



博学英语系列

# 英美文化与 国家概况

British and  
American Studies

来安方 著

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# 前 言

随着中国改革开放的深入和经济全球化的大趋势日益发展,跨文化交际也日益重要,这就要求英语专业的学生,不但要学好作为交际工具使用的英语语言,还要深入了解英美文化。近几年来,不少院校的英语语言文学专业硕士研究生的入学考试也表现出了对英美文化的更多重视,这是时代的要求,也是与时俱进的反映。什么是文化?按照《现代汉语词典》的说法,文化是指“人类在社会历史发展过程中所创造的物质财富和精神财富的总和,特指精神财富,如文学、艺术、教育、科学等”。简而言之,文化就是英文中的 **way of life**(生活方式):既包括社会生活(**social life**),如政府和社会组织、生产和分配方式、就业与福利、教育、科研、宗教和节假日等;也包括私人生活(**private life**),如婚姻、家庭、衣着、食品和个人行为规范等,所有这些都属于文化范畴。文化是区分民族最重要的标志,在英语中,文化和社会在很多场合是可以互换的同义词。因此,不同国家和民族之间的一切交流,都必须建立在互相理解和尊重彼此文化的基础之上。

文化的重要特点之一是基于符号,即用抽象符号进行思维和交流,语言文字和数理化所使用的公式符号,就是典型代表。语言既是交际工具,也是思维的外壳,是构成民族文化的要素之一,但语言不是文化的同义词。相对而言,来自不同文化(社会)的人们要进行交际,其最大障碍不是语言,而是文化。不同的民族语言产生于不同的民族文化土壤,并随着该民族的文化发展而发展,因此,不懂一个民族的文化,就不可能真正学懂这个民族的语言,更不懂这个民族的人民,因为文化说到底就是人。没有对英美文化的深刻了解,就没有真正意义上的英语语言和英美文学研究,更谈不上对英美社会的真正研究。

作为一门课程,《英美文化与国家概况》应有自己相对稳定的基本知识结构,但也要不断更新。人类活动的客观事实是不能依主观好恶而任意诠释的,但处于不同时代的人们,对同样的事实往往有不同的观察和领悟。人们常说的更新知识,也包含这层意思。往日的否定有可能变成今日的肯定,反之亦然。这是因为,正确的认识需要经过实践的反复检验。由于文化涉及很多领域,有横断面(某一时期的状况),也有纵深轴线(发展演变过程)。如何把这些貌似分属不同领域而又不变化

的内容组合成统一的有机体,并揭示出它们之间的关系和相互影响,从而形成对英美文化的真正了解,是很值得研究的。对客观事物的静止观察和强行分割,必然产生片面性,而被动地去记忆这些被分割开的内容,不但使人感到乏味,而且也很难形成有连贯性的逻辑思维。有这么一种说法:如果一个人要想恨美国并要为这种恨收集论据,最好的办法是天天读美国报纸,其中有很多文章对美国社会问题的揭露和批判比外国媒体更尖刻;如果一个人想要爱美国并要为这种爱寻找论据,最好的办法也是天天读美国报纸,其中也有很多文章把美国民主和生活方式捧到天上。产生这种差别的原因之一是,报纸主要刊登一时一事的新闻报导,一般不进行全面综合分析和纵向观察。如果完全以这些一时一事的新闻报导为根据得出结论,就往往会带有片面性。为了帮助读者全面深入了解英美文化,增强整体观察和综合研究的能力,这本书所讲述的基本内容采用了树状结构组合,这样就有横有纵,横向展开以拓宽视野,讨论英美社会的方方面面,纵向探索以追溯其运动轨迹和因果关系。纵横结合,互相补充,犹如影像中使用的摇镜头和变焦距技巧。在尽量控制篇幅的前提下,尽量兼容并蓄,加大内容含量,以提高全书的可教性、可读性和参考性,以满足多层次、多方位的不同需要。

本书的章节划分,既考虑到一学期的授课时数,也考虑了学生的自学阅读。为此,各节都配了副标题。用作教材时,可把副标题视作讲课大纲参考,也可以依此组织学生进行课堂讨论,不需要过多受限于原文字句。各节后配的练习题,是本节的复习重点,其中包括书中大部分的专有名词和术语,这是为了使学生掌握标准的汉语对应译文。

我二十年前开始研究英美文化,写的第一本书,就是由复旦大学研究英美文化的著名学者索天章教授审校。索先生的渊博知识和严谨的治学态度,给我留下了深刻印象,也一直是学习的榜样,我愿借此机会,再次表达对索先生的敬意与怀念。

为帮助中国学生了解、认识和研究英美文化,一本好的英文教材要有普适性、延续性和前沿性。这不单涉及材料选取、篇章结构、语言难易和分析深浅等多个方面,还涉及不同文化的思维和认知模式差异。我在编写这本教材用书时也力求各个方面能恰到好处,但是否做到了,还有待读者和研究英美文化与国家概况的专家批评指正。预致谢忱。

来安方

Lai Anfang

2008.07.08

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# ***The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland***

## **Chapter One Panoramic View**

- Section One The Country and the People
- Section Two The British Government
- Section Three Politics and Law
- Section Four National Economy and Cities
- Section Five Cultural and Social Life

## **Chapter Two English History**

- Section One Origin of the English Nation and Beginning of Parliament
- Section Two Decline of Feudalism and the Tudor Monarchy
- Section Three The English Civil War and Industrial Revolution
- Section Four The Rise and Fall of the British Empire





# Chapter One *Panoramic View*

## Section One

### The Country and the People

*Great Britain — England — Scotland — Wales — Northern Ireland — Highland Zone — Lowland Zone — Climate and Weather — Factors Influencing English Weather — May Day — Inland Water — People — Celts — Anglo-Saxons — Immigrants — Official Language — Old English — Middle English — Modern English — Religion — State Church — Free Church*

To the west and off the European Continent, several thousands of islands exist on the **Continental Shelf**. They are generally called the British Isles. Of all these isles, the largest one is called Great Britain which, for the sake of convenience, is often shortened to Britain. The name **Great Britain** was not applied to this large island until the 18th century (1707) when the three kingdoms finally united under one king. The island of Great Britain runs nearly 1,000 kilometers from south to north and extends, at the widest part, about 500 kilometers from west to east. Its area is some 230,000 square kilometers. Still to the west of Great Britain is the second largest island known as **Ireland**, which is politically divided into two parts, the Republic of Ireland and **Northern Ireland**. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (U. K.) is made up of Great Britain, Northern Ireland, and a number of smaller islands around them. The total area of the country is some 240,000 square kilometers with a population of about 59.6 million (2001).

Great Britain is traditionally divided into three countries, or political regions: England in the south, Scotland in the north, and Wales in the southwest. There are still discernible differences between them for historical reasons. England is the largest and most developed of all the three. Its area, about 130,000 square kilometers, takes up nearly 60% of the whole island. Its population is more than 50 million, which makes up 85% of the country's total population. The importance of England is so great



**Map of the Four  
Parts of UK**

in Britain that some foreigners just say “England” when they mean Britain, and they say the “English people” when they mean the British people.

Scotland is the second largest both in area and population. It has an area of about 78,760 square kilometers, less than 30% of the whole island, with a population of more than 5 million, less than one-tenth of the total population.

Wales is the smallest of the three both in area and population. Its area, 20,700 square kilometers, makes up less than 9% while its population, about 2.7 million, does not exceed 5% of the whole.

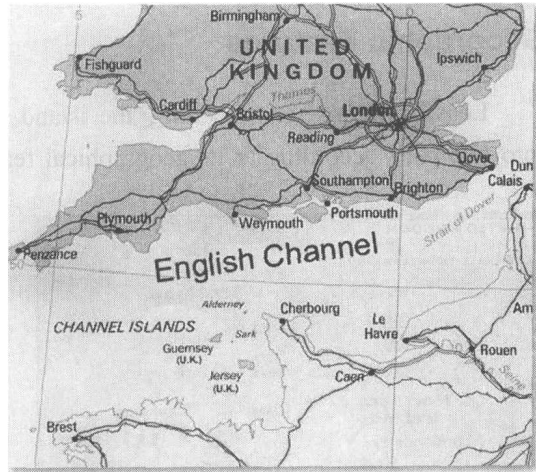
Ireland was an independent kingdom before the Anglo-Norman invaders came. Henry VIII (1491—1547) was the first English king to conquer Ireland and force English law on the Irish people. Soon after the conquest, large numbers of Scottish immigrants came in and established a colony in **Ulster**, another name for Northern Ireland. The Irish people were

mostly Roman Catholics and they were opposed to the English occupation. In 1641, a large-scale rebellion broke out in Ireland. The English Government put down the rebellion and passed the **Penal Law** of 1690, which deprived the Irish Catholics of all their legal rights. The Irish people continued to fight for independence. Their successful struggle finally led to the establishment of the Republic of Ireland in 1927 within the **British Commonwealth**. In 1948 Ireland withdrew from the Commonwealth and declared itself a republic. Since most of the immigrants from Britain were **Protestants**, they refused to separate themselves from their home country. They now hold the northeast corner, about 14,000 square kilometers, of the island and continue to keep it within the United Kingdom, making the kingdom known as the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland has six counties and a population of one and a half million. About one-third of them are Roman Catholics, who demand independence from Britain that is dominated by Protestantism. The **Irish Republican Army**, composed of radical Roman Catholics, is a military organization fighting for the independence of Northern Ireland. It often resorts to terrorist campaigns of bombing, murdering, and arson. The political wing of IRA is called **Sinn Fein**. The bloody sectarian fighting in Northern Ireland prompted Britain and Ireland to reach an agreement known as the

**Downing Street Declaration.** The agreement, upholding the principle of self-determination, says that there can be no change in Northern Ireland's place in the United Kingdom without the consent of a majority within the province. In 1998, a new accord was signed, under which Northern Ireland would establish a **semi-autonomous** government.

Britain is an island country, with its coastline running about 8,000 kilometers. Great Britain's coastline is highly irregular, with many bays and inlets that provide harbors and shelters for ships and boats. The western coast is characterized by cliffs and rocky headlands, especially where the lands meet the sea in northwestern Scotland. On the gentle southern and eastern coasts lie many sand or pebble beaches as well as tall limestone or chalk cliffs, the most famous of which are the White Cliffs of Dover in the southeast.



Map of English Channel

As an island country, Great Britain does not share a land border with any other countries except the Republic of Ireland. To the north of the large island the seaway is open and leads to the **Arctic Ocean**. Britain faces Holland, Germany, Denmark, and Norway across the North Sea. To the southeast and across the **English Channel** is France, and the channel, at the narrowest part, is only thirty-three kilometers in width. Today England is linked with France by a tunnel known as the **Channel Tunnel**, which runs underground beneath the English Channel. The tunnel, open to traffic in 1994, was built by British and French private investors. The main tunnel is 50-km long at an average depth of 40 meters below the seabed. The trip through the tunnel by train takes about 30 minutes. The tunnel has great symbolic importance as an unbroken link between Britain and the European Continent. To the south of Britain are Spain and Portugal, and America and Canada lie on the west corresponding side of the **Atlantic Ocean**.

Britain suffered from geographic disadvantage in its development before the religion of Christianity was introduced into the country. Christianity first appeared in the Middle East. Jerusalem was subsequently once considered as the center of a flat earth separated by the blue curtain of the sky from the paradise above. As a result, Britain was thought to be on the dangerous "edge" of the world. The discovery of

America by Columbus in 1492, consequently, released the British Isles from the disadvantage because important **sea routes** from Europe to America ran across the British Isles. This helped London to become one of the world's most important commercial centers.

## Geographic Features

Leaving Ireland on one side, the island of Great Britain can be divided roughly into two parts according to its geographical features: the **Highland Zone** in the north

and west and the **Lowland Zone** in the south and southeast. The dividing line runs approximately from the southwest to the northeast. The Highland Zone may be subdivided into several smaller geographic regions.



### A) The Highlands of Scotland

Scotland is a mountainous country, with the Highlands of Scotland taking up over half of the country. The highlands include many great mountain chains in the northern part, with a general downward tilt from west to east. **Ben Nevis**, the highest mountain in Britain, with an elevation of 1,300 meters,

stands in North Scotland. Generally speaking, the Highlands of Scotland is composed of old mountains with rounded tops. These old mountains combine to make up a kind of plateau, with an average elevation of between 600 and 900 meters. The soil in the Highlands of Scotland is of the poor type which is not suitable for crops to grow. As a result, a large part of this area is turned into **grazing-land** for developing animal husbandry and is still sparsely populated.

### B) The Central Lowlands (Middle Valley) of Scotland

Lying to the south of the Highlands of Scotland is a great valley that forms the Central Lowlands of Scotland, also known as the Middle Valley. The valley was once a shallow arm of the sea which, as a result of natural processes, gradually became swamps covered with forests, which finally became coal. Many of the British coalfields are situated in this valley. As the most important economic region in Scotland, the Middle Valley accommodates three-quarters of Scotland's total

population. Most of the industrial towns and cultivated farmland in Scotland are situated in the Central Lowlands.

### C) The Southern Uplands

The land on the southern side of the Central Lowlands of Scotland is known as the Southern Uplands. The area includes some very old mountains with round tops; therefore, the Southern Uplands present a scene of **moorland country** covered with small trees and grass. On the west side of the Southern Uplands and along the shores of the Irish Sea are stretches of low ground covered with smiling pastures.

### D) The Pennines

The Pennines, in the northern part of England, include some old mountains that make up a kind of plateau. Since these old mountain chains run about 120 kilometers from south to north, they are also known as the **Backbone of England**. The highest place is usually the west margin with a general dip towards the east, turning the eastern side of the Pennines into a narrow plain bordering the North Sea. The bulk of the Pennines is composed of moorland covered with small trees and tall grass.

### E) The Lake District

The Lake District, well-known for its unique lakes, is situated on the western side of the Pennines. The lakes here spread on the mountain slopes like the spokes of a wheel from the central hub. Because of its beautiful lakes and misty hills, the area has the finest scenery in Britain. The Lake District is also well-known in the history of English literature because it was home to **Lake Poets**, a term often applied to three English poets, Robert Southey (1774—1843), Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772—1834) and William Wordsworth (1770—1850). They used to live in the Lake District and advocated **romanticism** in literary creation. Their poems were characterized by reliance on an idealization of nature and freedom of expression.

### F) The Welsh Massif

This massif practically embraces all the hill masses that lie to the west of the middle part of England. Its southern part was once covered with swamp forests, resulting in rich coal deposits. Today Wales is still a major producer of coal in Britain.

The Lowland Zone is mainly composed of the southern and southeastern parts of England. It is a V-shaped area. The southern end of the Pennines fits into the center of the "V." The left arm of the "V" reaches Lancashire between the Pennines and the Irish Sea while the right arm includes York on the eastern side of the Pennines, corresponding to the plains of Lancaster on the west. These plains are mostly of rich soil suitable for agriculture.

## Climate and Weather

British people are sensitive to privacy and they don't like to engage in small talk of personal affairs, such as income and age, but they are fond of discussing the weather. Sometimes they even argue heatedly over what the weather is going to be like. Perhaps it is nothing more than a habit, but the habit has something to do with the changeability of the English weather. Britain has a **maritime climate** and changeable weather. Even the most reliable English weather experts find it hard to give a correct and reliable weather forecast. Thus, British people like to join in discussions of the weather whenever the chance presents itself. The discussion is mainly based on experience and guesswork, but is interesting nevertheless.

Another characteristic of the English climate is its mild or "strange" temperature. We call it "strange" because it is "incompatible" with the latitude of Britain. The temperature in winter is "too high" and in summer "too low" if compared with weather in other countries of the same latitude. Some English people argue that they have no climate but, instead, have weather in England. Their argument is based on the small differences between the seasons and the variability of the English weather.

In spite of its maritime climate, Britain still has discernible seasons. Broadly speaking, the English summer consists of June, July and August. In summer the days are long: the sun rises before 4:00 a. m. and does not set until after 8:00 p. m. , with unusually long twilight. The temperature in summer is not very high, only about 20°C most of the time, seldom over 32°C. Winter includes December, January and February, January being the coldest month of the year. Even in this coldest month, however, the average temperature seldom dips below 3°C. Snow falls in winter but usually in tiny flakes that cannot last long on the ground. Occasionally, there may be a heavy snow, but that is very rare. As it is uncommon for the temperature to fall below freezing point, some English people prefer to put water pipes on the outside of their buildings.

Autumn, consisting of September, October and November, is the season of maturity and harvest in England. The crops that have been ripening all summer are ripe and should be reaped. The leaves of many trees turn from green to rich brown and gold before they start to fall. Autumn days are fine, warm and refreshing.

Spring in Britain includes March, April and May. It is the season of reawakening. A lot of trees start to put forth leaves while countless birds return back from their migration. Various flowers blossom once again to cover the ground with beautiful colors. With the rise in temperature, farmers begin their spring sowing in the fields which are often muddy because of abundant rainfall and small evaporation.

Britain celebrates some popular festivals in spring, including **Easter Day** and **May Day**. The English May Day, the first day of May, is an annual festival with a long history. In the past, winter was a hard time for most people for the lack of warm clothes food, and fresh vegetables. They felt very happy with the coming of a warm spring because it would release them from confinement in their uncomfortable small houses. On May Day, English people would pluck **Mayflowers** and green twigs, with which they could decorate their homes. Boys and girls, garlanded with flowers, would dance round **Maypoles** set up in every parish. In the past, it was also the custom for people to make bonfires and perform **masques** in the evening. The celebration used to last the whole night until the next morning. Boys and girls were especially fond of the May Day celebration because it provided a good chance for them to talk with each other. It is almost like the Chinese festival of **Pure Brightness**.

The English weather is also characterized by abundant rainfall. The annual average rainfall is about 1,000 mm in most parts of England. What's more, the rainfall is distributed almost evenly through the twelve months of the year. Strictly speaking, neither wet season nor dry season exists in England; instead, most of the rain comes down in a drizzle, which takes a long time for so much rain to come down. As a result, more than half of the days of the year are rainy days. In London, for example, there are more than 160 rainy days each year while in the west part of the country rainy days number more than two hundred. The famous English novel **Jane Eyre**, written by Charlotte Bronte, actually begins with: "It was a cold winter. The wind had brought dark clouds and heavy rain." The passage describes England as rainy even in winter. In fact, endless rain is one of the reasons why English people tend to carry umbrellas with them when going out.

It is common for people abroad to visualize the city of London shrouded in dense fog. It is said that cars and people have to move slowly down the street of London because of the poor visibility. It is true that England has a lot of fog, but the truth is different from what foreigners imagine. In a large industrial city, such as London, the old fog, or the **smog**, as it is called today, was the result of the excessive use of coal and the humidity of the atmosphere. Today coal is no longer used for cooking or heating in London, and the heat from houses tends to disperse the fog near ground level. There are also strict regulations regarding pollution. Consequently, fog no longer poses a serious problem for people in London.

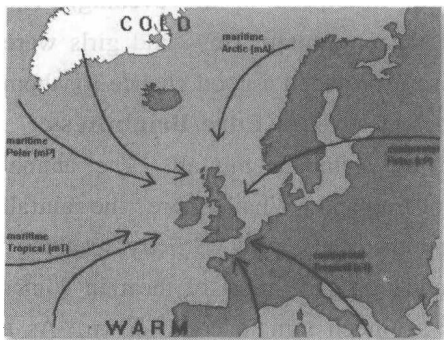
## **Factors Influencing English Weather**

England enjoys a moderate temperature with abundant rainfall throughout the

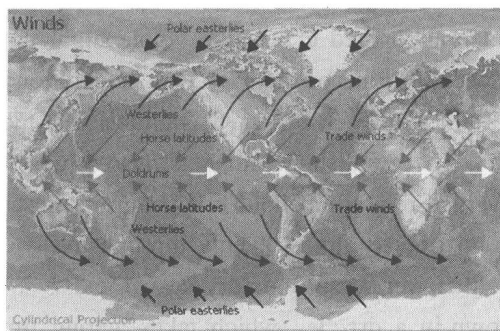


year, but other countries sharing the same latitudes with England have quite different climates. What are the factors that have a determinant influence on the English weather and climate?

A) The shores of the British Isles, especially the western shores, are bathed by a warm drift of water. It is called the **North Atlantic Drift**, which is a continuation of the **Gulf Stream** originating in the Gulf of Mexico. Since no land barrier prevents the flow of the warm drift, the British Isles almost lie within the embrace of this large warm stream.



Factors Influencing British Climate



Winds in Britain and America

- B) Except for certain periods in winter, the British Isles lie wholly within what has long been called the westerly wind belt. Generally speaking, the west wind is the dominant wind in Britain. Coming from the Atlantic Ocean, the wind is mild and moist.
- C) There are numerous rivers and inlets in Britain. They allow the oceanic influences to come inland easily. Other, less important factors contribute to the weather in this part of the world as well.

## Inland Water

As a result of ample rainfall and small evaporation, the problem for English farmers is how to drain the surplus water from fields instead of irrigation. During the early part of this century, about 4.3 million acres of land, some one-seventh of the land in agricultural use, depended on artificial drainage for agricultural production. The English government has to build drainage channels to deal with the problem of surplus water.

Since Britain has a moist climate with much rainfall, rivers and lakes are numerous. Rivers in central and eastern Britain tend to flow slowly and steadily all year long because they are fed by frequent rain. Many have been navigable, and from the