

大学英语素质教育拓展教材



英美文化掠影

CULTURAL SNAPSHOTS: UK & USA

总主编 江滨
主 编 武力 江滨



天津大学出版社
TIANJIN UNIVERSITY PRESS

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前 言

近年来,随着我国大学英语教学改革的逐步深化,英语教学已成为英语教育,其功能已由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。为此,我们为英语专业本科生开设了大学英语素质教育拓展课程——大学英语系列选修课,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,使大学英语教学能够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。经过改革、创新从而形成新层次的教学实践,为素质教育提供更宽广的发展空间。

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的接触和了解。本书共十章,每章包含知识预测、知识概述、知识复习和知识拓展四个板块。

此教材的出版是编者多年教学积累和资料梳理的成果。在此出版之际,我们向曾经一起开设课程、共同研究、共享教学资源的周可荣、殷鸣、田文娟等几位老师,向给予许多建设性意见的张纹祯老师,向对知识孜孜追求、给予我们动力出版此教材的学生们,向始终在默默地支持和奉献着的编者家属们表示由衷的敬意。感谢你们!

大学英语素质教育拓展教材编写组

2011年春于天津大学

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British Culture

Chapter 1 A United Kingdom



Preview 知识预测

1. What does the 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 like in England?
5. What are the national traits of the Scots?



Overview 知识概述

When people in modern times mention the UK, it generally refers to the United Kingdom located on the British Isles off the northwestern coast of Continental Europe. The 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 British Isles, Great Britain, Britain, or simply England.

Geography and Population

There are four constituent countries forming the sovereignty of the UK, England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Of the four countries, Northern Ireland is quite unique with the presence of the only land border owned by the UK, sharing it with the Republic of Ireland. Without this

land border, the UK would be totally surrounded by the sea waters.

The UK has a territory area of 243,610 km², approximately the size of Anhui Province and Zhejiang Province in China. According to the latest official data released by the Office for National Statistics, the UK population has reached 61,792,000 in mid-2009, rising by 394,000 compared with that in mid-2008. Immigration has been a key factor in boosting the UK's population. People of the mixed ethnicity are the fastest growing section 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 crowd into the urban area, thus leading to its top position in the world regarding overall population density.

Origins of British People

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

In 55 B. C., the Romans invaded Britain and incorporated it into the Roman Empire. The incorporation 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 Roman Empire declined, the state was again exposed to invasions, including the pivotal assaults of the Anglo-Saxons from the present region in Denmark, Germany, and Holland between 450 A. D. and 600 A. D. The Anglo-Saxons created the English nation and brought their language to the

country, which was an early form of English. They ruled the English nation till the Norman Conquest in 1066. Under the Anglo-Saxon rule, the British Isles received waves of incursions from Danish Vikings from the 9th century to the 11th century. Viking impacts are noticeable in some peculiarities of dialect in northern and eastern England. And many English words, such as “ball”, “take” and “they” are of Old Norse origin.

1066 was a significant year in British history. In this year, William the Conqueror, invaded England and claimed the English crown as a vassal to the King in France. The history recorded the 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 had profoundly developed from Old English into a starkly different Middle English. The language development set a foundation for the modern English language, which is 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 Flag, or the Union Jack. It is so called because it embodies the emblems of the three countries united under one Sovereign. They are 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 George, representing England. The diagonal white cross on a blue ground is the cross of St Andrew of Scotland. And the diagonal red

cross on a white ground is the cross of St Patrick 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). The lyrics of the national anthem originated from a patriotic song first performed in 1745, substituting “Queen” for “King” where appropriate. On official occasions, only the first verse is sung 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).

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 there are evenly distributed in a year; half of the days of the year are rainy days. People are used to carrying 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.

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 a 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.

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.

Wales

Wales is bordered to its east by England and to its west the Atlantic Ocean and the Irish Sea. The country is officially bilingual with Welsh and

English. Its largest city Cardiff was proclaimed as the country's 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.

Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland is situated in the northeast of the Island of Ireland, sharing the only land border of Britain with the Republic of Ireland. The capital city and largest city of Northern Ireland is Belfast. The country has two official languages, English and Irish. Its national flower is the shamrock.

The Irish are well-known for their rich literary heritage. To name but a few, Jonathan Swift, author of *The Gulliver's Travels*, Oscar Wilde who advocated "art for art's sake", George Bernard Shaw, the Nobel Prize winner playwright, and James Joyce, who produced the great stream-of-consciousness work *Ulysses*.



Reinforcement 知识复习

I Blank Filling

1. UK is the abbreviation of the United Kingdom, a short term of _____.
2. There are four constituent countries forming the sovereignty of the UK, _____, _____, _____, and _____.

3. _____ is the largest of the four constituent countries of the UK. And its capital _____ is also the capital of Britain.
4. The _____ created the English nation and brought their language to the country, which is an early form of English.
5. The national flag of the UK is commonly known as the _____, or the _____.
6. The lyrics of the British national anthem _____ originated from a patriotic song first performed in 1745, substituting "Queen" for "King" where appropriate.
7. _____ is the safest and most popular ice-breaking topic to start a conversation with strangers.
8. Generally the Scots are categorized as two groups according to their residential location, the _____ from the mountainous north and the _____ from the southern cities.
9. Bertrand Russell, an influential logician, philosopher, and mathematician was born in _____.
10. The _____ are well-known for their rich literary heritage, giving birth to great writers such as Jonathan Swift, Oscar Wilde, George Bernard Shaw, and James Joyce.

II Questions for Consideration

1. What is the weather and climate like in England?
2. What are the characteristics of Scots?



Extension 知识拓展

English Characteristics

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, English leave a deep impression of their common characteristics of conservatism, deference, and reservation. Their conservatism finds a convincing expression in their retention of the royal monarchy and the aristocratic Upper House. In their courts, the judges and barristers still wear wigs, which have been part of British law's standard dress for 300 years. The impression of English deference stems from their rigidly stratified and status-conscious society in early years. Traditionally, the English took a deferential attitude towards those superior in wealth, status, and power. Modern English still accept doctrines, but meanwhile they advocate equality, freedom, and openness. The reserved personality of the English is revealed in their daily conversation and behavior. They hate small talk topics such as age, marriage, and income and refuse to express their minds freely. In social gatherings, English people tend to choose carefully the words appropriate to the status and the occasion and take it as an honor to have good manners and behave well.

Most Popular British Sport

British people are sports lovers. There are quite a number of sports which originate from Britain, including soccer, rugby, cricket, golf, badminton, tennis, and table tennis. British football, namely soccer, might be one of the most popular team sports in the world. The laws of modern soccer game are based on the mid-19th century rules of the football games played at the independent schools of England. In 1848, the first set of rules resembling the modern British football game was produced at Trinity College, Cambridge. British people at present times never hesitate to show their passion about soccer, and the evidences are apparent. For instance, in Britain, soccer players are usually idols and focus of the public attention. And British soccer fans think a lot of the active participation in

football matches. This enthusiasm sometimes will drive them to travel abroad for a live soccer game. However, these passionate British fans are not always welcomed by the host countries. One keyword of modern British football is football hooliganism, which is associated with disorder and violence caused by notorious soccer fans. The violence in football games dates back to the Shakespeare's time, when British people took it as a custom to drink hard and play hard on the soccer field. It was not uncommon that at half-time both the players and spectators got very drunk and acted in a rather unrefined manner.

Best-known Scottish Dish

Haggis is the best-known local dish in Scotland. The main ingredients of the famous dish are lamb offal, suet, and onions, all mixed and packed into a sheep's stomach. According to the Scottish folktales, the haggis dish is made of the meat of a three-leg bird, the wild haggis, which is a fictional creature native to Scottish Highlands. There are many versions of the image of the Scottish bird. It is said that the bird much resembles an ostrich with vestigial wings. However, it is different from the ostrich in legs, which are believed to be three legs of different length. One version of the fictional bird also says that male haggises run only clockwise while the female ones run only anticlockwise. Scottish folk tales tell us that wild haggises are hunted in Haggis Season and their meat will be cooked into the most delicious Scottish food. Scotch egg, another Scottish snack food consisting of a cold boiled egg wrapped in meat mixture is said to be the egg of wild haggis. It is usually served cold on Scottish dinning table with salad and pickles.