

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Key Terms

---

*Instructions:* As you explore the recent controversy over Brexit, you may encounter some of the following terms. Refer to these descriptions as needed.

**Article 50**—The formal process for leaving the European Union (EU). This allows any member state of the EU to “withdraw from the union in accordance with its own constitutional requirements.” After triggering the process on March 29, 2017, the UK began negotiating with the EU to settle the terms of its exit, sometimes referred to as the “divorce talks.” Under the terms of Article 50, a country has two years to exit the EU officially or it must request an extension. An extension must be agreed upon by all twenty-eight EU members. After a formal request by the British government for an extension, the EU granted an extension until October 31, 2019.

**Backstop**—A requirement by the EU in the Brexit negotiations that would guarantee no hard border (requiring border crossings and customs inspections) between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Under the current withdrawal agreement, the UK will not be allowed to exit the backstop until new trade arrangements are in place. Until then, the entire UK must remain inside a customs union with the EU. Brexit supporters find this unacceptable, yet an alternative agreement has not yet been reached.

**Brexit**—The process for British withdrawal from the European Union. Three of the most commonly discussed ways to achieve Brexit include:

**Soft Brexit**—A withdrawal from the European Union that keeps the UK closely associated with the EU. The goal of a soft Brexit would be to keep business and trade operating smoothly. Those who support this position believe that the UK should remain part of the EU’s single market and its customs union, even though the UK would lose the ability to shape rules and regulations. The UK also would not be able to negotiate its own trade deals. Under this scenario, the UK would pay a “divorce settlement” of about £33 billion (\$40.5 billion) to the EU to fund projects and commitments it made while part of the EU.

**Hard Brexit**—A withdrawal from the European Union that fundamentally re-shapes the UK’s relationship with the EU. A hard Brexit would take Britain out of the EU’s single market and customs union and end its obligations to respect the EU’s four freedoms (free movement of goods, services, capital, and people). Those who support this position believe that the UK should “take back control” of Britain’s borders, laws, and trade. It would require the UK to negotiate and sign agreements with trade partners following World Trade Organization rules. Under this scenario, the UK would pay a “divorce settlement” of about £33 billion (\$40.5 billion) to the EU to fund projects and commitments it made while part of the EU.

**No-Deal Brexit**—Immediate withdrawal from the European Union with no agreement about a transition period. This differs from former Prime Minister Theresa May’s deal with the EU that Parliament rejected three times, which would have allowed for a 21-month transition period to phase out UK involvement in EU bodies. Under a No-Deal scenario, the UK would immediately leave the EU’s single market, customs union, and other EU institutions like the European Court of Justice. Some advocates for this scenario also believe that the UK could avoid paying a “divorce settlement” of about £33 billion (\$40.5 billion) to the EU to fund projects and commitments it made while part of the EU. Others, however, claim that if the UK wants to negotiate new trade deals and re-set the relationship with the EU, it would be wise to start the relationship off well.

**Commonwealth**—A voluntary association of the UK and other countries—including many former colonies—that promotes political, social, and economic cooperation. The British monarch is its symbolic figurehead. Its members include fifty-three independent countries, including the UK, Nigeria, Kenya, India, Singapore, Australia, Fiji, the Bahamas, and Canada.

**Conservative Party (Tory)**—One of several political parties in the United Kingdom; currently the largest political party in the House of Commons.

**Council of the European Union**—Made up of twenty-eight members, one from each EU country. The Council passes laws and determines the EU budget along with the European Parliament. The Council also makes decisions on security and foreign policy issues.

**Customs Union**—The EU’s Customs Union requires that all member countries impose the same tariff (import tax) on goods originating outside the EU. Once inside the EU, goods can move tax-free between the twenty-eight member countries. Member countries cannot negotiate trade deals separate from the EU.

**European Commission**—Made up of twenty-eight members, one from each EU country. The European Commission manages EU policies and its budget, negotiates trade agreements, monitors compliance with EU laws, and represents the EU internationally.

**European Court of Justice**—Part of the European Union, the court makes sure EU laws are applied in all EU countries and rules on disputes over EU legislation and treaties. A desire to leave the European Court of Justice’s jurisdiction was a key goal of many Brexit supporters.

**European Economic Area (EEA)**—An agreement that links Iceland, Norway, and Liechtenstein to the European Union’s single market. These countries accept the rules and regulations associated with the single market but do not have a voice in setting or changing policy. In return, they may trade freely with the single market.

**European Economic Community (EEC)**—A group of six European countries—Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands and West Germany—that signed an agreement in 1957 to form an economic union. The EEC was the predecessor of today’s European Union (EU).

**European Free Trade Association (EFTA)**—A free-trade area established in 1958 with the goal of eliminating tariffs on goods produced in and traded among member states. Members include Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland.

**European Parliament**—Made up of 751 members representing EU citizens in all twenty-eight EU countries. Members are elected for five-year terms. Along with the Council of the European Union, the Parliament passes laws and determines the EU budget.

**European Union (EU)**—A political and economic union of the following twenty-eight countries: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland (Republic of), Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom.

**Exports**—Domestic goods and services sold to buyers in other countries.

**Great Britain**—A geographic term that refers to the largest island in the British isles, made up of England, Scotland, and Wales.

**House of Commons**—One of two chambers that make up the Parliament in the UK. The 2017 elections led to the following representation in the 650-member House of Commons, listed by party and number of seats: Conservative Party (288); Labour Party (247); Scottish National Party (35); Independent (34); Liberal Democrat (18); Democratic Unionist Party (10); Sinn Fein (7); The Independent Group for Change (5); Plaid Cymru (4); Green Party (1). The Speaker of the House also has a seat in the House of Commons.

**House of Lords**—One of the two chambers to make up the Parliament in the UK. The general population does not elect Lords; instead, they are appointed for life by the prime minister. Currently, there are approximately 775 members of the House of Lords.

**Imports**—Foreign goods and services purchased from sellers in other countries.

**Labour Party**—One of several political parties in the United Kingdom; currently the largest opposition party in the House of Commons.

**“Operation Yellowhammer”**—The British government’s planning document projecting what may happen if the United Kingdom exits the European Union under a No-Deal Brexit. The analysis warns of “reasonable worst-case” scenarios with food, gas, and medicine shortages, trade disruptions, and the possibility of widespread protests.

**Parliament**—The UK’s legislative body that debates issues, makes and changes laws, and examines the Government’s work and spending. Parliament is made up of three parts: the House of Commons, the House of Lords, and the Monarchy. The king or queen’s relationship to Parliament has changed over time; currently, the Queen of England serves in a largely ceremonial role.

Generally, the leader of the political party that holds the most seats in Parliament after a general election, usually held every five years, becomes Prime Minister. The Prime Minister chooses other party members to serve as cabinet members. In the United States, the Constitution outlines a separation of powers between the executive, legislative, and judicial branches. In the UK, there is a close relationship between Government and Parliament, since most members of Government have dual roles as Government ministers and members of Parliament.

**Prorogue**—To suspend the activities of a legislative session for a period of time. Prime Minister Boris Johnson asked the Queen to suspend Parliament from September 11-October 14, 2019 to prepare his legislative agenda and continue negotiations with EU leaders over Brexit. Many in the UK considered Johnson’s request an effort to limit the time for debate over his government’s policies before the Brexit extension with the EU expired on October 31, 2019. A legal challenge to Parliament’s suspension resulted in a review by the Supreme Court. A unanimous decision by the eleven members of the Supreme Court ruled the suspension unconstitutional; members of Parliament returned to work the day after the ruling.

**Second Referendum**—Some politicians and citizens would like voters to have a second opportunity to decide whether or not the UK should leave the EU. Supporters of a second referendum contend that voters have much more information about the issues and costs associated with Brexit now. They believe the outcome of a second vote would more clearly reflect the will of UK voters. Opponents of a second vote counter that the first vote was a result of a democratic process and the result should be honored.

**Single market**—The EU’s single market creates a trading area that allows for free movement of goods, money, services, and people. The single market seeks to remove barriers to trade between member countries, including tariffs (taxes on imported goods), physical borders, and differences in rules and regulations (such as food safety). By having the same rules and regulations, goods do not need to be checked within the single market, helping trade to flow more freely. Some countries like Norway have negotiated deals to be part of the single market without being EU members. This allows them to also negotiate separate trade deals with other trading partners, but does not allow Norway to have a direct say in EU policies.

**Tariffs**—Tariffs are taxes on imported goods that make goods from other countries more expensive than domestically-made goods.

**Transition period or implementation period**—If the UK negotiates a withdrawal period with the EU and the UK Parliament agrees to it, there will be a transition period during which the two sides will negotiate their future relationship. A transition period also will give businesses time to adapt to a new relationship. During this time, the UK would remain in the customs union and single market. The UK would continue to follow EU rules, regulations, and court decisions, but would no longer have a say in making or changing rules and regulations. In the case of a No-Deal Brexit, there would be no transition period.

**United Kingdom**—A sovereign state that includes the countries of England, Wales, Northern Ireland, and Scotland, as well as administration over some outlying British islands and overseas territories. The UK Parliament has authority over national matters such as EU membership, foreign policy, and health care, but regional parliaments have authority over local issues like education.

**Withdrawal agreement**—The separation agreement between the EU and the British government. Theresa May’s government negotiated areas of agreement, including:

- the UK’s financial settlement with the EU (also referred to as the “divorce bill”)
- the rights of EU and UK citizens after Brexit
- a “backstop” deal to prevent the return of a hard border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, even if there’s no deal on a future trade relationship between the EU and the UK at the end of the transition period.

**World Trade Organization (WTO)**—An international organization with 164 member countries that oversees the rules and regulations negotiated by countries about international trade. The WTO also provides a forum for governments to negotiate trade agreements and settle trade disputes. If the UK leaves the EU, some analysts argue that the UK will still need to abide by WTO trade rules.

## Key Players

**David Cameron**—Conservative Party leader and prime minister from 2010-2016.

**Theresa May**—Conservative Party leader and prime minister from July 2016-July 2019.

**Boris Johnson**—Conservative Party leader and prime minister from July 2019-present.

**Nigel Farage**—British politician who led the right-wing UK Independence Party (UKIP) on and off from 2006-2016 and launched the Brexit Party in 2019.

**Jeremy Corbyn**—Labour Party leader from 2015-present.

**John Bercow**—Speaker of the House of Commons.

**Donald Tusk**—European Council President.

**Michel Bernier**—Chief EU Brexit negotiator.