

**ТЕКСТЫ ДЛЯ ЧТЕНИЯ К ЭКЗАМЕНАЦИОННЫМ БИЛЕТАМ
ГОСУДАРСТВЕННОЙ ИТОГОВОЙ АТТЕСТАЦИИ ПО АНГЛИЙСКОМУ ЯЗЫКУ
ПО ПРОГРАММАМ ОСНОВНОГО ОБЩЕГО ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ**

1. Sports in Great Britain

It is interesting how many of today's sports games originated in Britain – football, rugby, tennis, boxing, rowing and horse racing among them. Of course, horse racing was popular with the Greeks and Arabs long before the British began to put them into practice; and people had been playing football in one form or another for thousands of years all over the world. But it was the British who created special rules for these sports and sports games.

Football is a good example. In the Middle Ages people in Europe, Japan and Asia all played some forms of the game. A sort of football was also very popular in England, especially as a contest between villages. But at that time there were very few rules. When the students of English schools started to play football, rules then became necessary. They were changed several times and by the middle of the 19th century football had become very much the game that we know and like today. By the way, the first serious football rules were written at Cambridge University.

A similar story can be told about some other sports. Why did this happen in Britain before other countries? There are some possible explanations: after the Norman invasion of 1066, Britain was quite a peaceful country. As a result people had time to develop sports. Later, after Britain's industrial revolution, English factories were based on highly organized work and strict time keeping. The same discipline was applied to sport. So uniforms, referees and punishments were introduced to football and other games. British authorities thought that team games were good training for future military and industrial careers.

Every country has its own list of favourite sports. What is the British list? There are lots of games apart from football. Schoolgirls, for example, play a game which seems a lot like basketball. It is called netball. Netball is different from basketball in many details: for example, the ball is lighter, the court is bigger and netball has seven players in each team (not five). There is something very strange about netball – it is never played by boys. There is no biological reason for this, it is simply a tradition. It is popular throughout the English-speaking world, and the Australians and New Zealanders usually win the competitions.

But the most famous and popular British sport is cricket. Cricket is an important part of English summer life. You can watch it all day on TV or even listen to it on the radio. News programmes keep you up-to-date with the score. Men, when they meet, always exchange a few words about the state of the game.

One of cricket's distinguishing features is that the games are very long. In an ordinary game at a boys' school it takes up to a whole afternoon. But the big international games are up to five days long.

2. The White House

For more than 200 years, the White House has been known as the symbol of the President's administration, and of the United States.

The history of the White House began when President George Washington signed an Act of Congress in December of 1790 which declared that the federal government would live in a district "not exceeding ten miles square on the river Potomac." The creation of the new American capital began. Later it was named Washington after the first American President.

George Washington, together with the city planner Pierre L'Enfant, chose the place for the new president's home. A competition was held to find an architect to design the President's

House. Nine proposals were handed in, and architect James Hoban won the competition. He proposed to build an impressive three-storey house.

The construction began in October of 1792. Although President Washington watched over the construction of the house, he never lived in it. Originally the White House was grey and was called the Presidential Palace. In 1800, when it was nearly completed, its first residents, President John Adams and his wife moved in. Ever since, each President of the United States has lived in this residence.

The Presidential Palace was seriously damaged in the great fire of 1814. The British invaded Washington and burned many buildings. After the war James Hoban, the original architect, partially rebuilt the President's home. To cover the marks of the fire, the building was painted white. At various times in history, the building has been known as the President's Palace, the President's House, and the Executive Mansion. President Theodore Roosevelt officially gave it the name of the White House in 1901.

The White House is the president's private home and each president has made his own changes and additions in it. At first the president's office was located in the living area, on the second floor of the White House. When Theodore Roosevelt brought his large family to the White House in 1901, he felt that his office and his home should be completely separated. Two wings were added to the first floor of the building: the East Wing and the West Wing. The President's Office was moved into the West Wing and was called the Oval Office.

In 1805 President Thomas Jefferson opened the house for public tours. However, since September 11, 2001 the public tours have been prohibited.

There are 132 rooms in the residence now. For recreation, the White House has a variety of facilities available to its residents, including a tennis court, a jogging track, a swimming pool, a movie theatre, and a bowling alley.

The garden around the White House was first planted by John Adams, the first resident of the White house. Later it was redesigned by many presidents and their first ladies. The part of the garden outside the Oval Office is used now as a place for official ceremonies.

3. Peer pressure

"Peer pressure"* is very strong, especially among young people. Almost everyone can remember a moment when they did something because their friends were doing it. Teenagers often buy something just because their friends have it, and this thing comes into fashion. If teenagers didn't imitate their friends' behavior, there would be fewer social problems: smoking, crime and so on.

On the other hand, "peer pressure" can also produce positive results. Youth crime and vandalism in one of the districts of Bristol, a city in England, fell by 20% last year. Why? Because young people stopped doing stupid and anti-social things. Now they are trying to keep out of trouble. And it's all the result of a new project.

Two Bristol policemen organised a football league for teenagers in one of the poorest parts of the city. The idea is to prevent teenagers from committing crimes. They want to show teenagers how they can spend their free time in a better way.

The policemen introduced a system in which football results are connected to young people's behaviour outside the football grounds. Teams get points for winning their matches, but lose points if any team-member does anything he shouldn't on the football field or off it! For example, teams get ten points for winning a match, but if any player is arrested, the team loses ten points. If a member is caught doing an act of vandalism, such as spraying graffiti, the team loses five points. Three points are lost for less serious crimes.

The results in Bristol are great. None of the teenagers playing in the football league has been arrested by the police. Instead of doing antisocial things and causing problems these teenagers are trying to behave properly!

The idea is already getting popular in other parts of Britain, and similar programmes will be started in other cities. Social workers are also trying to use “peer pressure” to get other positive results. If some more original ways are found, levels of crime among young people will soon be falling quickly.

Some people also think that a similar system should be used for professional footballers. If a professional player gets into a fight on the football ground, his team loses points. In this way footballers will try to behave with more respect to other players.

Another example of positive “peer pressure” is that there are fewer teenagers who smoke or take drugs. This is the result of the growing popularity of mobile phones. A mobile has become a new symbol of growing up. Teenagers no longer need to smoke to show that they are adults. Now they want to get a phone as cool as their classmates have.

4. The Isle of Man

In the Irish Sea about 20 miles away from the UK you will find a beautiful island. This is *the Isle of Man*. The people of the island are called Manx and they speak the Manx language. The island occupies a mid-point in the Irish Sea and the British Isles – right between England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

The scenery of the Isle is varied. There are ranges of hills with green valleys between them, there are sandy beaches in the north which contrast with the rocky cliffs along the coasts. The island's only mountain is slightly over 600 metres high. An old legend says that from its top on clear days you can see six kingdoms: the island itself, Scotland, England, Ireland, Wales and Heaven.

The Isle of Man has the oldest parliament in the world. It is called the Tynwald and it has met regularly since 979. The Tynwald usually meets in the capital of the country. However, for one day every summer the Manx parliament gathers in a small village to celebrate Tynwald Day. It is the only day of the year when parliament is held in the open air. On this day government officials read a summary of all the laws that have been passed during the year in both the English and the Manx languages. There is entertainment before and after the ceremony and it is a real community event. In addition to that, an open air market is organised and different concerts are held in the evening. At the conclusion, the Manx national anthem is played and there is a firework display.

Another thing that attracts tourists to *the Isle of Man* is its rich and unique culture. Any visitor to the island will be particularly fascinated by the legends, folklore and the ancient traditions that are still kept alive today. Most tourists are happy to participate in the folk programmes.

In Manx mythology, the island's name comes from the name of a Celtic sea god. He ruled the kingdom and protected the land from invaders by covering the island with mist and thick fog. The island is also reputedly home to fairies who are very special. The Manx fairies are described as small and human-like. They wear red caps and green jackets and are naughty and wicked. There's even a bridge called Fairy Bridge. Those who cross it are advised to say ‘hello fairies’ in order to get good fortune. If the person doesn't greet the fairies, the fairies will become angry with him and may play a nasty trick on him. Some people go further in trying to pay their respects to the ‘little people’. They do not just simply say hello, they also leave messages and gifts at the side of the road.

If you love reading about King Arthur and his knights, then a must-see place is Peel Castle. It was constructed in the 11th century by the Vikings and has a fascinating history. It is believed

that Peel Castle was the location of Avalon – the legendary island where King Arthur’s sword was made and where King Arthur was taken after being wounded.

5. A Desperate Adventure

Captain Cowgill had always wanted to arrange a hot-air balloon expedition. One day, he placed an announcement in all the morning papers. He wrote that he needed three people who wanted to take a risky adventure. Ten people came to his office and Captain Cowgill selected three of them: two men and a young lady.

The first volunteer was Mr. Crutter, a well-dressed man of about sixty. He looked depressed and unhappy. The second one was a doctor, Dr. Hagan, a sad thin gentleman. The third adventurer, Miss Dermott, looked slim and miserable. They were ready to fly in the balloon in spite of the risks. Though Captain Cowgill hoped for success, there was a great chance that the participants wouldn’t come back.

The next day, the balloon was ready for the journey. They had some food and the gas equipment. It was supposed that the travellers would fly during the day and then land for the night. Right before the take-off, a young man ran up to Captain Cowgill and begged to let him join the expedition. Captain Cowgill listened to his arguments and let the young man, Mr. Winden, fly too.

With the last farewell to Captain Cowgill, the balloon went sailing towards the clouds. At first the travellers said nothing. An hour later they found the journey exciting. Two hours later they revealed their reasons for coming on the dangerous flight.

Mr. Crutter said that he had been cheated by his partners and had lost a large part of his business. Though he had enough money left, he felt extremely depressed. Dr. Hagan told the travellers that he had lost his job in a hospital. He felt lonely and unwanted. Miss Dermott said that she suffered from a serious disease and had no money for treatment. Mr. Winden had just split up with his girlfriend and was ready to die.

In the evening, the travellers decided to take a rest. They landed in a deserted place and tied the balloon to a tree. After supper they continued talking about their unhappy fates. Suddenly, Mr. Crutter offered to share his money with his new friends. Dr. Hagan smiled and looked at Miss Dermont. “I think I can cure you, Miss Dermont,” he said. “I have already had patients with the same diagnosis.” Miss Diamont smiled. But it wasn’t the last surprise. Mr. Winden proposed to Miss Diamont saying that he had fallen in love at first sight. She shyly promised to think it over.

The talk raised their spirits and, in the morning, everybody decided to go back home. Now when all their problems were happily solved, they didn’t want to go anywhere. Suddenly Miss Dermott cried out pointing to a distant object in the sky. It was their balloon that had broken loose while they were having breakfast. Nobody felt upset!

The group decided to walk to the nearest railway station. Mr. Crutter bought tickets for his new friends and they sent Captain Cowgill a telegram. It said that the balloon had flown away accidentally, their expedition had failed and they would arrive in town the next day.

6. Shakira

Shakira Ripoll was born on February 2, 1977, in Colombia. She was the only daughter of a well-respected jeweller and his wife. In naming the newborn daughter, her mother chose from several names, containing the letter "K". She thought about Karime and Katuska but finally chose Shakira. It’s an Arabic name which comes from the word "Shukram" meaning "Grace". So Shakira’s full name is translated as "a woman of Grace".

When Shakira was a child, her mother discovered that the girl had a gift for learning. Shakira knew the alphabet by the age of eighteen months and at three she knew how to read. By the time she was four, she was ready for school. School was not just a place where little Shakira learnt her arithmetic and geography. There she began to understand such great things as kindness, love, trust, and other human ideals. She realized what real friendship was and how much her family meant to her. Later it helped her to decide what to do with the big money she earned.

Shakira loved attention and wished to find a way to get it. She sang a lot for her schoolmates and teachers. However, the music teacher told her that she sounded "like a goat". Shakira wasn't too upset about it and soon found a more original way to become the centre of attention. It was dancing. It helped her to express herself and become famous in school. What is interesting is that no one had ever taught her to dance.

In school Shakira was disciplined, but absent-minded. She was usually writing lyrics for her songs on the back of her notebooks. However, Shakira was a good student because she was a quick learner and could understand her teachers' explanations faster than others.

As soon as the bell rang after class, Shakira was the first one to run and get in line for the cafeteria. She usually bought a pepsi, a hamburger and something sweet, like a muffin or a piece of cake. She seldom took a packed lunch from home. Though Shakira was a lover of fast food, she had no weight problems, as she loved dancing.

When she was eight, Shakira's father lost all his money because his business went bankrupt. For a while Shakira had to stay with her relatives in Los Angeles. When the girl returned, she was shocked to see almost everything that her family had, had been sold. She later said: "In my childish head, this was the end of the world."

To show her that things could be worse, her father took her to a local park to see the homeless children. What she saw shocked her deeply and she said to herself: "One day I'm going to help these poor kids when I become a famous singer or dancer".

Between the ages of ten and thirteen Shakira was invited to various dance events and became very popular in the area. It was at this time that Shakira met a local theatre producer, who was impressed with her performance and as a result tried to help her career. This woman organized a meeting with the managers of the Sony company. After Shakira sang, they decided to sign a contract for three albums with the talented girl.

7. Joseph Rudyard Kipling

Joseph Rudyard Kipling is considered to be one of the greatest English writers. He was born in 1865, in Bombay, India. At the time of his birth, his parents were recent arrivals in India. They had come to India with plans to start a new life. The family lived quite well. His father, an artist, was the head of the Department of Architectural Sculpture at the School of Art. For young Kipling, India was a wonderful and happy place.

However, at the age of 6, Kipling's life changed greatly. He was sent to England to receive a formal British education. These were hard years for Kipling. The boy suffered from strict school discipline, his classmates' insults and bullying. His only comfort was books: he enjoyed reading. By the age of 11, Kipling was on the verge of a nervous breakdown. Fortunately, Kipling's mother placed him in a new school. There, Kipling found friends and discovered his talent for writing, eventually becoming the editor of the school newspaper.

In 1882, Kipling was told by his parents that they didn't have enough money to send him to college, and he returned to India. It was a powerful moment in the young writer's life. He found a job with a local newspaper. Kipling's experience as a reporter formed the backbone for lots of his stories. Later, his collection of 40 short stories called *Plain Tales from the Hills* gained wide popularity in England.

Seven years later, Kipling returned to England in the hope of becoming a famous writer. In London, he met Wolcott Balestier, an American publisher who became one of Kipling's great friends and supporters. Later, Kipling happily married Wolcott's sister, Carrie.

As a writer, Kipling flourished. His portfolio contained gems like *The Jungle Book*, *The Naulahka: A Story of the West and East* and *The Second Jungle Book*. Kipling loved children and understood them very well. His tales fascinated boys and girls all over the world.

Kipling travelled a lot but in 1902 he returned to Great Britain with his wife and children. The Kiplings bought a large estate in Sussex and many of his most famous books were written there. One of them was *Just So Stories*. The book's name had, in fact, come from his daughter, who asked her father to repeat each tale several times, or "just so," as she often said.

In 1907 he was the first English writer to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature. It was international recognition of his talent.

In 1914, the First World War began and Kipling was a passionate supporter of the fight against Germany. He even encouraged his son John to join the army though John had a serious problem with his eyesight. Kipling and his son were very close. Unfortunately, in October of 1915, John was killed in France. Kipling, feeling guilty about persuading his son to become a soldier, was terribly depressed.

Due to these sad circumstances, for the last twenty years of his life Kipling did not write any more of his wonderful children's tales.

8. Banksy

Where do you expect to see graffiti? Probably not in a museum. Bristol Museum and Art Gallery, in the south-west of England, was the kind of place where you could see classical pictures and statues. However, in the summer of 2009 the exhibition 'Banksy versus the Bristol Museum' opened. The exhibition presented more than a hundred works by Banksy, one of the world's most famous graffiti artists.

Banksy is a puzzle to all. He keeps his identity secret. He hardly ever gives interviews and likes to remain anonymous. Nobody knows much about his life or his background but many people believe that his real name is either Robert Banks or Robin Banks and that he was born in England, somewhere near Bristol.

Banksy's street art is always provocative. It's his way of communicating with society. His graffiti is characterised by bright and frequently shocking images, often combined with slogans. His work is often a personal protest against wars, social policy or people's behaviour. Although graffiti is not allowed in cities, Banksy's works have become immensely popular.

Banksy believes that art should not be used for advertising. He has refused four times to do adverts for *Nike*, a famous sportswear company.

A year after the Bristol exhibition, Banksy made a film called 'Exit Through the Gift Shop'. The film tells the story of a street artist. It got many positive reviews from the critics and from the general audience.

Another curious fact from Banksy's biography is that once he was named among the 100 most influential people in the world. He actually found himself in the company of Barack Obama, Steve Jobs and Lady Gaga. When he was asked to send a photo, Banksy sent a picture of himself with a paper bag (recyclable, naturally) over his head. His fans still don't really know who he is.

Bristol isn't the only place in Britain to welcome and accept graffiti. A park in Dundee, Scotland, has the longest legal graffiti wall (almost 110 metres long) in the UK. Anyone can paint on the wall any time they like. The idea of this graffiti wall project is to demonstrate the positive side of graffiti and to organise workshops and graffiti classes for local children.

Even the capital of the country could not stay free of street art. There's a special website dedicated to London's street art and artists. The site's team is a group of enthusiastic young people who are closely connected with the street art world. They try to record and register all the works and display them on their 'Street Art London' site. That is quite a job to do! The reason is that street art is very temporal and short-lived: graffiti is soon covered by another wall painting so they have to be quick to take a picture and post it on the website.

9. Christmas Tree Memories

My name is Ted. I grew up in the 50s, but my childhood memories are still alive. The most pleasant of them is the family Christmas tree. Besides my mum and dad, there were five children in the family. We all took part in decorating the Christmas tree, one way or another. It was a special time for me as dad took us for a trip to the winter forest.

The experience was special as only boys were allowed to go to the countryside to pick out the tree. At the age of five I felt proud to be in a man's adventure. I remember walking through the forest with dad looking for the perfect, large tree. We had a tall ceiling in the living room, so a small tree did not look right there.

At the age of five, even a small tree seemed great to me. To measure a tree I raised my hands above my head and looked up. If I could reach the top of the tree I thought it was big enough. Dad, however, always chose the perfect tree very carefully.

Once he had made his choice, he took out an axe to cut down the tree. I wanted to help my dad and brothers, but they always told me to stand back. When the cutting began, I tried to hold the tree up. I was afraid the tree would fall on them and I felt strong enough to hold it.

After the tree was down we took it to the car and went back home. I don't remember how we got that large tree through the door, but it was always right. Then dad got the tree to stand up and we could start the decorating. The tree, the boxes with decorations and a tall ladder took up the whole room.

All the family took part as mum gave everyone a task. I had to pass the decorations. What I liked best about the Christmas tree were the lights. When everybody else had left I stayed in the room and watched the lights travelling up and down the Christmas tree.

Dad had one more special job that day. Mum took her favourite ornament, a lighted angel, which she had got as a present from her family. Dad climbed up the ladder and fixed the angel at the top of the Christmas tree. When I looked at the angel, I thought Santa was close to my house.

Everyone, and the decorated shining tree, was ready to celebrate Christmas. It was so big that it nearly touched the ceiling. I felt I was a small part of a big adventure. The last few years we lived in that house the trips to the forest with dad ceased. We bought an artificial tree instead.

10. Nike

Take a look around. How many people are wearing *Nike* right now? There is at least one, trust me. *Nike* is the number one manufacturer of footwear and clothes, and it has become a world famous brand on the same level as Coca Cola, McDonald's, and Apple.

Nike was originally known as *Blue Ribbon Shoes*. It was founded in 1964 by the runner Philip Knight and his coach Bill Bowerman. They established the company to import cheap Japanese running shoes for sale in the U.S. At the very beginning they had no room or shop, so Philip Knight sold the shoes out of the back of his car. Meanwhile Bill Bowerman worked on improvements to the footwear. He tore the shoes apart to see how he could make them lighter and better.

In 1967 a third person joined *Blue Ribbon Shoes*. It was Jeff Johnson. A runner himself, Johnson became the first full-time employee of *Blue Ribbon Shoes*. His contribution to the company is so great that it's hard to estimate. Johnson created the first product brochures, print adverts and marketing materials, and even took the photographs for the company's catalogues. He established a mail-order system and opened the first company shop.

At about the same time the company became ready to take a big move forward. They no longer wanted to be distributors, but wished to start designing and manufacturing their own brand of athletic shoes. Here again Johnson made an enormous contribution to the company. One night, he dreamed of Nike, the Greek goddess of victory, and suggested the name to his bosses.

Yet, another thing was missing – a memorable logo. One was created by a graphic design student Carolyn Davidson. She had become acquainted with Philip Knight who asked her for her design ideas and Carolyn agreed to do some freelance work for his company. Soon she presented a number of designs to Philip Knight and the other company managers, and they finally selected the mark which today is the Swoosh. That has been the *Nike* logo ever since then. Amazingly, Carolyn asked just \$35 for her work.

In 1988 *Nike* started an advertising campaign with its world famous slogan 'Just Do It'. The slogan was born during a *Nike* meeting with the advertising agency. The slogan has become so closely associated with *Nike* that as soon as most people hear or see those three words, they remember *Nike*, even if the company name is not mentioned. Today, the words 'Just Do It' and the *Nike* "swoosh" brandmark are all that are needed to identify something as a *Nike* product.

Isn't it amazing how a small symbol we call a logo can make a company into a huge success!

11. Jamie Oliver

Jamie Oliver is a genius in the world of food and one of Britain's most famous cooks. He has encouraged people to spend more time in the kitchen and enjoy it. His programmes are shown in over 100 countries including the USA, Australia, South Africa, Brazil, Japan and Iceland. They were translated into over 30 languages, Jamie Oliver's cookery books are bestsellers not only in the UK but across the world.

Jamie Oliver was born in 1975 in England. From an early age he got interested in food. His parents had a pub where he often helped them in the kitchen. He actually began working there at the age of eight. Jamie cut vegetables like any other ordinary worker in the pub.

Jamie Oliver left school at 16 without any official certificate. He went to Westminster College to study economics and after that travelled to France. Jamie knew that in France cooking was a kind of art. And he wanted to master that art. It was no doubt the best place to study if he wished to become a professional chef.

After returning from France, Jamie worked in a number of British restaurants. At that time there was a programme on the telly about the café where Jamie worked. TV producers were impressed by the young chef. The next day Jamie received calls from five different TV companies wishing to work with him. He soon became the best-liked celebrity chef on television and his programme was a real revolution in cooking shows. Thanks to an informal and friendly manner Jamie Oliver won crowds of fans around the world.

However, Jamie devotes his time not only to cooking. He's a family man, with a wife and four children. He also works on a number of projects. For example, Jamie Oliver created the "Fifteen Foundation". Each year, fifteen young people are trained and taught to work in the restaurant business. It's interesting that they are not common people. They are from unhappy families, they are unemployed. Some of them were in prison or took drugs. In this way Jamie Oliver tries to help them start a new life.

Another project by Jamie Oliver was connected with school dinners and lunches. He wanted school children to begin eating healthy food instead of junk food. The British government supported the project. It spent extra 280 million pounds to improve school meals. Part of the money was spent on training cooks and buying modern cooking equipment for schools.

It's really hard to name all the TV programmes, shows, projects that Jamie Oliver had and is still having. He's so creative and imaginative, that there's no end to new ideas and projects. Except television, Jamie Oliver is a writer. His every book immediately becomes a bestseller. It's interesting that he became the best-selling author in the country after JK Rowling, the "Harry Potter" writer.

12. The Owl

Joan Harrison was walking along the street. She was shy and always felt lonely and upset. Joan worked as a secretary in an office in the city centre. It was lunch time and she went out to get some air. She was looking absently at the shop-windows when she saw a brown wooden owl in one of them. Suddenly Joan stopped. Joan was totally indifferent to birds and she had never understood people who collected useless statues. But for some reason she could not take her eyes off the owl. The wooden owl drew Joan to itself.

Joan decided to buy the owl. She earned a little, just to pay for her room and food. She couldn't afford new clothes. Even a ticket to the cinema was a heavy expense for her. But this time Joan was sure that she had to buy the wooden owl.

Joan opened the door of the shop. She asked the shop assistant about the price of the wooden owl. It was fifty pounds. Joan understood that it was sheer madness to buy such an expensive wooden bird. But she did it without any hesitation.

Joan left ten pounds in advance and promised to bring the rest of the money in the evening. After work she ran home, took all her savings and rushed back to the shop in excitement. Joan brought the wooden owl home and put it onto the table. Joan smiled and touched the owl's head. Suddenly, she felt happy and self-confident.

The next morning she left her house in a very good mood. Now, having the owl at home, Joan made it a habit to say good-bye and touch the owl's head before leaving. Amazingly, after this simple gesture she was cheerful and energetic the whole day. One morning, when patting the owl on the head, Joan remembered her wish to join the evening pottery class at college. She had often thought about it but always changed her mind at the last moment. Now she decided to fulfill her wish.

At the pottery class Joan achieved considerable results. Her teacher said she had a unique style. Nobody knew that she worked hard at home. Under the owl's observation Joan experimented with forms and colours. Once she took part in the students' show at the college, and the Art Museum asked her to sell her works for two thousand pounds. The sum covered all her debts and she could afford to buy a new dress and shoes and even more.

The next step was the annual National Art Festival, at which a secretary, Joan Harrison, presented her personal exhibition. Her fame and income were growing. Joan left her office and became a potter. A year later she and the art director of the museum were happily married. They moved to a large country house and now Joan had her own pottery.

Joan took the lucky owl with her. It took its honorary place in the large living room. In her last years she often remembered the shop where she had bought the owl, her evening classes and her first steps in pottery. Joan was so proud of the owl that each piece of her pottery had a picture of the owl on it. Lots of famous artists and important people visited Joan and her husband but Joan never gave her owl to anybody until her dying day.

13. Mark Twain

Mark Twain wrote 'The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn' in 1884. Since then, the book has been published in at least sixty languages, and some people say it is the best book ever created by an American writer. American students have 'The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn' on their school reading list and parents, teachers and literary experts still debate the problems touched in the book.

The writer's real name was Samuel Clemens. Samuel was born in 1835. He grew up in the state of Missouri on the Mississippi River. After his father died, young Samuel went to work as an assistant to a publisher. Ten years later, he became a pilot on a steamboat that sailed on the Mississippi. He heard the riverboat workers call out the words "mark twain!" That was a measure for the depth of water. Later he used this word combination as a pen-name.

In 1861 Clemens travelled west and became a reporter for newspapers in Nevada and California. He wrote news stories, editorials and sketches under his penname *Mark Twain*. He became one of the best known storytellers in the West. He developed his own narrative style – friendly, funny, and often satirical, which won him a wide audience. The first success came with the story 'The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County'.

Mark Twain travelled a lot during his lifetime not only round the USA but also to Europe and the Holy Land. He naturally began writing books about his travels. 'The Adventures of Tom Sawyer' was published in 1876, and soon after he began writing a sequel, 'The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn'.

It took Mark Twain longer to write 'The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn' than any of his other books. He started writing in 1876, but put the story away after about two years of work. He returned to it in 1883, and the following year it was published.

From the beginning, the book was strongly debated. Some critics praised its realism and honesty but the others strongly disliked it. They protested against the personality of Huck – a rough, dirty and disobedient boy. They could not agree that such a person should be the main character of a book. What's more, critics disliked the way Mark Twain used the language of a common, uneducated person to tell the story; no writer had ever done that before.

Today there is no longer any debate about the importance of 'The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn' in American literature. In 1935 Ernest Hemingway wrote: "All modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called 'Huckleberry Finn.' There was nothing before. And there has been nothing as good since."

No wonder then, that the novel 'The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn' was a great inspiration for film producers – more than 20 screen versions of the book have been shot not only in America but in Europe, Russia and Japan. There are feature films, musicals, cartoons and even Japanese anime.

14. The Art of Campfire Cooking

Pat Mac and Mike Faverman first met when they were comedians going on tour and organising shows around the country. Later, their love of food became a new hobby they had in common and a new project.

Before they met in 2005, Mac had grown up cooking in his father's restaurant in Idaho, and Faverman had worked as a chef in restaurants across the US. They decided to combine their two hobbies – making people laugh and cooking good food – into a travelling road show called *Ultimate Outdoor Cooking*. The idea of the show was to prove that cooking by campfire out in the woods is exciting but not always simple.

Mac had had a lot of camping experience before he met Faverman and it had taught him that food was extremely important for people on vacation. Interestingly, better food brought more people to the campground. When it was their turn to cook, the new campers started to give up eating hot dogs and hamburgers and started to create new recipes.

Mac and Faverman have tried different types of camping together, each time experimenting with the most suitable recipes. Their favourite dish for car camping, for example, is steak in lemon juice mixed with salt and pepper. To keep the meat fresh, they keep it cool in a car while travelling. Afterwards, when they get to the campsite, the steak is barbecued with red potatoes.

For travelling on foot with a rucksack they suggest either red potatoes with grilled and salted fish or sausages with different vegetables like zucchini, cabbage, carrots and onions. The only secret to keeping the vegetables nice and fresh while walking is to pack them properly and leave them until ready to cook in a pan over the fire at the campsite.

As they do a lot of cooking, the most useful instruments for Mac and Faverman are plastic bags, knives, a wooden rack to cut the food on and also matches and a lighter. Besides the latter, they use electric things, which can be a little risky at times. For example, a couple of years ago Mac was using an oven to slow-cook meat on a little grill. Suddenly one of the legs of the oven broke; the grill itself and the pot fell to the ground and the meat fell straight onto the dirt. Luckily, Mac used the “five-second rule”: just wash the meat off and put it back on the grill. He said later that it tasted a bit sandy, but the campers didn’t notice.

Unlike Mac, at the beginning of the project Faverman was usually unsuccessful at making a fire and putting up a tent because he didn’t have enough experience. Later, he became quite a skillful camper who could give a useful tip or two to beginners. The best piece of advice from the pair for cooking in the woods is to design the menu ahead of time and to know exactly what you are going to cook on the first and second days. A good camper should try to make the first meal easy because setting up camp takes a lot of time and effort.

15. Sir Christopher Wren

Sir Christopher Wren was a designer, astronomer, geometer, and one of the greatest English architects of his time.

Christopher Wren was born into a rich family in 1632 . He was a weak and sickly child and was taught at home by private tutors and his father. Wren’s schooling is a mystery: there are no documents about whether he attended school or not. However, there is a written evidence that he entered Oxford University in 1650 to study science and mathematics.

On graduating from university, Wren was appointed Professor of Astronomy at Gresham College, London. He was required to give weekly lectures in both Latin and English to all who wished to attend; admission was free. His lectures and the following discussions led to establishing the Royal Society, England’s first scientific organization.

Later, Christopher Wren taught at Oxford University. His scientific work included astronomy, optics, mechanics, medicine and meteorology. He invented and improved lots of things. He experimented with submarine design, road paving, and design of telescopes. It was also around these times that his attention turned to architecture.

In Wren's time, the profession of an architect did not exist. In the past, buildings had been constructed to the requirements of the patron and the suggestions of building professionals, such as master carpenters or master bricklayers. Since the early years of the 17th century, it was not unusual for the well-educated gentleman to take up architecture as a hobby. Wren designed 51 London churches, including St Paul's Cathedral, and several buildings after the Great Fire in 1666. Each church was different, though all were classical in style. He insisted on the finest materials and only skillful workers were hired for the job. Christopher Wren became a knight in 1673.

Actually, St. Paul's Cathedral is still Wren's masterpiece. The architectural style of St. Paul's Cathedral is a beautiful mix of the Medieval, Classical, and Baroque. The inside of St. Paul's Cathedral is gorgeous. The foundation stone of the Cathedral was laid in 1675 when Wren was 43 years old, and the last stone was put in place by his son, 35 years later.

Nowadays, St. Paul's Cathedral is the largest working Protestant church in England. Services are held regularly. Important events at the Cathedral have included the funerals of Lord Nelson and Sir Winston Churchill, Jubilee celebrations of Queen Victoria, peace services marking the end of the First and Second World Wars and, most recently, the thanksgiving services for both the Golden Jubilee and 80th birthday of Her Majesty the Queen.

Wren died on 25th February 1723. His gravestone in St Paul's Cathedral features a Latin inscription which translates as: *'If you seek his memorial, look about you.'*

16. The Best Job in the World

Have you ever heard of the Great Barrier Reef? It is the world's largest coral reef system along the eastern coast of Australia. In February 2009 an extraordinary position was advertised by the Australian Tourism Office. The advertisement ran that the Great Barrier Reef needed a caretaker for half a year. It was for a special person who would look after the Reef.

The job offered a large salary, free accommodation in a luxury villa, and transportation there and around the islands. All expenses would be paid: the winner wouldn't need to spend any extra money on anything.

The job's duties were pretty simple. You could only dream of such requirements. First, the person had to speak English and swim well. Second, on the island his responsibility included writing a weekly Internet blog. That's right, weekly, not even daily! The job description also required the successful applicant to explore the islands of the Great Barrier Reef, swim, make friends with the locals and generally enjoy the tropical climate and lifestyle. A real dream!

Within the first 2 days of the contest, the tourism office received more than seven thousand online applications. All told, 34,000 people of all different nationalities applied. Each made and presented a 60-second video resume. They had to be creative and they were. In the end 16 people were chosen, who flew to Australia for the final selection. The candidates were interviewed and the winner was Ben Southall from the UK.

Ben greatly enjoyed the dream job he had got. He realised that people knew very little about the Earth and its treasures. Living in big cities, they forgot how important the flora and fauna of this world were. Every time Ben went outdoors, he could discover something new. "Every time I dived or went underwater, I forgot about all the troubles above water and concentrated on living in the moment. It was a good way to clean the mind and build respect for the natural world," Ben said.

Ben's life on the island was not just fun. It was very busy, busier than most people imagined, and certainly busier than Ben himself had imagined. He worked seven days a week and up to 19 hours a day. *The Best Job* included travelling to over 60 islands of the Reef almost every day. It was not just looking after the Reef, Ben had a lot of meetings, press conferences and interviews. He was getting a lot of attention all the time and he couldn't get away from it. That was probably the hardest part of the job.

Moreover, any adventure has a certain degree of risk. Swimming and diving on the Great Barrier Reef was not different. Ben had to deal with whales, sharks and other huge sea creatures. Surprisingly, the most dangerous thing was a small jellyfish about the size of a little finger. It's

considered to be extremely poisonous and Ben was stung by it. He had to spend a couple of days in hospital but luckily recovered after a course of antibiotics.

Ben often says that the project has taught him a few valuable lessons. Working with the Internet is one of those jobs you can do 24 hours a day. Ben realised it was hard to separate life and work, but this he had to do. He also said: "I've learned that we get one life on earth so we have to use it. There'll always be other countries to visit, other people to meet and other adventures to meet. This is what I wish to do. I'm planning to go to Asia in a few years time".

17. Louis Armstrong

Louis Armstrong played jazz, sang jazz and wrote jazz. He recorded hit songs for fifty years and his music is still heard today on television, radio and in movies.

Louis Armstrong was born in New Orleans, in the state of Louisiana on August 4th, 1901. His father was a factory worker and left the family soon after Louis's birth. Young Louis was desperately poor. He lived with his sister, mother and grandmother in the poorest area of New Orleans known as 'the Battlefield' because of the fighting and shooting that often happened there.

When Louis was eleven years old, he was arrested for firing a gun into the air on New Year's Eve. He was sent to a reform school, where he learned to play the trumpet in the school's band. Eighteen months later Louis was back home and already dreaming of the life of a musician. He sold newspapers, unloaded boats and sold coal. However, in the evenings Louis played the trumpet with local groups or went to clubs to listen to jazz bands. He soon became friends with one of the greatest musicians of the time, Joe Oliver, who became young Louis's teacher. As Louis's skills developed, he began to perform professionally.

He was soon able to stop working on manual labour jobs and began concentrating fulltime on music, playing at parties, dances, and at local cafés. He joined Joe Oliver's band and moved to Chicago. Later, Louis organised his own band and began to record one of the greatest series of songs in the history of jazz. Louis developed a unique style of singing: he could make his voice sound like a musical instrument and he could make an instrument sound like a singer's voice. Louis enjoyed singing improvised melodies and rhythms. Armstrong was an easy-going and communicative person. His fellow musicians called him 'Satchelmouth' because of his wide smile. Later, it was shortened to 'Satchmo'.

Armstrong's biggest hits came later in his life. In 1964, his version of the song 'Hello Dolly' was a top hit around the world. It even replaced a top-selling hit by the hugely popular British group, the Beatles. Three years later, he appeared in the film version of 'Hello Dolly' with the singer Barbra Streisand. The song 'What a Wonderful World', recorded in 1968, was his final big hit.

Louis Armstrong never finished the fifth grade in school, yet he wrote two books about his life and many stories for magazines. He appeared in more than thirty movies. He composed many jazz pieces. He won several gold records and many other awards. Armstrong performed about three hundred concerts each year, travelling all over the world. He became known as the legend and symbol of jazz.

18. Christmas Fire

Dan had sweet memories of his childhood years, especially Christmas. In those days, he had lived in Wales, in a small town. He remembered the white snow in the garden and a cold moon in the sky at night. December was always cold and frosty. Dan spent lots of time outdoors because he liked playing in the snow. While Dan was growing up, each Christmas was much like the last:

Christmas tree, Christmas wishes, Christmas presents under the tree, Christmas dinner with relatives. But one of his Christmases he would remember forever.

It was many years ago, and he was 6 or 7 years old. It was the afternoon of Christmas Eve. Dan was playing in Mrs. Prothero's garden with her son Jim. Dan was afraid of Mrs. Prothero because she always looked strict and harsh. She never invited him to the house. But her son Jim was different. The boys were playing cat hunters: they made lots of snowballs and prepared to attack the cats. Dan and Jim felt cold waiting for the cats to come over the garden wall. But none of them had appeared yet.

Suddenly the boys heard a loud cry from the house. At first they thought it was Mrs. Prothero's white cat, that was their main enemy. Soon the cry repeated and grew louder. Now the boys understood that it was Mrs. Prothero herself, and she was shouting 'Fire!'

The boys ran down towards the house. The door was wide open with grey smoke coming from inside. Something was burning. Mrs. Prothero desperately called for help and for Mr. Prothero, who was obviously sleeping in another room. He always slept after lunch with a newspaper over his face. Finally, Mr. Prothero appeared in the clouds of smoke in the doorway. "What a fine Christmas!" he said waving his hand like an orchestra conductor. Mrs. Prothero asked him to call the fire brigade but he doubted that they would be available because of the holiday. But he sent the boys to the telephone box.

Dan and Jim rushed out of the house. The adventure seemed to be better than cat hunting. Jim suggested also calling the police and the ambulance. But they called only the fire brigade. The fire truck and three tall men in helmets arrived just as the boys returned to Mrs. Prothero's house. It was the noisiest and most unusual Christmas Eve they had ever had.

The firemen started the pump and the water ran into the house. When it was all over, Mr. and Mrs. Prothero were standing in their wet and smoky room with a grey Christmas tree in the middle. The room looked a complete mess. Mrs. Prothero opened the oven and took out a burnt cake. She was in tears – it had been a horrible Christmas.

Just as the firemen were going to leave, Jim's aunt, Miss Prothero, came back home. She looked surprised at the crowd of neighbours but did not give way to panic. She opened a colourful paper bag and produced a nice Christmas cake from the nearest shop. Then she smiled and said, "Merry Christmas! Everything will be all right!"

19. Halloween

Halloween dates back to an ancient Celtic festival. The Celts, who lived 2,000 years ago in the area of Ireland, the United Kingdom and northern France, celebrated their new year on November 1. This day showed that the summer was over and winter had come. Because of the cold and darkness, winter was associated with human death.

Celts believed that on Halloween night the ghosts of the dead returned to earth. With their help, the Druids or Celtic priests, could predict the future. It was important because people depended on the natural world which was dangerous and changeable. They wanted to know what their life would be like in the next year.

For this event the Druids built big bonfires, where the people gathered to burn crops and animals. It was a gift to the Celtic gods. During the celebration, the Celts wore costumes made of animal heads and skins. They sang, danced and listened to the stories the Druids told them. When the celebration was over, they went home and brought burning pieces of wood with them. They lit their fires and hoped it would ensure good fortune and protect the family during the winter.

The first celebrations of Halloween in America were public events. Neighbours got together to celebrate the harvest and tell each other stories of the dead. They also sang and danced. By the

middle of the nineteenth century, these autumn festivals were common, but Halloween was not yet celebrated everywhere in the country.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, lots of immigrants started coming to America. They helped to make the celebration of Halloween a popular national event. Americans began to dress up in frightening costumes and go from house to house asking for food or money. The most popular characters were witches, ghosts, and vampires. Everyone tried to look as ugly and scary as possible.

Halloween is closely associated with the Jack-o'-lantern, a pumpkin with a candle inside that shines through the holes to make a horrible face. Most people think that the Jack-o'-lantern is an American tradition. However, the original Jack-o'-lantern was not a pumpkin but a man who, according to the old Irish legend played a trick on the devil himself. He was punished for that and was accepted neither to heaven nor to hell. The Irish people shared the legend with the Americans and showed them how to make Jack-o'-lantern out of the pumpkin.

By the 1930s, Halloween had been celebrated with parades, town-wide parties and lots of other entertainment. Later a new tendency appeared. By the 1950s, Halloween had changed into a holiday directed mainly at children. On that evening children in costumes travel from house to house in order to ask for treats (such as some sweets, a small present or a few coins) with the question "Trick or treat?" The trick is a threat (usually not working) to perform mischief on the owner of the house if no treat is given. "Trick or treat?" has become a traditional practice on Halloween in many countries.

20. Cambridge University

Cambridge University is the second-oldest university in the English-speaking world (after the University of Oxford) and the seventh-oldest in the world.

The story of Cambridge University begins in 1209 when several hundred students arrived in the little town of Cambridge after having walked 60 miles from Oxford. These students were all churchmen and had been studying in Oxford at that city's well-known schools. It was a hard life at Oxford for there was constant trouble, even fighting, between the citizens of the town and the students. Then one day a student accidentally killed a man of the town. The Mayor arrested three other students who were innocent and they were put to death. In protest, many students left Oxford, some of them went to Cambridge. And so the new University began.

It was Cambridge University. Of course, there were no Colleges in those early days and student life was very different from what it is now. Students were of all ages and came from anywhere and everywhere. Life in College was strict. Students were forbidden to play games, to sing (except sacred music), to hunt or fish or even to dance. Books were very rare and all the lessons were in the Latin language which students were supposed to speak even among themselves.

In 1440 King Henry VI founded King's College, and other colleges followed. Nowadays there are more than 30 different colleges, including five for women students and several mixed colleges, in the University. The number of students in colleges is different: from 30 to 400 or 500.

The training course lasts 4 years. The academic year is divided into 3 terms. The students study natural and technical sciences, law, history, languages, geography, medicine, economics, agriculture, music and many other subjects. After 3 years of study a student may proceed to a Bachelor's degree, and later to the degrees of Master and Doctor.

There are many ancient traditions that are still observed at Cambridge. Students are required to wear gowns at lectures, in the University library, in the street in the evening, for dinners in the colleges and for official visits. One more tradition is to use Latin during public ceremonies of awarding degrees.

All the students must pay for their education, examinations, books, laboratories, university hostel, the use of libraries. The cost is high. It depends on college and university speciality. Very few students get grants.

Many great men studied at Cambridge, for example, Bacon (the philosopher), Milton and Byron (the poets), Cromwell (the soldier), Newton (the outstanding physicist), Darwin (who is famous for his theory of evolution) and Kapitsa (the famous Russian physicist).

21. Robert Falcon Scott

Robert Falcon Scott, known as Captain Scott or Scott of the Antarctic, was a British polar explorer. He joined the Royal Navy in 1882. Although he had no previous experience of polar research, in 1900 he became the leader of the British Antarctic Expedition. This expedition, known as the *Discovery Expedition* lasted from 1901 to 1904. Among other important things it determined the nature and size of the *Ross Ice Shelf* in Antarctica.

The aim of Scott's second expedition in 1910-12 was to reach the South Pole. Departing from Cardiff, Wales, on the ship *Terra Nova*, the expedition reached the Antarctic coast in 1911. There Scott learned that the Norwegian explorer, Roald Amundsen, had already left for the Pole. So Scott's chance to reach the South Pole before R. Amundsen was poor.

Equipped with motor tractors, ponies and dogs, Scott and 11 members of his team set off for the Pole on 24 October 1911. Unfortunately, the motor tractors rapidly broke down and their ponies were unsuitable for Antarctic conditions. Very soon, six members of the team were sent back. The five explorers continued their dangerous journey across the snowy desert. On 16 January, they saw a black marker flag left by the Norwegian expedition, and two days later the party reached the South Pole itself, where the Norwegians had built a snow marker. Amundsen had reached the South Pole more than a month earlier, on 14 December 1911. Scott was greatly disappointed after the exhausting 81-day journey and recorded in his diary, "This is an awful place and terrible enough for us to have reached it without the reward of priority."

However, the 800 mile return journey was even more terrible. Two members fell ill and died, and the remaining explorers were frozen inside their tent in a terrible nine-day snowstorm. The last entry in Scott's diary was made on 29 March.

Eight months later a search party, led by Dr Atkinson, discovered the tent and the bodies of the explorers, along with the diaries and last letters of Scott. Scott had written a message explaining the reasons for the failure. The search party buried the brave explorers and built a snow memorial on their grave. Later, another memorial was put up at Observation Hill, at Hut Point (Antarctica) with the words '*to strive, to seek, to find and not to yield.*'

The news about the death of the Polar team reached Britain in February 1913. Within days, Scott became a national icon. A memorial service was held in St Paul's Cathedral. A campaign was launched to raise a memorial fund to continue the scientific work Scott had carried out. The Scott Polar Research Institute was founded. In the several years following the disaster, more than 30 monuments and memorials were set up in Britain alone.

22. Helen Keller

Life is not always easy. Sometimes it presents us serious problems that make us sad and even depressed. When it comes to this, you may remember the example of Helen Keller, born in a small American town in 1880.

The illness struck Helen Keller when she was a baby and left her deaf and blind before she learned to speak. As a child Helen was wild and disobedient. She seemed not to understand what

was going on in the world around her. In spite of Helen's illness her parents decided that she should have some education and started looking for a teacher.

Helen Keller's new life began on a March day in 1887 when she was seven years old. On that day Anne Mansfield Sullivan, a 20-year-old graduate of the Perkins School, came to the town to be her teacher. From that day, the two of them – teacher and pupil – were inseparable.

Miss Sullivan began her first lesson by handing Helen a doll and pressing "d-o-l-l" into the child's hand. In this way she hoped to teach Helen to connect objects with letters. Helen quickly learned to form the letters correctly and in the correct order. In the days that followed, she learned to spell lots of different words.

Helen Keller was a talented pupil and quickly learnt how to read and write. She enjoyed reading books written for blind children. In 1890, when she was just 10, she decided to learn to speak. Somehow she had found out that a little deaf-blind girl in Norway managed to do it.

At first Helen had difficulty with speaking, but with the time and help from Anne she developed a clear voice. Later, she was able to speak in public for large crowds which came to her whenever she gave her lectures. There was usually a storm of applause after her every lecture.

After school Helen went to college and graduated it with honours. She got a Bachelor of Arts degree. Throughout those years and until her own death in 1936, Anne Sullivan was always by Helen's side. She pressed book after book and lecture after lecture into her pupil's hand.

One of Helen's professors was so deeply impressed by her essays in English that he suggested the girl writing the story of her life. Helen followed the advice and wrote the book while still at college. It was a cheerful account of how a young girl was able to live a happy life in spite of her terrible misfortunes. Later she wrote several books more. In her books and lectures Helen did everything possible to help and encourage those who were blind. For the rest of her life, Helen Keller worked for improving education for the blind and deaf.

Helen Keller lived in many different places – Alabama; Cambridge and Wrentham, Massachusetts; Forest Hills, New York, but perhaps her favorite residence was the house in Easton, which she called "Arcan Ridge." She moved to that white house in 1936, after her beloved teacher's death. And it was "Arcan Ridge" she called home for the rest of her life. She died in 1968.

23. Fast Food

When people all over the world are looking for a quick, easy meal, fast food is the most common choice. With good service, low prices and a relaxed atmosphere, fast food looks like the ideal choice. In fact, over 25 percent of Europeans eat fast food every day. Fries and hamburgers are sold everywhere: in big cities, small towns, shopping malls, airports, bus stations, schools, and even hospitals! There are 31,000 McDonald's worldwide.

However, fast food companies make clients eat more. They offer over-sized burgers, extra-large French fries, and big portions of Coke. What's more, these "large versions" are usually cheaper. The products have lots of calories, sugar and fat. A typical hamburger at a fast food restaurant weighs 170 grams. In 1957, it was just 50 grams. According to scientists, your fast food meal is like three ordinary meals.

Fast food doesn't spoil. This is because it has lots of "special" ingredients. There's a video on YouTube that illustrates this. It is based on a true story. In 1991, an engineer from the USA, Tom Scarvell, met with friends for New Year's Eve. They stopped at McDonald's on the way home. He bought some cheeseburgers, ate one and put the other in his coat pocket. Then he forgot about it. A year later, he took the coat out of the wardrobe, put it on and discovered the cheeseburger in his pocket from New Year's Eve. It looked exactly the same. He was absolutely shocked. He told his friends and family but nobody believed him. So he decided to start a

"burger museum" to show everyone that these cheeseburgers and hamburgers don't decompose.

He started collecting burgers, one every year. He kept them on bookshelves in his living room in the open air. These burgers looked exactly the same, the bun, the meat, the cheese, the special sauce, the cucumber, even the lettuce. They all kept their shape and colour for over five years!

It is surprising that although most people don't think that fast food is the best choice they can't stop going to fast food restaurants, like McDonald's. The chain has healthy dishes on the menu, such as fruit and vegetables. Why not order them? But you don't go to McDonald's for a green salad or a yoghurt! The unhealthy hamburgers, French fries and milkshakes are more common and attractive and to many people they are tastier than low calorie dishes.

There is no problem with eating fast food from time to time. If you really are dreaming about a hamburger, go and get it. But if you're having a stressful day, remember that lunch in a fast food restaurant is not a good choice. Doctors strongly recommend avoiding all fast food and takeaways these days. You can occasionally allow yourself a fast food meal. However, if you are eating it more than once a week, think of giving up.

Fast food should play a small role in your life. If you don't have a way out, have a fast food meal in one of McDonald's restaurants but choose the healthier dishes. You should be aware of what you eat and try to develop healthy eating habits.

24. The Open Window

Mr. Nuttel, a young gentleman, came to live in the country. The doctors said a quiet place like that and complete rest could help cure his nerves. He didn't know anyone round there and was too shy to make new acquaintances. That's why his sister gave him letters of introduction to some nice people she knew.

One of the letters was to Mrs. Sappleton. When Mr. Nuttel visited her, Mrs Sappleton was busy and he was asked to wait for several minutes. The servant invited Mr. Nuttel into a room. There Mr. Nuttel met Mrs. Sappleton's niece, a very self-confident young lady of fifteen. The young gentleman was very shy and he didn't know how to start the conversation. The young lady broke the silence and asked him what he knew about her aunt. Mr. Nuttel knew nothing except Mrs. Sappleton's name and address.

Mr. Nuttel looked around. There was something about the room that told him there were other people living in the house. So he was wondering if Mrs. Sappleton was married. Suddenly the girl got sad and told a story of Mrs. Sappleton's tragedy. Mr. Nuttel was greatly surprised because his sister hadn't told him anything about it. The tragedy was very unusual for that peaceful place.

The girl pointed at the French window, which opened on to the lawn and said that Mrs. Sappleton always kept it open. Mr. Nuttel stated that it was natural to keep the window open because the weather was quite warm. But the girl sighed and explained that her poor aunt always kept the window open in the evenings because she was waiting for her husband and sons to return. Three years ago they had gone hunting and never came back. The story caught Mr. Nuttel's imagination deeply. He felt very upset.

He felt a little better only when Mrs. Sappleton finally appeared in the room. She apologized for being late and asked if he minded the open window. She said her husband and sons would soon be home from hunting. They always came in that way. Then, she continued talking cheerfully about hunting ducks. But Mr. Nuttel felt terrible.

He made an attempt to change the topic and told her about the reasons why he had come to the country. But Mrs. Sappleton didn't seem to notice. She was constantly looking at the open window. Mr. Nuttel felt uncomfortable. He understood that he had chosen the wrong moment to visit her. Suddenly Mrs. Sappleton cried happily pointing at the window, "Here they are at last,

just in time for tea!” Three male figures were walking across the lawn towards the window. They carried guns and a dog followed them.

Shocked and afraid, Mr. Nuttel grabbed his stick and hat and rushed out of the house. Mrs. Sappleton was extremely surprised at the extraordinary man who had left the house so quickly without a word. Her niece suggested that it was because of the dog. She said that Mr. Nuttel had been afraid of them since childhood – once, a dog had seriously bitten him. This was enough to make the young man lose his nerve. The young lady was so good at making up stories!

25. Pirates

There have always been people who robbed ships in the open sea. We know them as pirates or corsairs. Many of them were sailors who lost their jobs, others were just young men and women looking for adventure. Thousands of pirates were active from 1650–1720. These years are sometimes known as the 'Golden Age' of piracy. Probably the most famous pirates of this period are Blackbeard, Henry Morgan, William 'Captain' Kidd, and the Barbarossa brothers. The "Jolly Roger" is the well-known pirate flag. There are a number of theories about its origin. It is thought that the first pirates used a red flag, which was common in sea attacks. A red flag told other ships that there would be no pity and no prisoners would be taken. This red flag was called *Joli Rouge* (pretty red) in French. Most probably, English people pronounced it in their own way "Jolly Roger". Another theory says that "old Roger" was another name for the devil. Another popular image from the pirate world is a parrot, sitting on the captain's shoulder. Well, there's no historical proof of that. No doubt, pirates often travelled to faraway exotic lands and brought unusual animals as souvenirs with them. Parrots were particularly popular because they were colourful, could be taught to speak, and were easier to care for than, say, monkeys. However, you can't imagine a pirate fighting with a bird on the shoulder. This image possibly began with the book 'Treasure Island'. In the book, the ever famous Long John Silver carried a parrot as a pet.

Before joining a ship each pirate signed an agreement called "Articles". This explained the rights and laws on board the ship, how much a person was paid, what to do in case of emergency, etc. For example, playing cards for money was not allowed. For breaking the rules a pirate would be shot or left on a desert island with a bottle of water and a gun.

A pirate ship was organized democratically. After a successful attack they divided the treasures equally, only the captain and the cook got more. They sometimes decided together which ship to attack or where to sail next. Most pirates were paid four times more than they had when they were sailors. But on land they were criminals and lots of money was offered to those who caught them.

However, for some time the English government supported pirates. There were lots of pirates in the sixteenth century when England was at war with Spain and the Dutch Republic. Queen Elizabeth I ordered them to rob Spanish ships and bring gold, silver and jewels to the country. Sir Francis Drake was one of the most famous pirates. He brought lots of treasures to England and also was the first Englishman to sail all the way around the world. Because of this, he was made a knight by Queen Elizabeth I.

26. Glastonbury Festival

Glastonbury Festival is the largest open air music and arts festival in the world. It became an example which other festivals followed. Of course, Glastonbury is best known for modern music, but its programme also includes dance, comedy, theatre, circus and other arts.

The festival organiser, Michael Eavis, was a common farmer. In 1970 he visited an open air concert which greatly impressed him. So he decided to organise a big festival outdoors in the same year. He knew, it wouldn't bring any money, but it didn't matter. At the first festival there were more than one thousand people. Each of them paid £1 for the ticket. The price also included

free milk from the farm. Later on, the festival took place almost every year and grew in size and audience.

The festival takes place in southwest England on a farm. It's a beautiful and mystical place called the "Valley of Avalon". It is surrounded with a lot of legends, symbols, myths, and religious traditions dating back many hundreds of years. Legends say that here King Arthur's sword was made and the king himself was buried there. No wonder that the main stage of the festival, Pyramid Stage, has the form of a pyramid. Many believe that this is a very powerful structure, which gets energy from the stars and gives it to people.

In many ways, Glastonbury is like a mix of different festivals, which take place in the countryside and last for a weekend. Each area of the Festival has its own character, its own fans and its own special attractions. For example, dance lovers go to the "Dance Village". There is also a big cinema area, "Theatre and Circus". Children can have fun in the "Kids' Field". Some people spend the whole weekend in their favourite area. However, most of them prefer walking about and trying lots of different things.

Most people who stay at Glastonbury Festival live in tents. There are lots of different camping areas, each one with its own atmosphere. You can choose where to stay: in a quiet place or a lively one. There are also places for families and disabled people. Anyway, you should remember to bring a tent with you. Of course, it's possible to rent one, but it's quite expensive.

Glastonbury Festival supports Greenpeace and has a number of programmes. There are hundreds of rubbish bins on the territory. All cans, glass, paper, electrical and electronic equipment, wood and waste are separated and recycled. Visitors are asked to clean after themselves and not to leave rubbish. The Festival supports those who come by public transport or by bicycle, not by car.

If you're thinking about visiting Glastonbury, you should book tickets in advance. Today an average ticket is about £200 for three days which is quite expensive. Nevertheless the tickets are sold out in two or three hours. So be quick to catch them. There are usually more people wishing to get to the festival than tickets. Registration for the 2013 festival began in June 2011.

27. Florence Nightingale

Florence Nightingale was a celebrated English nurse and writer. According to a survey, British people consider her to be one of the most famous British persons along with outstanding scientists, writers and politicians.

She was born into a rich, upper-class family in 1820, in Italy. She got her name Florence after the city of her birth, as there was a tradition in her family to name the children in honour of the city they were born in. She got an all-round education and according to the family's status Florence was expected to become a faithful wife and attentive mother.

However, in 1844 Florence decided to become a nurse, despite the intense anger and distress of her mother and sister. At that time nursing was seen as a job that needed neither education nor special medical skills.

In 1854 the Crimean War broke out and Florence Nightingale offered her services to the War Office and soon left for the Crimea with thirty-eight volunteer nurses. They began their work in the main British camp, in the hospital. Very soon Florence found out that hygiene was neglected, and fatal infections were common. There was no equipment to cook proper food for the patients. Florence decided to change the situation.

Nightingale managed to found a vast kitchen and a laundry. In addition to her nursing work, she tried to organize reading and recreation rooms for the wounded soldiers. She was on her feet for twenty hours a day and so were the other nurses. Florence was called 'The Lady with the Lamp' for her habit of making rounds round the hospital at night. She checked on her helpless patients.

Florence remained in the Crimea until 1856, then she returned to England.

In London Florence Nightingale visited Queen Victoria and persuaded the Queen of the need to create a military hospital system. Soon Florence Nightingale set up a training school for nurses, the first nursing school in the world. It is now called *The Florence Nightingale School of Nursing and Midwifery* and is part of *King's College* in London. The annual International Nurses Day is celebrated around the world on Florence's birthday, the 12th of May.

In the Crimea camp, Nightingale got 'Crimean fever' and never fully recovered. By the time she was 38 years old, she was seriously ill. She left her house very rarely and had to stay in bed most of the time. Nevertheless, Florence continued her work from her bed. She wrote many books, some of them became the base of the curriculum at the *Nightingale School* and other British nursing schools.

Florence Nightingale died in London in 1910, at the age of ninety. The government offered to bury Florence in Westminster Abbey but her relatives did not agree. However, the memorial service took place in St. Paul's Cathedral.

Florence Nightingale received a lot of honorable awards. Several books were written about the life of 'The Lady with the Lamp' and a few films were shot about her.

28. The Crown Jewels

Every year, millions of visitors come to the Tower of London to see the Crown Jewels*. The Crown Jewels have been kept at the Tower since 1303 after they were stolen from Westminster Abbey. Luckily, that time most of the Crown Jewels were found shortly afterwards and put in the Tower.

Although there have been a few attempts to steal the Crown Jewels from the Tower, none of them have succeeded. But the name of one of the thieves has remained in the British history. He was Thomas Blood.

On the 9th May, 1660, Thomas Blood, dressed as a priest, came to the Tower. He came with three well-dressed young men.

Thomas Blood had already been to the Tower a few days earlier. He was with a woman whom he introduced as his 'wife'. When they were walking round the Tower, the 'wife' pretended to feel unwell and fainted. Talbot Edwards, who was Master of the Jewel House and lived in the Jewel House with his family, took the woman upstairs to his family's rooms. He also asked his wife to help the fainted lady. In an hour or so the lady felt better and left the Tower with her 'husband'.

On the second visit, Thomas Blood, again dressed as a priest, brought a present for Edwards' wife for her help and attention to his 'wife'. He gained the confidence of the Master of the Jewel House, Talbot Edwards, and asked him to show the Crown Jewels to his friends. Talbot Edwards agreed and took them to the room where the Crown Jewels were kept. Suddenly Blood took out a hammer from under his priest's dress and struck the Master on the head. Talbot Edwards fell down and fainted. Thomas Blood took the king's crown and made it flat with the hammer in order to put the crown into a large pocket of his priest dress. The other three men took other royal jewels and hid them in their pockets.

By chance, Talbot Edwards' son, Wythe, arrived at the Tower earlier than expected. He found his father lying unconscious and bleeding. Wythe raised the alarm. Though Thomas Blood and his gang had left the jewel room, they were caught when they were getting out of the Tower. The broken crown and the jewels were found with them.

A report was immediately sent to the king, and Charles II sent for Thomas Blood. The king wanted to talk to the thief who had done such a wicked crime. The end of the story is unbelievable. Thomas Blood was not punished. Moreover, Blood was awarded a pension of £500 a year. At the

same time the Master of the Jewel House Talbot Edwards was dismissed for his carelessness. Later, he died in misery.

Since Thomas Blood's attempt in 1600 up to the present date, there have been no attempts to steal the jewels. Nowadays the priceless collection is open for the public to view and the Crown Jewels are considered to be the most well-guarded treasures in the world. They are kept at the Tower and are guarded by the Yeomen Warders, commonly known as the Beefeaters.

29. "The 1900 House"

"The 1900 House" was a reality television programme in Britain. It took people back a hundred years to the time of Queen Victoria, when there were no computers, mobile phones or the Internet. The idea of the show was to give people an experience of living in the past.

A modern family, the Bowler family, spent three months living like people at the beginning of the 20th century. There were the parents (Paul and Joyce) and their four children (three daughters and a son). The cameras recorded them every day. The house didn't have a telephone, a fridge, a TV set or even central heating. The Bowlers wore clothes from 1900 and ate the food that existed in England at that time. There wasn't much to choose from. The main dishes on the table were meat and fish, and the day usually started with a cup of tea and porridge.

The father of the family, Paul Bowler, still went to work but in an old-fashioned uniform. He couldn't read newspapers or use a computer. The mother, Joyce, became a housewife and stayed home. She did all the cleaning, washing and cooking. The children still went to school, but they changed their clothes on the way to and from school so their classmates wouldn't know anything about this unusual project.

The Bowlers noticed that life at the beginning of the century was much slower. It was rather hard for them to get used to the new speed. For example, it took 28 minutes to boil water and make a cup of tea. And can you imagine cleaning the house without a vacuum cleaner or washing clothes without a washing machine? There wasn't any toothpaste or modern shampoo. Without central heating nobody thought about a warm bath or a shower in the morning.

Toothbrushes were made of pig and horse hair. Toothpaste was expensive so most people cleaned their teeth using salt or soda. The children thought it was horrible.

11-year-old Hilary said: "The most difficult thing was finding entertainment. We couldn't go to the cinema or to a café. It was a new experience to be with the family for half a day or more. It was new and hard to be nice to each other all the time. But I really think we all became closer."

17-year-old Kathryn remembered that she couldn't wear any make-up. She had to wear a corset every day and had only three sets of clothes: one to wear every day, the second – to wear while cleaning, and the third was for special events, like celebrations.

When the show was over the Bowlers were asked: what did you miss most from the modern world? The father said it was a hot shower. The mother had longed to have a quick cup of tea. The daughters said it was the music, the hot water, shampoo and "normal sounds like the washing machine" which they missed. For the son it was pizza and the computer.

It's interesting that the family was allowed to keep anything they wanted after the project. Joyce took her corset and each of the children took something from the house to remind them of their experience.

