



英国背景

BACKGROUND TO BRITAIN

M. D. M. 麦肯齐 L. J. 韦斯特伍德 著

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(附中文注释)

M. D. 芒罗 麦肯齐

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内容简介

本书是为非英语国家的学生编写的英语知识性读物。全书共40篇短文,内容涉及今日英国生活的各个方面,如英国的人民、城市、商店、食品、学校、教育、图书馆、报刊、剧院、文娱、体育运动等。每篇短文后配有词汇、课文提问、语法、作文等练习。

本书图文并茂、语言通俗易懂,可供中学生、大学低年级学生以及赴英留学、访问或进修的人员使用。

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Preface

In this new, revised edition of *Background to Britain* we have not, apart from deleting some now inappropriate chapters and replacing them with new ones, made any very substantial alterations. We have not done so because the sales of the book and the comments of its users have testified to the fact that it has been fulfilling—as we hoped it would—a very useful function in its original form. What we *have* done is to make a number of emendations and additions in order to bring the content of the chapters more up to date, and also to correct statements which the passage of time has rendered inaccurate or irrelevant. In doing this, we have incorporated suggestions from teachers who regularly use the book.

The purpose of the book, as stated in the original preface, is that of providing short reading passages which have been specially written to give the student some idea, without going into too much detail, of various aspects of life in Britain today. Each passage can be read and the vocabulary in it studied in the course of a single lesson of average duration. The matter is suitable for use by students of an intermediate stage, *i.e.* the type of student who is preparing for the Cambridge First Certificate in English for Foreign Students, or for those in the middle forms of schools.

Each passage is followed by a number of exercises. Apart from providing work on the vocabulary of the text, these deal with grammatical matters to be found in it, or arising from it. Questions on the content of the passage are also set. The exercises may be worked through orally in class or they may be used for homework. Each series of exercises includes a subject for an essay. Most of the passages will be found suitable for practice in summary.

We are gratified that this little book has been found helpful by our colleagues and their students. We hope that now, in its revised form, its useful life will be considerably extended.

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As others see us

We are rarely able to see those who are very close to us as they really are because of our readiness to accept their faults and accentuate their virtues. The same is equally true when we come to look at ourselves. It is very difficult for anybody to be objective about his own character. Yet it is very good for us to try to be so from time to time. As the Scottish poet Robert Burns put it:

O wad¹ some Pow'r the giftie² gie³ us
To see oursel⁴s as others see us!
It wad frae⁵ mony⁶ a blunder free us
And foolish notion.

What Burns says about individuals is equally true of nations. Every country tends to accept its own way of life as being the normal one and to praise or criticize others as they are similar to or different from it. And unfortunately, our picture of the people and the way of life of other countries is often a distorted one.

Here is a great argument in favour of foreign travel and learning foreign languages. It is only by travelling in, or living in, a country and getting to know its inhabitants and their language, that one can find out what a country and its people are really like. And how different the knowledge one gains this way frequently turns out to be from the second-hand information gathered from other sources! How often we find that the foreigners whom we thought to be such different people from ourselves are not so very different after all!

Differences between peoples do, of course, exist and, one hopes, will always continue to do so. The world will be a dull place indeed when all the different nationalities behave exactly alike, and some people might say that we are rapidly approaching this state of affairs. With almost the whole of Western Europe belonging to the European Economic Community and the increasing standardisation that this entails, plus the much greater rapidity and ease of travel, there might seem some truth in this—at least as far as Europe is concerned. However this may be, at least the greater ease of travel today has revealed to more people than ever before that the Englishman or Frenchman or German is not some different kind of animal from themselves.

Yes, travel does broaden the mind. And learning the language

¹would ²gift ³give ⁴ourselves ⁵from ⁶many

2 As others see us

and culture of another nation does liberalise one's outlook. It is to be hoped that more and more of the ordinary people in all countries will have the opportunity to do both things in the future. But when people travel they should be open to new experiences. Too often English people abroad create their own community, keeping to English ways of life no matter where they might be.

A Vocabulary

- 1 What does *objective* mean? What is its opposite?
- 2 Find a synonym for *readiness*.
- 3 Find an antonym of *virtue* (not *fault*).
- 4 What do you do when you *accentuate* something?
- 5 What sort of picture is a *distorted* one?
- 6 Explain the meaning of the phrase *turns out to be*.
- 7 Give a synonym for *blunder*.
- 8 What is *second-hand* information?
- 9 Find two or three synonyms for *dull*.
- 10 What is the opposite of *rapidly*?
- 11 Explain the meaning of *broaden* in the phrase 'travel does broaden the mind.'

B Questions on 'As others see us'

- 1 What do we all find difficult to do?
- 2 What sort of picture do we tend to have of those who are close to us, and why?
- 3 What did the poet Burns consider to be the advantages of seeing ourselves as others see us?
- 4 What sort of attitude does each country have towards its own way of life?
- 5 Give an important argument in favour of foreign travel.
- 6 What is the only way of finding out what a foreign country is really like?
- 7 What is the opinion of some people concerning the differences between different nations?
- 8 What effect does travel have on one's mind?

C Grammar

- 1 Put the following sentences into reported speech.
 - a Which of these roads will take me into town?
 - b Run and tell father that supper is ready.
 - c How pleasant it is just to sit and do nothing!
 - d How many goals did you score when you played football this afternoon?
 - e Put your books away tidily when you leave the room.
 - f Leave your things here when you go and I will look after them.
 - g Next week I shall be starting my holidays.
 - h Please go away!
- 2 Insert a suitable interrogative pronoun or adjective in the following sentences.
 - a coat is this? Yours or mine?
 - b country do you come from?
 - c is wrong with you?
 - d is the name of this flower?
 - e answer did he give to my question?
 - f bus goes to London Bridge?
 - g sort of shoes are those you're wearing?
 - h is the matter?

D The adjective formed from the word 'England' is 'English'.
Give the adjectives formed from the following countries.

Germany, France, Italy, Sweden, Poland, Russia, Finland, Scotland,
China, Spain, India, Wales, Japan, Ireland, Switzerland.

E Write an essay on your first impressions of any foreign country and its people.

The Cockney

Almost everyone who has heard of London has heard of the term 'Cockney'. Strictly speaking, in order to call oneself a Cockney one should have been born 'within the sound of Bow bells', that is to say within the sound of the bells of the church of St Mary-le-Bow, which stands nearly in the centre of the City of London. But, in fact, all London's citizens who were born and bred in the city may call themselves Cockneys if they wish. However, the term is generally reserved for the Londoner with a 'Cockney accent'.

The Cockney accent is not a particularly pleasant or melodious one, and the Cockney's distortion of the English language is such that the foreigner often finds it impossible to understand the speaker until his ear has become acclimatised to the peculiar tones. The principal characteristics of the Cockney accent consist in a general slurring of consonants (the aspirate aitch is often ignored) and a distortion of vowel sounds. The best known example of Cockney speech in modern English literature is that of Eliza Doolittle, the heroine of Bernard Shaw's play, *Pygmalion* and of the musical adapted from it, *My Fair Lady*.

But if Cockney speech is unpleasant, the Cockney himself is usually far from being so. The average Cockney is distinguished by his quick wit, his ready sense of humour, his ability to 'carry on' under unusual or difficult conditions and by his willingness to be of help if he can. The Cockney's humour is often satirical but it is never vicious; he is very ready to laugh at other people's petuliarities but he is equally ready to laugh at his own. He often makes jokes under the most difficult conditions, a quality that was very apparent during World War II. This rather lugubrious type of humour is well exemplified by the title of an old Cockney music-hall song: 'Ain't It Grand To Be Blooming Well Dead'.

Nowadays, as the tempo of life in big cities grows ever faster (although the Cockney opposes this process when he can), the opportunities for the Cockney to exercise his wit and humour diminish. But if one keeps one's ears open on buses, in railway stations, in street markets and similar places, it will soon become evident that the spirit of Cockney humour is still very much alive, although the old Cockney pronunciation is less common than hitherto.

Most people who call themselves Cockneys usually do so with some pride. And, by and large, they are justified.



Most colourful of London's Cockneys are the Pearly Kings and Queens – so-called because their traditional costumes are decorated with hundreds of pearl buttons.

Many Cockney expressions seem mysterious because they are based on 'rhyming slang', where the original words are replaced by words that rhyme with them.

For example:

apples and pears	= stairs	Uncle Ned	= bed
mince pies	= eyes	bees and honey	= money
plates of meat	= feet	custard and jelly	= telly (television)

A Vocabulary

- 1 Find an alternative for the word *bred*.
- 2 What does *melodious* mean? Name three sounds which you consider to be particularly melodious.
- 3 What is the literal meaning of *acclimatised*? In what sense is it used in the passage?
- 4 Find a synonym for *principal* in the phrase 'principal characteristics'.
- 5 What is the *aspirate aitch*?
- 6 How would you define *slurred* speech?
- 7 What is *satirical* humour?
- 8 Find an alternative for *lugubrious*.
- 9 What is the *tempo* of life?
- 10 What does a thing do when it *diminishes*?

B Questions on 'The Cockney'

- 1 What is the strict definition of a Cockney?
- 2 Where is the church of St Mary-le-Bow situated?
- 3 What is the City of London?
- 4 What are the main characteristics of the Cockney accent?
- 5 What are the characteristics of the Cockney himself?
- 6 When were these characteristics very noticeable?
- 7 Why are the opportunities for the exercise of Cockney wit and humour diminishing?
- 8 Where might one still expect to hear examples of Cockney wit?
- 9 How do the Cockneys feel about their name?

C Grammar

- 1 Put the adverbs of manner (shown in brackets) in the correct place in each of the following sentences.
 - a The Cockney speaks English. (unmelodiously)
 - b He worked for many weeks. (hard)
 - c The boxer hit his opponent on the chin. (hard)

- d* The boys refused to obey their teacher. (stubbornly)
e He refused to see me as I was late. (angrily)
- 2 Add the necessary question-tag in the following sentences
 (e.g. It's a nice day, *isn't it?*).
- a* I am clever . . . ?
b You must go now . . . ?
c You will be back soon . . . ?
d She dresses badly . . . ?
e Tom is going home . . . ?
f You haven't seen Joan . . . ?
g Owls eat mice . . . ?
h You'd do it if you could . . . ?
- 3 Give the past tense and the past and present participles of these verbs.
 write, ring, grow, speak, wear, show, tear, sing, throw

D The following sentences show different uses of the verb 'to take'. Put suitable words in the spaces allowed.

- 1 The dentist had to take . . . my bad tooth.
 2 Take the quotation . . . in your notebooks.
 3 The plane was due to take . . . at five o'clock.
 4 He took a coin . . . his pocket for the telephone call.
 5 If one is bored it is a good idea to take . . . a hobby of some kind.
 6 Will you take . . . my work for a little while? I need a rest.
 7 I did not take . . . the man when I first met him, and my dislike has increased since.
 8 Waiter, take this soup . . . ; it is cold.

E Write an essay on any group of people who, like the Cockney, have characteristics peculiar to themselves.

Piccadilly Circus

It is difficult to say what is the real centre of London, but many people would choose Piccadilly Circus. This is because it is not only central but also the heart of London's entertainment world. Within a few hundred yards of it we find most of London's best-known theatres and cinemas, the most famous restaurants and the most luxurious night-clubs.

In the middle of Piccadilly Circus there is a statue said to be of Eros, the god of love. Few people know that it really represents the Angel of Christian Charity. This statue is the first that was ever cast in aluminium. On Cup Final night and New Year's Eve it is boarded up to prevent over-enthusiastic revellers from climbing onto it. (The Cup Final is the match which decides the winning football team.)

The buildings around the Circus are rather nondescript, though

Theatres and neon lights at Piccadilly.

