

大学英语素质教育拓展教材

CULTURAL SNAPSHOTS:

UK & USA (REVISED)

英美文化掠影

(修订版)

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前 言

随着社会的变革与发展,我国大学英语教学改革日益深化、日益成熟,英语教学已成为英语教育,其功能已从单一传授知识向传播文化、训练语言技能、培养交流能力、提高文化素养和思想品德的多元化功能转化。因此,为非英语专业本科生开设了大学英语素质教育系列拓展课程,这些课程是大学英语课程体系的一个组成部分,主要包括语言技能类、文化类、文学类以及应用类,旨在实现大学英语教学的个性化教育与综合素质培养的目标,结合语言学习,综合提高学生语言文化能力和应用能力,全面提升学生的语言素质、心理素质和文化素质,发掘大学英语课程的隐性功能。

大学英语素质教育系列拓展课程的配套教材共 8 本:《英美文化掠影》(修订版)、《西方文化掠影》(修订版)、《翻译实践》(修订版)、《英美文学》(修订版)、《商务英语基础阅读》(修订版)、《英语影视欣赏》(修订版)、《中国文化概览》(修订版)、《实用英语写作》(修订版)。

本教材在 2011 年天津大学出版社出版的《英美文化掠影》的基础上,根据时代的发展以及教学实践的需要补充、更新和修订而成的。

若要学好一门语言,必须了解使用该语言国家的生活及文

化,这已经是语言学习界的普遍共识了。本书将分述英美两国的文化背景及其社会状况,以期辅助对英语语言学习及英美文化有兴趣的同学对这两个最具有影响力的英语语言国家进行初步接触和了解。本书共分8章。每章都包含知识导入、知识概述、知识复习和知识拓展四个模块。

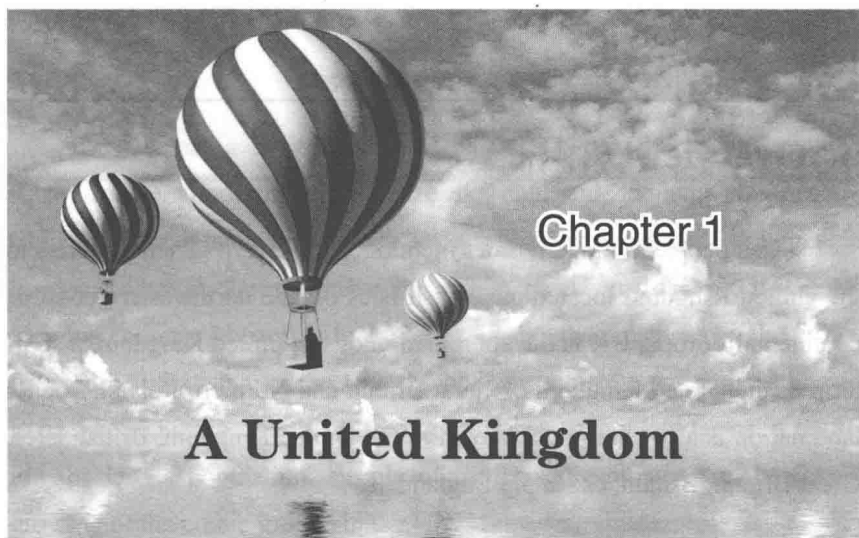
此教材是多年教学积累和资料梳理的成果。在此书出版之际,我们向曾经一起开设课程、共同研究、共享教学资源的老 师,向对知识孜孜以求、给予我们动力出版此教材的学生,向始终在默默地支持和奉献着的编者家属表示由衷的敬意。感谢你们!

大学英语素质教育拓展教材编写组

2016 年于天津大学

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Chapter 1

A United Kingdom

★ Preview 知识导入

1. What does UK stand for? How many names of the nation can you think of?
2. How many constituent countries does the UK have?
3. Who are the ancestors of the modern British people?
4. What is the weather in England like?
5. What are the national traits of the Scots?
6. What are the characteristics of the Welsh?
7. What are the Irish famous for in the cultural respect?
8. What do you know about the wars fought by the English?
9. Who is Charles I? What happened to him?
10. What do you know about the Elizabethan Age?



★ Overview 知识概述

When people in modern times mentioned the UK, it generally refers to the United Kingdom located on British Isles off the northwestern coast of continental Europe. UK is the abbreviation of the United Kingdom, a short term of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The island nation is also commonly known as the United Kingdom, British Isles, Great Britain, Britain, or simply England.

Geography and Population

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland¹ (UK) is off the northwestern coast of the European mainland. Geographically, it covers the major part of the British Isles², including the island of Great Britain³, about one-sixth of the island of Ireland⁴, and numerous small isles. There are four constituent countries forming the sovereignty of UK, England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Three of the four constituent countries are on the island of Great Britain. They are England, Scotland, and Wales. Northern Island is on the island of Ireland. Northern Ireland is quite unique in another way. The 360 kilometers long boundary it has with the Republic of Ireland⁵ is the only land border the UK has. Without this land border, the UK would be totally in sea waters. So it is very safe to say that the UK is an island nation. Surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean, the nation has the North Sea to its east, the Celtic Sea to its south, and the Irish Sea between the island of Great Britain and Ireland. To its south lies the English Channel, separating the nation from the mainland of the European Continent. The nearest neighbor of the UK on the European mainland is France.

The UK has a territory area of 243,610 square kilometers (94,060 square miles), approximately the size of Anhui and Zhejiang Provinces in China. In area, it is the 80th largest state in the world and the 11th largest in Europe. Although the nation has the word “great” in its name, it is not a very big country. According to the latest official data released by the Office for National Statistics of the UK, the population of the nation is estimated to be 64,596,800 in mid-2014. Immigration has been a key factor in boosting the UK’s population. People of the mixed ethnicity are the fastest growing of the ethnic groups in the UK. However, white people still remain the majority of the UK population (over 90%). On the other hand, the UK population features uneven geographical distribution. 90% of the population crowded into the urban area, thus leading to its top position in the world regarding overall population density.

Origins of British People

The early history of the UK is a history of invasions. The early ancestors of modern British people dated back to the Celts⁶ in the Iron Age. They were the most powerful warring tribes in central and northern Europe from 750 BC to 12 BC and gradually infiltrated Britain between about 500 and 100 BC. Today, the Celts living in the UK mainly stem from two major groups, the Gaels⁷ in Scotland and Ireland as well as the Britons⁸ in Wales.

In 55 BC, the Romans invaded Britain and incorporated it into the Roman Empire⁹ in 43 AD. The incorporation lasted for about 400 years and had a positive effect of bringing Britain more active contacts with the rest of Europe and boosting its overall development. The traces of Roman civilization are still visible in the British culture, ranging from Roman numbers to English words derived from Latin.



As the Roman Empire declined, the state was again exposed to invasions, including the pivotal assaults of the Anglo-Saxons¹⁰ from the present region in Denmark, Germany, and Holland between 450 to 600 AD. The Anglo-Saxons created the Kingdom of England¹¹ in the 10th century and brought their language to the country, which is an early form of English. They ruled the English nation to the Norman Conquest¹² in 1066. Under the Anglo-Saxon rule, the British Isles received waves of incursions from Danish Vikings¹³ from the 9th century to the 11th century. Viking impacts are noticeable in some peculiarities of dialect in northern and eastern England. Besides, many English words, such as ball, take, and they are of Old Norse origin.

1066 is a significant year in British history. In this year, William the Conqueror¹⁴, invaded England from France and claimed the English crown as a vassal to the King in France. Later, he became the first Norman king of England, reigning from 1066 to 1087. The history recorded the above intrusions as the Norman Conquest. The Conquest largely removed the Anglo-Saxon ruling class in England and replaced it with a French-speaking aristocracy, which in turn brought about a transformation of the English culture and language. In the reign of Norman England, English has profoundly developed from Old English¹⁵ into a starkly different Middle English¹⁶. The language development set a foundation for the modern English language, which was primarily a blend of Anglo-Saxon English and Norman French. An invasion as it was, the Norman Conquest led to the final unification of England and ensured its safety from further intrusions. Certain institutions characteristic of Britain could develop, including a system of common law and a representative government.

Symbols of the UK

The national flag of the UK is commonly known as the Union Flag¹⁷, or the Union Jack. It is so called because it embodies the emblems of the three countries united under one Sovereign. They are the country of England, Scotland, and Ireland. The emblems on the Union Flag are actually the crosses of patron saints of the three countries. The red cross on a white ground is the cross of St. George¹⁸, representing England. The diagonal white cross on a blue ground is the cross of St. Andrew¹⁹ of Scotland. And the diagonal red cross on a white ground is the cross of St. Patrick²⁰ of Ireland. Although now only Northern Ireland is part of the UK, the cross of Ireland remains in the national flag. Wales is not represented in the Union Flag because when the national flag first came into being, Wales was already united with England.

Another symbol of the UK is the national anthem, *God Save the Queen (King)*²¹. The lyrics of the National Anthem originated from a patriotic song first performed in 1745, and substituting “Queen” for “King” where it is appropriate. On official occasions, only the first verse is sung. The lyrics are as follows:

God save our gracious Queen (King)!

Long live our noble Queen (King)!

God save the Queen (King)!

Send her (him) victorious,

Happy and glorious,

Long to reign over us,

God save the Queen (King)!



O Lord, our God, arise,
Scatter her (him) enemies,
And make them fall:
Confound their politics,
Frustrate their knavish tricks,
On thee our hopes we fix:
God save us all.

Thy choicest gifts in store,
On her (him) be pleased to pour;
Long may she (he) reign:
May she (he) defend our laws,
And ever give us cause,
To sing with heart and voice,
God save the Queen (King)!

Four Parts of the UK

England

England is the largest of the four constituent countries of the UK. It borders Scotland to the north, Wales to the west, the North Sea to the east, and the English Channel to the south. Most of England comprises the central and southern part of the island of Great Britain. Nearly a third of the UK population lives in England's prosperous southeast, and approximately 15% lives densely in the capital of London, making the city the largest populous metropolis in Britain as well as in Europe. London is an old city with

a long history, which goes back to its founding by the Romans. As the capital of England and the United Kingdom, it serves the comprehensive function of a world cultural, administrative, commercial, and financial center. Greater London, the top-level administrative area in the UK covering the city of London and 32 London boroughs, has an area of 1,580 km².

As an island country surrounded by the sea, England enjoys a moderate temperature and plenty of rainfall while the areas sharing the same latitude have different climates. The weather in England is changeable and unpredictable. Nobody knows what the weather will be like from one day to another. And one can experience four seasons in the course of a single day. Therefore, the weather in England is a popular guess-work to local residents, interesting and unoffending to anyone. That naturally makes weather the safest as well as the most popular ice-breaker to start a conversation with a stranger. Another feature of the weather and climate in England is mildness, because there are no extreme temperatures there. Simply put, the people in England enjoy warm summers and cool winters. On the other hand, the weather and climate in the UK is somewhat “strange” because it is “incompatible” with the latitude. Another well-known feature of the climate in England is that there is abundant rainfall brought about by the typical moderate oceanic climate. Rainfalls here are evenly distributed in a year; half of the days of the year are rainy days. People used to carry umbrellas when going out. As a result of the ample rainfall, there is no lack of water in Britain. There are plenty of rivers and lakes on the UK territory, though none of them is very large in size. The major rivers in Britain include the Severn River, the Thames River, and the Clyde River.

English gentlemen like Sherlock Holmes and Winston Churchill have fixed a stereotype of the English people in people’s mind all over the



world. Despite traditional and present diversity, in most people's minds, the common characteristics of the English are conservatism, deference, and reservation. Englishmen give people the impression that they are in many ways more conservative than people from other countries in the world. They seem more likely to accept things familiar and show suspicion to those strange and foreign concepts. Their conservatism finds a convincing expression in their retention of the royal monarchy and the aristocratic Upper House²². The monarchy system has been retained rather than discarded, though it is now adapted to the modern society by restricting the monarch with the constitution. In the state parliament, the Upper House consisting of noblemen is still there. The reform of the House is slow, not complete yet. Englishmen show adequate respect to their customs and traditions. Ceremonial costumes and activities dating back to the medieval period can still be seen in modern England. In their courts, the judges and barristers still wear wigs, which has been part of British law's standard dress for 300 years. English society used to be rigidly stratified and status-conscious. Traditionally, the English take a deferential attitude towards those superior in wealth, status, and power. The monarch and the nobles were the highest social class in society. In the modern England, where democracy, equality, and freedom being the major political themes and pursuits, people still accept doctrines and show respect to the royal family, mainly in terms of manners. The reserved personality of the English was revealed in their daily conversation and behavior. Customarily, some topics are under taboo in small talks, including age, income, marriage, and family life, etc. Other than polite talks, English ladies and gentlemen pay much attention to the good manners. In English culture, it is an honor to behave well. When talking, English choose words appropriate to the occasion and status to



show their politeness. They are careful with their manners. They will dress appropriately for the time, place, and occasions and keep quiet in the public places. And the English habit of queuing commonly known by the world.

The rose is commonly recognized as the national flower of England. Officially, it is the Tudor rose, and unofficially the red rose.

Scotland

Scotland is the second largest constituent country of the UK occupying the northern third of the island of Great Britain. It shares a border with England to the south and is surrounded by the sea in other directions. In addition to the mainland, Scotland includes over 790 islets. Edinburgh is the country's capital and second largest city, only next to Glasgow in size. Scotland has two official languages, English and Scottish Gaelic. The national flower of Scotland is the thistle.

The national traits of Scotland are kilts and bagpipes. Kilts are pleated skirts made of material with a tartan. Each Scottish clan has its own tartan. The great highland bagpipe is native to Scotland, which obtains wide recognition through its presence in the military service and folk music. Scotland is also well-known for its large number of castles. There are an estimated number of 3,000 castles in Scotland, ranging in size from royal households and large military outposts to simple fortified farmhouses. Of them, the ancient Edinburgh Castle on the Castle Rock of Edinburgh might be the most famous. Originally built as a site of residence, the castle has played military roles by the 17th century. Now it is commonly known as the symbol of the city and an important national heritage of Scotland.

Generally the Scots can be categorized into two groups according to their traditional residential location, the highlanders from the mountainous

north and the lowlanders from the southern cities. The Scots are proud of their separate identity, especially the highlanders. They have a reputation of being inventive, hardworking, serious-minded, brave and courageous. And they have far more control over their own affairs. The Scots were pioneer settlers and empire builders in America, Canada, Australia, South Africa, and New Zealand. They were also fierce soldiers, particularly the highlanders. In World War I, the Germans called them “the women of hell” (because of their kilts). Enemy troops have often been terrified at the sight and sound of the highlanders in kilts marching into battle accompanied by the music of the bagpipes. There are many famous inventors, scientists, and writers either Scottish by birth or residence, including Alexander Graham Bell, Robert Watson-Watt, Charles Darwin, Alexander Fleming, Louis Stevenson, Walter Scott, and Robert Burns.

Scotland impresses the world with its relentless pursuit of independence. Located on the island of Great Britain, Scotland underwent a series of invasions as the other parts of the UK did. However, Scotland was strong enough to withstand major invasions in history such as the Roman Conquest and the Anglo-Saxons attacks. Invaders found it hard to occupy and rule Scotland, especially the highland zone. It was in the 9th century, when the Vikings invaded Great Britain, that Scottish kings had to unite to form an independent sovereign state, the Kingdom of Scotland. Ever since then, frequent wars between Scotland and England have made independence a key word in Scottish politics. In 1603, King James VI²³ of Scotland became King of England and King of Ireland by inheritance. Reigned over by the same king, Scotland still remained independent from England. However, in 1707, Scotland became a part of the new Kingdom of Great Britain by agreement of the Scottish Parliament. Although from then on Scotland



elected its members of parliament to the British parliament in London as the other countries of the nation did for nearly 300 years, this country never forgot its dream of independence. The country has developed distinct legal and educational systems from the remainder of the UK to keep its national identity. Based on a referendum in 1997, Scotland re-established its parliament in 1999 and elected 129 Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs). The Scottish National Party (SNP), a party in pursuit of Scottish independence, was the second largest party in the newly-elected Scottish Parliament. In 2011, SNP won an overall majority in the general election with 69 seats. The new SNP government held a referendum on Scottish independence in 2014 and 45% voters voted for Scottish independence.

Wales

Wales is bordered to its east by England and to its west the Atlantic Ocean and the Irish Sea. It is the third largest country of the UK, only larger in area than Northern Ireland. The country is officially bilingual with Welsh and English. Its largest city Cardiff was proclaimed as the country capital in 1955. The national flower of Wales is the daffodil.

Most Welsh people living in the mountains make a living with sheep farming. And those who prefer to live in the urban area have come down to the south and dwelled in the cities. The typical Welsh people are emotional cheerful people proud of their past and hospitable to friends. But it is said that the Welsh are suspicious of foreigners, particularly the English. Bertrand Russell, an influential logician, philosopher, and mathematician was born in Wales.

Since Wales is close to England and much smaller in area than the latter, it has long been dominated by England before the other countries of the