



The British by Benjamin Zephaniah

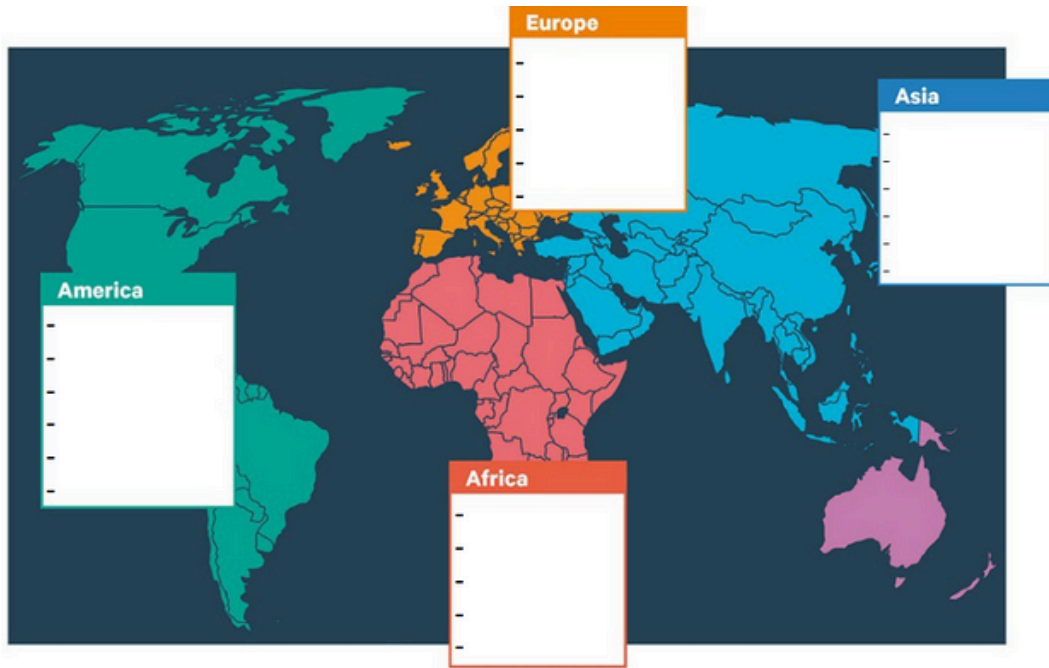
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- 1/ Listen to the poem. What sort of text does it imitate?
- 2/ Listen to the poem again and find nouns or adjectives referring to nationalities.

Write a minimum of three for each continent/

- 3/ What is the message of the poet?
- 4/ According to Benjamin Zephaniah, who are the British?



Pies and Prejudice by Stuart Maconie, 2008



There is no south of England, if we're honest There is a bottom half of England, naturally, but there isn't a south in the same way that there's a north. There is no conception of the south comparable to the north. Good or bad, "the north" means something to all English people wherever they hail from.

To people from London it means desolation, arctic temperatures, mushy peas, a cultural wasteland with limited shopping opportunities and populated by aggressive trolls. To northerners, it means home, truth, beauty, valour, romance, warm and characterful people, real beer and decent chip shops. And in this we are undoubtedly biased, of course.



1/ Focus on what the North represents for northerners and how Londoners see the North.

2/ Where is the author from?



Accentism is the new classism - RT UK - 2014

<https://ladigitale.dev/digiview/#/v/68b8a63406a57>



- 1/ Watch the report. List the accents mentioned and the adjectives used to describe them.
- 2/ How does having a strong regional accent can affect people's job prospects?
- 3/ Why does Caroline regret changing her accent?
- 4/ Who is the reporter referring to when she says "They've been accused of repeatedly of not speaking the same language as the rest of the country". What does it mean?



What does it mean to be British? The Telegraph, Alice Thompson, 2005



This week, in a West London swimming-pool, I watched as two large West African women plunged into the water topless in their knickers. No one commented until one woman said: "They look like they're having fun." It was only when they went into the café afterwards and one lit a cigarette in a no-smoking zone that someone complained.

This sums up the British. (...)

So what does it mean to be British? Jacques Chirac thinks it's about bad food. Tourists cite Buckingham Palace and the double-deck bus - which has become even more iconic since the bombings. The series Little Britain shows a nation of eccentrics with a sense of humour.

According to the Aussies, the British always lose at cricket. Others told me that, for them, Britain was all about curries, roasts, toast, kettles, gardens, gnomes, tea cosies, rain, the Queen and her corgies. Statistically, the country is divided in each census into the English, Welsh and Scottish, into ethnic minorities, and into religions. But britishness is about more than this. It is what unite, rather than what differentiates us, that is particularly interesting. Emma Soames, the editor of Saga Magazine, says the older generation has a very strong view of britishness. "Ginger beer, James Bond, pony club camp, a deep love of animals and an ambivalence towards children. We also have a great sense of pageantry and dressing up which we mustn't lose." Andrew Roberts, author of a biography of Lord Salisbury, says that britishness is easy to define.



1/ Read the first paragraph and explain: "This sums up the British."

2/ Highlight elements referring to:

- everyday life
- history and geography
- famous people and reasons for fame

3/ Explain the quote: "It's about being classic with a twist ... and castles"

4/ Conclude by explaining how the British see themselves, and what is britishness.

"We have a profoundly different history to the rest of the world - partly because our geographical insularity, partly because we are the most constitutionally mature. We were the first to have an industrial revolution and we don't lose wars. We once covered one quarter of the world. Of course, we are unique." (...)

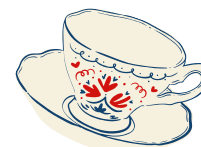
Brooke Shields, the American actress now appearing in London, thinks it's easy to define. "Fudge and pubs." But britishness is not about just a set of values or sweets - it is also about the people who have made Britain.

Baroness Susan Greenfield, the director of the Royal Institution, points to the fact that Britain produced Newton, Darwin, and has won more Nobel prizes than any country except America.

The British are also great innovators, explorers, story-tellers, soldiers and sailors - a tradition carried on by Ellen MacArthur sailing round the world, Tim Berners-Lee inventing the Internet and J.K. Rowling writing about Harry Potter.

"It's about being classic with a twist," says Geordie Greig, the editor of Tatler Magazine. "About combining the best of British with abroad, having Zadie Smith and Shakespeare, Kelly Holmes and Paula Radcliff, Ikea furniture and castles."

Mriganka Chatterjee, one of the first to take the new citizenship test, says: "I could have chosen worse," showing another British trait - understatement. Even if you are proud to be British, you should never brag about it.



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1/ Bombings in London on July 2005 killing 30 and injuring 700

2/ Lord Salisbury = British PM 1886-1892

3/ Zadie Smith - British novelist of Jamaican origin

4/ Kelly Holmes & Paula Radcliffe - British athletes

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England as seen by Martin Parr

British photographer Martin Parr is famous for his satirical photos of English eccentricity and the British class system



Socks or no socks?

Sandals with socks are a classic for some older British people. It's a stereotype of the British tourist on holiday at home or abroad.

Martin Parr took this photo in Dorset, southern England in 1996.

Summer job

Parr shows a typically unsentimental vision of life, in Britain in this 1985 photo. He took the photo at the New Brighton seaside resort in Liverpool. New Brighton was a popular destination for the working-class residents of the industrial city of Liverpool, on England's west coast.



Dressed with style

Royal Ascot is a British institution. More than 300 years old, it is one of the world's most prestigious horse racing events. But, as Parr's 1999 photo shows, this five-day extravaganza is not just about the horses. A highlight in London's social calendar, it's also about class and who has the most extravagant hat!



Hungry birds

One of Martin Parr's favourite themes is the seaside. In particular, he likes to capture the less glamorous side of beach culture. This 1996 photo, for example, shows two seagulls enjoying someone's chips in Dorset. The birds often attack people to steal their food.

Understanding the English

England can be a strange place when you don't know how its society functions.



Everyone is shy.

The English are not famous for their powers of seduction. Charms requires making another person feel good about themselves, but they are shy about paying each other compliments and even worse at receiving them. As a result, the seduction process for heterosexual couples has traditionally involved three elements: a man, a woman, and a significant quantity of alcohol. So don't be surprised to find you are not being chatted up there as you might be in France. But if an English person so much looks at you - let alone speak to you - this is probably a sign that they think you are attractive.

Everything is a joke

The English are famous for their humour: they're constantly making fun of each other and everything else. So much so, in fact, that they are uncomfortable with serious discussion. In their eyes, discussing a subject seriously suggests you take yourself seriously - and that is not a good thing. Raised to value intellectual debate, French people in England find it difficult to adapt to this. Just let them make fun of you and joke about them in return - it's how English friendship works. Similarly, if you don't know someone well, stick to safe topics like the weather and possible TV shows. Either way, avoid politics or anything too philosophical or intellectual. Particularly at the pub.

Emotion is dangerous

Like the Japanese, who also live on an overpopulated island, the English try to maintain social harmony by always being calm, even when something angers them. When taken too far, however, this can have a counter-productive effect: when an English person refuses to admit they are angry, they deny themselves a chance to resolve the problem. This means that they generally stay angry much longer than necessary. Basically, if you think an English person might be angry with you, they probably are and you should apologise. They'll laugh and insist there was never any problem, but secretly you will have defused the situation.



Irony is king

There is a saying that the English and the Americans are "two peoples divided by a common language". The reason is that while both employ the same vocabulary, the English uses words ironically all the time whereas the Americans are more likely to use them literally. For instance, if an English person describes someone as "not entirely ugly" this probably suggests they are stunningly beautiful. A day that is "a little warm" is excessively hot. If someone says they are not "feeling brilliant" then it means they feel really ill.

Yes can mean no

In some cultures, it is very difficult for people to say 'no' because this would be impolite. England is one of those cultures, but they take politeness even further. For example, they will say "Yes, we must see each other again!" and then never phone you. It's confusing, but in their eyes they were just being polite because how could they possibly say "Goodbye, we shall probably never meet again"? Equally strangely, they constantly apologise for things that are not their fault. For instance, an English person on the Tube might say to you "I'm sorry, but you are standing on my foot". Even they find this strange. Similarly, the English are not used to complaining or making a fuss in shops or restaurants. Everything is always fine, or lovely, even when it is clearly not!

La Gacilly - So British! exhibition

Work in groups (5 pairs and 1 group of three) so as to complete the different tasks.



Task 1 - writing

What does "So British" mean?

To answer this question visit the part of the exhibition on this topic.

Focus your research on four photographers among Martin Parr, Don McCullin, Tony Ray-Jones, Mary Turner, Peter Dench, Terry O'Neill and Josh Edgose.

Gather information about them (years, place) as well as their style, their message.

Choose a photo for each artist that represents their work the best - remember to take a photo of those artworks!



Task 2 - speaking



Walk around the exhibition in La Gacilly, focusing on the artworks by British artists.

Choose a photograph you enjoy and that is a faithful representation of British culture according to you.

Then record a podcast with your partner which must include a presentation of the artist, a description of the artwork chosen as well as an analysis of what makes this photograph a typical representation of Britishness.



Task 3 - writing

Continue discovering the exhibition in La Gacilly, and keep focusing on the artworks by British artists.

Choose a photograph you enjoy and that is a portrait.

Then write a 200-word text with your partner in which you imagine the life, the dreams, the expectations or disillusionments of the character on the photo.



Then send all of your work (both photos of the artworks as well as the podcast and your text) to:

Laetitia.Craveur@ac-rennes.fr