the Commonwealth nations. **Bottom:** England competed against Samoa in rugby at the 2006 Commonwealth Games in Melbourne, Australia. England went on to win the rugby silver medal that year.

# Chapter Review

## Chapter Summary

### Section 1: A Brief History of British Colonization

- The British competed with other European countries to gain colonies in North America.
- Their expansive empire covered the globe from the 16th century until the end of World War II.

### Section 2: British Culture Abroad

- The United States, Canada, and Australia share similar cultures because they were all originally British colonies.
- The religion, language, and ideas in the United Kingdom were spread by colonists as they moved around the world.

### Section 3: The British Commonwealth

- British Commonwealth members have strong ties with the United Kingdom and other member countries. These ties encourage trade and diplomatic relations.
- Canada and Australia gained independence peacefully and are part of the Commonwealth.
- Although it is a former colony, the United States has never been a Commonwealth country.

## Activities for Learning



### Reviewing People, Places, and Things

Write a short paragraph containing each of the following words. Do not repeat phrases from the chapter or write definitions of the words.

British Commonwealth	monarch
British Empire	colonists
culture	language

### Understanding the Facts



1. What other European countries colonized North America?
2. How did the United States and Canada differ in gaining independence?

3. What caused the end of the British Empire?
4. What are two ways British culture spread through colonization?
5. Why did Britain send many of its people to certain colonies?
6. Who is the leader of the British Commonwealth?
7. Name two benefits of being a Commonwealth member country.
8. Name three Commonwealth member countries.

### Developing Critical Thinking



1. How do you think indigenous people in former colonies feel about the effects of British culture on their countries today? Why? How does this affect their relationship with the United Kingdom?
2. Most US citizens still have family in countries where their ancestors lived. Do you think the British colonists spread across the empire may have also been related? Why? How would these family ties affect historical decisions?

### Writing across the Curriculum



When people travel, they bring their ideas, religion, and language with them. Write a short report about a time someone shared part of their culture with you. What was it? How did it change your understanding of the world? Do you think it is important to understand other cultures?

### Applying Your Skills



Create a chart that contains examples of prominent cultural items of the United States, Canada, and Australia. You can include cultural items that were and were not discussed in this chapter. Give examples of the cultural item in each country to see how similar these countries still are.

### Exploring Technology



Access the Commonwealth's official online archives at <http://tiny.cc/cwealth>. Browse through the photos to find one that illustrates the combination of British and indigenous cultures. Save your image, and explain in a short paragraph what things you see from each culture.