

Changing Names

Throughout history, countries and cities have changed their names. Sometimes, it is a result of a new government coming into power. It might happen when a country gains independence. On rare occasions, it might be done to attract attention!

New...York?

New York was originally established as New Amsterdam in 1624. The Dutch West Indies company created the colony in honour of their masters back home. They purchased Manhattan from a local tribe in 1626. The English took control in 1664 and renamed it New York.

DISH

If you'd have visited a small town in Texas before 2005, you might have stepped into the town of Clark. After that, the signs would have welcomed you to DISH. A satellite TV company struck a deal with the town in 2005 to rename itself as DISH in an advertising stunt. As a reward, all of the residents received 10 years of free satellite TV.

Bognor Regis

Before 1929, the British seaside town of Bognor Regis was simply known as Bognor. King George V visited in 1929 to recover after an illness. The officials applied to have Regis added to its name. Regis is Latin for 'of the King'. They were successful and have been known as Bognor Regis ever since.

Bangladesh

Bangladesh has changed names several times in the last hundred years. Before 1947, the area was part of Bengal. This was part of the British Empire. It became known as East Pakistan in 1947 but was part of the larger country of Pakistan. Bangladesh gained independence and its current name in 1971.

The Czech Republic and Slovakia

Czechoslovakia split into two separate countries in 1993. Czechoslovakia itself had only been created at the beginning of the First World War. The split wasn't welcomed by everybody in the new Czech Republic. Many wanted the countries to remain united.

To Zaire and back again

The African country of Zaire gained independence from Belgium in 1960. It changed its name to the Republic of Congo. This was very confusing because the country next to it was also called the Republic of Congo! For the next few years, the only way to know which country was being talked about was by the name of their capital city. Eventually, the newer Republic of Congo changed its name again to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. A new president took charge in 1965. In 1971 he reverted the name back to the African name of Zaire. That name lasted until 1997 when it changed back again to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

RETRIEVAL FOCUS

1. What was New York originally called?
2. Which town renamed itself in exchange for free TV channels?
3. Why did Bognor add Regis to its name?
4. What was the area of Bangladesh originally called?
5. When was the last name change for Zaire?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

S Why did the new name of the Republic of Congo cause confusion? How did they solve the problem to begin with?

V Which word or phrase in the text means to do something out of respect?

V Copy a phrase that tells you a place renamed itself to attract attention.

S Looking at the examples in the text, why might a place change its name?

P If you could rename the place where you live, what would you call it and why?

Answers:

1. New Amsterdam
2. Clark
3. King George V went there to recover from an illness
4. Bengal
5. 1997

S: It was the same name as the country next to it. The capital cities had different names which helped to identify each one.

V: In honour of

V: An advertising stunt

S: A place might change its name when a new person takes charge. It might gain independence or it might do it to get money or attention.