

# City vs. country

Countries



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Podcasts – Themes – City vs. country Introduction Download the LearnEnglish Themes podcast. You'll find more information on this page: <http://www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglish-podcasts-themes.htm> This support pack contains the following materials:

- the article that you can listen to in the podcast
- an optional language activity based on the article
- links to other activities on the LearnEnglish website on this theme (city vs. country).

Read the article Town or country mouse? by John Russell Once upon a time, there were two mice – cousins. One lived in the town and the other in the country.

The town mouse was a very superior mouse, who thought that living in the town was far better than living the country. So one day, he invited his country cousin to stay with him in his town house and experience the civilized lifestyle of the town. They sat down to a meal, which to the country mouse was a feast. " Goodness me" he said. " If I was in the country, I would be having only simple bread and cheese in the quiet of my peaceful home. " Suddenly, there was a loud noise at the door. " Don't worry," said the town mouse, " that's just my neighbour - the dog, he wants to join us for dinner. The country mouse ate a little faster. Another noise was heard outside, even louder this time. " Oh dear" said the town mouse, " the cat who lives facing my house wants to join us too. " Quickly eating the last of his meal, the country mouse said, " thank you, but I think I will return to the peace and quiet of my own house after all! " Then he ran back home as fast as his legs could carry him. This simple tale (taken from Aesop's famous stories) shows that what may be a good place to live for one person, may not be good for another.

A modern version of this story might look like this: Maria lives in a big city surrounded by the speed and convenience of urban life. She works in an office with 1000 other employees, and travels too and from there on a crowded Metro. Her home is a flat overlooking a busy city-street, which is always alive with the sound of traffic and people passing by. After work she meets with friends in a bar or restaurant before going on to a disco or nightclub. Weekends are spent in the shopping mall with its numerous shops, multi-screen cinemas, fast food and entertainment complexes. Alex, however, lives in a small village in the countryside.

He cycles to work down country lanes every morning, the sound of tractors, birds and animals in his ears. In the evening, he relaxes at home in front of the fire with a good book to read. At weekends, he goes for long walks in the fields with his dog. Unfortunately, life is not as simple as stories make it. A lot of today's 'town mice' such as Maria would be happy to live in the country. Many modern cities have very large populations (Tokyo or Mexico City - over 25 million) and can be crowded, dirty and dangerous places to live. More than half the world's population now lives in cities.

In much of Europe and North America this can be as high as much as 80% of a country's population. (According to the United Nations, approximately 1 billion people in cities are living in slum conditions – overcrowded and unhealthy). The 18th Century marked the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, the depopulation of the countryside, and the move to towns. The towns became places of mass employment in factories and offices. Today, many town dwellers wish to The United Kingdom's international organisation

for educational opportunities and cultural relations. We are registered in England as a charity.