United Kingdom Decides to Leave the European Union Name:

The people in the UK\* have voted to leave the European Union (the EU).

The European Union\*\* is a group of 28 countries in Europe that have agreed to co-operate—to all become one group, in many ways. For instance, people in European Union countries can travel, live and work easily in any other EU country. And businesses that are in the European Union can send products back and forth more easily. Nineteen of the EU countries all use the same money (currency)–the Euro.

On Thursday, June 23 there was a very important vote. People in the UK were asked this question:

Should the UK:
[  ] Remain a member of the European Union?
[  ] Leave the European Union?

The polls predicted (before the vote) that people would vote to remain in the European Union. But the polls were wrong. More people voted to leave the European Union.

The vote was:
Leave the EU: 51.9%
Remain in the EU: 48.1%

More than 30 million people voted. “Voter turn-out” (in other words, the number of people who voted) was very high, at more than 71%. That is a sign that people were very interested in this issue and wanted to be involved in the final decision.

Prime Minister David Cameron headed the campaign to remain in the EU. Since the vote ended up going against his idea about the way the UK should be, he decided to resign—quit his job. He said he hopes to be replaced by a new Prime Minister by October 2016.

“…it would not be right for me to try to be the captain that steers the country to its next destination,” he told reporters shortly after the vote.

There are many things that will be affected by this historical decision, not just for the UK but for Europe and the rest of the world. For instance, right after the vote, the British pound dropped in value–by quite a lot. This is a complicated thing to explain, and beyond the scope of this article, but essentially many money experts lost some confidence in the UK’s ability to be financially stable for now. The British pound will almost certainly rise back up, but no one knows when that will happen.

Some people are also worried that the “remain” vote means that people from outside the UK can’t as easily travel in the UK or work or move there. In other words, immigration will be affected.

The people who voted “leave” say they want the UK to be less influenced by other countries and to have its own laws rather than having to go by the rules of the EU.

Thank you to Martin Greig, Associate Professor, History, Ryerson University and Secretary/Treasurer Midwest Conference on British Studies for his help with this article. Thank you also to Lauren Clegg.

**Related links**
The BBC (a respected news organization in the UK) has this excellent explainer on the referendum vote: <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-32810887>

**Some facts about the UK and the EU:**
\*There are four countries in the UK. They are: England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

\*\*There are 28 countries in the EU. They are: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and United Kingdom. This list came from [Europa.eu](http://europa.eu/about-eu/countries/index_en.htm), which gives links for more information on each of these countries.

The UK has never used the “euro” as its money. Nineteen of the 28 EU countries use Euros. But the UK never used Euros; they stayed with the British pound which they will continue to use now that they have voted to leave the EU.

**Activities for Social Studies Class – On your own paper please – Finish for HMWK**

1. On your own, write a ‘pros’ and ‘cons’ list of the UK leaving Europe. Write down all of your ideas.

2. How was it different working on your own versus working in a group? What were the challenges of working on your own? What were the challenges of working in a group?

3. How can you connect your experiences working independently and as part of a group to the UK deciding to be independent and leave the EU “group”?

4. The UK’s vote to leave has resulted in more questions than answers. Questions, such as, “Why did the UK want to leave?”, “Will more countries now try to leave the EU”?, “What will happen to the British pound and the European Euro as a result of this decision”?

What other questions do you have about this historic decision? Think of at least 5 questions that came to mind as you read the article. Read through your questions and try to infer/predict the answer based on your knowledge of the situation.

5. A metaphor is a word or phrase that compares two nouns (people, places, things). For example, the Prime Minister of the UK is described as a ‘captain’ who ‘steers’ his country in a specific direction. While the Prime Minister is not actually a captain and he doesn’t have a boat, can you explain how this metaphor helps us to understand the role of the Prime Minister?

6. The vote was:
Leave the EU: 51.9%
Remain in the EU: 48.1%

What does that add up to? Explain why is it important that it added up to that number?