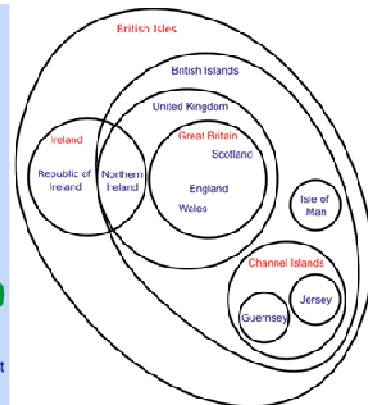


The British Isles

by Jane Lawson at DailyStep.com

There are many ways of referring to the part of Europe where I live. You could say that I live in the United Kingdom, or in the British Isles or in Great Britain. But what are the British Isles? And what is the difference between Great Britain and the United Kingdom?



The British Isles is a group of islands off the north coast of the main European continent. You can see the main islands of the British Isles in the left hand picture. The two largest islands are called Great Britain and Ireland, and there are also about six thousand smaller islands as well. The largest island, Great Britain, contains three countries – England, Scotland and Wales. These 3 countries have separate parliaments, although they are still a part of the same state, the United Kingdom. The UK actually consists of 4 countries: England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Scotland used to be a totally separate country from England, but in 1707 they were united as one country. You can learn more about this in my blog about the Story of the Union Jack. Since 1997, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have had their own parliaments with law-making powers for many areas, but not for taxation.

The second largest island in the British Isles is called Ireland. Its name in Gaelic, the native language of Ireland, is Eire. This is where the name Ireland comes from. Ireland is divided into 2 countries. The Republic of Ireland, in the south, is now completely separate from the United Kingdom, but a small area in the North of Ireland is still a part of the UK. That is why the full title of the UK is 'The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.'

Many of the countries in the British Isles have their own languages, completely unrelated to English. In many cases, this language is spoken by only a small number of people, but in Wales, the Welsh language is thriving. In parts of North Wales, Welsh is still the first language, and English is learned as a foreign language! Some of the islands in the British Isles, such as the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands, have their own laws, taxation and government. They also have their own flags and are politically separate from the UK and the Republic of Ireland.

So, now that we have learned about the British Isles, let's move on to our audio word study, where we will start to learn the meanings of WOULD in English.

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