Culture in Great Britain

It you're staying in London for a few days, you'll have no difficulty whatever in finding somewhere to spend an enjoyable evening. You'll find opera, ballet, comedy, drama, review, musical comedy and variety. Most theatres and music-halls have good orchestras with popular conductors. At the West-End theatres you can see most of the famous English actors and actresses. As a rule, the plays are magnificently staged - costumes, dresses, scenery, everything being done on the most lavish scale.

The last half of the XVI and the beginning of the XVII centuries are known as the golden age of English literature, It was the time of the English Renaissance, and sometimes it is even called "the age of Shakespeare".

Shakespeare, the greatest and most famous of English writers, and probably the greatest playwright who has ever lived, was born in Stratford-on-Avon. In spite of his fame we know very little about his life. He wrote 37 plays. Among them there are deep tragedies, such as Hamlet, King Lear, Othello, Macbeth, light comedies, such as The Merry Wives of Windsor, All's Well That Ends Well, Twelfth Night, Much Ado About Nothing.

Customs and traditions

I am going to tell you about English customs and traditions. First of all it concerns United Kingdom political system. In Great Britain there is no written constitution, only customs, traditions and precedents. After the English Revolution of Great Britain is a constitutional monarchy headed by King (now Queen, Elisabeth the second). Traditionally the queen acts only on the advice of her Ministers. She reigns but she does not rule.

Englishmen have traditions not only in political, but in social life. For example, London, the capital of England, is traditionally divided into three parts: the West End, the East end, and the City. The City is a historical, financial and business centre of London. The East End is the district inhabited by the workers, and the West End is a fashionable shopping and entertaining centre. English people like to spend their free time in numerous pubs where they can have a glass of beer and talk about different things with their friends.

The English are traditional about their meals. They eat eggs and bacon with toasts for breakfast, pudding or apple pie for dessert. Every English family has five o'clock tea. A typical feature of an english house is a fireplace, even when there is central heating in the house.

English people like domestic animals. Every family has a pet: a dog, a cat or a bird.

Politeness is a characteristic feature of Englishmen. They often say "Thank you", "Sorry", "Beg your pardon". Russian people, I think, have to learn this good custom.

Englishmen have many traditional holidays, such as Christmas, St. Valentine's Day, Mother's day, Easter and others.

Education in GB

I know English boys and girls begin to go to school(it is called "infant") at five; at seven they go to junior schools or departments; at eleven they go to secondary schools. (After selection procedures at the age of eleven they can study at different types of secondary school: grammar schools which provide an academic education oriented towards university entry; secondary modern schools which were originally designed to give a general education with a practical bias(уклон); a few secondary technique schools offering a general education related to industry, commerce and agriculture; and schools providing all three or any two types of education, in separately organised streams known as multilateral or bilateral schools).

These schools consist of denominational and non-denominational schools. I'd like to yell you about non-denominational school. One must study there for 6 years. It's open to all boys and girls. There are the six years in this school. During the first year all classes receive the same basic core of subjects namely English, maths, history, geography, science, French, art, music, P.E., technical subjects & home economics. Toward the end of the second year pupils are asked to make their subject choices for third and forth years. Decisions on this stage are only taken after interviews involving parents, staff and the pupils themselves. The curriculum in 3rd and 4th years consists of compulsory section (обязательное разделение) which includes English, math and an options section made up of those subjects chosen by the pupil at the end of the second year. Optional courses are designed to give a sound basic education.

The system of higher education in Britain includes universities, colleges of education and advanced courses at various colleges.

There are more than 44 universities in Britain. But not all universities are equal. They differ from one another in history and tradition. The oldest and world-known universities are Oxford and Cambridge.

A university usually consists of colleges. The departments of the colleges are organised into faculties. In the university students have a series of lectures, seminars, tutorials and laboratory classes. Lectures are given to large groups of students while seminars are much smaller than lectures. Lectures and seminars are all one hour in length, laboratory classes last 2 or 3 hours. The academic year divides into 3 terms. First two terms last for 24 weeks; the 3rd term is reserved for classes and examinations and lasts for six weeks.

After three years of study a university graduate will leave with the Degree of Bachelor of Arts or Science. Student can continue to take his Master's Degree and then the Doctor's.

Education in Russia.

Citizens of Russia have the right to education which is guaranteed by the Constitution. The public educational system in our country incorporates pre-school, general school, specialised secondary and higher education.

Pre-school consists of kindergartens and creches. Children there learn reading, writing and arithmetic. But pre-school education isn't compulsory - children can get it at home.

Compulsory education is for children from 6(7) to 17 years of age.

The main link in the system of education is the general school which prepares the younger generation for life and work in modern production. There are various types of schools: general secondary schools, schools specialising in a certain subject, high schools, lyceums and so on. Tuition in most of them is free of charge, but some new types of schools are fee-paying. The term of study in a general secondary school is 11 years and consists of primary, middle and upper stages. At the middle stage of a secondary school the children learn the basic laws of nature and society at the lessons of history, algebra, literature, physics and many others.

After 9th form pupils have to sit for examinations. Also they have a choice between entering the 10th grade of a general secondary school and enrolling in a specialised secondary or vocational school.

Persons who finish the general secondary school, receive a secondary education certificate, giving them the right to enter any higher educational establishment. Entrance examinations are held in July and August. Institutions are headed by rectors; the faculties are headed by the deans. One has to study in the institute for 5 years. Higher educational institutions train students in one or several specialisations.

Environmental problems

The poisoning of the world's land, air, and water is the fastest-spreading disease of civilisation. It probably produces fewer headlines than wars, earthquakes and floods, but it is potentially one of history's greatest dangers to human life on earth. If present trends continue for the next several decades, our planet will become uninhabitable.

Overpopulation, pollution and energy consumption have created such planet-wide problems as massive deforestation, ozone depletion, acid rains and the global warming that is believed to be caused by the greenhouse effect.

The seas are in danger. They are filled with poison: industrial and nuclear waste, chemical fertilisers and pesticides. The Mediterranean is already nearly dead; the North Sea is following. The Aral Sea is on the brink of extinction. If nothing is done about it, one day nothing will be able to live in the seas.

Every ten minutes one kind of animal, plant or insect dies out for ever. If nothing is done about it, one million species that are alive today will have become extinct twenty years from now.

Air population is a very serious problem. In Cairo just breathing the air is life threatening- equivalent to smoking two packs of cigarettes a day. The same holds true for Mexico City and 600 cities of the former Soviet Union.

Industrial enterprises emit tons of harmful substances. These emissions have disastrous consequences for our planet. They are the main reason for the greenhouse effect and acid rains.

An even greater environmental threat are nuclear power stations. We all know how tragic the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster are.

People are beginning to realise that environmental problems are not somebody else's. They join and support various international organisation and green parties. If governments wake up to what is happening- perhaps we'll be able to avoid the disaster that threatens the natural world and all of us with it.

Great Britain

The United Kingdom of G.B. and Northern Irelands is situated on the British Isles/ The British Isles consists of two large islands, G.B. and Ireland, and about five thousand small islands. Their total area is over 244,000 square kilometres.

The UK is made up of four countries: England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. GB consists of England, Scotland and Wales and doesn't include Northern Ireland. The capital of the UK is London.

The British Isles are separated from European continent by the North Sea and the English Channel. The western coast of GB is washed by the Atlantic Ocean and the Irish Sea.

The surface of the British Isles varies very much. The north of Scotland is mountainous and is called the Highlands, while the south, which has beautiful valleys and plains, is called the Lowlands.

There are a lot of rivers in GB, but they are not very long. The Severn is the longest river, while the Thames is the deepest and the most important one.

The mountains, the Atlantic Ocean and the warm waters if Gulf Stream influence the climate of the British Isles. The weather in GB is very changeable. A fine morning can change into a wet afternoon and evening and the wrong side out. The english people say: "Other countries have a climate; in England we have weather." The English also say that they have three variants of weather: when it rains in the morning, when it rains in the afternoon or when it rains all day long.

The weather is the favourite conversational topic in GB. After they greet each other they start talking the weather.

The best time of the year in GB is spring(of course, it rains in spring too). The two worst months in Britain are January and February. They are cold, damp and unpleasant. The best place in the world then is at home by the big fire. Summer months are rather cold and there can be a lot of rainy days. So most people who look forward to summer holidays, plan to go abroad for the summer.

The most unpleasant aspect of English weather is fog and smog. This is extremely bad in big cities especially in London. The fog spreads everywhere so cars move along slowly and people can't see each other. They try not to be run over by a car but still accidents are frequent in the fog.

The Hermitage Gallery

I'd like to tell you about the Hermitage Gallery, one of the largest and well known museums in the world. Two months ago together with my classmates I was on an exertion in S. Petersburg. I visited many places of interest including the Hermitage Gallery. I was greatly impressed by visiting this museum of art. It was founded in 1764 by Ecatherine the Second when she bought 225 pictures in Berlin. Now the Hermitage consists of five buildings.

Now I'd like to tell you about pictures, sculptures and other works of art I've seen in the Hermitage Gallery. A great number of wonderful pictures are offered there. Everyone can find some kind of pictures to enjoy, for example the pictures by the world's greatest masters : Michelangelo, Raphael, Rembrands, Rubens and many others. All great schools of paintings are represented there: Italian, Spanish, German etc.

A few words about sculptures. I saw a lot of vases, statues and fountains. The most beautiful thing I have ever seen was the fauntain belonged to Alexander the Second.

Among other outstanding pieces of art I saw the coach of Ecatherine the Second and beautiful gobelens. It took 60 years to made one of these gobelens.

In conclusion I'd like to stress that no one can see everything for the one visit. To enjoy the Hermitage Gallery you must visit it several times.

The State Hermitage in St Petersburg is one of the world's most outstanding art museums. It is the largest fine arts museum in Russia.

World famous is the collection of West-European paintings covering a span of about seven hundreds years, from the 13th to the 20th centure, and comprising works by Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, Titian, El |Greco. Velasquez, Murillo; outstanding paintings by Rembrandt, Va-Dyck, Rubens; a remarkable group of French 18th-centure canvases, and Impressionist and Post Impressionist paintings. The collection illustrates the art of Italy, Spain, Holland, Belgium, Germany, Austria, France, Britain, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and some other countries. The West-European Department also includes a fine collection of European sculpture, containing works by Michelangelo, Canova, Falconet, Houdon, Rodin and many other eminent masters. The Hermitage, together with the Pushkin Fine Arts Museum in Moscow, must be ranked among the richest in the world in respect of Impressionist art.

In addition to the works of Western masters, the Hermitage has sections devoted to the arts of India, China, Ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, Pre-|Columbian America, Greece and Rome, as well as a department of prehistoric art, not to mention a section devoted to Scythian art. People come to admire the collections of tapestry, precious textiles, weapons, ivories, pottery, porcelain and furniture as well.

Hobbies

Hobbies differ like tastes. If you have chosen a hobby according to your character and taste you are lucky because your life becomes more interesting. Hobbies are divided into 4 large groups: doing, making, collecting and learning things. The most popular of all hobby groups is doing things It includes gardening, travelling, playing games and so on. Making things includes drawing, painting, writing music.

My main hobby is to collect compact disks.

No matter what kind of hobby a person has, he always has the opportunity of learning from it. By reading about the things he is interested in, he is adding to what he knows. Learning things can be the most exciting aspect of a hobby.

Laos

Somewhat smaller than Oregon, Laos is a mountainous Southeast Asia country ruled by communists. The population of this little country is about 3 and a half million people.

One of the poorest and most underdeveloped nations of the world, Laos depends on aid from other countries to import the food and other goods its people need to survive. Most of the people are rice farmers. Few can read and write.

Over 80 percent of the country is rugged jungle terrain. The main river is Mekong River-the system of irrigate.

Now I'd like to tell you about the history of Laos. First Laotian territory was the seat of the Buddhist kingdom of Lan Xang, founded in 1353 by King Fa Ngum. Laos was invaded by France in 1893 and by Japanese forces in 1941. During the World War II King Sisavang Vong proclaimed himself king of all Laos.

A new coalition government under Premier Souvanna Phouma that included 5 members of the communist Pathet Lao was sworn in on April 5, 1974.

Kuwait

The middle Eastern nation of Kuwait is the second most prosperous country in the world. It is the area's third-largest producer of oil, surpassed only by Saudi Arabia and Iran. Kuwait has given and loaned billions of dollars to poorer Arab states, has invested billions in the United States and other industrial countries and purchased planes and other equipment for Arab states opposing Israel.

The government also has used its oil to give medical services, education and social welfare to everyone in Kuwait. Local telephone service is also free, and almost every family owns at least one car and one TV set. There no income taxes.

Now I'd like to tell you about the history of Kuwait. In the 1700s Arab nomads founded the town of Kuwait. Under the leadership Sabah Abu Abdullah Kuwait's population grew to several thousand (now the population of Kuwait is about 988 thousands of people). With the discovery of oil in Kuwait in 1938, and its development after 1945, Iraq decided in 1952 to renew an ancient claim to Kuwait,

but it was rejected by the British. In 1961 Kuwait became a fully independent nation. But in 1973 Iraqi troops invaded Kuwait and only after Saudi Arabia had sent more than 15,000 troops to assist Kuwait, Iraq withdrew. In March 1975 the government took complete control of the oil and gas industry from US and other foreign owners, increasing it's annual income to $10 billion or more a year.

Today Kuwait is a monarchy which is ruled by the Emir Sheikh Saban al-Salim al-Sabah (rained since 1985). It's area is about 7,7 square miles. Official language is Arabic, but there are also Persian and English in Kuwait. Religion: Islam. Places of interest: Oil wells, modern city of Kuwait, royal residences and so on.

That's all I would like you to say about Kuwait.

Moscow

Moscow is the capital of Russia, its political, economic, commercial and cultural centre. It was founded 8 centuries ago by Prince Yuri Dolgoruky in 1147. Gradually the city became more and more powerful. In the 13th century Moscow was the centre of the struggle of Russian lands for the liberation from the tartar yoke. In the 16th century under Ivan the Terrible Moscow became the capital of the new united state. Though Peter the Great moved the capital to St. Petersburg in 1712; Moscow remained the heart of Russia. That's why it became the main target of Napoleon's attack. After the October revolution Moscow became the capital again.

Now Moscow is one of the largest cities in Europe. Its total area is about nine hundred square kilometres. The population of the city is over 8 million.

Moscow is one of the most beautiful cities in the world. The heart of Moscow is Red Square. The Kremlin and St. Basil's Cathedral (Vasily Blazheny) are masterpieces of ancient Russian architecture. On the territory of the Kremlin you can see old cathedrals, the Palace of Congresses, the Tzar-Cannon and the Tzar-Bell, the biggest cannon and bell in the world. St. Basil's Cathedral was built in the mid-16th century in memory of the victory over Kazan.

One of the well-known Kremlin museums is the Armoury Chamber. The famous golden cap of Monomach, the first Russian imperial crown of Katherine the second and many other historical items are exhibited there.

There are more than 80 museums in Moscow. The Historical Museum, the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, the Tretyakov State Picture Gallery are world famous and the largest.

Moscow is famous for its theatres. The best-known of them are Bolshoi, Maly and Art theatres.

Moscow is the seat of the Russian Parliament (the Duma) and the centre of political life of the country.

My school

First of all I'd like to tell you about my school which I've just left. My school is one of the specialised schools in Moscow. It is famous for its high-quality education and strict discipline. To my mind, our school-lyceum is very well equipped. It has a gym, a canteen, a library, a computer class and some labs( for example - chemistry lab or physics lab).

First two years in our lyceum we had 7 or 8 lessons, but in 10th and 11th forms we had less lessons. What about our homework we usually had a lot to do and it took me several hours. I sometimes had to sit up to write a composition, to prepare a report, to translate an article from English to Russian or to learn a poem by heart.

After classes we usually had some out-of-class activities. Our social and cultural life was well-organised. For example, we had a choir and literature club.

At school we had classes in Russian, literature, mathematics, English, history and so on. My favourite subjects were English, History and Russian. On Russian we had a lot of fun situations and talks; history, to my mind, is a very interesting subject; and what about English, we need learning this language to be able to read books, listen to the news, speak with English speaking people and so on.

Now my plans for the future. I must say that when you leave school you understand that the time to choose your future profession has come. It's not an easy task to make the right choice of a job. People choose profession according to their own interests and abilities. As far as I have a computer at home I've decided to enter some mathematics institute. It is called МГАТУ(Moscow State Aviation- Technology University). I'll be study there informatic and English. I think, today computer is very popular in our country and programmists are paid very much.

Political system of US

Washington, the capital of the United States is situated on the Potomac River in the District of Columbia. The district is a piece of land which doesn't belong to any state but to all the states. All these states are sovereignty.

Under the Constitution, the federal government is divided into three branches.

The legislative power is vested in Congress and made up of two houses: the Senate and the House of Representative. There are 435 members in the House of Representative and 100 senators. Each state elects two members of the 100-member Senate.

The executive branch is headed by the President, who proposes bills to Congress, enforces federal laws, serves as commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces and with the approval of the Senate, makes treaties. President can veto a bill unless Congress by a two-thirds vote shall overrule him.

The vice President, elected from the same political party as the President, acts as chairman of the Senate, and in the event of the death of the President, assumes the Presidency.

The judicial branch is made up of Federal District Courts, 11 Federal Courts and the Supreme Court. Federal judges are appointed by the President for life. Federal courts decide cases involving federal law, conflicts between citizens of different states. The Supreme court may rule the law to be unconstitutional.

Now about the elections. The President is chosen in nation-wide elections every 4 years together with the Vice-President.

Constitution. Constitution has been amended 26 times. The Bill of Rights guarantee individual liberties: freedom of speech, religion and so on. Later amendments abolish slavery, grant the vote to women and allow citizens to vote at age 18.

The Russian Federation

The Russian Federation is the largest country in the world. It occupies about one-seventh of the earth's surface. It covers the eastern part of Europe and the northern part of Asia. Its total area is about 17 million square kilometres. The country is washed by 12 seas of 3 oceans: the Pacific, the Arctic and the Atlantic. In the south Russia borders on China, Mongolia, Korea, Kazakhstan, Georgia and Azerbaijan. In the west it borders on Norway, Finland, the Baltic States, Belorussia, the Ukraine. It also has a sea-borders with the USA.

There is hardly a country in the world where such a variety of scenery and vegetation can be found. We have steppes in the south, plains and forests in the midland, tundra and taiga in the north, highlands and deserts in the east.

There are two great plains in Russia: the Great Russian Plain and the West Siberian Lowland. There are several mountains chains on the territory of the country: the Urals, the Caucasus, the Altai and others. The largest mountain chain, the Urals, separates Europe from Asia.

There are over two million rivers in Russia. Europe's biggest river, the Volga, flows into the Caspian Sea. The main Siberian rivers- the Ob, the Yenisei and the Lena- flow from the south to the north. The Amur in the Far East flows into the Pacific Ocean.

Russia is reach in beautiful lakes. The world's deepest lake is Lake Baikal. It is much smaller than the Baltic Sea, but there is much more water in it than in the Baltic Sea. The water in the lake is so clear that if you look down you can count the stones on the bottom.

Russia has one-sixth of the world's forests. They are concentrated in the European north of the country, in Syberia and in the Far East.

On the vast territory of the country there are various types of climate, from arctic in the north to subtropical in the south. In the middle of the country the climate is temperate and continental.

Russia is very reach in oil, iron ore, natural gas, copper, nickel and other mineral resources.

Russia is a parliamentary republic. The Head of State is the President. The legislative powers are exercised by the Duma.

The capital of Russia is Moscow. It is its largest political, scientific, cultural and industrial centre. It's one of the oldest Russian cities.

At present, the political and economic situation in the country is rather complicated. There are a lot of problems in the national economy of the Russian Federation. The industrial production is decreasing. The prices are constantly rising, the rate of inflation is very high. People are losing their jobs because many factories and plants are going bankrupt.

But in spite of the problems Russia is facing at present, there are a lot of opportunities for this country to become one of the leading countries in the world. I'm sure that we, the younger generation, can do very much to make Russia as strong and powerful as it used to be.

Sport in our life

Millions of people all over the world are fond of sports and games. Sport helps people to stay in good shape, helps to support health and prevents from illness. Sport makes them more organised and better disciplined in their daily activities.

We've always paid great attention to sport in our schools, colleges and universities. You can hardly find a school without a gym or a sports ground. Every city and town has a few stadiums or swimming pools where local competitions are usually held.

There are different sporting societies and clubs in Russia. Many of them take part in different international tournaments and are known all over the world. A great number of world records have been set by Russian sportsmen. Our sportsmen also win a lot of gold, silver and bronze medals in the Olympic Games.

Television and advertisement.

Many people have forgotten what the world was like before TV. But today it has become an integral part of our lives. No medium can compare with TV as a means of information, entertainment & education. TV now plays such an important role in so many people's lives that it is essential for us to try to decide whether it is bad or good.

On the first place TV is not only a convenient source of entertainment, but also a comparatively cheap one. For a family of 4, for example, it is more convenient as well as cheaper to sit comfortably at home than to go out. They don't have to pay for expensive tickets. All they have to do is to turn on TV and they can see films, political discussions and the latest exciting football matches. Some people say that this is fust where the danger lies. The TV viewers need do nothing: they make no choices, they're completely passive & don't even use their legs.

TV, people often say, informs about current events and the latest developments in science and politics. A lot of good films, music programs have appeared recently on TV. Yet here again there is a danger. We get to like watching TV so much that it begins to dominate our lives. A friend of mine told me that when his TVset broke he & his family suddenly found that they had much more time to do things.

The most important thing which is really criticising is poor quality of the programs and its harmful effect on children. For example the film " Natural Born Killers" teaches children to kill and there was one accident in France when a group of teenagers kill their parents.

There are many arguments for and against TV. I think we must understand that TV in itself is neither good nor bad. TV is as good or as bad as we make it.

Washington

I am going to tell you about Washington. Washington, the capital of the United States is situated on the Potomac River in the District of Columbia. The district is a piece of land which does not belong to any one state but to all the states. The district is named in honour of Columbus, the discoverer of America.

Washington was founded in 1791 for the purpose of serving as the capital of the United States of America. George Washington chose the place located midway to keep at close touch as possible between the states. Washington is quite new as it didn't exist for two hundred years. The population of the city is nearly million people. It is not a very large city, but it is very important as the capital of the USA. There is a law in Washington against building structures higher than the Capitol; therefore it presents a different appearance from New York with its skyscrapers.

Washington has many historical places. The largest and tallest is the Capitol, where the Congress meets. It is a very beautiful building with white marble columns. Not far from the Capitol is the Library of Congress. It holds five million books.

The White House, the residence of the president is the oldest public structure in the capital and one of the most beautiful. It was built in 1799. It is a two storied white building. It is said that in 1812 when England was at war with America the British entered the city and some of the buildings, including the Capitol and the house of the president were set on fire. Two years later in order to hide the marks of the fire, the brown stone walls of the president's home were painted white and it has been the White House ever since.

Not far from the Capitol is the Washington monument, which looks like a very big pencil. It rises 160 metres and it is empty inside. A special lift brings visitors to the top in 70 seconds, from where they can enjoy a view of the city.

The Jefferson Memorial was built in memory of the third President of the USA Thomas Jefferson, who was also the author of the Declaration of Independence. The Memorial is surrounded by cherry trees.

The Lincoln Memorial is devoted to the memory of the sixteenth President of the USA, the author of the Emancipation Proclamation, which gave freedom to Negro slaves in America.