

Hello, World! 7

Unit 2 Changes

READY, SET, GO!

Meet Molly!

Dia dhuit, everyone, my name is Molly! I come from **Northern Ireland**, also known as **Ulster**. My country is located in the northeast of the island of Ireland, and it is one of the four countries that make up the United Kingdom. It is separated from the island of Great Britain by **the Irish Sea**. But, although separated, they're not far apart! There's a point between the shores of Northern Ireland and Scotland from which you can see across the narrow **North Channel**... But only when the weather is nice, of course. It's called **the Straits of Moyle**, and it's one of my favourite places on the coast.

I live in **Belfast**, the capital city, with my mum and dad. Belfast is famous for a lot of things – did you know that the Titanic, the most famous ship in history, was built here? She set out on her first big journey in 1912, but she sank after only five days at sea, because she hit an iceberg.

Belfast is also home to **the Peace Walls**, and to their many murals. Do you know why they were built? In the 19th century, the whole of Ireland became part of the UK. The Irish people, who were Catholics, wanted their independence back. The Protestants wanted to stay in the UK. As a result, the island was split into two parts in the first half of the 20th century. That's why, today, we have the Republic of Ireland in the south, and Northern Ireland in the north. But Northern Ireland is still home to both **Catholics** and **Protestants**. In the second half of the 20th century, there were lots of fights between these two groups. These fights were known as **the Troubles**. The first peace walls were built in this period, to separate the two communities. Some of them still stand as a reminder of the violent history of Northern Ireland. A lot of tourists come to see them every year.

History isn't the only thing tourists visit Northern Ireland for. They also come for its **natural wonders**. These are the **Dark Hedges**, a beautiful avenue of beech trees that meet over a narrow road and create a tunnel. Did you know that some scenes from one of the most popular TV shows in the world, *Game of Thrones*, were filmed there?

And this is **Lough Neagh**. It isn't as well-known as the Scottish *lochs*, but it's the biggest lake not just in the UK, but also on the island of Ireland. Northern Ireland also boasts one of the most beautiful tourist drives in the world: **the Causeway Coastal Route**. It runs from Belfast to the second-largest city in Northern Ireland, Londonderry. If you ever take it, you must stop at the **Giant's Causeway**. This is a natural wonder that looks like a series of dark stone steps, which disappear under the sea. They were formed after volcanic eruptions millions of years ago. But, according to legend, they were built by two giants – one Scottish, one Irish – so that they could fight. Cool story, isn't it?

Speaking of stories, storytelling is extremely popular all over the island. This tradition comes from the Celts, who told stories to each other instead of writing them down. No wonder, then, that the Northern Irish **writer C. S. Lewis** became one of the most famous British fantasy authors: storytelling is in our blood! His series of fantasy novels, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, is a must-read for everyone.

Another thing that is popular on the whole island is **Riverdance**, a show that consists of traditional Irish music and dance. Have you ever seen it? The dancers wear beautiful costumes and shoes with wooden taps that make a noise as they move their feet. The music is wonderful, too: the fiddles, flutes and pipes make you want to get up and dance along! Despite being the smallest country in the UK, there are plenty of things Northern Ireland has to offer. I hope you like it, and I hope you'll visit us some day. I'd love to be your guide!