

ENGLAND: WHO ARE THE ENGLISH

by Ross Mulkern

<http://naukabezgranic.pl/podcasty/england/>

The United Kingdom is an independent state. Within this state there are four countries which share a monarchy, government, army and legal system. These countries are called England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. To make things even more confusing, the first three of these countries share an island called "Britain", and the fourth shares an island called "Ireland" with another independent state – The Republic of Ireland, which is not part of the United Kingdom.

This session is all about England. So, what makes England different from Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland?

Well firstly it is the biggest, both by area and population. Of the 64 million people in the UK, about 53 million of them live in England. But the differences go deeper than that. In Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, the majority of people identify as Celtic. The Celts are an ethnic group, like Slavs or Arabs, who used to dominate the whole of Britain and Ireland. They have their own family of languages, which are still spoken today, and before the arrival of Christianity had their own gods, heroes and legends, just like the Vikings or Greeks.

The English are a little more complicated. After the Romans had left Britain, a number of tribes from the area of today's northern Germany invaded Britain. Together they were called the Anglo-Saxons and the language they spoke shares its roots with modern Germanic languages such as Dutch, Swedish and, of course, German. They fought with the Celts in Britain, pushing them to the north and west of the island to the areas now called Scotland and Wales. The Anglo-Saxons brought their culture and language and made their home in the area now called England. In fact, that's how the country got its name. Angle-land – the land of the Angles.

Like us <http://facebook.com/learningwithoutborders.eu>

Make friends with Ross at

<https://www.facebook.com/rossatlearningwithoutborders/>

If the story finished there, England would be a very different country today. But the Anglo-Saxons weren't the last group to make their home in the country. The Vikings came later and started their own colony in the north of England, remaining for a long time before they were eventually defeated by the Anglo-Saxon king Harold – who united England as we know it today into a single country. Unfortunately for Harold, just as he had beaten the Vikings in the north, another invasion was beginning in the South.

A group of people from northern France, called the Normans wanted to invade England and make their own king, William, king of England. In the following battle, poor Harold was killed by an arrow to the eye and William became William the Conqueror in the year 1066.

After this, the English nobility became dominated by French-speaking culture, whilst the ordinary people continued to speak Old English. Over the next 1000 years, England would join with its neighbours in Britain and Ireland and eventually become a great superpower with an Empire that covered 20% of the world's surface. This meant that many foreign people from all areas of the globe also came to England to make their home.

To answer the question then – who are the English? Well, I suppose we're a mixture of Celtic, German, French and Viking that grows more complex and diverse all the time, so that perhaps it won't be long before we can add Indian, Caribbean and Polish to that list too! But then again, maybe the best answer is simply "English."