

# Brexit

## Pre-Reading

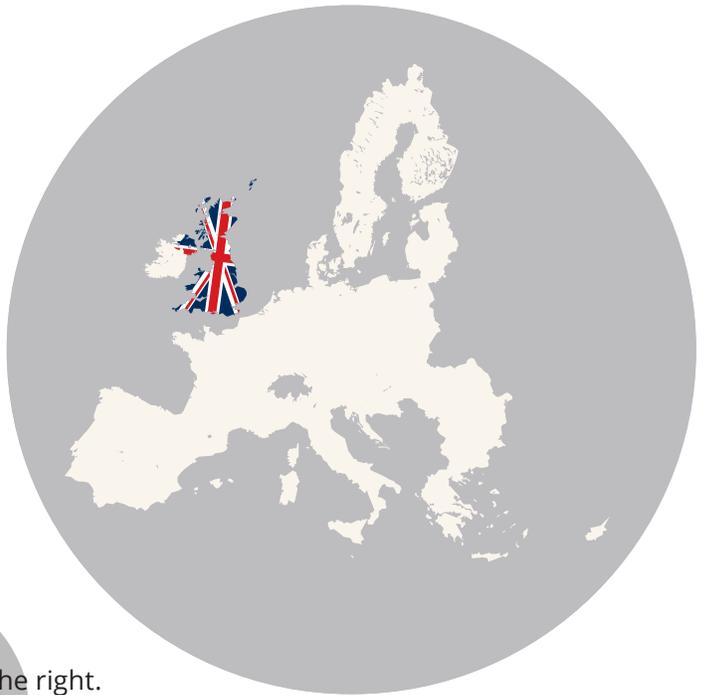
### A. Warm-Up Questions

1. What does the UK stand for and *where* is it?
2. What does the EU stand for and *what* is it?
3. What type of vote is a referendum?

### B. Vocabulary Preview

Match the words on the left with the correct meanings on the right.

- |                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| ___ 1. referendum   | a) having a good variety  |
| ___ 2. turnout      | b) to work together to agree on terms                                       |
| ___ 3. eligible     | c) number-one, key  |
| ___ 4. Commonwealth | d) to be against  |
| ___ 5. oppose       | e) a vote about a single question or issue                                  |
| ___ 6. diverse      | f) the amount of people that attend or participate                          |
| ___ 7. camp         | g) to cause surprise or disturbance   |
| ___ 8. shock        | h) a group or side  |
| ___ 9. step down    | i) to give up one's leadership position                                     |
| ___ 10. negotiate   | j) being allowed to do something  |
| ___ 11. petition    | k) a document that people sign to try to reverse a decision or rule         |
| ___ 12. primary     | l) a group of associated nations previously belonging to the British Empire |



## Reading

1. On June 23, 2016, a historic **referendum** took place in the United Kingdom (UK). The referendum question was: *"Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?"* The possibility of Britain leaving the EU became known as *Brexit*.
2. Over 30 million people voted in the referendum. The **turnout** was higher than Britain's last general election. **Eligible** voters were British, Irish, and **Commonwealth** citizens (18 and over) living in the UK. UK citizens living outside of the UK for under 15 years were also eligible.
3. Those **opposed** to Brexit were in the "Remain" **camp**. This included Britain's prime minister, David Cameron, as well as the majority of citizens in Scotland, Northern Ireland, and London. These voters wanted the UK to remain a **diverse** nation. They valued their rights to work, trade, and move about freely in the EU.
4. Supporters of Brexit were in the "Leave" camp. This included the majority of citizens in England (excluding London) and Wales. These voters wanted the UK to have more control over its borders. They also wanted the UK to have freedom to make its own business rules. Nigel Farage, the head of the UK Independence Party (UKIP), was the leader of this camp.
5. On June 23, 52% of voters chose "Leave the European Union." The "Leave" win **shocked** the world. People began to google the "European Union" to get a better understanding of why it exists. Within hours, the value of the British pound (£) had fallen to a historic low and Prime Minister Cameron had **stepped down**. A few days later, Nigel Farage stepped down as well. Farage said he had achieved his goal of helping the UK become a "self-governing" nation.
6. In the weeks following the referendum, millions of people signed a **petition** asking for a second referendum. The new prime minister, Theresa May, told citizens that "Brexit is Brexit." **Negotiating** the exit will take approximately two years. The status and rights of British nationals living in the EU and of EU nationals living in the UK is a **primary** concern.

### The European Union

The EU is an economic and political group of 28\* European countries. In terms of the movement of goods, services, and people, the EU acts as a single country. Many members of the EU also share a currency (the euro). The original purpose of the EU was to encourage political and economic cooperation and discourage war.

\*When Brexit becomes official, the EU will have 27 members.

*"It is true that the past years have been the most difficult ones in the history of our union, but I always remember what my father used to tell me—'What does not kill you makes you stronger.'"*

—Donald Tusk, EU president

## Comprehension

### A. Timeline

Place the following in chronological order (1-7).  
One item is not mentioned in the reading, but is correct.  
Place a star beside it and guess where it belongs.

- \_\_\_\_\_ The leader of UKIP announced his plans to step down.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 72% of eligible voters cast a vote in the referendum.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The idea of Britain exiting from the EU became known as *Brexit*.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The "Leave" camp won the referendum with 52% of votes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Prime Minister Cameron announced his plans to step down.
- \_\_\_\_\_ People organized a petition for a second referendum.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Prime Minister Cameron promised to hold a referendum about the UK leaving the EU.

### B. Ask and Answer

Practice asking and answering the following questions with your partner. Then write your answers in complete sentences in your notebook.

1. What type of vote is a referendum?
2. Who was eligible to vote in Brexit?
3. Which camp was Prime Minister Cameron in?
4. What role did Nigel Farage play in the Brexit campaign?
5. What major item will Prime Minister May have to negotiate?

## Portmanteaus

The word *Brexit* is a portmanteau. It blends two words (*Britain + exit*) into one.

A portmanteau is different from a compound noun, which features two complete words as one (such as *doghouse* and *doorknob*).

Can you figure out which words were blended to make these portmanteaus?

#	Word	Blend
1	motel	<i>motor + hotel</i>
2	brunch	
3	smog	
4	workaholic	
5	Grexit	
6	staycation	
7	frenemy	
8	webinar	

## Vocabulary Review

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

1. The referendum is only for people in our province.
  - a) politics
  - b) reform
  - c) vote
2. There was a low turnout due to the rain.
  - a) reversal
  - b) attendance
  - c) vote
3. The students have diverse religious beliefs.
  - a) difficult
  - b) strong
  - c) varied
4. You are not eligible to vote unless you are a citizen.
  - a) preserved
  - b) allowed
  - c) equal
5. We were shocked to hear that he was stepping down.
  - a) excited
  - b) surprised
  - c) hurt
6. I am opposed to the new rule about uniforms.
  - a) against
  - b) opposite
  - c) arguing

## Discussion

1. How will Brexit affect language teachers?
2. How will Brexit affect students?
3. Will British English lose its importance after Brexit?
4. How does the refugee crisis in Europe relate to Brexit?
5. Will other EU nations think about leaving the EU? If yes, which ones?
6. What other news has shocked the world recently?

# Answer Key

## LESSON DESCRIPTION:

In this lesson, students read about the historic referendum in the UK in which citizens voted to leave the EU (2016). Students learn and practice new vocabulary and discuss how Brexit will affect language teachers and learners.

**LEVEL:** High Int

**TIME:** 2 – 2.5 hours

**TAGS:** Brexit, European Union, EU, David Cameron, Theresa May, English language learning, English language teaching, British English, refugee, borders

## Pre-Reading

### A. WARM-UP QUESTIONS

1. UK stands for United Kingdom.
2. EU stands for European Union. It is an economic and political group of 28 (27 without the UK) European countries. It acts as a single country when it comes to movement of goods, services, and people. The full answer is located in the note on page 2.
3. A referendum is a vote about a single question (Yes/No style).

### B. VOCABULARY PREVIEW

- |      |      |      |      |       |       |
|------|------|------|------|-------|-------|
| 1. e | 3. j | 5. d | 7. h | 9. i  | 11. k |
| 2. f | 4. l | 6. a | 8. g | 10. b | 12. c |

## Reading

Read as a class, in groups, in pairs, or individually.  
Discuss the quote.

## Comprehension

### A. TIMELINE

- 6 The leader of UKIP announced his plans to step down.
- 3 72% of eligible voters cast a vote in the referendum.
- 2 The idea of Britain exiting from the EU became known as *Brexit*.
- 4 The “Leave” camp won the referendum with 52% of votes.
- 5 Prime Minister Cameron announced his plans to step down.
- 7 People organized a petition for a second referendum.
- 1\* Prime Minister Cameron promised to hold a referendum about the UK leaving the EU.

### B. ASK AND ANSWER

1. A referendum is a vote with one question that has two options.
2. The eligible Brexit voters were British, Irish, and Commonwealth citizens (18 and over) living in the UK. UK citizens living outside of the UK for under 15 years were also eligible.
3. The UK’s prime minister was in the “Remain” camp.
4. Nigel Farage led the “Leave” camp during the Brexit campaign.
5. Prime Minister May will have to negotiate the status and rights of British nationals living in the EU and of the EU nationals living in the UK.

*(continued on the next page...)*

## Answer Key cont.

### Portmanteaus

Challenge your students to figure out which two words create each portmanteau in the chart.

1. motor + hotel
2. breakfast + lunch
3. smoke + fog
4. work + alcoholic
5. Greece + exit
6. stay (at home) + vacation
7. friend + enemy
8. web + seminar

### Vocabulary Review

1. c
2. b
3. c
4. b
5. b
6. a

### Discussion

Answers will vary. You may want to search for a blog post or article on the topic of Brexit and language learning/teaching. Many teachers have weighed in on this topic since the referendum.

#### SPELLING NOTE:

This lesson shows the American spelling of the word *Practice*. Most other English-speaking countries spell it this way: *Practise* (when used as a verb; *Practice* when used as a noun). Make it a challenge for your students to find this word in the lesson and see if they know the alternate spelling.