



Teacher's page

Fun lesson plans from Learn Hot English

Strange things about the British!

Level: Intermediate (B1) to Upper Intermediate (B2)

Audio: Yes

What do you know about Britain? Do you know any unusual facts? Have you heard anything strange related to the people or country? As with most places around the world, there are some things that visitors often find funny or unusual. In this fun lesson, your students will talk about some unusual things about Britain and the British. This practical class will get your students using lots of useful language and all the essential skills: speaking, listening, reading and writing. Here are some ideas for doing it in class. Good luck!



1 Warm-up

Can you describe the UK or the British? – scroll down for the student pages

Write up or print off the following categories on the Resource Page. Then, in pairs or small groups, students say what they know about the British in relation to any of the things mentioned.

Video – weird things in Britain

Show your students this video by a German girl who is talking about some things she finds unusual about Britain and the British. Tell your students to try to get the gist of what she says – they won't understand every word. Tell them to focus on the two questions below, and just play the video up to about 2:50 minutes. Show your students the pictures of the tap and strawberries and cream so it's clear what she's talking about.

1. What does the woman say about British taps?
2. What does she say about cream, cake and strawberries?

Up to 2:50 only: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3mO3mzs0_vM



2 Lesson activities

Go through the activities for the lesson on the sheet: the Pre-reading, Reading I and Reading II activities. You could do this lesson as a *listening* activity. In order to do this, tell your students to turn over the sheet so they can't see the text as they do the exercises. For the first listening, play it once through without stopping.

If your students' listening level is low, stop the recording after each paragraph and check their understanding.

After finishing that, and if you've done this as a listening activity (not a reading), let your students read the text as you play the recording again. This is good for developing their listening skills as they can see the connection between the written and spoken language.

If you do this as a reading activity, you could assign a paragraph to different students. Then, in pairs or small groups, get them to explain what their assigned food item consists of.



3 Follow-up activities

Retell it!

Assign a paragraph (or two, etc.) to each student. Students have a minute or two to try to remember the text. When they're ready, students try to recount the information, using as much of the language as possible.

Quiz

Students use the internet to write up three quiz questions based on the UK or the British. When they're ready, students take turns reading out their quiz questions, and other students have to answer them. This could be played as a game. For example:

Student 1: What side of the road do the British drive on?

Student 2: The left!

Student 1: Correct!

Investigation & presentation!

Students find out about something typically British and make notes for a mini-presentation on it: a type of beer, a sport, a custom, a type of food such as Marmite, the Mini car, Harrods... They include information on what it is, why it's famous, who invented it, when it was invented, why it was invented, etc. When they're ready, they present the information to the class, using notes. Other students listen and ask questions.

Dialogue

In pairs, students write up notes for a dialogue between a reporter and a typical (or stereotypical) British person. Tell your students to make the dialogue as funny, silly or serious as they like. When they're ready, ask for volunteers to act out their dialogues (from memory or by using notes, not reading it out word-for-word). Other students listen and vote on the best ones.



Student's page

Strange things about the British!

Level: Intermediate (B1) to Upper Intermediate (B2)

1 Warm-up

Talk about Britain and the British?

Say what you know about Britain or the British in relation to any of the things below.

Food, drink, clothing, housing, politics, the economy, alcohol, chocolate, driving, cars, jobs, sports, cricket, rugby, football, furniture, houses, customs, traditions, festivals, language, speaking, accents, money, class, cities, tea, the weather, pubs, film, TV, actors, shops, beer... Other?

For example: *Politics: The prime minister lives at 10 Downing Street.*

Cars: The British drive on the left-hand side of the road.



Objective To improve your reading and listening skills.

Think about it What things do you find strange about the British? What do you think people would find strange about the people or customs in your country? What are some of the strangest customs that you've come across in your travels? Would you like to live in a foreign country? Why? Why not? Which one?

Exams This reading and listening activity will help prepare you for English exams such as PET and TOEFL.

TRACK 11: ENGLISHMEN



STRANGE THINGS ABOUT THE BRITISH!

What comes to mind when you think of Britain? Buckingham Palace, a pint of beer, a double-decker bus, horse racing, fish and chips, cricket... What about British people? The *Guardian* newspaper asked foreigners living in the UK for their opinions on the British. Here are some of their answers. [Please note: as the speakers are non-natives, there are some examples of non-Standard English.]

"The strangest...well for me, can I say food? Like, for example, that you eat on the **couch** not on a table." (Irene, 23, a small business owner from Italy)

"When a British person has a problem with another person they don't actually come and tell that person directly in their face." (Felicia, 37, an **obstetrics** and **gynaecology** consultant from Romania)

"Here, if you've done something really good, they will say 'This is not bad.'" (Spela, 41, a graphic designer from Slovenia)

"I find it strange that British people are so much **into** beer and, you know, not into wine. But that's just me!" (Valeria, 32, a journalist from France)

"I find it strange seeing

that they still accept this so-called '**class system**', you know, in education, you know, in the modern world." (Dick, 75, a retired oil executive from the Netherlands)

"I really don't know, just drinking tea with milk but I had it myself and it's OK." (Janis, 25, a cook and psychology student from Latvia)

"Here in England I see so many people and it's 3 degrees Celsius, and they have **short sleeves** and I don't understand it. **Fingers crossed** to them, they are heroes for me." (Jakub, 36, a wine waiter from the Czech Republic)

"The strangest thing about British people is probably lunchtime **pints**. It always shocks me to go from a meeting to the bar to have a pint, back to the meeting..." (Hector, 26, an entrepreneur from Cyprus)

"The mixes they do with food, I would never understand why in a very English pub there's a Thai restaurant... why? Why do they put **sweet corn** in tuna... why?" (Helena, 27, a businessperson from Spain)

"People are very fond of **queuing**, that's a **stereotype** but it's true. I think I've

gotten into the spirit as well, so whenever I am in another country and people don't queue I get very angry, so I think I am slowly becoming more British." (Philipp, 23, a law student from Austria)

How strange! 🌱

VIDEO

YouTube

Watch this video with some Americans saying what they think of the British. Search YouTube for "What do Americans think of the British?".

GLOSSARY

a couch *n*
a sofa; a long, soft chair that two or three people can sit on

obstetrics *n*
the branch of medicine that is concerned with pregnancy and giving birth

gynaecology *n*
the branch of medicine which deals with women's diseases and conditions

into *exp*
if you're "into" something, you like it

the class system *n*
the way that society is divided into different classes: working class, middle class, etc.

short sleeves *n*
if someone is in "short sleeves", they're wearing a T-shirt or a shirt with no "sleeves" (the part of the shirt that covers your arms)

fingers crossed *exp*
when people say "fingers crossed", they mean "good luck"

a pint *n*
a measurement of liquid that's about half a litre (500 ml)

sweet corn *n*
a long vegetable covered in small yellow seeds. The seeds can also be referred to as sweet corn

to queue *vb*
if you "queue", you wait in a line so you can be served in a shop, etc.

a stereotype *n*
a very general and typical image of someone or a group of people

to get into the spirit *exp*
if you "get into the spirit" of something, you start doing the same things as everyone else (in this case, queuing)

Answers on page 44

1 Pre-reading

How would you describe the British? Use the following words to help you answer the question: food, honesty, anger, alcohol, class, tea, drinks, work, the pub, customs, habits... Other?

2 Reading I

Read or listen to the article once to compare your ideas from the Pre-reading activity. Which comments about the British do you agree with?

3 Reading II

Read the article again. Then, answer the questions. Who thinks it's strange that the British...

1. ...still accept the class system?
2. ...eat on the couch?
3. ...drink beer at lunchtime?
4. ...don't like wine?
5. ...have Asian restaurants in their pubs?
6. ...drink their tea with milk?