

The Commonwealth of Nations

Pre-Reading

A. Warm-Up Questions

1. Does your nation belong to the Commonwealth of Nations?
2. What does "free" mean in relation to a nation?
3. What values does your country have?



B. Vocabulary Preview

Match these words to their correct definitions.

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| _____ 1. former | a) a requirement |
| _____ 2. obligation | b) a country ruled by a monarch such as a king, queen, or emperor |
| _____ 3. dismantle | c) to prevent from using or attending |
| _____ 4. pay allegiance | d) the ruling and decision-making of a region or group |
| _____ 5. adopt | e) main |
| _____ 6. monarchy | f) to officially accept |
| _____ 7. governance | g) the person who is next in line for a position or role |
| _____ 8. every other | h) prior |
| _____ 9. successor | i) not required, optional |
| _____ 10. voluntary | j) to take apart or to come apart |
| _____ 11. suspend | k) a list of people or groups waiting to be accepted |
| _____ 12. withdraw | l) to show loyalty (honour and respect) |
| _____ 13. waiting list | m) each alternate, every second one in a series |
| _____ 14. core | n) not important, unnecessary |
| _____ 15. irrelevant | o) to remove oneself from something such as a list, contest, or group |

Reading

1. The Commonwealth of Nations is a group of 53 nations from around the world. Most members are **former** colonies of the British Empire. These nations have no legal **obligation** to each other. They are united by their common history, language, and values. The Commonwealth is sometimes referred to as *a family of nations*.
2. The British Empire began to **dismantle** in the early 20th century. In 1931, the *Statute of Westminster* stated that *The British Commonwealth of Nations* was a group of free and equal nations that **paid allegiance** to the Crown. In 1949, the *London Declaration* was **adopted**. This document included some important changes. Firstly, the official name was changed to *The Commonwealth of Nations*. Secondly, members were no longer obliged to pay allegiance to the British **monarchy**.
3. Since 1952, Queen Elizabeth II has been the symbolic *Head of the Commonwealth*. The Head of the Commonwealth does not play a role in the **governance** of the members. However, some members of the Commonwealth are constitutional monarchies. This means Britain's monarch is their head of state, too. The other members have their own heads of state. A meeting of Commonwealth heads of state is held **every other** year in a different host nation. Members discuss law, peace, security, human rights, trade, and other international issues. The next Head of the Commonwealth will not necessarily be Queen Elizabeth's **successor**.
4. According to its founders, this network of nations was built on the shared desire for friendship, loyalty, freedom, and peace. Membership is **voluntary**. If a nation's government violates the Commonwealth principles, it can be **suspended**. In 2002, Zimbabwe was suspended for holding unfair elections. Nations can also withdraw from the association. The Gambia* **withdrew** in 2013. Similarly, nations can ask to join even if they aren't former members of the British Empire. In fact, the Commonwealth of Nations has a **waiting list**. Mozambique and Rwanda are two countries that have recently joined.
5. The Commonwealth Games, a sporting competition between the Commonwealth members, are held every four years in a different host nation. The first Games were held in Hamilton, Ontario, in 1930. The **core** sports at that time were swimming, diving, boxing, lawn bowling, rowing, and wrestling. Since then, other sports have been added, including rugby, squash, and field hockey.
6. The Commonwealth of Nations makes up almost a third of the world's population. While some people think that the Commonwealth plays an important role in maintaining international friendship and human rights, others feel the association has become **irrelevant**. Every Commonwealth Day, which takes place on the second Monday of March, Queen Elizabeth broadcasts a message to the members. She talks about why the organization is more important than it ever was.

***Note:**

The official name of the West African country many may know as *Gambia* is *The Gambia*. This distinguishes it from the Gambia River.

Comprehension

A. True or False?

Read the statements below. If the statement is true, write T beside the sentence. If it is false, write F and correct the information.

- _____ 1. The Commonwealth countries have a legal obligation to each other.
- _____ 2. Queen Elizabeth is the Head of the Commonwealth of Nations.
- _____ 3. A meeting of Commonwealth leaders is held every year in London.
- _____ 4. Aquatic events have been part of the Commonwealth Games since the beginning.
- _____ 5. Approximately half of the world's population is a Commonwealth nation.

B. Write Your Own Questions

Practise writing comprehension questions about the Commonwealth of Nations in the spaces below. Trade papers with a partner and answer each other's questions in your notebooks.

1. When?

2. Where?

3. What is?

4. Why?

5. How?

6. How often?

7. Which?

8. Who?

Vocabulary Review

Choose the word or phrase with the closest meaning to the underlined word or phrase in the following sentences.

- After the conference, we have to take apart the exhibits.
 - dismantle
 - remove
 - double-check
- The politics course is optional for grade 11 students.
 - available
 - open
 - voluntary
- The previous prime minister was female.
 - behind
 - former
 - latest
- Skiing is one of the main events in the Winter Olympics.
 - master
 - average
 - core
- The Canadian dropped out of the race because of the flu.
 - came in last
 - withdrew from
 - fell down

Discussion

- Why was the British Empire so powerful before the 20th century?
- What does *independence* mean for a country?
- What role should the monarchy play in a nation's governance?
- How do international sporting competitions help promote peace?
- Do you think the Commonwealth of Nations will exist in 20 years?
- Discuss the quote on the right. Do you agree with Queen Elizabeth? What can international organizations do to involve young people?

“As a concept that is unique in human history, the Commonwealth can only flourish if its ideas and ideals continue to be young and fresh and relevant to all generations.”

—Queen Elizabeth,
Commonwealth Day, 2015