The History of the English Language Factfile – Stage 4

Before reading

1 How much do you know about the English language?
Fill in the blanks with these items.

* an, b, e, feminine, from, -ful, full stop, get, i, -ing, masculine, question mark, s, the, turn, with  

vowels: ______, ______ articles: ______, ______  
consonants: ______, ______ verbs: ______, ______  
prepositions: ______, ______ endings: ______, ______  
punctuation: ______, ______ genders: ______, ______

2 How much do you know about the history of the language?
Choose the best words to complete these sentences.

1 English developed from the languages spoken by invaders from northern Europe / China.

2 The English words for some of the days of the week come from the names of kings and queens / gods and goddesses.

3 A place with a name ending in -ford is usually near a river / a mountain.

4 For more than three hundred years after 1066, all the kings of England spoke German / French.

5 Six hundred years ago, the letter k in knee was pronounced / not pronounced.

3 Can you name some words that have come into your language from English? Who uses them? How do you feel about the arrival of English words in your language? Why do you feel this?
While reading

Read Chapter 1, then complete these sentences with the correct words.

communication, international, quarter, settled, simple, spread, traffic, widely

1 English is spoken very ______. About a ______ of all the people in the world use English in some way.

2 ‘Airspeak’ is a ______ form of English used in international air ______ control.

3 English started to ______ around the world about three hundred years ago, when many British people ______ in other countries.

4 In the twentieth century, air travel made more ______ business possible. Telephones and computers also made faster ______ possible.

Read Chapter 2, then put these events in the correct order.

1 The Romans left Britain.

2 Wessex became the strongest kingdom in England.

3 The Kurgan people began to travel across Europe and Asia.

4 Jutes, Angles, and Saxons from northern Europe settled in Britain.

5 Some British people learnt to speak and write Latin.

6 The Celts settled in Britain.

7 The people of England and south-east Scotland organized themselves into seven kingdoms.

8 The Romans invaded Britain.

9 The Celts began to leave their homeland in central Europe.
After reading

Do you agree or disagree with these sentences? Why?

1 Everyone should learn more than one language.
2 Learning to speak is more important than learning to write.
3 People who live in the same country should speak the same language.
4 If a language is used by very few people, it’s important to keep it alive.

How do you think the use of English will change in the future?

Write a report about English in your country in 2050. Use these questions to help you.

– Will more or fewer people speak English? Why?
– Will English be taught in schools?
– Will English be popular with Internet users?
– Will other languages be more important than English?
– Which languages will people use for business?