Belgium is located in Western Europe and is one of the founding members of the European Union. The Belgian Revolution took place in 1830 and ended with the London Conference where the great powers of Europe recognized Belgian independence from the United Kingdom of the Netherlands. King Leopold was made the first King of the Belgians, though the Dutch refused to recognize Belgian independence until 1939. More recently, Belgium won the title for going the most number of days without having a government (the title was previously held by Iraq) when it went 589 days in 2010-2011 without having an elected government. A government was finally formed under the leadership of Elio Di Rupo of the Socialist Party. The current government is headed by Charles Michel of the Reformist Movement.

RELIGION
Roman Catholics makeup the majority religion in Belgium, with roughly 75% of the population being Roman Catholic, and the remaining 25% belonging to other religions (including Protestants). Following Christianity, Islam is the second largest religious group making up roughly 5-8% of the population. Belgium maintains a separation between church and state which can be seen following the "school wars" regarding the role of the state in funding Catholic schools.

ETHNICITY and DEMOGRAPHICS
The Belgian population breakdown is 58% Flemish, 31% Walloon, and 1% mixed or other. As Brussels is both the capital city of Belgium and the seat of the European Union, Brussels is a particularly multicultural city. Belgium is set as the middle ground between the Germanic and the Latin societies, and its population has grown greatly due to higher birth-rates amongst non-Belgian born residents and EU-related migration to Brussels.

CUISINE
Some of the more well-known dishes in Belgium include Moules Frites (muscles and fries), Steak Frites, and Vol-au-Vent (a chicken and mushroom casserole). Belgium is also known for its chocolates; over 172,000 tons of chocolate are produced each year. Additionally Belgium is known for its waffles and unique beer — some of which has been in production since the 16th century.
CONTEMPORARY BELGIUM
Since Belgian independence from The Netherlands, it has played an important role on the European continent. With the Industrial Revolution and the rise of coal mining, Mons became a vital part of Belgian and European industry. Mons has also become well known due to the battle that took place in 1914 during the First World War. During the years of German occupation (1914-1918), the Flemish population was seen as having been oppressed by the Walloons — the German occupier decided to take measures such as introducing Dutch as the language of instruction in all Flemish schools. Belgium was again occupied by Germany during the Second World War during which time King Leopold III (who had refused to flee Belgium) surrendered the remaining troops to the Germans once they had been surrounded — a move decried as unconstitutional by the Prime Minister. Today Belgium is home to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), an intergovernmental military alliance that consists of 28 member states and operates as a system of collective defense. An attack against one is seen as an attack against all.

BELGIAN HERITAGE IN THE USA
Belgian migration to the US dates back to the 17th century, and many cities on the east coast are names after or by Belgians. Hoboken, NJ for instance is named after a town in Belgium. In the 19th century there was a lot of migration to northeast Wisconsin where many worked on small farms. Some of the descendants of the early Walloon settlers in Wisconsin still maintain some of their language and culture, celebrating events such as “Kermis” and “maypole.” According to the US Census, approximately 350,000 people living in the US have Belgian heritage.

USEFUL LINKS
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/country_profiles/999709.stm

FAMOUS BELGIANS
Belgium has been home to many well-known individuals over the years, ranging from painters such as Jan Van Eyck and Peter Paul Rubens, to movie stars such as Jean-Claude Van Damme. Many others have lived in Belgium: after being exiled from France, Karl Marx wrote the Communist Manifesto in Brussels in 1848, and Victor Hugo worked on Les Misérables while exiled in Brussels in 1851.

FRENCH WORDS
Hi ............................................ Bonjour
Bye ........................................... Au revoir
Good morning .......................... Bonjour
Yes ............................................. Oui
No .................................................. Non
Please ..................................... S’il vous plait
Thank you ................................. Merci
How are you? ...................... Comment allez-vous?

FLEMISH WORDS
Hi .......................................................... Hallo
Bye .................................................. Tot ziens
Good morning .......................... Goeiemorgen
Yes ............................................. Ja
No .................................................... Nee
Please ......................................... Alsjeblieft
Thank you ................................. Dank u wel
How are you? ...................... Hoe gaat het met jou?

USEFUL LINKS
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/country_profiles/999709.stm

The flag is comprised of three vertical bands colored black, yellow, and red.