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English in the world: A very brief history of a global language

Narrator:

English in the world. The English language has existed for a little over one and a half thousand years. Which, in the grand scheme of things is just a blip in the history of human language. And an even smaller blip in the history of humankind.

The language is called English because of its associations with England. Which sounds straightforward enough, although it's actually a bit more complicated than this.

English had its roots here in the north of Europe. Although of course, it wasn't called English then. There were a number of Germanic tribes. The Angles, Saxons, and the Jutes, who crossed the channel; It wasn't called the English Channel until the 18th century.

And found out across the island of Great Britain which at the time was inhabited by Britons who spoke Celtic languages, the ancestors of Welsh, Scottish Gaelic, and Cornish before the Anglo-Saxons arrived the Romans had also colonised large parts of the island along with people from various parts of the Roman Empire.

Later the Vikings came and then the Normans. All speaking their own languages and also mixing their languages with English.

It wasn't until the 14th century that English became properly established as the language of England and was used for the first time in parliament and in the law.

The first king of England to speak English as his native language was Henry IV.

Henry came to the throne in 1399 almost a thousand years after the Anglo-Saxons arrived but once English was established, it also began to spread or more accurately it began to be spread.

The most important driver for this was colonialism in lots of countries, English pushed out the local language, and indigenous forms of English developed in other countries, English existed alongside the local languages and new forms developed.

In the 20th century, it continued to spread through the entertainment industry, politics, the media, and technology, so that today it's a truly global language.

Throughout its history, it's always changing, and we'll continue to do so far into the future.