

西方社会与文化丛书

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British Society and Culture

主 编 周 爽



西北工业大学出版社

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【内容简介】 本书是西方社会与文化丛书之一,针对高校学生编写,内容囊括了英国的地理环境、民族特点、种族关系、社会结构、政治制度、宗教信仰、教育体制、生活习惯、饮食娱乐、节日民俗、文学发展等文化知识要点,详略兼备,并有适当的知识延展。

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前 言

当今世界,经济全球化、科技一体化、文化多元化、信息网络化的发展趋势加快,世界各国之间的竞争日趋激烈,对我国的专业人才提出了新的挑战,对人才培养和教材建设提出了更高要求。如何培养具有国际视野和创新能力的人才,是国家、社会和高校教师共同关注的问题,也是教材编撰者和教材出版者关心和重视的问题。

本书编写的主要目的是帮助大学生掌握英国社会与文化的基础知识,拓展大学生知识的深度与广度,促进综合素质的提高,更重要的是激发和增强其英语语言学习的兴趣,提高英语水平。

本书内容囊括了英国的地理环境、民族特点、种族关系、社会结构、政治制度、宗教信仰、教育体制、生活习惯、饮食娱乐、节日民俗、文学发展等文化知识要点,详略兼备,并有适当的知识延展。

笔者具有在英国学习和生活的经历,因此,在编写过程中除大量参考书籍与网络资料外,也将在英国的所闻所感融汇其中。同时,为了增强趣味性与时代感,本书还附有大量辅助阅读材料,将英国社会与文化的方方面面生动地展示出来,也为学生接触地道英语提供了条件。因此,材料中不可避免地出现了语言较难或篇幅较长的现象,笔者建议这些辅助材料供学生选择阅读或由教师指导阅读。

限于水平及编写时间所限,书中尚有许多不足之处,恳请读者指正。

编 者
2012 年 11 月

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Chapter 1

Panoramic View

1.1 Geography

To the west and off the European Continent, there are several thousands of islands on the Continental shelf. They are generally called the British Isles. Of all these isles, the largest one is called Great Britain. It is often shortened to Britain. To the west of Great Britain is the second largest island known as Ireland. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (the UK) is made up of Great Britain, Northern Ireland, and a number of smaller islands around them. The total area of the country is 243,000 square kilometers with a population of about 56 million. Great Britain runs nearly 1,000 kilometers from south to north and extends, at the widest part, about 500 kilometers from west to east. No place is over 250 kilometers from the sea.

Great Britain is traditionally divided into 3 parts, or countries; England in the south, Scotland in the north, and Wales in the southwest. England is the largest and most developed of the three. Its area takes up nearly 60% of the whole island. Its population makes up 85% of the country's whole population. The importance of England is so great that some people just say "England" when they mean Britain. The same is true of the custom of speaking of British people as the English who are the majority of the UK.

Scotland is the second largest both in area and population. Its area is less than 30% of the whole island with a population of 5 million, less than one-tenth of the total population.

Wales is the smallest of the three both in area and population. Its area makes up less than 9% while its population does not exceed 5% of the whole.

Ireland had been an independent kingdom. The Anglo-Norman invaders came in 1169 for the first time and quickly made Ireland the first colony of

England. The Irish people's persistent struggle finally led to the establishment of the Republic of Ireland in 1927. Since most of the English Protestant settlers refused to separate themselves from their home country, they occupied the northeast corner of the island and kept it within the UK, which thus became known as the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Britain does not share land border with any other countries except the Republic of Ireland.

Leaving Ireland on one side, the island of Britain can be divided roughly into 2 parts according to their geographical features: the Highland Zone in the north and west and the Lowland Zone in the south and southeast.

1.2 Climate & Weather

Britain shows typical maritime climate. The temperature in the whole year ranges from -10°C to 32°C . The British weather can be described as "changeable" and "unsteady." Even the most reliable of English weather experts find it hard to give a correct and reliable weather forecast. People like to join the discussion of the weather whenever there is a chance. It's guess-work, but it is interesting and unoffending to anyone.

Some English people argue that they have no climate but weather in England. Their argument is based on the variability of their weather and the small differences between the seasons. But there are still discernible seasons in England.

Broadly speaking, the English summer consists of June, July and August. In summer the days are long. The sun rises before 4 a. m. and it does not set until after 8 p. m., with unusually twilight. The temperature is not very high, only about 20°C for most time, rarely over 32°C .

Winter includes December, January and February. January is the coldest month. However, the average temperature in January is rarely below 3°C while the freezing point is rarely reached. Snowfall does occur in England, but usually in tiny flakes which cannot last long on the ground. Occasionally there may be a heavy snow, but that is very rare.

Autumn is the season of maturity and harvest. It includes September, October and November. The crops are ready to be reaped and the leaves of trees turn from green to rich brown and gold before they start to fall.

Autumn days are fine, warm and refreshing.

Spring is the season of reawakening. It consists of March, April and May.

Another feature of the English weather is its abundant rainfall which shows the English climate belongs to the oceanic type. The rainfall is distributed almost evenly through the 12 months of the year. Strictly speaking, there is neither wet season nor dry season, though autumn is the rainiest time.

1.3 Peoples

The British people are mostly white people. But their forefathers were of different origins and came from different lands in Europe. When the British claim that theirs is a society of variety, they mean, in part, the present-day British people are a mixture of ethnic groups. Foreigners often say the “English people” when they mean the “British people.” But there are some people in Britain who refuse to consider themselves the English. It is true that people of English origin make up the majority of the nation, but there are also the Scottish people, the Irish people, the Welsh people, and some other minority groups. They all use English as their official language, but some of them retain their local dialects and accents. It is said that there are as many dialects as there are countries in England, and the King’s English is one of them, though it is considered official and standard English.

In its narrow and historical sense, the term “English people” refers to the descendants of the English-speaking Anglo-Saxons who conquered the native Celts in England in the 5th century. The native Celtic inhabitants in England either intermingled with the Anglo-Saxon invaders or fled into the mountains of Wales and Scotland, giving rise to regional differences. The following invasions by the Danes and Normans, in the 8th and 11th centuries respectively, added not only to the population but also the variety of characteristics. In spite of their different historical background, today the British people are well mixed for a national state and in this sense the 3 items, the English people, the British people, and Britons are interchangeable.

1.3.1 The Scots

The Scots includes the Highlanders from the mountainous north and the Lowlanders who are concentrated in the densely-populated towns and cities of southern Scotland. There urban areas are heavily industrialized, with coal-mining, iron, steel, ship-building and textiles. Most Scots are Lowlanders.

The Highlanders try to maintain their separated identity. They object to being called "English." Their earliest known ancestors were the Picts who immigrated from the European Continent and the Celts who were driven out of England by Anglo-Saxon invaders. The Scottish Gaelic language is still spoken in remote parts, which comes from the ancient language of the Celtic tribes.

The Scottish Highlander considers himself the "true" Scot and wears his national dress, the kilt, with pride. Kilts, pleated skirts made of material with a squared, coloured design called a tartan, probably derive from the costume of the Roman conquerors. Each Scottish clan (a Gaelic word for "tribe" or "family") has its own tartan with specific colours and design and only members of that clan are entitled to wear it. There are tartan for all the famous Scottish names like Campbell, MacLeod, Fraser, Gordon, Stuart and Macdonald (Mac or Mc, found in many Scottish names, means "son of").

The Highlanders are a proud, independent and hardy people who mainly live by farming sheep in the mountain areas; others, on the coast and islands, are fishermen.

The Scots has a reputation for being inventive, hardworking, serious-minded and cautious with money. In the past, they were pioneer settlers and empire builders in places like America, Canada, Australia, South Africa and New Zealand. They have also provided the British Army with some of their most famous regiments. Over the centuries, enemy troops have often been terrified at the sight and sound of Highlanders in kilts marching into battle accompanied by the blood-curdling music of the bagpipes. Some even nicknamed the Scottish soldiers "devils in skirts" and "ladies from hell."

Apart from their very distinctive national dress the Scots can be recognized by their particular style of speech and accent. Also, their

vocabulary contains many words and expressions, often of ancient origin, which are unique to Scotland. Remember that they like to be called “Scots” or “Scottish” and not “Scotch.” Scotch refers to the most famous of Scottish exports, whisky: the word “whisky” is derived from the Gaelic and means “water of life.”

1.3.2 The Welsh

The Welsh fall into 2 groups: those — mostly sheep farmers — from the mountainous regions of the centre and north, and those (two thirds of the population) who live and work in the highly industrialized south where coal mining and steel manufacture are the main economic activities. Today, the miners of South Wales are among the highest-paid workers in Britain.

Celts used to be the inhabitants in England. The Anglo-Saxon invaders drove part of them to Scotland while the other part fled into the mountains of Wales. Therefore, the Welsh ancestors are Celts. The Welsh have been united with England since the 1535 Act of Union, but they are still very conscious of their separate Celtic heritage. Although the number of people who actually speak the Welsh language is declining (only 20% in 1980), cultural pride in Wales is very strong. Officially Welsh (an ancient Celtic language, but different to Gaelic) has equal status with English in Wales, but in practice it is a minority language.

The Welsh are very famous for their love of music and poetry and they have developed choral singing to a national art. They also have a great feeling for the music of words. Every year there are many festivals of music and verse in Wales. The most famous is the National Eisteddfod (the Welsh word for “sitting”) which takes place each August and lasts for about a week. The highlight of the Eisteddfod is a competition for the best epic poem about Wales written and read in Welsh; the winner is crowned bard, considered the supreme honour in Wales.

Another passion emerging is rugby football. Before the match starts, it is traditional for the crowd of Welsh supporters to sing — always in perfect harmony — “*Land of My Fathers*,” an old song that has almost become a national anthem for Wales.

1.3.3 The Irish

The Irish, a mainly Celtic people, have maintained their ancient Irish Gaelic language, but English is spoken by everyone. They have a rich literary heritage which is apparent in their love of words.

Two thirds of the Northern Irish people are the descendants of Scottish and English immigrants in the 17th century. They believe in Protestantism (基督新教). The rest are the descendants of Irish people (ancient Celts) who believe in Roman Catholicism (罗马天主教).

The island has a long and violent history. The whole of Ireland was colonized by England in 1169 and from that time onwards there were constant uprisings. The situation worsened in the 16th century when the Irish refused to accept the Protestant Reformation; they remained stubbornly true to their Catholic faith despite many cruel persecutions by the English. A hundred years later Oliver Cromwell, Lord Protector of Britain after the execution of King Charles I, crushed various rebellions in Ireland, and settled English and Scottish Protestants there by giving them land. The main duty of the new immigrants was to put down any anti-English revolt by the native Irish. Eventually these Protestant settlers became a powerful force in the country although numerically they formed a minority, except in the 6 counties of Ulster. In 1801, a treaty was signed between the Irish and the English, indicating the establishment of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Eire. Therefore, Ireland formally became part of Britain. But the Irish anti-English movements have never ceased.

Ireland was then an agricultural society (and, in the main, still is). The people's livelihood depended on what they could grow, which was often totally inadequate, and by the middle of the 19th century famine conditions prevailed. The desperate state of the economy caused many Irish people to emigrate, particularly to the US. Those who remained soon began to demand some kind of autonomy. The Ulster Protestants (60% of the population in that area) feared that an autonomous Ireland would be dominated by Catholics.

Eventually, in 1922, Ireland was partitioned. The 26 counties of southern Ireland became the Irish Free State, later renamed the Republic of Eire. The 6 counties of Ulster, in the north, remained part of the UK with

their own parliament, Stormont, responsible for internal affairs. It was in the year 1922 that the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland was adopted formally.

Tragically, violence and terrorism are still part of daily life in Northern Ireland. The Westminster government continues to search for ways in which the people of Northern Ireland can co-operate to bring peace and reconstruction to their land. Many Catholics support the idea of union with the Irish Republic, but many others are just as adamant as the Protestants that they should remain part of the UK, provided that they are granted full civil rights and that some form of power-sharing (Catholic-Protestant) assembly is set up.

1.3.4 The English

The English are as individual as the inhabitants of any other nations. Perhaps even more so because they are descended from so many different peoples who all came and settled in England at some time or other.

The Celts came from central and north-western Europe between 700 and 200 BC. Then, in 55 BC, the Romans invaded and brought with them their laws, taxes, engineering skills, architecture and social system as well as their language, Latin, and their system of writing and numbering. They introduced Christianity and when they departed in AD 411, they left behind a well established Celtic-Roman culture. They also left behind the first written description of the land and its peoples as well as records of their administration.

The Roman was followed by the pagan Angles, Saxons and Jutes who came from where is now Denmark and northern Germany. They were Germanic. From AD 450 to 600, they gradually took control of most of the country by eliminating or assimilating the Celts, and became Christians and settled down as farmers. They replaced Celtic and Latin with their language English. The name England is, in fact, derived from "Angla-land" (land of Angles). They are considered the ancestors of the English.

Next, it was the turn of Viking Danes from Scandinavia. They plundered the coastlands and islands but eventually they too settled, intermarried and fused with the local population. During the 9th and 10th centuries, England was divided almost in half between the Viking Danes in

the east and north east and the Saxons in the west. By the end of the 10th century, however, the Saxons controlled most of the country.

In AD 1066, William of Normandy (William the Conqueror) landed with a large armed force on the south coast and won a great victory over the Saxons. He and his French-speaking followers set up a strong central government which brought a new unified discipline and control to the country. Normans were also called Vikings and they were Germanic. The conquerors intermarried with the ruling Saxon families; they built castles at strategic points for defense and peace-keeping; they made French the official language and firmly established the feudal system. The French influence grew so strong that many aspects of England's social and cultural life became totally French. Since then, the Normans intermingled with the Anglo-Saxons, so did their languages.

Historically, the English population is descended from several genetically similar peoples — the earlier Britons (or Brythons), the Germanic tribes that settled in the area, including Angles, Saxons, and Jutes, collectively known as the Anglo-Saxons, who founded what was to become England (from the Old English England), and the later Danes, Normans and other groups. Following the Act of Union in 1707, in which the Kingdom of England became part of the Kingdom of Great Britain, English customs and identity became closely aligned with British customs and identity.

Today, some English people have recent forbears from other parts of the United Kingdom, while some are also descended from more recent immigrants from other European countries and from the Commonwealth. Through their position at the centre of the former British Empire, the English are the source of the English language, the parliamentary system, common law systems of many countries and a variety of the globe's most popular sports.

1.3.5 Other Ethnic Minorities

Though Norman Conquest was the last invasion of England by foreigners, there have been constant migrations in England. After England became a Protestant country in the 16th century, it became a refuge for other Protestants from Catholic states who were being persecuted for their

faith. Over the centuries, many refugees from political and religious persecution have found a home in England and their special skills and languages have enriched the English economy and culture.

One of the greatest migrations occurred in the 1930s and during the 2nd World War when thousands of people, especially, Jews, fled from Nazi persecution in Germany Austria, Czechoslovakia and other European states. Between 1948 and 1962, many nationals from countries of the old British Empire moved to Britain as at that time they had complete freedom of entry. But in 1962 the situation changed with the Commonwealth Immigrants Act. People from Commonwealth countries no longer had free entry to the UK and could not claim automatic full citizenship. Immigration from both Commonwealth and non-Commonwealth countries does, of course, still take place but is now subject to strict controls.

As a whole, before the 20th century, the immigrants to the UK mainly came from the European Continent; since the 2nd World War, the UK has accepted many Jews and immigrants from Asia, Caribbean Sea Area and the Old British Empire.

Apart from the white people who account for the majority of the British population, there are also ethnic groups like Indians, Pakistanis, black people of Caribbean isles, African blacks, Bengalese, blacks of other origins, Chinese and so on.

It is undoubtedly the case that Britain has become a more racially mixed society than at any time in its history. According to British social attitudes, "Britain's minority ethnic population grew by 53% from 3 million in 1991 to 4.6 million in 2001 and now represents 7.9% of the UK population" (*Rothon and Heath* 2003: 190) (see the table below). This population is concentrated in certain parts of the country. So, for example, in the London borough of Brent 45% of the population are non-white (CRE 1999), raising the question of whether the term "ethnic minority is still applicable."

Ethnic origin	Total population	Percent/%	Ethnic minority/%
White	54,143,898	92.1	14.6
Mixed	677,177	1.2	22.7
Indian	1,053,411	1.8	16.1