**Britain key words**

**By-election:** When a seat in the house of commons becomes vacant an election will take place.

**Constituency:** A group of voters in a specified area who elect a representative to a legislative body.

**Constitutional monarchy:** Both a government and a monarchy rule at the same time.

**Chancellor of the exchequer:** A senior official within the government that deals with the economy.

**Houses of commons:** Lower house of parliament that considers and proposes laws.

**House of lords:** Upper house of parliament that makes and checks laws.

**General election:** Each member of parliament has to defend their seat in the house of commons.

**Prime minister:** Head of the elected government party.

**Britain in the 1920s**

**The empire**
- Head of a 240 million people empire.
- Some areas like Australia, India and Canada were self governed but India had limited self government.
- Colonies in Asia were ruled directly.
- It’s empire was important because it helped win the first World War but it was costly and difficult to defend.

**Society**
- Loss of over 750,000 men in World War One.
- Loss of faith in old values and patriotism and there was an overall reluctance to go to war again.
- There was a rise in wealth and influence of the middle class meaning the importance of banking and economy outstripped that of industry.
- There was a social change in regards to women who wanted freedom to dress and an equal vote to men which was granted in 1917.
- The rise of cinema, radio, popular press etc made people more aware of the rest of the world and improved communication.

**Political life**
- There were two main political parties the conservatives and labour.
- Labour was relatively new, representing the working man. They didn’t form a government until 1924 and won an election in 1929.
- The conservative party represented the upper and middle class, embodying the ideas of capitalism rather than socialism.
Left of the Labour party

- Bevanites
- Wanted increased socialism and believed the unions should have a say
- Wanted greater commitment to the EEC in regards to clause IV (part of the constitution that outlines ideals of the party)
- Wanted unilateral nuclear disarmament
- 50 mps resigned over prescription charges.

Right of the Labour party

- Gatesgillites
- Wanted to move away from radical socialism and believed in equality over economy.
- They didn’t want to join the EEC and they were against nationalisation
- They wanted to maintain nuclear weapons as a deterrent and were opposed to German rearmament
- They wanted to introduce prescription charges.

Why did the conservatives win the 1951 election?

Labour weaknesses

- They were a party linked with austerity. Austerity is a policy in which the government deliberately backs living standards through rationing to attempt to cut spending.
- They were involved in the Korean war in 1950-53 when communist north Korea and Russia invaded non-communist south Korea in an attempt to spread their influence. The USA led the united nations force with the backing of Britain. Over 1100 British soldiers were killed and 2600 were wounded. The Battle of the Imjin river was the bloodiest since world war two in which 1091 casualties of the British 29th brigade, with over 500 missing in action and the Chinese army lost ⅓ of its strength in that one battle.
- Nye Bevan resigned after prescription charges on glasses and dentistry saying it undermined the principle of free health care.
- They were left with a working majority of 5 mps in the house of commons.

Conservative strengths.

- Young politicians like Reginald Maudling gave the party new ideas and direction, encouraging young people to vote conservative.
- They promised to build 300000 houses a year and give people “more red meat” at a time in which things were being rationed.
- They promised to endorse the welfare state.
- People wanted to thank Churchill for winning the war.
The winter of discontent 1978-79

● The unions disliked Heelys policies believing he abandoned the social contract

● In december after a 3 month strike ford workers won a 15% pay increase followed by lorry drivers and bin men who demanded a 30% increase

● Callaghan was out of touch and when he was asked about the crisis he said “crisis? What crisis?”

● The government couldn't control the unions or the economy.

● The government relied on the support of the welsh nationalist party and the SNP. but in march 1979 referendums in both Scotland and Wales failed to win enough votes and at the end of march joined the conservatives in a no confidence motion which the government lost by 1 vote

**The 1979 election**

● Conservative won 43.9% of the vote and 339 seats but labour won 36.9% of the votes and only 269 seats.

● In many constituencies the collapse of the liberal vote was enough to hand it to the conservatives but in the north, Scotland and wales they won twice as many votes than the conservatives.

**The 1983 election**

● The conservatives won 42.4% of the vote and 397 seats while labour won 27.6% of the votes and 229 seats.

● The falklands war in 1982: The argentinian dictator sent forces to capture the falklands, Thatcher immediately sent forces to recapture the island. 255 British servicemen died. 655 Argentinian forces died and surrendered in June.

● The labour manifesto was called “the longest suicide note in history”

**The 1987 election**

● Conservatives won 43.4% of the vote while labour won 31.7% of the vote.

● The conservatives won 376 seats and labour won 229 seats

Thatcher's government

● Taxation policies in 1979 were introduced by chancellor howe who changed the type of taxes he collected from direct tax to indirect. This worsened inflation as it pushed up the price of goods.

● Rates at which prices rose was reduced from 18% in 1980 to 4.5% in 1983

● The value of the pound increased making exports more expensive
● High interest rates made it difficult for anyone with a loan to pay it off
● Government spending rose by 13% in 1979 and 1990 but spending reduced as a % of the economy as a whole.

Brighton bombing
● The IRA member Patrick Magee built the bomb with the intention of killing Margaret Thatcher
● The mid section of the hotel collapsed. She changed clothes and was led out of the wreckage
● 5 people were killed and 34 were taken to hospital but they all survived.

Northern Ireland
● The British government withdrew special category status for convicted parliamentary prisoners
● In 1980 seven prisoners went on a hunger strike which ended after 53 days. The second took place in 1981 when Bobby Sands was elected prime minister and it ended when 10 people starved to death.

The Gulf war: Operation desert storm
● The Iraq occupation of August 2nd 1990 led to Thatcher and Bush deploying troops to Saudi Arabia, the world's largest oil producers and exporters
● If it didn’t withdraw from Kuwait by January 1991 the United nations were prepared to use any means necessary to drive them out but remained present.
● By mid February the coalition forces has shifted focus from air attacks to ground attacks. All in all an estimated 9000 Iraqi forces were killed in comparison to only 300 coalition troops. The United nations made it a no fly zone ever Iraq.

The Iranian embassy siege
● 6 armed men stormed the Iranian embassy in London and took 26 people hostage in an attempt to release Arab prisoners.
● Negotiations ensured the release of 5 hostages in exchange for minor concessions.
● Operation nimrod: SAS soldiers abseiled from the roof of the building and forced entry through the windows. The aim of the operation was to rescue all the hostages. This did not go to plan, the sargent leading the operation became entangled in his ropes and while one tried to assist him the other smashed a window with his foot accidentally. The SAS killed all but one of the terrorists.

Miners strikes
Leadership Election

- Heseltine announced his candidature for the leadership election of the party.
- Thatcher won but not by a lot and a second vote had to be passed.
- She announced her resignation on 22nd November and was replaced by John Major on 28th November.

Lack of authority of John Major

- He was only elected to block Heseltine as he was blamed for the fall of Thatcher.
- He had only been a cabinet minister since 1987 and served only as foreign secretary and chancellor.
- Vigorous campaigning and standing on a plastic container won him admiration.

Divisions over Europe

- The maastricht treaty was established in 1991. This committed themselves to a full integration, europe would have a common currency. Major refused to sign the social chapter and the european currency arguing Britain was entitled to their own.
- He faced an unlikely alliance between sceptics and the labour party and so had to force the ratification bill through parliament telling MPs if they didn’t vote in favour, the government would resign.
- Challenged by eurosceptic and “bastard” (voted against the ratification bill) John Redwood. Major won by ⅔ but ⅓ didn’t actually vote.

Black Wednesdays

- Inflation tipped the economy into a depression. Businesses went under, unemployment rose and the exchange rate was too high.
- The government responded with devaluation but the value of the pound fell quite than expected, he pushed interest rates up and made the bank buy more pounds.
- Britain withdrew from the exchange rate mechanism.