

# The Channel Islands and their languages

## Worksheet



### Exercise 1. Reading.

Read the text about the Channel Islands and fill in the gaps with words given below. Use each word only once.

Not that remote but still largely undiscovered, the Channel Islands are a tiny archipelago in the English Channel, just off the northern coast of France. With the largest island being only 5 by 9 miles, they form a mosaic of picturesque sceneries, a (1.0.) **tapestry** of architectural styles and bustling harbour towns. While a popular holiday (1.1) \_\_\_\_\_ among the British, many people outside the UK do not even know they exist. And even fewer know it is also the linguistic (1.2.) \_\_\_\_\_ - not only the natural one - that makes the Channel Islands so fascinating.

The countryside of Alderney, Sark or Guernsey is best described with adjectives such as 'gorgeous' 'marvellous' and 'breathtaking': once there, take a moment to enjoy (1.3.) \_\_\_\_\_ along cliff paths through unspoiled nature with spectacular views of the sea. But it is not only nature that the Channel Islands are famous for. Jersey is one of the world's most successful tax (1.4.) \_\_\_\_\_, nurtured and protected by the United Kingdom and its elites who want to use this offshore area to avoid rules they resent. The smaller island of Sark had long been known as the last (1.5.) \_\_\_\_\_ of feudalism in Western Europe: the whipping of wives, *droit du seigneur* and other medieval regulations only disappeared in the 2000s as and it was not until 2008 that the rulers of Sark finally agreed to fully switch to democracy.



Although the Channel Islands are not part of the UK, historically they belong to Great Britain. They were part of the Duchy of Normandy when the Normans invaded Britain in 1066. There were several attempts to (1.6.) \_\_\_\_\_ the Channel Islands throughout history but the archipelago has remained under British (1.7.) \_\_\_\_\_ ever since. Norman culture is still present in the islands: not only are there remnants of Norman architecture all over the Channel Islands, but people have also managed to preserve their (1.8.) \_\_\_\_\_ languages which all have common ancestry with the Norman language. Ranging from Guernésiais and Jèrrais, with several hundred speakers, to Sarkese and Auregnais, with only a handful of people using them – all are threatened with (1.9) \_\_\_\_\_.



The dominant language of the archipelago is English and the smaller languages of the Channel Islands are no longer used in day-to-day communication. They still remain in (1.10) \_\_\_\_\_ language use - in 2008 Guernsey Post issued a series of stamps in Guernésiais and there are Jèrrais road signs on Jersey - and there are numerous activists and enthusiasts who will make every effort to promote the use of Jèrrais and Guernésiais as well. However, with hardly any official status and the younger generations not speaking them anymore, the struggle for saving these endangered languages of the Channel Islands is far from over.

tapestry	heritage	rule	symbolic	havens	destination	landscape
extinction	outposts	conquer				

## Exercise 2. Listening.

Listen to a sample of Jèrrais – an endangered language spoken in Jersey. Which language does it resemble?

### Exercise 3. Speaking.

Discuss the following statements in groups. Do you agree or disagree with them? Why?

- 3.1. A language is something completely different from a dialect.
- 3.2. Some languages/dialects are better than others.
- 3.3. It'd be better for mankind if we all spoke the same language.

### Exercise 4. Listening.

You are going to hear Julia Sallabank from the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London speak about the Guernésiais language, otherwise known as Guernsey French. Guernésiais is one of the endangered languages of the Channel Islands. Listen to

the recording and decide whether the statements are true or false. Tick ( ☒ ) the appropriate box.

		TRUE	FALSE
4.0.	Julia is primarily interested in how the language works.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4.1.	Guernsey is the biggest of the Channel Islands.		
4.2.	Most of the speakers of Guernésiais have a passive rather than active knowledge of the language.		
4.3.	Only about 2% of all the inhabitants of Guernsey speak Guernésiais fluently.		
4.4.	It is a generally accepted fact that Guernésiais is a separate language.		
4.5.	Up to 40% of English vocabulary may be of Norman origin.		
4.6.	There has been much development in Guernsey over the last century.		
4.7.	Most of the people who live in Guernsey were not born there.		
4.8.	The inhabitants of Guernsey think their island has become so similar to England due to the loss of its heritage language.		
4.9.	Attitudes towards Guernésiais have been rather negative over the past 20 – 30 years.		
4.10.	The first dictionary of Guernésiais was written in the 1930s.		

## Exercise 5. Listening.

Listen to the interview once again and find answers to the questions.

- 5.1. What does 'a social viewpoint' on language mean?
- 5.2. Why is Guernésiais an endangered language?
- 5.3. Which linguistic feature makes Guernésiais so different from e.g. English?
- 5.4. In what aspects do the Guernsey people see themselves as different from the English?
- 5.5. What is so unique about the first Guernésiais dictionary?

## Exercise 6. Speaking.

Describe the picture.



## Exercise 7. Writing.

Write an opinion essay on one of the following topics:

- 7.1. Everyone should have the opportunity to receive education, browse the Internet and read books in their heritage language.
- 7.2. Language is something more than grammar and vocabulary.

7.3. We shouldn't care about dying languages.

**Circle the topic of your selection. You should use 200-250 words.**

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