

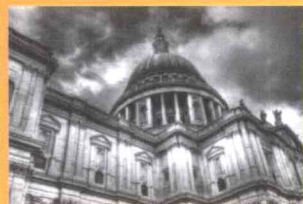
语言文化系列丛书

A Guide to British and American Culture

英美文化导读

总主编 李庆明

副总主编 尹丕安 贾立平



主编 黄雯琴



西北工业大学出版社

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西北工业大学出版社

【内容简介】 本书由八个单元组成,内容包括思想观念、生活方式、政治、经济、娱乐、高科技、节日庆典、餐饮习惯等英美社会和文化生活的各个方面。每个单元进一步细分,涉及的范围很广。为了帮助读者提高英语阅读能力,本书在每一个小节后还提供了一些难词和短语的注释。此外,每个小节后还有相应的问题,以帮助读者在阅读后进行深入的思考和讨论,更透彻地理解英美社会的文化和传统。本书资料翔实,内容新颖,文化韵味浓厚,图片丰富,语言难度适中。使用者能够在了解文化传统的同时,极大地提高英语阅读水平。

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前言

众所周知,语言是文化的载体,文化是语言的土壤。要想学好一门外语,就必须了解这种语言所具有的特定的文化背景,否则就不可能真正掌握这门语言。了解外国文化知识不仅有助于提高阅读水平,培养学生跨文化交际的能力,也可以使学生逐步提高个人的文化素质和修养。作为英语语言学习者,没有对英美文化的了解,就没有真正意义上的英语语言的掌握,更谈不上对英美社会的真正认识。这正是我们编写《英美文化导读》的初衷。

本书分别介绍了英美两国的政治、经济、教育、娱乐、科技、节日庆典、餐饮习惯等,内容丰富,涉及面广,对英美文化的精华做了较为精辟的介绍,具有以下突出优点:

1. 取材视角独到

关于英美文化的书多如恒河沙数,在浩瀚如烟的资料中,你是否无从选择?不用担心了,我们经过精心筛选,为你带来最值得一览的各色文化闪光点,在不知不觉的阅读中,至真文化将令你心驰神往。

2. 栏目设置科学

每篇文章后都配有生词解释,便于读者阅读,同时也将传授文化与英语语言学习有机结合起来;最后是针对文章内容供读者思考的问题,给读者以思考的空间,通过问题增强对知识点的理解,巩固文章内容。

3. 版式图文并茂

书中的每一篇文章都配以精心挑选、引人入胜的图片,与文字主旨相映生辉,即使你无法踏上那块异域土地,也能在阅读时一饱眼福,体验身临其境的感受。

本书可供大学高年级学生阅读训练使用,还可供广大英美文化爱好者、出国人员及英语教师参考使用,亦可作为大学英语选修课教材。

在编写本书的过程中,我们参考和借鉴了国内外网站、书籍、杂志上的素材,在此表示感谢。由于编者水平所限,书中一定有值得商榷的地方,恳请读者批评指正。



最后,本书编者殷切希望,此书能使喜爱英语语言和英美文化的读者有所收获,并深深期待各位以此为基础深入钻研下去,精益求精,更上一层楼!

编 者

2011年5月



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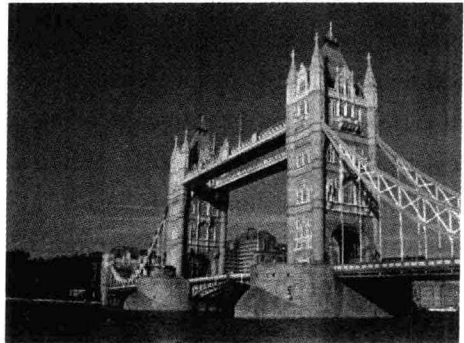
Unit 1 Values and Attitudes

1. The Reserved British People

When Englishman is mentioned, a stereotype will come into one's mind — “men wearing bowler hats, pinstriped suit, a newspaper under the arm and carrying a long unopened umbrella”. The English, as a race, are very different from all other nationalities. It is claimed that living on an island separated from the rest of Europe has much to do with it. Whatever the reasons, it may be fairly stated that the Englishman has developed many attitudes and habits which distinguish him from other nationalities. To other Europeans, the best known quality of the English, is “conservative” or “reserved”.

A reserved person is one who does not talk very much to strangers, does not show much emotion, and seldom gets excited. It is difficult to get to know a reserved person; he never tells you anything about himself, and you may work with him for years without ever knowing where he lives, how many children he has, and what his interests are.

The English tend to be rather conservative. Their conservative attitude usually includes two aspects: an acceptance of things that are familiar to them and an inclination to be suspicious of anything that is strange or foreign. The English view their way of doing things is the best and most reasonable. Therefore, they have been slow to adapt rational reforms and suffer inconvenience from adhering to the old ways. For instance, Britain still uses miles instead of the metric system that is commonly used around the world. Besides, Britain is one of the



relatively small number of the countries that still maintain the monarchy. When the Americans invented central air conditioning, the English refused to accept it and continue to use fireplace and electric stove.

In many parts of the world it is quite normal to show openly extremes of enthusiasm, emotion, excitement, etc. The English are somewhat different. Broadly speaking, the English are quiet, shy, reserved who do not talk very much to strangers. You have only to witness a city train any morning or evening to see the truth of this. Serious-looking businessmen and women sit reading their newspapers or having a light sleep in a corner; no one speaks. If a conversation does start, personal questions like “How old are you?” or even “What is your name?” are not easily asked.

Of course, an Englishman feels no less deeply than any other nationality, but they do not show much emotion, and seldom get excited. They are fully relaxed only among people he knows well. In the presence of strangers or foreigners they often seem inhibited, even embarrassed. This is reflected in his use of language. Imagine a man commenting on the great beauty of a young girl. Whereas a more emotional man might describe her as “an excellent jewel”, “extremely beautiful”, “precious”, the Englishman will flatly state “Um, she’s all right”. An Englishman who has seen a highly successful and enjoyable film recommends it to a friend by commenting, “It’s not bad, you know”, or on seeing very unusual scenery he might convey his pleasure by saying, “Nice, yes, very nice.” The overseas visitor must not be disappointed by this apparent lack of interest and involvement; he must realize that “all right”, “not bad”, and “nice”, very often have the sense of “first-class”, “excellent”, “beautiful”: This special use of language, particularly common in England, is known as “restrained” statement. The people who make loud speeches are considered ill-bred. The main topic of British is weather.

This reluctance to communicate with others is an unfortunate quality in some ways since it tends to give the impression of coldness, and it is true that the English (except perhaps in the North) are not noted for their generosity and hospitality. On the other hands, they are perfectly human behind their barrier of reserve, and may be quite pleased when a friendly strange or foreigner succeeds for a time in breaking the barrier down. We may also mention at this point that the people of the North and West, especially the Welsh, are much less reserved than those of the South and East.

7 Words and Expressions

reserved: *adj.* not liking to talk too much about oneself or to make one’s feelings known

conservative: *adj.* opposed to great or sudden change

suspicious: *adj.* having or showing doubt about

foreign: *adj.* not belonging naturally to sb. /sth. ; uncharacteristic of sb. /sth.

human: *adj.* showing the feelings, especially those of kindness, which human beings have

conceited: *adj.* full of excessive pride in oneself or in one's powers, abilities, etc.

inconvenience: *n.* trouble, difficulty or discomfort

embarrass: *v.* cause to feel self-conscious, awkward or ashamed



Questions for discussion

1. When you meet with an Englishman, how to get along with him?
2. What is the stereotype of an Englishman?

2. Gentlemen Culture



Many Chinese people have the impression that British people are gentlemen. But how much truth is there to this perception? And what is a gentleman? On the standpoint of women, a gentleman is supposed to be much more like a knight. Being a gentleman not only refers to your show of respect for women but also the responsibility to protect puniness. When the Titanic was sinking, what a gentleman should have done is to leave the living hope to women and children.



The traditional concept of a gentleman emerged from a patriarchal world and stressed men's courtesy towards women, making it an indispensable etiquette of the upper class. In western countries, being a gentleman invariably refers to being chivalrous and obliging to women. Typical gentlemanly behavior includes kissing lady's hands reverently, opening the

door for women, letting them in first, pulling out a chair when they are about to sit down, walking on the roadside of a lady to save her from an accident, lavish her with expensive gifts, take her for a picnic and a ride in a small canoe on a lake, always wear a suit to the dinner table and buy a bunch of flowers every day.

But despite their courteous facade, they still patronized women, condescendingly thinking themselves as superior and belittling women's efforts and contribution. In fact, their magnanimous behavior towards women aptly reflected their consciousness that the female was the weaker sex and thus it was their responsibility to be gracious. In the case of a married couple it resulted in the man controlling the woman's behavior and lifestyle. As the woman did not work, she did not have an independent income and was solely reliant on her husband for money and hence putting "food on the table". So although spoilt by very gentlemanly deeds the woman was deprived of her independence. In this controlled situation many ungentlemanly events occurred like sexual abuse, violence, etc. In some cases, women would receive a weekly budget to run the home but if they wanted to buy a new dress or clothes for the children they would have to beg their husbands for money.

The perception of a gentleman also progresses with the passage of time, especially since the rise of the feminist movement. In today's modern western society, with the advent of the women's movement in the 1960 & 70's, we have gradually seen a change develop in the attitude of both men to women and women to men. Women are now treated as equals. Many western women feel that they don't want or need the type of treatment often offered by a gentleman. They work, buy clothes with their own money (plus their husbands' money), go to lunch, the theatre and vote. But it also means that it can be more difficult to spot the gentleman since he might be reluctant or not permitted to offer or display his courteous manners for fear that his motives might be misunderstood or dismissed. Gentlemen are now confused about their roles when it comes to relating with women. For example, when it comes to paying the restaurant bill, who should pay? Some western women would insist on paying their portion whilst others would expect the man to pay. Even asking who should pay can be problematic.

The contemporary version of a gentleman emphasizes more and more on their interior notion of women. Modern gentlemen truly respect women's individuality and their choice of independence. They still understand that women are physically less powerful and they are thus very protective, but intellectually they treat women as an equal counterpart.

Time is different, things happen and people change, but whatever the situation, whether a man is qualified to be a real gentleman has nothing to do with appearances and



degree of wealth, it's their personal characters such as esteem for the opposite sex, moral rectitude etc. that truly count. What a real gentleman should have is self-confidence or even pride. It ensures a man the ability to face all the possibilities and problems in the world with leisure. With self-affirmation, gentlemen are living for honor. If a man has the heart of a gentleman then in spite of everything, he will eventually be recognized as a gentleman.

So although in western society the gentlemanly acts may have decreased, I think a woman is far better off as a person and the gentlemanly acts of today are more sincere. A man still can open the car door, give a lady roses on special occasions like Valentine's Day or going out for a romantic candle-lit dinner.



Words and Expressions

chivalry: *n.* ideal qualities expected of a knight, such as courage, honor, courtesy and concern for the weak and helpless

patriarchal: *adj.* ruled or controlled by men

reverent: *adj.* feeling or showing deep respect

lavish: *v.* give sth. to sb. abundantly and generously

facade: *n.* outward appearance, esp a deceptive one

patronize: *v.* treat (sb.) as an inferior

condescend: *v.* do sth that one regards as undignified or below one's level of importance

belittle: *v.* seem unimportant or of little value

magnanimous: *adj.* having or showing great generosity

gracious: *adj.* kind, polite and generous

problematic: *adj.* difficult to deal with or to understand

rectitude: *n.* moral correctness or straight forwardness



Questions for discussion

What is the stereotype of a traditional gentleman?

What do you think should a man do for a woman nowadays?

3. Royal Family



The British Royal Family is the group of close relatives of the monarch of the United Kingdom. The term is also commonly applied to the same group of people as the relations of the monarch in his or her role as sovereign of any of the other Commonwealth realms.

Although in the United Kingdom there is no strict legal or formal definition of who is or

is not a member of the Royal Family, and different lists will include different people, those carrying the style His or Her Majesty (HM), or His or Her Royal Highness (HRH) are always considered members, which usually results in the application of the term to the monarch, the consort of the monarch, the widowed consorts of previous monarchs, the children of the monarch, the male-line grandchildren of the monarch, and the spouses and the widows of a monarch's sons and male-line grandsons.



Public role and image

Members of the Royal Family participate in hundreds of public engagements yearly throughout the whole of the entire United Kingdom, as formally recorded in the Court Circular, to honour, encourage and learn about the achievements or endeavours of individuals, institutions and enterprises in a variety of areas of life. As representatives of the Queen, they often also join the nation in commemorating historical events, holidays, celebratory and tragic occurrences, and may also sponsor or participate in numerous charitable, cultural and social activities. Their travels abroad on behalf of the UK (called State Visits when the sovereign officially meets with other heads of state) draw public attention to amicable relations within and between the Commonwealth and other nations, to British goods and trade, and to Britain as a historical, vacation, and tourist destination. Their presence, activities and traditional roles constitute the apex of a modern "royal court," and provide a distinctly British and historical pageantry to ceremonies and flavour to public events. Throughout their lives they draw enormous media coverage in the form of photographic, written and televised commentary on their activities, family relationships, rites of passage, personalities, attire, behaviour, and public roles.

Queen Elizabeth II

The official title of the present monarch is: Elizabeth the Second, by the Grace of God of

the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and of Her other Realms and Territories Queen, Head of the Commonwealth, Defender of the Faith.

The Queen is the personification of the State. Legally, she is head of the executive; an integral part of the legislature; head of the judiciary; commander-in-chief of all the armed forces; and temporal head of the Church of England.

In practice, over the centuries, the real power of monarchy has gradually been reduced and today the Queen acts solely on the advice of her ministers. The United Kingdom is actually governed by Her Majesty's Government and although all official letters and documents bear the initials OHMS (On Her Majesty's Service), this is a courtesy rather than a reality. The Queen reigns, but she does not rule. Her principal role is symbolic; she must represent the nation's present-day hopes and ideals as well as its historic past.



The Queen participates in various important acts of government. For example, she summons, prorogues and dissolves Parliament; she confirms major public appointments such as government ministers, judges, diplomats, Church of England bishops and, of course, the new Prime Minister after an election. In international affairs, she has the power to declare war, make peace, recognize foreign states and conclude treaties. But in all these instances the Queen can only act on the advice of her ministers. This advice is usually arrived at after policies and decisions have been fully examined and debated in Parliament.

Conferring honours, such as peerages and knighthoods, is also part of the Queen's job. Honours and awards are usually given to people in Britain and the Commonwealth who have done outstanding work in the arts, industry, sport, politics, entertainment, the diplomatic service... in fact, in almost every field of life.

The Queen is also involved in the day-to-day workings of government. She holds meetings of the Privy Council; she has meetings with ministers and other holders of office at home and overseas; she signs countless documents and state papers; and in her weekly sessions with the Prime Minister, she receives reports of Cabinet meetings.

In her role as head of the Church of England, she is expected to attend its religious services and to bring up her children according to its teachings. Neither the monarch nor any member of the royal family is permitted to marry a Roman Catholic. If any of them ever wished to do so, they would have to renounce all royal rights and their place in the line of succession to the Throne. Besides, members of the royal family must obtain the Queen's

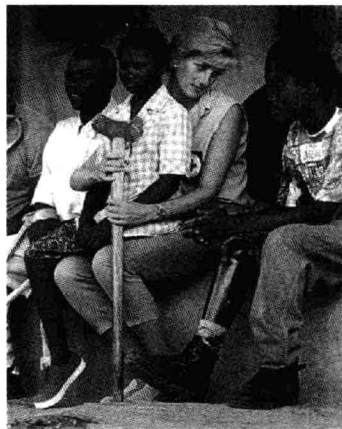
permission to marry and divorce.

A Symbol of British Culture

Recently, the Britain has had a wide discussion about the existence of the royal family, and many media and nations take an active part in it. The result is that most of the people do approve of the existence of the monarchy. So why?

Firstly, the British royal family is a spiritual leader of this country. As we all know, the monarchy is abolished because of its becoming an obstacle to the advance of the country. But the British royal family is neither an obstacle nor an opponent to the development. On the contrary, it unites and comforts the nation at times. For example, during World War II, the royal family insisted on staying in London when the bombers of Germany flew around it, and Prince Philips, at that time, served in the navy of the Great Britain. They showed their determination to fight against the aggressors, and the behavior of the family not only satisfied the public but also established the prestige among them. Yes, it's really a spiritual leader.

Secondly, they lead many people to do good things for this society. Let's take Princess Diana as an example. She did quite a lot of things that moved the world. She had connection with more than 100 charities, and is the chairwoman of 6 charities; she shook hand with AIDS patients without fear; she distributed food to the refugees in Africa; she auctioned her clothes to raise money for the charities, and so on. And people call her the "People's Princess" sincerely. Though she passed away in the year 1997, her spirit has inspired many people to do some things beneficial for others.



Moreover, the royal family is a combination of the old and the new. There is Queen mother, also there is Prince William. This combination makes it popular with all kinds of people. It's a traditional family, but it's also an enlightened family. They try their best to keep in pace with the modern world. For example, Queen Elizabeth II wants to employ someone that is familiar with the computer technology, and can create a wireless net to connect all the computers in the palace. Also she'd like to be adapting to use modern technology, such as the ipod. There is no doubt that they want to learn new things.

It's the British royal family. It's a family admired by the world. It's a family attracts all the cameras. It has a status over all the other royal families

Words and Expressions

monarch: *n.* supreme ruler; king; queen; emperor or empress

consort: *n.* husband or wife, esp of a ruler

endeavour: *n.* attempt or effort

commemorate: *v.* keep (a great person, event, etc.) in people's memory

amicable: *adj.* showing friendliness; without hostility

apex: *n.* top or highest point

pageantry: *n.* spectacular display

rite: *n.* religious or some other solemn ceremony

attire: *n.* clothes; dress

confer: *v.* give or grant a title to sb.

renounce: *v.* agree to give up ownership or possession of sth. formally



Questions for discussion

1. What is the role of the Monarch in the British government?
2. Will British Monarchy still be popular 20 years later?
3. Are you in favor of British Royal family?

4. Individualism: American Trait



Americans are proud to be Americans, but each individual will explain that he, personally, is not like the other Americans. He is better. Americans are proud to be different from each other, and from the world.

It was Benjamin Franklin who epitomized early American individualism in his writings and suggested “God helps those who help themselves”. The American have been trained since very early in their lives to consider themselves as separate individuals who are responsible for their own situations in life and their own destinies. You can see this in the way Americans treat their children before age one, the child has already learned to express her own preferences and make her own decisions, at least with regard to food. The child's preference will normally be accommodated. In most societies such extreme forms of personal preference would not be cultivated, or tolerated. But American society implicitly accepts that children should be encouraged to make decisions for themselves, develop their own opinions, solve their own problems, have their own possessions, and in general, learn to view the world from the self's point of view. The American is not expected to bow without question