While you listen
The Britain is Great series tells you about some of the things that make Britain so great. There's a lot of fun facts – and lots of good language, too. See if you can answer the questions while you watch the video.

Comprehension Task 1 - What topics do Richard and Roger talk about? Choose all the right answers.

a) the number of items in the British Library
b) how English has evolved over time
c) the impact of Shakespeare on English
d) the impact of the Industrial Revolution on English
e) the impact of the Internet on English
f) a famous printer
g) the first dictionary of English
h) the first text message ever sent
i) the versatility of English

Comprehension Task 2 - Fill in the missing information with words or numbers from the video.

1. The British Library has existed for over _______ years.
2. Every year, they have to add _______ kilometres of shelves to house the new items.
3. The library has _______ items from all over the world.
4. A thousand years ago, English was similar to _______.
5. The first English book was printed about _______ years ago.
6. Chaucer wrote the first _______ in the English language.
7. Caxton spells the word French as both '_______' and 'Frenshe' on the same page.
8. A poem which dates from _______ uses 2 for 'to' and 4 instead of 'for', just like modern SMS language.

Language Task 1 - The nineteenth century poet wrote "I wrote 2 you b4", instead of 'I wrote to you before'. How good is your SMS English? Translate these messages into 'correct' English, one word in each space.

1. Luv u. C u l8r
   I _______ _______ _______ _______.
2. Ru OK? Pls call me asap.
   _______ _______ OK? _______ call me _______ _______ _______ _______.
3. My hols wr gr8 - & yrs?
   My _______ _______ _______ _______ _______ _______?
4. Wld u like dnr 2nite?
   _______ _______ like _______ _______?
5. I need 2 c u b4 I leave.
   I need _______ _______ _______ _______ I leave.
Language Task 2 - Richard says ‘The British Library’s collection just keeps on growing’. 'Keep on' is a phrasal verb that means 'continue'. Choose the best phrasal verb in these sentences - the first six are from the video.

1. Extra shelves have to be _______ every year.
   a) built up
   b) got in
   c) made up
   d) put up

2. The British Library is a good place to come to _______ about the English language.
   a) find out
   b) look up
   c) pick up
   d) sort out

3. We have documents here that _______ a thousand years.
   a) go back
   b) date from
   c) take on
   d) turn up

4. In Shakespeare’s period, printing had already _______.
   a) come across
   b) come in
   c) ended up
   d) turned out

5. William Caxton later _______ to print Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales.
   a) came out
   b) got on
   c) turned up
   d) went on

6. William Caxton often had to _______ how to spell words himself.
   a) call up
   b) get across
   c) make up
   d) see to

7. Texts written in Old English are very hard to read, and it can be difficult to _______ the meaning.
   a) get into
   b) work out
   c) take on
   d) turn out

8. Many changes have _______ in the English language since the Internet was invented.
   a) broken out
   b) come about
   c) gone through
   d) got on

   a) left over
   b) missed out
   c) taken off
   d) turned out
10. SMS language has really ________ in the last ten years - everyone understands the more common abbreviations now, even my mum!

a) broken out
b) caught on
c) grown up
d) taken up