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Institut vzdělávání

Tahák k maturitní zkoušce z anglického jazyka

FESTIVALS AND OUTSTANDING DAYS IN CZECH REPUBLIC, GREAT BRITAIN AND U.S.A.

Festivals in Great Britain

Let me start with Britain.

January

British first feast day in a year is **New Year's Day**, celebrated on January 1st, when titles and decorations are conferred by the sovereign.

February

Than comes **St. Valentine's Day**, on February 14th. It is the lovers' day. On this day young people send Valentine cards to a person of the opposite sex, usually anonymously, and exchange gifts. Originally this day commemorated the Roman priest who gave aid and comfort to the persecuted Christians before he was put to death.

March

In March, two feast days are celebrated - **St.David's** (the patron's saint of Wales) **Day** on 1st March and **St. Patrick's** (the patron's saint of Ireland) **Day** on 17th March.

April

April 1st is known as **All Fools' Day**. It is named after the custom of playing practical jokes and tricks on people and then you can shout: April fool!! **Easter** is also celebrated in April. It is a spring feast of the Christian Church. Good Friday commemorates Jesus' crucifixion and Easter Sunday his Resurrection. Easter eggs, dyed and decorated, symbolizing new life, are given as presents. April 23rd is known as **St.George's** (patron's saint of England) **Day**.

May

Three other feasts are celebrated in May. The first is **May Day** on 1st May when political parties of the left hold procession and public meetings. On the second Sunday in May, the **Mother's day** is celebrated, and the last Monday in May is the **Spring Bank Holiday**, when banks and shops are closed. People often spend it going for excursions or to the coast if possible.

June

The Saturday after June 9th is **The Queen's Official Birthday**. There are various ceremonies associated with it, such as Trooping the Colour at the Horse Guards Parade in London. The third Sunday in June is **Father's Day**.

August

The last Monday in August is the **Summer Bank Holiday**.

October

On the 31st October a well-known **Halloween** is celebrated. Among the old Celts it was the last day of the year and the beginning of winter when witches and ghosts were supposed to celebrate their rites. During the time this holiday was converted to the Eve of All Saints' Day when Christian church honors the memory of the dead. Children dress up in Halloween costumes and put masks over their faces. They carry baskets and go to their friends' and neighbours' houses, knock at the door and when people from inside come, they say: „Trick or treat!“, which means „give us a treat or we will play a trick on you“. The people treat the children with sweets, fruit or money. Sometimes, people give Halloween parties.

November

November 5th is **Guy Fawkes Day**. It is the anniversary of the Gunpowder plot in 1605, is celebrated with bonfires and fireworks. November 11th is the **Remembrance Day**, when there is a ceremony in London's Whitehall, in which two minutes' silence honors those killed in two World Wars. November 30th is **St.Andrew's** (patron's saint of Scotland) **Day**.

December

And the last and the most celebrated feast is **Christmas**. December 24th is Christmas Eve, December 25th is Christmas day and December 26th is Boxing Day. The New Year's Eve is celebrated on 31st December.

Festivals in U.S.A.

Now let me speak about the USA.

January

The third January Monday is **Martin Luther King's Day**. This man was a black leader and civil-rights campaigner, who demanded racial equality.

February

Some states still celebrate February 12th, **Lincoln's birthday**, or February 22nd, the **Washington's Birthday**, instead of the **Presidents' Day**, celebrated on the third Monday in February, before which one more feast is scheduled in this month – **St. Valentine's Day** on the 14th February.

Easter is not a national holiday. Most Americans spend Easter Sunday with their families. Many people give children dyed eggs and sweets. In some families an egg hunt is organized, during which children look for eggs hidden by adults.

May

On the second Sunday in May, the **Mother's Day** is celebrated. The fourth Monday in May is the **Memorial Day**, honoring Americans killed in all the past wars and most recently all the dead. It also marks the beginning of the summer season.

June

The **Father's Day** is on the third Sunday in June.

July

On July 4th the **Independence Day** is celebrated. It commemorates the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776, thus establishing the USA.

September

The first Monday in September is the **Labor Day**, honoring all the working people and celebrated by a day of rest. It marks the end of summer season.

October

On 12th October, the anniversary of the discovery of America in 1492 called the **Columbus Day** is celebrated. As in Great Britain, **Halloween** is celebrated on October 31st.

November

Two feasts are celebrated in November – **Veteran's Day** honoring veterans of all wars on 11th November and the **Thanksgiving Day** on the fourth November Thursday. It is an occasion for the whole family to be together; celebrated by a traditional dinner whose main course is roast turkey.

December

When celebrating **Christmas**, Americans of British origin follow the same traditions as their ancestors. But Christmas is not a family holiday here, families invite friends to join them at Christmas dinner and they often give parties at Christmas-time.

Festivals in Czech Republic

At last, let me introduce Czech feasts and festivals.

January

They also start with the **New Year's Day** on 1st January.

February

Following **St.Valentine's Day** is not an original Czech tradition, but in the last years, it is celebrated as well as in Britain or USA, where it has been assumed from.

April

Easter is celebrated on the last Sunday in March or on the first one in April. The following Monday is free – it's Easter holiday.

May

Three festivals are celebrated in May – **The Festival of work** on 1st May, the **Day of liberation** from fascism on 8th May (these two days are bank holidays) and the **Mother's Day** on the second May Sunday.

June

On 1st June it's **Children's Day**, when many games are played and entertaining programmes arranged.

July

July 5th is the **Day of the Slavonic faith-bringers Cyril and Metoděj** and the following day, July 6th in an anniversary of the scorching of **Master Jan Hus**, a Hussian movement founder. These two days are bank holidays, too.

September and October

September 28th is the **Day of St.Wenceslas**, patron saint of the Czech lands, and the month later, on October 28th, the **Day of inception of the independent Czech state** is celebrated.

November

November 2nd is **All Souls' Day** honoring all the dead, when people usually go to the cemeteries, put flowers on the graves, light candles and reminisce with their dead relatives and friends. November 17th is the **Day of**

students' fight for liberty and democracy.

December

And on 24th December the **Christmas Eve** is celebrated, after which the first and the second Christmas Days follow. The New Year's Eve, called Silvestr in our country, is celebrated on 31st December.

THE U.S.A.

The USA is one of the most admired and most despised nations in the world today. As a dominant world power, The US is known for its military might, economic strength and democratic government. In addition, American culture has spread across the globe through its popular films, music and commercial products such as Coca Cola, McDonald's hamburgers and Levi's jeans. Because of its influence around the world, the US provokes strong reaction. Many people either love or hate this state.

Geography

The US is **the fourth largest country in the world**, stretching across the North American continent from the Atlantic coast on the east to the Pacific coast in the west. It occupies a land **area of more than 9 million square kilometres** and crosses **four standard time zones**. The mainland of the US is bordered by Mexico in the south and Canada in the north. The US also includes Alaska and the Hawaiian islands. The west of the US is rather mountainous, comprising **Sierra Nevada, Cascade mountain ranges** or the **Cordillera mountain range**. Moving east, we find more lowlands, flatlands and hilly plateaus such as the Mississippi Basin. The **highest peak** in the US is **Mount McKinley** in Alaska; the **largest rivers** are **Mississippi** and **Missouri**.

Population

With its approximately **265 million inhabitants**, the US is the **third most populous country in the world**. As a land of immigrants, the American population is very diverse. The history of slavery and colonization has also contributed significantly to the ethnic diversity of the US citizens. The **official language** is **English**. However, because of the large numbers of immigrants, many different languages are spoken in the fifty states.

History

The North American continent has been inhabited for some 35 000 years. According to the most widely held theory, the first people migrated from Siberia to America by crossing the Bering Straight at the very north of the continent. Through the centuries, they slowly spread across the continent forming different tribes and civilizations. The original inhabitants of what is the present-day US were Indians, named so by mistake by **Christopher Columbus**, who **discovered America** while sailing on behalf of the Spanish King and Queen on an economic mission. The continent was given its name after another Italian explorer who made many voyages to South America, **Amerigo Vespucci**. By the end of the 17th century, the Spanish, French, Dutch and English had claimed land and started settlements in North America. During the 18th century, more and more Europeans immigrated to the American continent. By 1750, there were thirteen British colonies on the East Coast, ruled from England. Thank to a system of triangular trade between America, Europe and Africa, these colonies grew economically, so England attempted to restrict their power. These efforts culminated in the **War for Independence in 1775**, leading by **Thomas Jefferson** and **George Washington** who, after winning this war, became the first president of the US (in 1789). In the 19th century the US enlarged its size and continued to rise economically. Owing to the **Civil War** between North and South, in which the North has won, the **slavery was abolished in 1865**.

Throughout the twentieth century, the US grew into a world power. Victorious in the two World Wars, the US became known for its military strength. Today, as the strongest world power, the US sees itself as an international peacekeeper. Many Americans support their government's international military action, while others protest in Washington and other major cities. Abroad, Americans have many allies and supporters, but anti-American critism and movements are also common.

Economy

The US has one of the strongest economies in the world. **The American dollar** is used for trade in countries across the globe. The US is a leading country in agriculture, in the chemical, car and machinery industry and in minerals and raw materials. Currently, **the fastest growing industries** in the US are **aeronautics, space technology and computers**. Although strong in industry, two thirds of Americans work in the service sectors, providing services in tourism, banking and transportation, and although the US produces 20% of the world's food, less than 2% of the population works in agriculture. The US is also rich in minerals. Its main trading partners are Canada and Japan.

Political system

The US is a federation consisting of fifty states. In the American democratic system, rights and powers are divided between the individual states and federal government which has three branches - the executive (held by the President and Executive office), the legislative (held by both houses of Congress) and the judiciary (held by federal courts). These three branches are designed to check and balance the others, so no one branch wields too much power in the federal government.

SPORTS AND GAMES MAKE FRIENDS

Sport is a popular leisure time activity. This is mainly due to the fact that it helps people to keep fit both physically and mentally. Such a form of relaxation as sport is refreshing, can help one to take off some weight and makes use of people's skills and strength. Last but not least, during sport events we can meet a lot of new people and see how it feels to be a winner or a loser.

Outdoor and indoor sports

Sports and games can be differentiated into two groups according to where they are practised. There are indoor sports, including for example **gymnastics, table tennis, boxing, wrestling** and so on, and outdoor sports, such as **skiing, sledding, rock climbing, golf** or **horse-riding**. But most sports and almost all games can be done both indoors and outdoors. Swimming, one of the healthiest sports, or skating for example, don't actually demand a roofed room.

Ball games

One can easily recognize that those sports which can be done only on ice or snow are called winter sports and all the rest we call summer or all-season sports. The games are usually all-season activities, and they can be practised both indoors and outdoors. The most numerous group of games are the ball games, which rank among the most popular ones in our country. They include especially **football, volleyball, basketball, handball** and **tennis**. Besides this ice-hockey is played at a high level here too. Our country has produced many sportsmen who have achieved success in top international competitions.

Popular games in Great Britain

Now let me mention some sports and games popular in Great Britain. The British are great lovers of competitive sports, and when they neither play nor watch games they like to talk about them. England was also the first home of many popular modern games.

Football

Among these, **football** is the most wide spread. In Britain there are a great number of clubs, for example **Arsenal** or **Manchester United**, and in London there is one of the biggest football stadiums called **Wembley Arena**. Well, football is played all over the world.

Rugby football

In Britain, a **Rugby football** is also very popular. This game was first played at Rugby School in England (Rugby is a name of a town). That's why the game is called so. In this game the ball is oval. It's a thrilling, but in my opinion also a bit violent game.

Others

And then there are **golf** and **cricket**. While golf is of Scottish origin, cricket was and still remains an English national game. Other very popular sports in Britain are **horse-riding, tennis** (the Wimbledon tournament is played in London every year in June) and **squash**.

Popular games in U.S.A.

In the United States most sports and games have been to a great extent commercialized. The four foremost professional games there are **American football, baseball, basketball** and **ice-hockey**, though it has its roots in Canada. These games are turned into big shows in which the sport stars make a lot of money. Other sports such as the former **Indian game lacrosse** or **field hockey** are also popular there.

Amateurs and Professionals

There are two kinds of athletes - amateurs and professionals. The amateur approach to sport is when you exercise, jog, swim or go to the gym once in a while. Often sports are performed together as a team, instead of just as individuals. But some people are so interested in sports that they want to make it their main lifehood. The highest achievement for sportsmen is usually to participate in the Olympic games and win a gold medal.

The Olympic Games

The Olympic Games are performed every four years, but not all the different kinds of sports which exist are represented there. However, new disciplines are added every time the games are held. The Olympic Games are named after the city in Greece where it took place for the first time in the year 776 B.C. and it was held there every four years for a long period of time. The intentions of the Games were to allow the best sportsmen in the country to compete, and their ideal was to promote perfect men both in body and soul (as the Games at that time were only for men). Another idea of the Games was to keep peace during the competition, as there were often minor wars going on at the time.The contemporary tradition of the **Games started in 1896, in Athens**. The initiator was **Pierre de Coubertin**. Since that, the event has taken place every four years, except during the world wars. Since 1924, a special Winter Olympics have been held. The well-known **symbol of the games** is the five intertwined different coloured circles on a white background. They symbolise the five continents.