

CHILDHOOD



BRITISH STUDIES NOW

ISSUE TWELVE AUTUMN 1999



MAGIC MOUNTAINS
ENGLISH RABBITS
BANGLADESH VISIT
READERS' SURVEY
TOP TOYS

 The
British
Council

Childhood

"The past is a foreign country", reflects the narrator of L. P. Hartley's 1953 novel, *The Go-Between*, as he recalls the summer of 1900 and the formative moment of his youth. In *BSN 12* we visit that country and set out to explore Childhood.

Readers respond to our childhood questionnaire from Albania, Bulgaria, Ethiopia, Japan, Malaysia, Malta, Morocco, the Philippines, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Taiwan, Turkey, the UK and from Belgrade. The results make fascinating reading for all of us – as teachers, parents and adults – who want to compare similarity and contrast difference through time and space. If you are a language teacher, we hope you find the questions and answers a useful resource for discussion and language practice (there's a suggested classroom activity on page 26).

The work of Beatrix Potter lies at the heart of classic English children's literature. Taking a closer look at Potter's English Rabbits, Jopi Nyman casts these adventurous yet fugitive characters in a revealing drama of national identity.

Maureen Haddock, Headteacher at Eustace Street Primary School in Oldham, UK, travels to Bangladesh to learn more about the cultural background of her pupils. In the world of secondary education, we look at how two textbooks, *Crossing Cultures* and *Lifestyles*, are being designed for very different contexts in Romania and the Czech Republic.

And as always, we have a round-up of new books and materials, conference reports plus a full calendar of events worldwide. Don't forget to visit our website at www.britishcouncil.org/studies which has more information about British Studies including an on-line bibliography and features in RealAudio.

BSN is edited by Nick Wadham-Smith and Naomi Clift
The British Council, Literature Department,

11 Portland Place, London W1N 4EJ (UK)

Fax: +44(0)171 389 3175

E-mail: nick.wadham-smith@britishcouncil.org

E-mail: naomi.clift@britcoun.org

WWW homepage: www.britishcouncil.org/studies

Front cover – The Teletubbies. With kind permission of BBC Worldwide. Created in 1997 by Anne Wood and Andrew Davenport, Tinky Winky, Dipsy, Laa-Laa and Po live in a fantasy world of song and image, linked to the real world by the televisions in their tummies. Based on the first words children learn, the programme's Teletubby language is specifically designed to aid children's speech development. The BBC estimate the Teletubby brand to be worth £32 million.

Back cover – Bill and Ben the Flowerpot Men and Andy Pandy with Teddy. Thanks to Freda Lingstrom, their creator, and BBC Picture Archive. These were the puppet stars of 1950s' and 1960s' children's television. Bill and Ben lived in flower pots and spoke a language largely made up of 'flibadob' and 'flobadob'. Andy Pandy's playmates were Teddy and a rag doll called Looby Loo, who only came to life when Andy and Teddy were not around. She would then dance, play and sweep and dust the house (a nice early sexist stereotype for children!)

Magic Mountains

Leah Davcheva, the British Council Sofia,
and Elena Tarasheva, Institute for Foreign Students, Sofia



The Intercultural Training Project for trainee teachers of English, Geography and Biology was launched in May 1997 and will be completed in 2000. For its seventy participants from the School of Education at the University of Durham and from the four major universities in Bulgaria, the project has been initiated as part of their initial teacher education programme. It aims to develop the trainee teachers' professional knowledge of language and culture teaching and, through enabling them to teach a series of culture-focused lessons in Bulgarian and British schools, the project enriches and diversifies the personal learning experience of each of its individual participants.

In each of the three years of the project the Bulgarian trainee teachers of English and Geography teach 12 –14 year old pupils from schools in Durham and Stockton-on-Tees. The choice of focus is the first professional challenge they face when they start preparing their lessons. Questions, with the potential for more answers than one dares count, emerge:

- What is Bulgarian culture?
- Does Bulgarianness exist?
- How is it constructed and represented?
- How accessible is Bulgarian culture without any knowledge of the Bulgarian language?
- Would British children be interested to know?
- Who are they and what do they already know?
- How to provoke a child's curiosity and coax them into venturing on an indefinitely long journey towards a distant and little known 'other'?
- Which culture learning skills to develop in order to help them along?

The search for a culturally unifying and productive notion has led to the discovery of the 'mountain'; the mountain in its role of a cultural entity which serves as a possible entry point to the multiplicity of Bulgarian culture. Mountains are universal. Like the sea, for example, they are features of our planet's geography. No matter where children live, they are bound to come across mountains at some stage of their

cognitive development. And yet, mountains occupy a special place in Bulgarian national, historic, and regional cultures, e.g. they form the opening line of the national anthem; play the role of national heroes in the historic past of the country; and have poems composed and songs sung to them.

Mountains are both real and imaginary. Children roam their forests, ski down their slopes or observe and protect their wildlife. On the other hand they learn about them at school, see them on television, read tales set in the mountains. Early in their childhood they learn to attach a special significance to the mountain, to recognise its relationship to a range of human values, e.g. friendship, loyalty, purity, justice.

Bulgarian children's books play an important role in the learning process. Through both text and illustrations they introduce their young readers to the values which Bulgarian society has traditionally attached to the mountains and invite them to accept these shared values as their own.

The task of involving English children in the decoding of cultural meanings attached to the representations of mountains in Bulgarian children's books intrigued the trainee teachers. They structured a number of their lessons round the images of the mountain and welcomed the challenge to make them understandable to the children they taught in England.

Three different approaches to the image come across. The romantic portrayal of the mountain – as the abode of wild animals, birds and plants – sets off a sense of natural order where the good creatures are in harmony with the environment and any beast going against it gets punished and, eventually, is converted back to harmony with nature.

Secondly, the mountain appears as the setting of narratives where the characters are put on trial. The harsh conditions test the strength of character in the textual story, while in the illustrations the mountain embodies features which visualise aspects of behaviour. The shapes of the mountain incarnate the moral judgement of the author in a visual code accessible for children.

Thirdly, the mountain forms the typical landscape against which children learn to recognise their national identity. The accessibility of the stereotyped link *landscape-national identity* facilitates the presentation of a cultural paradigm.

The procedure which the trainee teachers followed was, first, to show the illustrations to the pupils and invite them to make a story round the pictures. One would expect that the illustrations would prompt the children to tell a story more or less parallel to the story told by the Bulgarian text. However,



the direction of reading from image to text yielded a narrative different from the original. Detached from the original cultural context, the children associated the personified images of the mountain with values different from those at stake in the story. One of the illustrations, where two mountain peaks assume the outlines of two sad figures lamenting over an impending historic treachery, was related to parents moaning over the illness of a child. Below is what one of the pupils wrote:

*The baby is crying
the grandparents are sighing,
the caped magician casts a spell,
making the infant feel unwell,
the snow is thick,
the baby is sick
The grandparents corner the magician
but he disappears out of vision.*

Once all the pupils told their stories the teachers would let them hear the original tale and encourage a discussion about the possible roles of the mountain in the story, thus tying up images with text and representation.



In another lesson the pupils would discuss the reasons for choosing the mountain as the setting of a story about friendship. They exploited the literary significance of the mountain, which, again, proved culture-specific. Few of the British pupils could find justification for using the mountain as the scene of the action. Preferred settings were the country – in unison with the peaceful environment, the city – because it is there that people are under stress and need friendship most, or because it was the most familiar setting to the children in the class; the moon – because of the challenge and need for support in alien circumstances.

In a third lesson pupils would explore the relationship between people and wildlife that inhabited mountain areas. When invited to create a story set in the mountains and involving characters from the illustration, the children's interpretations of the picture appeared to be less determined by the specifics of their own culture. Perceiving the mountain as a home for wild animals, where people are often intruders or invaders, appeared to be a universally understood value.

Discussing the representations of the mountain in Bulgarian children's books through text and illustration allowed some of the children from Durham and Stockton-on-Tees to use their imagination, letting them escape for a while from the cultural paradigm they are accustomed to. Thus, they could both identify with some aspects of the foreign culture and feel empathy with the perceptions of fellow children, or distinguish differences, allowing them to achieve a better understanding of their own through the values of the foreign culture.

Morocco

Stereotypes? What stereotypes?

John Shackleton, the British Council's Deputy Director in Rabat, explains how British Studies works in Morocco

There is an increasing tendency for Moroccans to look for new experiences found outside their traditional relationships with francophone countries. There is a growing appetite for English and for 'Anglo-Saxon' models in education and research, in governance, in business and in many areas of human activity.

The role of the British Council in Morocco is to orientate this desire for new experience towards the UK. It is a slow process and there is much to be done. Despite Rabat's relative geographical proximity to London, 3 hours by plane, and the historical significance of Gibraltar and Tangier in UK-Morocco relations, knowledge of the UK is patchy in Morocco; the Moroccan community in the UK, at around 30,000, is comparatively small; comparatively few Moroccans study in the UK (around 500 last year) or visit the UK on holiday; trade, while not insignificant (the UK imports £367 million and exports £354 million), is centred mostly around the textile sector; around 105,000 UK tourists visited Morocco in 1998, but generally only to the main sites of Marrakesh and Agadir.

All things are relative, however. Some sectors of Moroccan society are more familiar with the UK than others of course. The educated wealthy elite, as in most countries, is more likely to be geographically and cross-culturally sophisticated. The disinherited on the other hand, of which there are scandalously many in Morocco, have less of an idea. Isolated in the mountainous and arid rural areas of the Moroccan interior, areas categorised as 'inutile' during the French Protectorate (1912 - 1956) or trapped in the *bidonvilles* of the 'utile' swathe of the large seaboard cities of Marrakesh, Casablanca, Rabat, Fez, Tetuan and Tangier, they have not had and do not look like having the opportunities that will lift them out of the daily struggle for survival.

And the middle classes? Well, they are somewhere in the middle.

The reverse is probably also true in terms of how much is known about Morocco in the UK. My right hand drive car is as inexplicably peculiar to a Moroccan as the Moroccan teapot being called a '*Manchesteur*' must be to someone from the UK.

The challenge for the British Council in Morocco through its work in British Studies therefore is as much a case of overturning inaccurate stereotypes of the UK, as it is raising awareness of the UK in the first place. This is a process that is inherently and inextricably dependent on the UK becoming more familiar with the real rather than the imagined camel-strewn, minaret-infested Morocco as projected by the Moroccan Tourist industry. Although the blue skies bit is right.

Strategy

The strategy for British Studies is an integral part of our work in Morocco. If we are going to contribute to development in Morocco, development in its broadest sense, we need to further understand both the divergent and convergent values and belief systems that are resident in our two nations. Mutual understanding, albeit at times fossilised by some into meaningless platitude, remains the guiding principle.

Research, teaching and the establishment of networks

The BC hosts an annual residential British Studies seminar and in April 2000, the fourth in the series will take place in Tetuan. The seminar is an opportunity for academics from each university in Morocco to come together to discuss ongoing research in cross-cultural studies, to compare the content of undergraduate and postgraduate courses and the way in which these courses are taught.

The seminars are developmental in nature, in terms of content, approach and resourcing. In Marrakesh in 1996 the seminar took as its objective a discussion of the content and pedagogical applicability of a set of Open University produced British Studies video and audio cassettes covering a range of topics from *Victorian Culture and Values* to *Black Experience in Britain*. After the seminar each faculty of letters in Morocco was able to borrow sets of the materials from the British Council's library.

In Marrakesh in 1997, academics were invited to give feedback on their use of the cassettes which provided a starting point for the main theme of the seminar, the teaching of the contemporary novel. As a source for analysis and discussion, the British Council provided sets of 18 Booker prize winning novels. Foregrounding the seminar in Fez, the use of film scripts and videos of the filmed versions of selected texts (*Remains of the Day*, *Schindler's List*) were also presented as ways of adding value to text-based teaching, as well as suggesting new areas of research. Fatima El Kanaoni, University Mohammed V, Rabat, also read her latest short story.

In Fez in 1998 the theme was visual representation although as in the past, time was made available for feedback on the previous seminar in Marrakesh. Visual representation was a controversial theme as it took participants further away from the relative safe ground of the text. A large array of visual stimuli from the landscape painting of Turner and Constable to how Morocco advertises itself in the tourism industry, to how women are positioned by TV advertising to analysis of filming techniques to theatre in performance vs. theatre as text were on offer for analysis. This analysis was supported as in previous years through the presentation of materials, basic references, video cassettes, slides etc. to each university department. Fez also saw four academics reading works in English they had produced themselves. Fez was by far the most participatory of the seminars to date. Drs. Liz Goodman and Steve Regan who had done almost all of the presentations in Marrakesh, although heavily involved in the preparation and decisions about content for Fez, led on only a few panels. We also included a field trip to Fez Medina to look at first hand the tensions between public and private spaces and how these were physically manifested.

In a similar way to this outside adventure, Fez marked a move away from basing the study of cross-cultural issues solely in the English Departments and brought in social science methodology and an examination of how this may be influential in assisting development in Morocco. This is an ongoing theme with much British Council work in Morocco – especially in the area of gender and development and promotion of human rights – tying academics into the development process, using research to lobby government. This will be further explored in the November conference of which more below.

Tetuan 2000

The fourth annual British Studies seminar will be in Tetuan in April 2000 and the theme is Cultural Geography. The seminar will be a further step in the process of deconstructing the UK from a different perspective, of enriching cross-cultural studies syllabuses at university level in Morocco, adding to (social science) research tools available for researchers, opening up new avenues for research, providing pedagogical insights, involving academics in developmental activity and of encouraging, and here it is again, mutual understanding. The seminar will also include participants from other countries in the region, inshallah.

Keeping in touch

In between seminars, as well as having a break from the rigours of post-colonial theory, we maintain contact with seminar participants throughout the biannual British Council Cultural Studies Newsletter and input into 'Offshoot', a translation and comparative studies journal published by the University of Tetuan and by offering support for conference attendance in the UK and in Morocco. The next conference will be hosted by Mohammed V University, Rabat on 19/20 November. The title is local/global cultures and sustainable development and is designed for a mixed audience of academics and representatives of NGOs. Terry Eagleton will be speaking and the event will be covered for BSN by Nick Wadham-Smith.

PhD programme

Steve Regan and Lizbeth Goodman, as well as chairing panels at the conference, will also be carrying out supervisory duties while they are in Morocco, as part of an external Open University/Surrey PhD programme. There are currently 4 PhD students enrolled, working on women's theatre, public spaces, African Shakespeare and the Thatcher period, looking at the UK context but also searching for resonance of their research in Morocco. The candidates have a regular spot at the annual seminar to report on progress and directions of their research.



Encouraging creative writing

Alongside the annual seminar, journal, conference support and the PhD programme, The British Council has recently launched the BC Prize for Literature for Moroccan Writings in English. The idea grew from the interest amongst Moroccan academics, producing work in English, in trying to bring their work to a wider audience. The initiative sums up very clearly the purpose of activity in the area of British Studies. It is an attempt to overcome obstacles to cross-cultural understanding, lack of

access to information, lack of contact, lack of language, lack of confidence, lack of trust, in order to create an environment where change and exchange are possible.

The prize will be awarded at the British Studies seminar in Tetuan in April 2000. We hope to see as many of you present as possible – but you'll need a map to get there.

For more information please contact

John Shackleton, The British Council, Rabat, Morocco.

Tel: 212 7 76 08 36. Fax: 212 76 08 50.

E-mail: john.shackleton@britishcouncil.org.ma

Top toys

Top 10 selling toys (by £ sales in UK)

1997

- Talking Whizz Kid Power Mouse – V Tech Electronics
- Tamagotchi – Bandai
- Action Man Moonraker – Hasbro (UK) Ltd
- Monopoly – Waddingtons Games
- Sky Diver Action Man – Hasbro (UK) Ltd
- Teletubbies (figures) – Martin Yaffe International
- Jenga – MB/Parker
- Pet Doctor Barbie – Mattel UK Ltd
- Pre-Computer Prestige – V Tech Electronics
- Action Man Super Biker – Hasbro (UK) Ltd

1998

- Furby – Tiger Electronics UK
- Pro-Yo II – TCL Marketing Ltd
- Action Man Polar Mission – Hasbro (UK) Ltd
- Action Man Roller Extreme – Hasbro (UK) Ltd
- Bounce Around Tigger – Mattel UK Ltd
- Monopoly – Waddingtons Games Ltd
- Laa Laa Talking Teletubbie – Golden Bear Products
- Teletubbies Bean Bags – Golder Bear Products
- Gyrocopter – Hasbro (UK) Ltd
- PO Soft Toy – Golden Bear Products

Information supplied by NPD Eurotoys UK Ltd part of NPD Group Inc who specialize in analysing consumer behaviour. They track 20 industries including toys which they divide into the following categories: infant/pre-school; dolls; plush; action figure toys; vehicles; ride-ons; games/puzzles; Interactive Entertainment; activity toys and all other toys. Contact fax +44 1711932 355580, www.npd.com

The British Association of Toy Retailers (BATR) has an excellent website for readers wanting to do further research. Information includes top selling toys each year from 1965. Highlights of the list include:

1965 James Bond Aston Martin die-cast car

1970 Sindy

1980 Rubik's Cube

1990 Teenage Mutant Turtles

1996 Barbie

www.batr.co.uk

British Studies Conference in Nizhny Novgorod

25–26 January 1999

Brian Maguire, the British Council's English Language Development Officer, reports on a major meeting for Russia's Volga region

The British Studies conference sponsored by the British Council and hosted by the Linguistic University of Nizhny Novgorod (LUNN) was originally planned to be a small, two day event for university lecturers from the Greater Volga Region to discuss curricula and issues of content. It was to be a platform for a group of lecturers from LUNN, who had been sponsored by the BC for a two week study visit to Oxford in the summer of 1998, to share what they had learned and to describe the impact that this had had on their curriculum development. The focus was definitely on British Studies for higher educational institutions.



However after meetings with British Studies enthusiasts in the secondary sector I was pleased to meet a large number of school teachers who not only wanted to attend but were also keen on making presentations. The focus of these presentations was towards methodology and practical issues such as project work and materials development. This seemed a great opportunity to create a dialogue and greater understanding between the tertiary and secondary sector and this dialogue became the theme for the conference.

As news of the conference spread, the event mushroomed in size and attracted great interest from British Studies groups in St. Petersburg and Moscow who had already achieved a great deal in terms of project development as a result of involvement in earlier British Council projects. Proposals for presentations and applications also came in from all over Russia including Samara, Volgograd, Astrakhan, Kazan, Yekaterinburg, Yaroslavl, Ishkarol-Ola and Cheboksari. An international dimension was added with a representation from Minsk and

British Council specialists Mark Andrews and John Braidwood contributing their expertise. The British Council London was represented by Nick Wadham Smith and the link with the Oxford Study visit was maintained with Karen Hewitt as the invited plenary speaker. A further interesting dimension was added by Elizabeth Bell, Head of the British Council Science Unit in Moscow, who led a well attended session on 'Science in Britain'.

Overall the main strands of the conference included curriculum design, cross-cultural issues, materials, assessment, methodology, projects and literature, and over fifty presentations were made over the two days. The general outcomes of the conference were a sharing of ideas and materials, the establishment of new networks and to some extent a dialogue between tertiary and secondary sectors although more co-ordination and co-operation is still needed in this area. A specific outcome on a practical level and a good example of how ideas and materials can be disseminated has been demonstrated by Tamara Vorobyova from Cheboksari, capital of the autonomous Chuvash Republic, about 500kms east of Moscow. Having made her presentation and attended as many sessions as she could, she returned to Cheboksari and ran a series of workshops for fellow secondary school teachers. I recommended her as a participant for a British Studies materials workshop in Pruhonice, Prague, in March this year, an offer which she at first declined, worried that her out-of-date passport would not be renewed in time. However she eventually changed her mind, attended the seminar and on returning to Russia, ran a mini conference of her own on March 30th. All of these events in Cheboksari have been carried through without any further funding or support from the British Council.

A final and less tangible result of the conference was the feelgood factor which at the time was evident from the smiles and sincere expressions of thanks. It is now June, a good five months after the event, and people are still telling me how much they enjoyed and appreciated the conference. This was the second BS Conference in Nizhny Novgorod, and judging from the written and oral feedback from the 120 participants, it will not be the last.

If you would like to read more about the conference, the full proceedings have been published in the latest British Council Moscow *Russia British Studies Newsletter*. For a copy of this newsletter please write to Oksana Ksenzenko, The British Council, Nikoloyamskaya Ul, 109189, Moscow, Russia.

Dialogue and Difference

Ege Conference, May 1999

Report by Laurence Raw, University of Baskent, Turkey

The 4th Ege University/British Council/USIS conference on Cultural Studies took place from 13–15 May 1999. The subject this year was 'Dialogue and Difference'. Guest speakers included Kevin Robins (University of Newcastle), Ray Browne (Bowling Green University, USA), and Gerald Maclean (Ohio State University, USA). The papers focused on a variety of subjects, ranging from travel literature to social anthropology, from American history to cultural theory. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the conference was the way in which many academics, both Turkish and/or otherwise, advocated a more systematic study of Turkish cultures, rather than concentrating either on British or American cultures. This did not mean that British or American cultures should be ignored – rather that they should be used as a basis for comparative cultural study.



The tendency to comparativism was particularly evident in a talk given by Talat Halman, of Bilkent University, Ankara, who urged all participants to consider their native cultures and re-interpret existing (mostly western-formulated) cultural theories in the light of the Turkish experience. Evidence of how successful this might be was shown in case-studies of the Istanbul suburb of Bahçesehir, and of Turkish popular cultures. The conference also demonstrated the fact that perhaps visiting academics from Britain and/or America should not restrict the topics of their presentations to their own cultures. Rather they should be prepared to offer strategies for an understanding of local and global cultures. This was brought out by Kevin Robins, who argued for the concept of 'identification' rather than 'difference', as a way of evaluating cultures. Hitherto this series of conferences has tended to concentrate on British and American cultures, at the expense of local cultures; what was clearly evident, once this conference had concluded, was that most participants wanted more emphasis to be placed on comparative approaches to cultural studies.

After seven years developing British Studies programmes in Turkey with the British Council, Laurence Raw now teaches Cultural Studies and English Literature at the University of Baskent near Ankara. He is the author of two volumes in the British Council's British Studies series: *Changing Class Attitudes* and *The Country and the City* (see www.britishcouncil.org/studies/stdspubs.htm for details of these and the whole series).



Above: Chris Rumford (the British Council), Sedat Isci (Ege University) and Kevin Robins (now at Goldsmiths College, University of London).

Below: Tuna Incesulu (Ege University) and Didem Danis (Bilgi University).



Pruhonice: a model for sharing?

In March this year, twenty-four teachers and project managers from Central and Eastern Europe met in Pruhonice, near Prague, in the Czech Republic, to review British Studies materials for secondary schools. This three-day event, organised by the British Council in London and Prague, is the first major comparison of British Studies secondary school materials to date.

Stephen Elder, a teacher at the British Council in Prague, explains what it was like to join the network



The conference brought together participants from ten countries in the Central and East European region, as well as the UK and Germany, with the aim of reviewing the wide variety of materials produced over the past twelve months. Of equal importance, of course, was sharing experiences of designing and teaching cultural studies materials and identifying key issues involved.

As I had had no previous contact with a network of British studies teachers and lecturers I was immediately impressed

by the depth and variety of projects represented. The majority were secondary school syllabuses and included projects from Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany and Romania which, with funding from the British Council, have created British Studies courses for their region or entire national curriculum. The materials range from textbooks with a student feedback questionnaire, magazine format, loose-leaf folders where teachers can develop the materials themselves, to banks of authentic materials and interactive web sites.

The projects in the Baltic states and Russia were in the earliest stages and their course participants were able to use the experience and expertise available to arm themselves with an array of strategies for setting-up, designing and indeed funding their own courses. This was also the main benefit of the conference for Prague where I have been teaching British Studies over the past year.

The Prague course was devised and taught last year by Simon Francis, whose intention was to run a course bridging the gap between the fact-based secondary school Czech curriculum and the analytical skills needed at university – a gap noted at the conference by lecturers from Czech and Slovak universities. The conference then has given us support for the validity of our course, reinforced a theoretical basis for British Studies that we had been groping towards (a case of reinventing the wheel caused by not networking sooner!), provided us with a mass of materials and design principles transferable to our teaching centres and, perhaps most interestingly of all, suggested ways in which issues of cultural and language awareness and interaction can be incorporated into the broad range of teaching centre courses; general English, young learners, business and ESP as well as the specifically British cultural studies classroom.

After the seminar, UK writer and teacher, Alan Pulverness, circulated some reflections on materials design for British Cultural Studies which participants found very useful. For a copy of these and more information on the workshop visit the BSN homepage at the British Studies website at www.britishcouncil.org/studies

Joanne Collie previews her new British Studies textbook for the Maturita exam

“Lifestyles” is a textbook of British Studies specially aimed at classes preparing for the Maturita exam in the Czech Republic. It consists of ten lessons, each one focusing on a particular topic which compares and contrasts lifestyles and cultural patterns in Britain today and in the Czech Republic. It aims to promote the comparative study of two countries while revising and extending the students’ general proficiency in English, and contributing to the building of their oral presentation skills.

Rationale

Why British Studies? English is the language that the greatest number of Czech students learn. The ever-growing importance of English as an international means of communication has brought about methodological shifts in the classroom, with greater focus on performance, not just formal competence. At the same time, it is increasingly recognised that understanding the cultural contexts of current use is vitally important for learning to function in the new language. In adopting a comparative cultural approach to the material, moreover, it is hoped to broaden the perspective of Czech students and give them an understanding of contemporary Britain that attempts to move well beyond stereotypical views, and at the same time extend their awareness and understanding of their own country and culture.

Why a book aimed specifically at the Maturita year? The exam is a totally oral one, for which students are required to speak for quite a testing length of time on a single subject. Teachers have of course been very aware of the need to prepare students so that they are equipped to speak on a fairly wide number of topics, but what is the best way of attaining this goal? Factual knowledge is undoubtedly necessary, which is why every unit of the book includes data about life in contemporary Britain. (In addition, the intention is at present to help teachers keep up to date by publishing regular supplements in a magazine form, by creating a web site dedicated to the textbook and by distributing material from this in other forms, for teachers without access to the Internet.) By itself, however, factual knowledge is not enough. It needs to be supplemented by other materials which enable students to understand and use that knowledge in a personal way, extend their active control over the language in realistic situations, and give them the opportunity of deepening their awareness and understanding of the world in which they live.

Methodology

The methodology of the book is based on two central assumptions:

1. Helping students to learn about another country and their own in a meaningful way.

The methodology adopted is comparative in its approach, learner-centred, and its movement is from the familiar to the less familiar. It aims to confront, analyse and eventually replace or at least extend the shallow, ‘touristy’ stereotypes which many lower-level ‘background’ books actually promote, thus providing students with more satisfying models of complex societal interactions.

2. Meeting the needs of students who are preparing for the Maturita exam while making the best use of valuable classroom time.

The aims here are to encourage students to engage in interactive exchanges designed to enhance spoken fluency and ease in the language – expand and practise vocabulary, both in general and in the more specialised areas relating to particular topics – extend their control over more advanced linguistic structures, and increase their awareness of characteristics of the spoken language apt to promote communication, for example linking devices, sequencing strategies, and so on.

Scope

After discussions with Czech teachers, it was decided to limit the range of topics covered by the book, and to concentrate mainly on the themes which would be of greater immediate personal relevance to the age group targeted. The principal aim was to enable them to make meaningful comparisons between cultural patterns in Britain and the Czech Republic. The ten units therefore cover issues to do with evolving family patterns, schooling, housing, and food and health. More ‘institutional’ or historical themes could possibly be dealt with in a second volume at a later date.

Since the topics are meant to be covered in approximately one lesson or two, the focus has had to be placed on depth and comprehension, rather than on breadth coverage. However, there is follow-up project work for each of the topics to enable classes to do further work if they so wish.

The map of the book which follows summarizes the ten topics covered, as well as the specific speaking skills, vocabulary and language skills targeted in each unit.

Consultation and production

A reading team of Czech teachers, teacher trainers and advisers was set up by Sta•a Zavitkovská of the British Council in Prague to monitor the book at each stage of its production. This committee met several times over the past year, provided invaluable feedback and comment on all units as they were being written, and piloted many of the units in their classrooms. In addition, an early version of the project was discussed in a workshop with teachers at the British Council Summer School in August 1998.

The project is now into production under the supervision of Paul Whittaker, at the Centre for Comparative Cultural Studies in Olomouc.

Unit 1 Childhood

Topic	A comparative examination of perceptions of childhood in the Czech Republic and Britain; legal ages in the two countries.
Speaking Skills	Structuring a talk, how to begin, order ideas, and conclude.
Vocabulary	Legal activities and psychological perceptions.
Language Skills	Discussing and justifying opinions, comparing memories.

Unit 2 Preparing the Future

Topic	Ways of preparing a student's future in the Czech Republic and Britain, choosing a career, attitudes to life now and in the future.
Speaking Skills	Connecting ideas, sequencing, making points in an understandable order, connecting similar or contrasting ideas.
Vocabulary	Families; careers; sequencing, coordinating & contrasting connections.
Language Skills	Reading, predicting, examining the structure of a short, authentic article, writing linked sentences.

Unit 3 Family Patterns

Topic	Facts about family patterns in the Czech Republic and Britain, social trends in Europe.
Speaking Skills	Comparing and contrasting, using figures and statistics to illustrate points made, indicating proportion, majority views, rising or falling trends.
Vocabulary	Family patterns; nuclear, extended families, life choices; expressions used to indicate change and to compare or contrast
Language Skills	Interpreting graphs and statistics and discussing them, understanding an article about changing social trends, comparing and contrasting.

Unit 4 Marriage and Bringing Up Children

Topic	Opinions and perceptions about changing lifestyle patterns in the Czech Republic and Britain, single parent families.
Speaking Skills	Expressing opposing opinions, agreeing and disagreeing with the views of others, using figures and statistics, justifying opinions (revision & extension).
Vocabulary	Family and lifestyle (extension); antonyms.
Language Skills	Working with graphs, statistics, trends, reading, skimming, using connectors (revision & extension), talking about the future.

Unit 5 Household Responsibilities

Topic	Sharing tasks within the household in the Czech Republic and Britain, relations between parents and children.
Speaking Skills	Illustrating points made; balancing main points and examples; using supporting examples.
Vocabulary	Household jobs; relationships; expressions for exemplifying.

Language Skills	discussing and reporting views, interpreting graphs and drawing conclusions, preparing and giving a short presentation.
-----------------	---

Unit 6 Life in the Classroom

Topic	Memories of classroom experiences in the Czech Republic and Britain; factors for successful and happy schools, bullying, relationships between teachers and students.
Speaking Skills	Expressing cause and effect, justifying, giving reasons for views.
Vocabulary	Schooling (affective, personal experiences), school relationships, ways of expressing reasons, cause and effect.
Language Skills	Reading – making inferences, prioritising ideas, writing in a persuasive way.

Unit 7 A Good Education?

Topic	Features of the educational system in the Czech Republic and Britain.
Speaking Skills	Expressing shades of options, qualifying statements, intensifying, nuancing, presenting priorities.
Vocabulary	Education, subject studies, single sex schools, qualifications.
Language Skills	Reading – extracting arguments for or against from an article, justifying views and choices, writing a short article.

Unit 8 Where We Live

Topic	Housing in the Czech Republic and Britain, owning and renting, advantages and disadvantages of urban or rural living.
Speaking Skills	Comparing and contrasting, working with pie charts and statistics (revision & extension).
Vocabulary	Types of housing, descriptive adjectives, comparatives & superlatives.
Language Skills	Describing, interpreting tables and drawing conclusions from them, talking about advantages and disadvantages, comparing and contrasting.

Unit 9 Food and Eating Patterns

Topic	Family eating patterns in the Czech Republic and Britain.
Speaking Skills	Giving a talk, using guidelines to discuss and assess the effectiveness of an oral presentation.
Vocabulary	Food and meals, national cuisines.
Language Skills	Describing, working with questionnaires, reading an article and extracting patterns.

Unit 10 Healthy Eating for All

Topic	Diet and health in the Czech Republic and Britain, cooking, providing cheap, healthy food for everyone.
Speaking Skills	Further practice – preparing and making an effective oral presentation.
Vocabulary	Food and cooking, diet and health.
Language Skills	Working with surveys, reading an article and extracting information, discussing views, negotiating solutions.

Resources

Books

General

Encyclopedia of Contemporary British Culture, 1999, by Peter Childs and Mike Storry (eds), 0-415-14726-3 £85.00 hardback.

The Childs & Storry team, who produced the useful *British Cultural Identities*, have commissioned 120 specialists in different areas to contribute a total of over 900 a-z entries which range in length from half-column notes (e.g. power dressing) to three-page essays (e.g. Indian communities). The culture surveyed is both high and low and sampled from the second half of the 20th Century. What saves this 600-page doorstopper from discreteness is the quality of the entries, most with a good bibliography plus cross-references, and the excellent indexes: not only a general one running from 'Aardman Animations' to 'Zionism' (Benjamin Zephaniah, who gets 6 references, nearly makes omega position) but also a topic index. The categories themselves will be inspiring to information specialists and teachers wanting to improve upon Dewey classifications. Can a web-updatable CD-ROM be far away?

Collins Cobuild Key Words in the Media, Bill Masculi, 1995, HarperCollins, 0-00-370951-5, £8.99.

1995 winner of the English-speaking Union Duke of Edinburgh Award, *Key Words in the Media* explains the English used in newspapers, radio, and television news. It deals systematically with vocabulary from eight key areas: the media; politics; business pages; entertainment and the arts; crime and punishment; diplomacy and war; work, unemployment and welfare; sport as metaphor. The book explains key words and typical word combinations defined in their grammatical contexts with stimulating, authentic examples from a wide range of British and American broadcasting and newspaper sources. Knowledge of how key words are used is developed through 150 enjoyable language activities, puzzles and exercises.

Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture (new edition), 1999, Addison Wesley Longman Dictionaries, 0-582-30203-X, £17.95 paperback, 0-582-30204-8, £25.00 hardback.

This dictionary is designed to get to the heart of American and British language and culture. It contains over 80,000 words and phrases, help with usage, and 15,000 special cultural entries. All definitions are written in the 2000-word Longman Defining Vocabulary. Contains feature pages, colour photos, maps and drawings and more than 400 Cultural Notes for entries such as 'Declaration of Independence' and 'Oxbridge'.

Oxford Guide to British and American Culture, Jonathan Crowther (ed), 1999 OUP 0-19-431332-8, £12.50 paperback, 0-19-431333-6, £16.00 hardback.

A highly illustrated, up-to-date reference book on all aspects of both British and American culture. Written for those for whom English is not a first language, this is a resource for both students and teachers in the upper secondary school or at university. Using this book should encourage students and their teachers to learn from the cultures compared.

History, Politics and Society

Cold War, Common Pursuit: British Council lecturers in Poland, 1938-1998, Peter Conradi and Stoddard Martin (eds), Starhaven 1999, 0-936315-11-3, £10.

"I dressed and opened the door. Four men and a woman, all strangers. The woman – short, stumpy, wearing a pair of mid-calf boots then the height of fashion, had sharp bright eyes – simply said, 'I am Captain Barbara Pawlowska of the Polish State Security Service. May we come in?'" Thus pro-Solidarity sympathies caught up with Gary Mead, the only one of 11 British Council Literature Lecturers telling their stories here to be arrested and deported. Others recounting no less fascinating engagements with Polish society since 1938 are Dennis Hills, Witold Ostrowski, Frank Tuohy, Derwent May, Michael Irwin, George Hyde, Jessica Munns, Sean Molloy, Stephen Romer and Cathal McCabe. In conclusion, Emma Harris, Director of the English Institute in Warsaw, combines her reminiscences of teaching in Poland since 1968 with observations on the lecturing programme and how it ended in 1998. Alastair Niven, the British Council's current Literature Director, takes the story forward in his introduction.

Britain in Europe: prospects for change, John Milfull (ed), 1999 Ashgate Publishing Limited, 0754610446, £40 hardback.

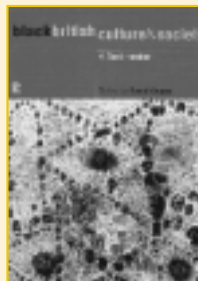
This book addresses the question of Britain's role in Europe from a range of disciplinary perspectives including history, politics, sociology and cultural studies. The authors break new ground by pursuing the relationship back into the period before the development of British exceptionalism, thereby stressing its 'episodic quality': by emphasising the relationship between internal democratisation, devolution and regional autonomy and the development towards a democratic and integrated, but essentially 'federal' Europe: and by tracing and recording past interactions between Britain and Europe, especially Germany, at levels below the 'high political', and considering developments towards 'Europeanisation' at the grass roots level in sport.

Godless Morality: keeping religion out of ethics, Richard Holloway, Cannongate Books 1999 0862419093 (second print 20 September).

James Meek in *The Guardian* (31 July 1999 – search the archive at www.guardian.unlimited.co.uk for 'Meek AND morality AND tales') groups Richard Holloway, Primus of the Episcopal Church of Scotland, with other 'radical Christian theologians and a tiny but fast-growing new group of practical philosophers' who are intervening in some of the biggest social debates: biomedical ethics and genetics. Already reprinting after a month, this controversial book argues that 'It may mean that we have to discover and promote the importance of a non-religious ethic ... that appealed, in its broad principles, to people who were religious and to people without religion' in order to bring the Church into a largely secular debate. This is a book to stimulate discussion and provide an insight into the role of religion in Scottish and British society.

Black British Culture and Society

Kwesi Owusu (ed), 0415178452, 8 October, £14.99.



Reviews are embargoed till publication date but this is advance notice of an important book to be reviewed soon in *BSN*. To quote the blurb 'Reading like a Who's Who of Black Britain, *Black British Culture and Society* brings together in one indispensable volume key writings on the Black Community in Britain, with contributions from Stuart Hall, Sir Herman Ouseley, Paul Gilroy, Kobena Mercer and Caryl Phillips, to name but a few.'

Secondary school level: pre-intermediate

Welcome to Great Britain & U.S.A., Elizabeth Laird, Longman, 1983, 0-582-08955-7, £6.25, 65 pages.

This book provides practical information for visitors to both countries. It gives a new look at national life; work and leisure, government, sport, music and family life as well as places of interest; a helpful guide to social occasions and meeting people; and lively reading passages in simple English.

This new edition has been altered and although many of the photographs have been replaced in order to update the original edition, some of the photos are still clearly very 'eighties' (e.g. the Prince and Princess of Wales with William and Harry). However, it serves as a good introduction to Britain and the USA at a fairly basic level of English. There is a page of exercise material at the end of each chapter comprising comprehension questions, language practice and writing practice.

The World of English, Mark Farrell with Franca Rossi and Regina Ceriani, Longman, 1995, book, 0-582-22692-9, £7.06; audio-cassette, 0-582-22693-7, £7.50.

This offers an opportunity for younger students to learn about culture and daily life in the different countries around the world where English is spoken. Entertaining topics such as fashion, music and sport are examined from the point of view of young teenagers, and students are encouraged to compare their own cultural experience with that in Britain, Ireland, Canada, the USA, Australia, New Zealand and the Caribbean. There is also an easy introduction to more challenging subject areas such as government, history and literature.

Information is presented in an attractive and lively magazine-type format with reading texts, fact files, authentic interviews, comic strips and photographs. A series of graded exercises, accompanied by a listening cassette, is included at regular intervals in each chapter to help students check their comprehension, reinforce new vocabulary and develop their language skills.

Audio and Video

Pre-intermediate and above

Introducing Great Britain, video (VHS PAL), 2 cassettes, £50 each.

This video pack takes you on a trip around Britain from Scotland in the north to Devon and Cornwall in the far south. London is not featured and the lack of a large industrial city leaves the impression of Britain as predominantly rural: London and the provinces. It does have fine footage of historic cities, beautiful scenery, the arts, culture etc. as well as glimpses of 'the everyday lives of British people at work and at play' as a *Pythonesque* blurb puts it. The commentary, at an elementary level, helps students to understand and appreciate what they are seeing and to set it in its historical context. One question lingers: given the absence of sport, pop music, youth culture, big cities, will this admirable product really lead children and young adults, rather than their seniors, to engage with British culture today.

There is a Workbook containing comprehension exercises and the full videoscript and exploitation tips is included. The Longman ELT video *London* may also be used to complement this video: Part 1: Edinburgh; The Highlands; Northern England: Hadrian's Wall, Durham, The Lake District, York, West Yorkshire; Hatfield House.

Part 2: Oxford; Stratford-upon-Avon; Wales; Bath; Devon; Cornwall; Brighton.

Famous British & American Songs and their cultural background.

Mario Papa and Giuliano Iantorno, Longman, 1979, book, 0-582-79088-3, £7.50; audio-cassette, 0-582-79089-1, £8.95.

A collection of well-known British and American songs accompanied by notes dealing with difficult vocabulary in the songs and relevant passages on many aspects of British and American culture. The passages can be used as supplementary reading material or to stimulate classroom discussion. Suggestions on how teachers can best exploit the linguistic material contained in the songs are given in the introduction and a Structural Index listing the most important structures in the songs is also provided. A 60-minute cassette containing recordings of the songs accompanies the book.

In the English-speaking world, Carol Goodwright and Janet Olearski (eds), Chancereel, 1998, book, 1-899888-26-8, cassette pack, 1-899888-27-6, teacher's guide, 1-899888-36-5 further details from the publisher: fax + 44 (0) 171 836 4186.

This book takes students on a journey around the world of English. In some 100 countries, from Australia to Zimbabwe, English is spoken as the first or second language. *In the English-speaking World* describes how and where English is spoken and how it helps the world to communicate. It gives the authentic views of the writers from the countries concerned and students are encouraged to make intercultural comparisons and share their own opinions. With each chapter, there is an activity section which includes an extract from that country's English-language literature. Among the writers are Nelson Mandela (South Africa), Margaret Atwood (Canada) and Arundhati Roy (India). *In the English-speaking World* is mainly a reading resource, but every chapter contains a full range of speaking, listening and writing activities. It is attractively illustrated throughout with colour photos.

Secondary school level

British Festivals, Matthew Hancock, Michael Hinton & Barry Tomalin, IBI multimedia/Connect ELT 1999, video 30 mins, 1-901545-35-0, PAL, NTSC, £34, activity book 1-901545-40-7, £6.

According to the final credits of this video, it is 'written and produced' by Barry Tomalin, co-author of one of the most useful cross-cultural textbooks of the decade, *Cultural Awareness*. However, *British Festivals* seems strangely monocultural. There is considerable interest in British festivals originating from other less relentlessly secular cultures. In those countries, public festivals often play a major part in municipal and national social life. This template does not fit the UK so easily. Moreover, of the 'eight popular British festivals' featured here – New Year's Eve, St Valentine's Day, Easter, May Day, Notting Hill Carnival, Halloween – only Notting Hill and perhaps a Morris Dancer's May Day are specifically British, the others are international but performed with local British variation. Problems pile up: the native informants we are promised on our ethnographic trip happen to be members of a white, home counties-type 'family' whose only claim to diversity is their infiltration by one or more actors. The teenagers interviewed 'vox pop' on each festival are exclusively white, one had never been to the Notting Hill Carnival; another found it 'colourful'. Hardly a stereotype is left unhoneed. At Christmas dinner 'Mum always cooks the Turkey, but Dad carves it'. Given the male production team of British Festivals, not many women seem to have been involved in preparing this particular offering.

Primary school level

Play it again! Gail Ellis, Addison Wesley Longman ELT, activity book 0-17-557008-6, £4.45, video 0-17-557007-8, video guide for teachers, 0-17-557068-X.

Play it again! Is a delightful collection of authentic children's songs, rhymes and games, performed by British schoolchildren at a variety

of settings and locations in Britain. Created by the authors of the best-selling primary course, *Stepping Stones*, the video is designed for children aged 7-11, who are learning English for the first time. The video provides a valuable insight into British culture as seen from a child's perspective. For classroom use, the accompanying video activity book provides a variety of enjoyable activities that exploit the language contained in the video. A video guide for teachers is also available. A booklet containing lyrics to the songs and information on the games is included in the video pack.

We're kids in Britain, Gail Ellis, Addison Wesley Longman ELT, activity book, 0-582-29421-5, £3.35, video (PAL VHS) 0-582-29434-7, £50.00.

This 40-minute video gives young learners a real insight into the lives of two British children, Luke and Jenny. We see them at home and at school, helping with the shopping, playing with their friends and enjoying their hobbies. A commentary in clear and simple English is combined with short passages of authentic speech. The teacher's guide contains a full transcript, along with background information and ideas for classroom exploitation. A student's activity book is also available, with opportunities for additional language work in each of the video's topic areas: home and the family; Guy Fawkes Day; a school day; Christmas; a week in February; an Easter outing; the summer holidays. One small caveat: although a contracted form is used in the video's title, full forms are sometimes used at points in the narration where they sound unnatural.

Magazines

iT's Magazine

This is a bi-monthly magazine for teachers and students of English around the world, originally intended for English teachers in Spain but now with an international readership. Teachers' notes are included and there is a great variety of stimulating and up-to-date features and activities. Examples from the March/April edition include an Easter quiz, tips on how to boil an egg, with a profile of that great British promoter of eggs, cookery writer Delia Smith. There is also a South Park match-the-profile-to-the-picture activity, as well as a 1999 Oscar awards game and a reading/discussion on perfume advertising. There is a website too, which is well worth a look and includes links to other sites including the Spice Girls and Mr Bean, although several of the links did not work when tested. For subscription details e-mail: its-online.com, iT's Magazines, Apartado 5096, 08080 Barcelona, Spain, Tel 932 659 357, Fax 932 654 253.

New English Digest

This is a bi-monthly magazine costing £2.99 and available on subscription with savings of up to 35% on the cover price. A year's subscription costs £16 in the EU and £18 overseas. A practical, A-5-sized format, it includes a wide variety of articles graded at both intermediate and advanced levels, as well as quizzes. The magazine is language-graded at intermediate and advanced with listening and reading material in a variety of articles, topics and writing styles for learning English. The mag comes with a CD/CD-ROM for self-study. Both adults and students in secondary schools will find it attractive. Further details about current and back-issues and subscription from the website at www.epaonline.cz/NewEnglishDigest or contact The Learning Bug, 1 Oakthorpe Road, Oxford OX2 7BD. tel: 44 (0) 1865 310620 fax: 44 (0) 1865 557655, info@learning-bug.com



Childhood

The Centre for International Research in Childhood
www.rdg.ac.uk/AcaDepts/In/English/English-PGCourses.html

The Centre for International Research in Childhood (Literature, Culture, Media) was founded at the University of Reading in Reading, England, in October 1996. (CIRCL for short) The centre aims to encourage academic research in childhood, focusing particularly on research in children and culture, children's literature, and children and the media. Staff also are also involved in teaching an MA in Children's Literature.

Young Book Trust

<http://www.booktrust.org.uk/ybt.htm>

Contains information about this organisation's many useful publications and resources including 100 best books, an annual compilation of 'the pick of the paperback stories for children from babies to teenagers' published during a given year. The 1999 edition costs £2.20 (ISBN: 0853534799). Editions for 1997 and 1998 are still in print. Useful for libraries, parents and teachers.

Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood

www.vam.ac.uk/collections/bethnal/

Basic information on the major UK collection at East London's Bethnal Green Museum.

University of Virginia's Electronic Text Centre

etext.lib.virginia.edu/subjects/Young-Readers.html

The University of Virginia's electronic text centre's collection of on-line out of copyright children's literature.

Centre for the Social Study of Childhood

www.hull.ac.uk/cssc/about/CSSC.htm

Details of a new multi-disciplinary research centre based in the School of Comparative and Applied Social Sciences at the University of Hull – applying social theory to childhood and carrying out empirical studies of children's lives.

The Realbook Web Site

www.realbooks.co.uk/

A very useful site for those teaching English to young learners.

General sites

Aviator project

radar.rdues.liv.ac.uk/Welcome.html

Fascinating searchable collection on neologisms sampled by the Research and Development Unit for English Studies at the University of Liverpool. Each list contains 'new' words from the *Independent* between the period January 1989 to December 1995. The words have been identified as being new by filtering software developed by the Unit during their AVIATOR Project, 1990 – 1993. Each word is given in surrounding context providing a commentary of sorts on social change. At random: *clausefourphobia*, *sleepover*, *meatlessness*.

Asian Online

www.asian-online.co.uk/index.htm

An index of British Asian community resources including news, business, cuisine, fashion and marriage.

Nostalgia Central

www.geocities.com/SoHo/Atrium/3451/

David Turner's major site for collective memory encompassing TV, Music, Movies, Comics etc to be recalled if you grew up in the 60's, 70's 80's or 90's. Andy Pandey's signature tune, a poignant farewell to us all, 'Time to go home', echoes through time (as .wav file) to ex-children everywhere. See our back cover illustration.

Stories on the Web

Michael Houten, the British Council Krakow, Poland

www.britishcouncil.org/poland/english/polbsw.htm

'It is hard to stop telling stories' (Hardy, B in Meek et al, p. 23)

As Barbara Hardy convincingly argued, narrative is fundamental to the way we think. Storytelling belongs to the cultural and social as well as to the personal, and the narratives we retain from the past can tell us stories about ourselves as members of a society. In most cultures Childhood is central to this process, whether in the form of 'Star Wars' and 'Xena the Warrior Princess' or Mullah Nasaruddin and Little Red Riding Hood.

In recognition of the ability of popular narratives to impart cultural as well as linguistic knowledge, edition six of the British Council Poland British Studies Web pages was devoted to 'Myths, Legends, Folk and Fairy Tales'. These Web pages are designed for teachers and learners of English in secondary schools and Teacher Training Colleges and can be adapted or used for self study. Thus in edition six you will be able to:

- react to and discuss a number of definitions offered by Polish British Studies teachers to the terms 'myth' (e.g. 'a unifying element for society'), 'legend' (e.g. 'transmitting values and cultural heritage'), and 'folk and fairy tales' (e.g. 'a fictional story for children with a message'). A follow-up activity provides a model for cross-cultural comparison of twentieth century legends
- read about Polish, Gaelic, and English myths and legends (with accompanying activities)
- test your knowledge of fairy tales in three interactive quizzes
- sample recipes based on the theme, (such as Papa Bear's Porridge and the Witches' Broth from Macbeth)
- consult a bibliography divided into collections of stories, methodology resource books, Young Learners, and theoretical and academic sources
- find links to other sites
- try out specific suggestions for using traditional stories in the classroom.

One of these classroom ideas exploits the structure of traditional stories to highlight intercultural similarities or differences. The activity has been used with children, pre-service teacher trainees, and in-service teachers, and as with all storytelling activities provides great scope for purposeful listening and speaking practice at any language level. We hope you will try it out and send us your reactions to this activity and other parts of the web pages. Happy storytelling. (Previous editions of The British Council Poland's British Studies web pages are 'Views of Britain', 'Festivals in Britain', 'Youth Culture and Fashion', 'Education' and 'Government'. They are a photocopyable resource.) For any further information concerning the British Council British Studies project in Poland contact Michael Houten at mhouten@bc.krakow.pl

Reference: Meek, M. et al 'The Cool Web' The Pattern of Children's Reading London, Bodley Head, 1994

UK Education facts

- In England and Wales there are 8.5 million children in 30,000 state schools of which about 1,000 are grant maintained (centrally funded).
- In Scotland there are 2,741 state schools of which four are grant-aided (funded directly from central government).
- In Northern Ireland there are 1,300 state schools, of which fifty-three are funded directly from central government.
- In England over 50 per cent of 3 and 4 year olds attend nursery school, in Wales more than 70 per cent, in Scotland 38 per cent and in Northern Ireland 15 per cent.
- There are 540,000 children in private schools in the UK

Source: 'UK Schools Information' The British Council's Education pages at www.britishcouncil.org/education/inform/se.htm

- England – percentages of secondary school pupils by broad ethnic group:
White 88.5
Black Caribbean Heritage 1.4
Black African Heritage 1.0
Black other 0.7
Indian 2.7
Pakistani 2.6
Bangladeshi 0.9
Chinese 0.4
Any other minority ethnic group 1.8
- Percentages for state primary pupils are very similar with variations accounted for in the method of collecting data and other factors.
- English is an additional language of 8.5% of all state primary and 7.85 % of all secondary pupils.
- There is very significant regional and urban/rural variation throughout the UK.

Source: Department for Education and Employment provisional statistics for January 1999.

Bangladesh visit



Maureen Haddock, Headteacher at Eustace Street Primary School in Oldham, Greater Manchester, made a journey of discovery to Bangladesh to learn more about the cultural background of her pupils.

As I stand facing the Himalayas, I wonder what a middle-aged, middle-class headteacher is doing in the middle of Bangladesh, one of the poorest nations on Earth.

I've been at my current school in Oldham for over six years. It's a school in which 90% of the children are Bangladeshi and over a fifth still regularly return there on 'extended holidays'. Almost all enter school with little or no English and nearly half of the mothers speak no English.

My school is, in Ofsted speak, a good school. The children are happy, lively and inquisitive, but one of our major problems is that as the percentage of Bangla-speaking pupils rises, the English-speaking minority who provide role models decreases. The only English our children hear is from the teachers at school.

I love this community, and would not wish to work anywhere else, but my over-riding aim and commitment is to raise attainment so that our children can take their rightful place in British society and will not be doomed to restaurant work and unemployment like the majority of their parents.

But, and here lies the rub, why do the Bangladeshi community insist on taking their children to Bangladesh at the most inappropriate times for 'extended holidays'? And why don't they help their children to become bi-lingual, even when parents speak English?

'Now I feel embarrassed'

These were the questions I wanted answered. I had in my time taught Pakistani children whose parents seemed more aware of the children's educational needs. Now I feel somewhat embarrassed and naive, but I truly wanted and still want the absolute best for the school's children.

In my own life, being one of the post-war, working-class babies, education has been the key to my own relative success and my personal fulfilment – so the answers to these questions became my quest.

When an opportunity arose to join a mixed professional party of workers going to Bangladesh from Oldham, I approached my staff and my governors indicating my interest. After some negotiation and with the full support of the staff, three teachers came with me.

The school's children thought it hilarious and gave plenty of tips and advice – "Everyone will stare at you Miss", "Watch out for snakes" and "You can buy Nike jackets for £3".

So, on a grey November day our great adventure began – and after spending just one day at Dhaka, I felt the journey had been worthwhile. The poverty was unspeakable, the dirt and pollution, the crowds, the colour, the chaos, the noise and the traffic.

As we moved onto Sylhet by road on a 12-hour journey the beauty of the country unfolded. Wherever you looked there was something of beauty and wherever there was beauty there was

also something indescribably poor.

To walk down the streets in Sylhet one felt alive. All human life was here – beggars, traders, rickshaws, the blind, the disabled, the young and the old. I was incredulous.

With 90% of the Bangladeshi community originating from Sylhet, I could safely say that this is where our families' roots are. I also suddenly realised why our parents seem to hustle and bustle and to shout at each other and to call out as they stand in our hall waiting for their children.

We found very few people who spoke English, and those who did rushed up to us to try out their skills. We were offered food and drink everywhere we went, even when they had so little for themselves.

I quickly learnt how important Bangla is as a language to the people. The Bangladeshi are a very political people and they fought for the right to be a separate nation in 1972 when three million people died. They fought and died to speak their own language and hence our parents pride and resolute determination to keep their language alive in their adopted country.

School under the skies

What also made sense was the reasoning why the British Bangladeshi send so much of their earnings home. As 'Londis', they have made it. They have warmth, shelter, food and clothes.

We visited a project in Khasdobir, which is part of the Toc H charity, which works with the poorest children in 13 small villages close to Sylhet town. These children would not normally go to school. Here they learnt under the sky, standing in rows doing their PE.

The Bangladeshis know the importance of education – how could I ever have thought differently? I was privileged to visit the tea plantation schools, where the Khasdobir project also runs an adult class for the Hindu workers. These people were brought over as cheap labour some 300 years ago and still live and work on the plantations. They are the poorest of the poor.

We visited an evening class where one woman had given up her small but clean home. She and all the young women, some as young as 12, had worked all day in the plantations. We felt so proud to be women and so humble in the face of such courage. Every little gift of pencils or books we gave was taken with thanks and photographs were arranged.

Shortage of English teachers

The dearth of English-speaking teachers is a real problem. They desperately need teachers to teach English to their teachers and teachers who can improve the pedagogical practices in many of the schools.

We visited village schools which were much as you imagine – benches and wooden desks. Boys on one side, girls the other. As feminists on the party we expected to have many of our stereotypes confirmed, but there were many contradictions which we did have to acknowledge.

For instance, girls are allowed to go to school free, whilst the boys pay, and non-governmental organisations lend money to train women to educate others.

As people we came back changed. We were spiritually enriched, bombed with confusion, anger, hope and so many overwhelming feelings. We learnt that the Bangladeshi are a people who are hardworking, full of pride and who adore politics and poetry.

How does this relate to our school? To begin with, the

relationships with the parents were always good, now they are extremely close. I think they almost trust me. I have learnt some Bangla and have renewed my own vocation. I also feel I have found a small way of understanding where they come from in more ways than one.

Where is their future? I am still tormented by this question, but I still believe that our job is to help them to achieve their potential no matter what the odds and to find every way we can to supplement their education. Does anyone want to start an outreach class in Sylhet?

It takes all sorts to make an education system. This is our space for those involved to sit back and reflect on how it is going from their corner of the world.

The views expressed here are personal.

Re-printed with kind permission of BBC Education and BBC Radio 4.

Crossing Cultures



The British Council in Romania is revising its flagship British Cultural Studies textbook *Crossing Cultures* after listening to teachers' comments. The following report is based on an interview between David Cole, Regional ELT Adviser, and Rodica Rogoz, who has been teaching the book.

Crossing Cultures was written in 1998 by British Studies Adviser, Andrew King, with Roxana Marinescu, Tunda Minulescu, Luminita Ganea, Adriana Cichurdan, Mirela Nasaudan, Cornelia Bursuc and Zoe Ghita. It is the

official textbook in Romanian Schools for 12th graders in bilingual schools. It is currently used by about 3000 pupils.

Rodica teaches English at the Dr I. Mesota National College, renowned for its bilingual classes and one of the top high schools in the country. There are seven rather than the usual two hours of English a week. Two of these are dedicated to the study of British and American geography, history, and cultural studies. Over 90% of students go on to study at university. They usually pursue careers in business, law, management, medicine, computers, banking etc., but consider English an important asset for their professional and personal lives.

To begin with, Rodica felt that the book seemed more suitable for university students than secondary school pupils since the intellectual level was quite high. Although she liked the book very much herself, some students found it too abstract with too many long reading activities requiring sustained attention, or with rather complicated statistics

However, Rodica felt that *Crossing Cultures* definitely brings a new approach to the Cultural Studies textbook. It has the wide variety of modern teaching activities usually found in modern EFL textbooks. The novelty is that they are adapted cleverly to Cultural Studies texts and are meant to develop all skills, including intellectual ones. Most textbooks on the market in Romania simply consist of a text followed by questions or language exercises or invitations for discussion. *Crossing Cultures* not only has a wealth of activities, but each lesson has its own structure adapted to the content, rather than following a rigid pattern, like many other textbooks.

The Teachers' Book contained interesting information and clarification which sometimes helped her understand activities or points of view not clear at first sight. Layout was acceptable considering the price and the methodology was something new.

Some of the activities did not work so well but possibly this was specific to Rodica's class. For example, the lesson *Politics and the Daily Press* involves a lot of calculations of circulation figures and percentages and her students could not be bothered with precise figures, although she noticed that they could reach the right conclusion using rough estimates.

An activity Rodica's students liked in particular was the lesson *Genderquake*, which forms the second part of a unit called *Gendering Britain/Gendering Romania*. For example, one activity contains information which shows that although gender roles have shifted in modern British society, sexism is still widespread at various levels and in different professions. Although Rodica's students were aware of some of these changes in Romania too, she felt they had not till then had a chance to talk about them openly and therefore the talk about gender roles was quite heated.

A less popular lesson was *Classifying Britain*. The orientation activity introduces the idea of choice, which is then exemplified in the fields of education, work, taste, fashion etc. The purpose is to prepare the students to accept the fact that British society, just like Romanian society, no longer has strict and traditionally defined social classes because borders have been shifting. The whole concept was quite difficult for the students to grasp as understanding of class in the two societies is quite different.

The book's multiple viewpoints on contemporary British society were seen as unusual and worrying, since Romanian students are used to simply being given facts to be learned. Having no 'official' version of a phenomenon, and therefore having to draw their own conclusions, is hard to accept. In time, Rodica thinks this traditionalistic way of learning will change as the Romanian system of education is undergoing a serious reform, but at present the underlying concepts of *Crossing Cultures* may be too avant-garde for students. Already, younger students are displaying more flexibility since they are more used to debates, contrasting points of view, group work etc.

So will Rodica continue to use *Crossing Cultures*? Yes, but with a few changes. For example, the few activities which put the message across in a lighter tone and involved practical work, such as *The Rhetoric of Ads*, were considered to be very enjoyable and more of these would be welcome, together with more case studies.

Rodica will continue to use *Crossing Cultures* because it helps shift the stress from facts to information processing and skills development, while offering a highly conceptual and coherent overview. It also helps students with research techniques for their English exam where they have to write a paper on a topic connected with British or American geography, history or cultural studies and present it in front of an examination board. She was very impressed by its academic rigor and its methodological novelty for a cultural studies course.

Following the evaluation of the first addition and the points raised above, a second edition is being prepared (available in September 1999) with improved features: better quality cassette, clearer signposting of cultural studies syllabus and rubrics, new simpler materials in several units and more varied task types.

Crossing Cultures can be ordered from Mona.Dobre@bcbucharest.sprint.com. Outside Romania the students' book, teachers' book and cassette are £5 each plus postage and packing.



Professor Jim Bulpitt 1937-1999

Jim Bulpitt, who died suddenly after a short illness on 5 April 1999, was known not only as a leading British political scientist but also as the man who founded Modern British Studies at the University of Warwick. He was an inspirational teacher, who

demanded a great deal from his students, always refusing to compromise, insisting on the highest standards and in consequence earning the love and respect of students from all over the world. At the celebration of Jim's life organised by his family and colleagues from the university on May 14th, evidence of his remarkable ability to inspire those with whom he worked as teacher and scholar was plain for all to see, as dozens of people crowded into Warwick's largest lecture theatre to share their memories of an exceptional man.

Jim was born on the wrong side of the tracks, in Wembley, north London. Despite his successful academic career, he never forgot his humble origins. He retained his working-class accent and was a passionate, some would say fanatical, football supporter. After studying at the Universities of Exeter and Manchester, he went as Research Fellow to the University of Milan, before returning to take up a lectureship in Scotland at the University of Strathclyde. He came to Warwick as a founder member of the Politics Department in 1965, when the university was still in its infancy. By the time of his death, he was Chairman of that Department, now ten times larger than when he had first been appointed.

Jim Bulpitt liked nothing better than to provoke argument, to stimulate debate. The premise upon which his teaching was based was that of challenge: he challenged students to think for themselves, to eschew facile answers and to grapple with difficult questions. A long-time conservative, he was nevertheless a radical thinker, and one of my most amusing memories of him was the occasion when a student from a newly democratized Eastern European country complained that she was being taught by an unreconstructed Marxist. Jim thought this interpretation of his teaching was highly entertaining; his friends felt that it reflected his idiosyncratic, no-party-line approach to political thought and history.

Academic life in Britain has changed over the past two decades, with pressures on academics to 'publish or perish', with increased administration, with less and less space for colourful personalities and individual thinkers. Yet despite such changes, Jim Bulpitt remained colourful. He was, quite simply, the embodiment of that English phrase "larger than life". He will be remembered not only for his brilliant ideas, his ground-breaking essays and his inspirational teaching; he will also be remembered as a great character, as a man who brightened your day with his outrageous humour and refusal to be pigeon-holed. He will also be remembered as someone who saw the importance of British Studies well before the majority, and whose belief in the value of interdisciplinary study has served the subject well. Jim Bulpitt will be missed by all his friends, and by his wife June and his sons.

Susan Bassnett

Calendar 1999/2000

Leicester, England

8 September 1999

Mind the Gap! Changing Boundaries of Childhood in the 1990s is a conference organised by the department of sociology at the University of Leicester. In the 1990s, children have come under increased scrutiny – by policy makers, the media and, not least, by sociology itself. Anxiety about the condition of contemporary childhood has co-existed with the desire to extend children's proactive rights. The conference examines new boundaries marking adulthood and explores themes such as technology and children's cultures, spaces and places, sexuality, sex education and the age of consent, economic activity – production and consumption, surveillance, discipline and punishment.

For further information, contact Jane Pilcher, tel + 44 (0) 116 252 2731, e-mail: jlp3@leicester.ac.uk or Chris Pole, tel +44 (0) 116 252 5259, e-mail: cjp21@leicester.ac.uk

London, England

10–12 September 1999

The Researching Culture Conference will be hosted by the University of North London and held at the London Voluntary Sector Resource Centre. Speakers include Ien Ang, Aijaz Ahmad, Jeffrey Richards and Angela McRobbie.

Today no single discipline owns the study of culture. This is an expanding field of analysis across philosophy, anthropology, sociology, cultural and media studies, literature and film studies, history, political economy, and more.

This conference brings together researchers from a wide range of backgrounds. With more than 60 papers in concurrent panels over 3 days, there will be an opportunity for wide ranging, interdisciplinary discussion of what 'the cultural' has come to mean in modern times.

For further information contact Jayne Morgan, conference organiser, at School of Social Sciences, Faculty of Environmental and Social Studies, University of North London, Ladbroke House, 62-66 Highbury Grove, London N5 2AD U, e-mail: j.morgan@unl.ac.uk

Valencia, Spain

16–18 September 1999

Culture and Power: challenging discourses is the title of the fifth seminar on Cultural Studies at the University of Valencia and will be held by the Department of English and German Philology. The guest speakers were Martin Montgomery (Strathclyde University), Trudi Tate (Warwick University), John Cunningham (British Council Hungary), Chantal Cornut-Gentile (University of Zaragoza) and Isabel Burdiel (University of Valencia) and cultural theorist, Sadie Plant.

The seminar focused on the ways in which discourse exerts power and/or gives shape to cultural manifestations in any geographical area within the English-speaking world. Discourse is understood here in its widest sense: literary works, films, public speeches, mass media, the Internet and hypertext, art products (music, painting...) and everyday communication.

The next conference will be organised by the University of Murcia in September 2000. For further information contact Dr david walton, e-mail: dwalton@fcu.um.es

Czudec, Poland

20–22 September 1999

Standardising the British Studies Syllabus is a three-day regional conference organised by the Rzeszów Teacher Training College. For information contact Michael Houten, SPRITE teacher education consultant, e-mail: mhouten@bc.krakow.pl Rynek Główny 38, 31-013 Krakow, Poland.

Sapporo, Japan

6 November 1999

Translation and Culture: aspects of different cultures is a one-day symposium to be held at Hokkaido University. Focusing on translation as one of the means of intercultural communication, British and Japanese speakers will examine various issues of cultural transformation and explore better intercultural understanding. The keynote speaker will be Professor Susan Bassnett (Warwick University). Other speakers include Jane Stevenson (Warwick University), Norikatsu Takahashi and Noriyuki Yanada (Hokkaido University). A simultaneous interpretation service will be available. There are 150 seats available and admission is free. Prior seat reservation is essential.

For further information, contact Professor Hisae Hashimoto, Institute of Language and Culture Studies, Hokkaido University, e-mail: hhisae@ilcs.hokudai.ac.jp.

The symposium is sponsored by the British Council in Tokyo. Details of the symposium are on the British Council Japan web pages at: www.britishcouncil.org/japan/eng/index.htm

Rabat, Morocco

19–20 November 1999

Local/Global Cultures and Sustainable Development is a conference hosted by Mohammed V University, Rabat. Designed for a mixed audience of academics and representatives of NGOs, it will examine how the fundamental notions of development agencies are being increasingly challenged by grass-roots NGOs and globalising forces which often seem incompatible with older national perspectives. There will be 10 panels including re-reading rural spaces; the politics of location and the problematics of globalisation; culture and politics of ecology; media campaigns and the politics of development. Panels will be chaired by, among others, Lahcen Haddad, Rabat, Ahmed Herzenii, INRA, Stephen Regan, Open University, UK and Lisbeth Goodman, Surrey, UK. For further information please contact Drs Taeib Belghazi or Lahcen Haddad at Mohammed V University, fax + 212 7 77 20 88, e-mail cultdevmorocco@hotmail.com

Coventry, England

12–18 December 1999

Looking into England is the title and theme of the 6th Warwick international seminar and conference on British Cultural Studies organised by the Literature Department of the British Council and the University of Warwick's Centre for British and Comparative Cultural Studies.

The conference will look at the whole picture of UK devolution, one which will offer a changed role for England as much as it will for other parts of the UK. The conference aims to enrich a national debate with the perspectives of an international group of scholars whose speciality is the study of Britain. Delegates from all over the world are invited to discuss a number of aspects of English culture and society from the viewpoint of other nations and cultures. Representatives from Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales will brief the conference on the latest devolutionary developments and join writers, musicians and political and cultural commentators, 'Looking into England'.

Confirmed speakers at the time of going to press include Andrew Motion, Baroness Helena Kennedy QC, Billy Bragg, Michael Bracewell, Charlotte Brunsdon, Nicholas J Cull, Antony Easthope, Julian Rathbone, Christopher Harvie and Gisela Stuart, MP. Deadline for papers: 17 October, for places: 22 November. There will be a mini-conference day on Friday 17 December to increase participation of UK delegates. For further information and an application form, please contact Naomi Clift, Education and British Studies Administrator, Literature Department, The British Council, 11 Portland Place, London, W1N 4EJ, e-mail: naomi.clift@britishcouncil.org, fax +44 171 389 3175. Updates on the WWW at www.britishcouncil.org/studies

Poland

March 2000

A third national conference on British Studies will take place for the fifty-five Teacher Training Colleges in Poland. The theme of the conference will be decided at a later date. For information, contact Michael Houten, SPRITE teacher education consultant, e-mail: mhouten@bc.krakow.pl Rynek Główny 38, 31-013 Kraków, Poland.

Edinburgh, Scotland

11–14 April 2000

Nation Building is the title of the 25th annual conference of the British Association for Canadian Studies (BACS). On 1 July 1999, the Scottish Parliament officially reconvened in Edinburgh for the first time since 1707. This constitutional change sets Scotland on a new path of nation building. Unlike the United Kingdom, where these changes have occurred only recently, Canada was set up as a devolved country. As a result of its history and political structure, the processes of nation building have been varied and at times contradictory.

The 25th anniversary conference of the BACS calls for papers on all aspects of nation building in the Canadian context, for example: competing Canadian nationalisms, writing national experience, social tensions within the nation, constructions of federalism, religion and nation, Québécois identities, the development of the First Nations, cultural expressions of nation, creating a national economy and Canadians and Britons as nation builders. Deadline for abstracts (250 words) – 30 November 1999. If submitting a proposal by e-mail, please ensure that an acknowledgement is received. Proposals from students are warmly invited (concessionary rate available). BACS regrets it is unable to assist participants with travel or accommodation costs. Proposals and enquiries to: Jodie Robson, Administrative Secretary, BACS, 21 George Square, Edinburgh, EH8 9LD, fax +44 (0) 131 662 1118, e-mail: jodie.robson@ed.ac.uk

Coventry, England

27 April 2000

Conceiving Cosmopolitanism is the title of the conference for the UK's major higher education project on aspects of emerging transnationalism, called *Transnational Communities* (see www.transcomm.ox.ac.uk). Places at the conference itself at the University of Warwick are limited but there will be a special panel on cultural policy in the Arts open to the public which continues the theme of the *Re-inventing Britain* project. Participants will include Homi K Bhabha. For more information about the evening panel which will be held at the Ramphal Building Lecture Theatre at the University of Warwick please contact Nick Wadham-Smith, British Studies, The British Council, fax +44 (0) 171 389 3175, e-mail: nick.wadham-smith@britishcouncil.org

Beatrix Potter's English Rabbits

Jopi Nyman, who teaches at the University of Joensuu, Finland, takes us into the forbidden garden of Edwardian England, a place where 'dangers lurk everywhere and any careless rabbit may end up in a pie...'



Beatrix Potter's animal tales are permanent bestsellers that have pervaded the market of children's literature and become one of Britain's major literary exports appealing to children and parents alike. Early editions of her tales are collectors' items and her house in the Lake District (now National Trust property) continues to attract a mass of literary tourists, who want to feel her England and become one with the rural landscape from which her literary imagination is thought to have drawn its inspiration. Yet such a romantic vision of Potter's idyllic narratives as symptomatic rural Englishness is only one half of the story.

In this article I want to suggest through a critical reading of Potter's Peter Rabbit tales that the England and English identities that today's readers find in Potter's narratives are produced in the context of imperialism and the related early twentieth-century redefinition of English national identity. In this task I am following such postcolonial critics as Edward Said, whose (1994) reading of the role of the colonies and Antigua slavery in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* shows that English literature cannot be understood without appreciating the role played by the margins and Others in constructing an English national identity. In this process children's and juvenile fiction has had a significant role to play since the late Victorian period in particular. One may, for example, think about Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* (1901), who becomes a masterspy to serve the empire, or H. Rider Haggard's African adventures that propagate colonialist values and the supremacy of the English. As historically and culturally constructed narratives, children's books contribute to the ways in which ideas of nation, gender and race are constructed and reproduced. In order to show the pervasiveness of the colonial imagination, I want to identify some of the colonialist tropes used in the stories and to suggest that the stories construct an English identity that is based on colonial economy and colonial Others.

The stories show Potter's rural England contains its colonial Others and transplants colonial dilemmas into English soil. Given that, for Peter and his cousin, Benjamin, Mr. McGregor's garden is colonized and annexed land where colonial identities may be performed and lapine fantasies of lettuce fulfilled, it is no surprise that *The Tale of Benjamin Bunny* is a story of colonization structured as a quest-narrative in which the two young males set out to explore a garden. The Other territory is both attracting and dangerous, dangers lurk everywhere and any careless rabbit may end up in a pie. The illustrations to the story are particularly interesting as they show two well-dressed young explorer-rabbits passing through a jungle-like garden 'along a little walk on planks' (29) and carrying in a pocket-handkerchief some specimens of the natural resources of the garden (i.e. onions) to be taken to Peter's mother. And, indeed, not only are the two gazed at by the natives of the space, the four dark-brown mice engaged in their natural activities

consisting of 'cracking cherry-stones'. These mice are native inhabitants of the

colonial garden: their difference from the two intruders is made obvious as they are not shown to possess two particular features of culture: they do not have a language but merely 'wink' at the explorers, instead of speaking to them; nor do they possess clothing. Unlike the two rabbits, who enter the garden in order to retrieve Peter's clothing, the four mice appear naked and thus uncultured.

The four Peter Rabbit Tales are also a continuous story that constructs a version of the history of England as a deteriorating narrative in the Condition of England mode. Apart from the happy childhood spaces, Potter's England figures as a rather gloomy space. The change from the happy world of Peter's childhood to the everyday reality of the impoverished Bunny family who are content with Mr. McGregor's rotten vegetables and finally to the dark tale of the threatening Mr. Tod cannot but parallel changes in Britain's social structure and its diminishing role in world politics. *The Tale of the Flopsy Bunnies* makes it clear that England has become a nation where food is scarce and both Peter and Benjamin are more labourers who worry over the source of daily income rather than free-roaming gentlemen of earlier periods, another issue suggesting the impact of class-based gender ideals made explicit in the stories. This contributes to the stories' nostalgic vision of the land of childhood as being carefree.

The worries over England's future are explored further in the tales through tropes that are immersed in the rhetoric of nationhood. The stories define England through its mothers, connecting the tales with the period's redefinition of motherhood as a national project. Regardless of his actions and repeated disobedience, Peter appears a dutiful son of the hard-working, widowed Mrs. Rabbit whose main aim is to delight his mother either emotionally or economically. Economic motives and prosperity are repeatedly emphasised in this context where buying and selling are important. And when Peter returns with Benjamin, the issue is foregrounded since home and shop are the same space where rabbit-tobacco and onions have their place. And what Mrs. Rabbit offers her customers are products from colonized spaces as revealed in her sign showing that she trades in tea and tobacco, as well as herbs. Here again, the mother stands for a British economy based on prosperity derived from colonial trade; the young Peter, then, is fully immersed in colonial economy and lives for fulfilling the needs of his mother. As the later stories show, the disappearance of the mother and the related economy forces Peter into labour and shows a national crisis and the emergence of different perils that threaten the Arcadian existence. And, indeed, Britain's decline starts with the death of Peter's unnamed father: while the sons of the



Rabbit resources

The complete Adventures of Peter Rabbit, Beatrix Potter, 0723229511 (1982) Frederick Warne £9.99. Contains *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, *The Tale of Benjamin Bunny*, *The Tale of The Flopsy Bunnies* and *The Tale of Mr Tod*.

Concordance to Beatrix Potter – Children's Stories – www.concordance.com/beatpott.htm – Search a concordance to the text of all the stories to test your theories: the word verb 'escape' is never used although pie(s) feature quite frequently. You can also search more than eighty classic, ie out of copyright works, on this site created by Bill Williams including all the Sherlock Holmes stories to prove Holmes never said 'Elementary, my dear Watson'.

The Tale of Peter Rabbit – www.lcom.ohio.edu/books/kids/beatrix/p1.htm – The whole story one page at a time with full-colour original illustration.

Beatrix Potter's characters – funnelweb.utcc.utk.edu/~estes/potter.html – A handy index of Potter's characters prepared by Glenn E. Estes and David Ratledge of the University of Tennessee

nation devote themselves to their nation-mother, whose name Josephine has an imperial ring

suggesting another regal name such as Victoria. Her disappearance from the later tales which are pervaded by an increasing darkness reveals the depth of the national crisis, a lack of a strong leader, and the beginnings of a post-imperial era.

The tales also construct an imperial race, an English ethnicity, through their portrayal of the lapine (that inhabits the national landscape of rural England) as a race threatened by the Others through the use of a particular trope of colonial discourse, cannibalism. As the animals of the tales are curiously translated into people ('I have made many books about well-behaved people. Now, for a change, I am going to make a story about two disagreeable people, called Tommy Brock and Mr. Tod' [49]), the rabbits are represented as humans. In the context of Victorian (anthropological and medical) discourses of race, this strategy encourages the racialization of the different species represented and leads to polarizations. What the three carnivorous mammals (badger, fox and Mr. McGregor) share is an enchantment with rabbit-people's flesh, showing that the rabbits are threatened by Others, who consider them as pies. It is through the utilization of the discourse of cannibalism that the Other becomes a savage whose cultural practices breach the most basic of our taboos. Through this trope Potter's tales construct racial and ethnic difference between the distinct groups populating the landscape, a theme supported by showing the increasing presence of the Other. The nationalist allegory of *The Tale of Mr. Tod* shows that the Other may now invade your home: Tommy Brock kidnaps Benjamin Bunny's sleeping children by giving their grandfather an opiate-like cabbage leaf cigar that makes the old rabbit fall asleep. The representation of space also changes from a jungle-like garden to dangerous frontiers as a liminal space the ethnically English rabbits should not enter. There, on the hill, far away, lives Peter's sister Cottontail with her family. And this is because of explicitly racialized reasons narrated in the text as a parenthetical addition: '(Cottontail had married a black rabbit, and gone to live on the hill)' (55). And this space is that of the cannibal Other too: 'But there were preparations upon the kitchen table which made him [Benjamin] shudder. There was an immense empty pie-dish of a blue willow pattern, and a large carving knife and fork, and a chopper' (58). In the end the trope of cannibalism is evoked as a fear of being devoured by the Other, as a fear of losing one's control over one's body. While other solutions may be possible, in this context the fear of the Other devouring the nationed body of the English subject signifies fears concerned with the future of Englishness. By suggesting that the frontier (garden) that the English males have once been able to tread safely has

now been transformed into a space of risk populated by not-altogether-trustworthy black rabbits and carnivorous badgers and foxes, Potter's history of England signifies loss and disappointment. What is now threatened and thus resisted in the tales is the body of the individual, a fear emphasised by representing the body most heavily at risk as that of the little bunny, the future of the nation.

Though Potter's tales seek to base English identities in an English landscape, they end up representing colonial fantasies. But as these fantasies are also a part of the national landscape, the strategy of representation shows how deeply the imperial crisis penetrates Englishness. While Potter's writing of English national identity as a tale of good rabbits and bad foxes in an imagined rural England is an attempt to construct Englishness, that identity cannot be achieved without the presence of the Others. Since national narratives, such as Potter's children's books, are embedded in networks of power, we critics, teachers and practitioners of British Studies should reflect on the construction of national (and other) identities in apparently simple narratives that yet have significant power both globally and locally. Children's fiction is only one of many cultural texts inviting reading and understanding, yet it is an extremely powerful one.

This is a summarised version made specially by the author for BSV of a paper given in June 1999 at *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes: a conference in pursuit of the English* held at the European Studies Research Institute of Salford University. It is published with thanks to the organisers, Liz Hedgecock (hedgecock@hotmail.com) and Jo Knowles (knowles@liv.ac.uk) who plan to publish proceedings of the conference in the near future.

Suggested Reading

- DAVIN, ANNA. 'Imperialism and Motherhood.' History Workshop: *A Journal of Socialist Historians* 5 (1978): 9-65.
- FERGUSON, MOIRA. 'Breaking in Englishness: Black Beauty and the Politics of Gender, Race and Class.' *Women: A Cultural Review* 5.1 (1994): 34-52.
- HULME, PETER. *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean 1492-1797*. 1986. London: Routledge, 1992.
- KNOWLES, MURRAY and MALMKJAER, KIRSTEN. *Language and Control in Children's Literature*. London: Routledge, 1996.
- POTTER, BEATRIX. *The Complete Adventures of Peter Rabbit*. 1982. London: F. Warne & Co./Puffin Books, 1984.
- SAID, EDWARD. *Culture and Imperialism*. 1993. London: Vintage, 1994.

Readers' Survey

Thanks to everyone who replied to our questions:

- *What is the first thing you can remember?*
- *Which stories you heard or read made the biggest impression on you as a child?*
- *What is the most unfair punishment you received?*
- *Did you have a school uniform – did you like wearing it?*
- *What did you do in your spare time?*

David Green

Director General, The British Council

What is the first thing you can remember?

Sitting on my grandfather's knee, eating an ice cream cornet.

Which stories you heard or read made the biggest impression on you as a child?

Grimm's Fairy Tales, Alice in Wonderland and Struwwelpeter – one of the stories from this book was about Conrad whose thumbs were snipped off because he sucked them. This was especially scary as I sucked my thumb as a small boy.

What is the most unfair punishment you received?

It was when I was at secondary school and I refused to swim for my school team because it made me feel violently ill. I was given 6 strokes of the cane by the head-teacher and had to write out the school line twenty times every day for 10 days. It is ingrained on my memory, 'Few things are more distressing to a well regulated mind than to see a boy who ought to know better disporting himself at improper moments.'

Did you have a school uniform – did you like wearing it?

Yes, I did have one and I didn't mind wearing it, but I always tried to make it look as casual as possible.

What did you do in your spare time?

In my spare time I painted a good deal, played with my 2 brothers and 2 sisters as we were all close in age, and collected butterflies, which I

realised later was not a clever thing to have done.

Jim Kell

Overseas Development Manager, The Bell Educational Trust, Cambridge, England

What is the first thing you can remember?

Jumping into a swimming pool in anger... and having to be saved (aged 2)

Which stories you heard or read made the biggest impression on you as a child?

Enid Blyton's Faraway Tree (aged 38!); poems – A.A. Milne's 'Lines and Squares'

What is the most unfair punishment you received?

Don't remember being punished until at public school when I was made to stand by my bed for x hours for something I may or may not have done. I solved the problem by faking a faint.

Did you have a school uniform – did you like wearing it?

Certainly had one. Didn't have particular feelings towards it, though I do remember looking forward to being allowed to wear long trousers instead of shorts.

What did you do in your spare time?

Football, mainly, I think.

Helena Kennedy QC

Chair of the British Council

What is the first thing you can remember?

Paddling at the seaside with my father. I can still recreate the sensation of happiness and security of his strong

arms holding mine and the exhilaration of jumping the waves.

Which stories you heard or read made the biggest impression on you as a child?

I remember Heidi being read to me. Also my older sisters telling me the Grimms and Hans Andersen fairy tales and being pleasantly frightened. When I was about nine or ten I loved Little Women. I wanted to be Jo.

What is the most unfair punishment you received?

In my first year at secondary school, the whole class was belted with a leather strap for talking when the teacher was out of the room. I had a red weal curling up the inside of my wrist.

Did you have a school uniform – did you like wearing it?

There was no uniform at Primary School but there was at the Senior Secondary. I was thrilled when I was first 'rigged out' but in the years of my adolescence I spent a lot of time devising ways of making it snappier.

What did you do in your spare time?

I read. All the time. Greedily. My aunts said I didn't get enough fresh air and had rings under my eyes from the excess of it. I was actually born with rings under my eyes.

Geraldine Kershaw

Freelance consultant and author, Romiley, near Stockport, UK

What is the first thing you can remember?

Getting cross: I had new red wellingtons and wanted to

wear them in the pram! In those days pushchairs were less common so toddlers were often pushed around in a pram; there was a seat on the pram too for my older sister.

Which stories you heard or read made the biggest impression on you as a child?

The first book I remember was called Naughty George and was about a kitten; there was a whole series of books about Blackberry Farm. The illustrations were lovely – I remember coming across the books in French translation years later. When I was at junior school I read Hugh Lofting, anything by Alan Garner, the Narnia books. I hated Arthur Ransome as I couldn't imagine real children having their own boats; felt happier with true fantasy or books about animals. And there was a student teacher when I was 8 who began reading The Hobbit to my class – of course she didn't finish it in the course of her teaching practice – but I nagged my parents to buy me a copy and loved it.

What is the most unfair punishment you received?

Being smacked for crying when I wasn't even crying! (Did cry afterwards of course)

Did you have a school uniform – did you like wearing it?

Both at primary and secondary school. In primary school it was fairly lax. The colours were royal blue and white and most girls wore a royal blue skirt in the winter but I had a grey pinafore dress which I hated. There was also a tie, but that didn't bother me much. I seem to

remember being cold a lot as we had school macs rather than warm coats or anoraks; girls weren't allowed to wear trousers – nor did the boys, all in shorts. Even through the winter of 1962-3. In secondary school the winter uniform included a black skirt 'suitable for school' – some of us wore maxi or midi skirts which looked really silly with the regulation tie and pullover or blazer.

What did you do in your spare time?

As a small child – played with Lego, made clothes for dolls and trolls, read, did a lot of drawing. Lots of family walks at weekends. Summer holidays were always spent at my grandparents' house in the country, and weather permitting we climbed trees, made dens; or if it was raining there was a vast collection of jigsaw puzzles from the 30's – all in tins, no picture to help you – and a load of Giles annuals. Also in the holidays helped feed pigs, collected eggs, and had various chores around the house.

Alastair Niven

Director of Literature, The British Council

What is the first thing you can remember?

I don't believe people who say they can remember what happened before about the age of four. Impressions linger, though: I recall sitting on my grandmother's kitchen dresser in Edinburgh and I may only have been two... or was it three? – or even four? Compton Mackenzie claimed to remember sitting up in his pram and noticing what people were saying. Rhubarb! My first definite memory is precisely on my fourth birthday when the frill around my cake went on fire when a candle fell off the top. Almost as exciting as my brother's attempt a few days later to murder me by saying it would be fun if I put my fingers on the metal bits in a live electric plug.

Which stories you heard or read made the biggest impression on you as a child?

Rumpelstiltskin was my favourite fairy story. A book called *Tiptoes the Mischievous Kitten*, given to me for a birthday present (perhaps at the conflagratory fourth birthday party), made me a lifelong reader and lover of cats. Richmal Crompton's *William* stories were my favourite reading when I was a bit older.

What is the most unfair punishment you received?

Being told by the head teacher that someone has committed a crime and he was going to keep every one back until someone owned up. No one did. A silly punishment, because logically we should still be standing there. But I can still feel myself going bright red as he accused us – guilty by association perhaps, though I hadn't done it, whatever 'it' was.

Did you have a school uniform – did you like wearing it?

Yes, at secondary school we wore black jackets, pinstriped trousers and stiff white collars in winter, blue blazers and straw boaters in summer. I liked the boaters. Now I think school uniforms are neo-fascist and have long arguments with my headmaster brother about them.

What did you do in your spare time?

Read, keep newts and rats, collect stamps, be unpleasant to my mother, avoid cutting the grass, moan about being bored. Life was very full.

Madeleine Tyack

English lecturer and upgrader, Universitas Haluoleo, Indonesia (Kendari)

What is the first thing you can remember?

My first memory is being in a baby frame on someone's back. I hated it so much and can remember screaming and

screaming out of protest until I was removed. Why did I hate it? I really can't remember.

Which stories you heard or read made the biggest impression on you as a child?

Enid Blyton stories, lots of them. I read them almost exclusively for years and always wished I could have an adventure too. And they didn't make me racist or sexist either.

What is the most unfair punishment you received?

When I was eleven I had to stand in the corner all lesson during Woodwork because I'd forgotten my apron. I'd just started secondary school and was terrified of the (very strict) teacher. I was still avoiding him in the Sixth Form.

Did you have a school uniform – did you like wearing it?

At junior school there was no fixed uniform but we had to wear something dark green. This worked pretty well, but you soon met with disapproval if you dared to combine dark green with a brighter colour.

What did you do in your spare time?

Played with my friends and my dolls, played/argued/fought with my brother, drew pictures, made things out of dough, played 'Two Balls' (juggling against a wall) – our freedom was fairly restricted, living in Inner London.

Michael Daniel Ambatchew

English Language Officer, The British Council, Ethiopia

What is the first thing you can remember?

Age 3: Being taken to school the first day by my father. Suddenly realising that he was going to desert me in the hands of this unknown kindergarten teacher. Realising that the important task of going to school performed by my brother and sister may not be such a great thing after all. Bursting into tears!

Which stories you heard or read made the biggest impression on you as a child?

The ladybird series of *Sleeping Beauty*, *Puss in Boots*, etc... Thought it was great how Puss fooled the Ogre into changing into a mouse and then gobbled him up. What a pity we can't get rid of some people in real life like that!

What is the most unfair punishment you received?

Being suspended for a month together with the whole class from music lessons because we would not blow the whistle on those classmates who smuggled in an illegal harmonica into the classroom and kept blowing it during the lesson while the teacher was playing the piano.

Did you have a school uniform – did you like wearing it?

Thank goodness, no.

What did you do in your spare time?

Played marbles, football, cards, table tennis; reading stories etc.

Emil E. Atbas

English Teacher, Erciyas Universitesi Yabancı Diller Yuksekokulu, Kayseri, Turkey

What is the first thing you can remember?

The house where I was born and grew up.

Which stories you heard or read made the biggest impression on you as a child?

My father used to tell us about his experiences at a teacher college as a student when Turkey was going through important reforms in education.

What is the most unfair punishment you received?

This was a punishment I received from a maths teacher when I was at middle school.

Did you have a school uniform – did you like wearing it?

Yes. I hated wearing it just as my peers did.

What did you do in your spare time?

I used to paint pictures.

Malu S. Bernas

Attorney, Makati City, Philippines

What is the first thing you can remember?

My first memories of childhood consist of mostly happy moments with my family. I had a regular routine which included playing, drawing, listening to music, partaking of regular meals as a family, being given daily baths by my mother, arguing pettily with my siblings, visiting my grandparents for lunch or dinner prior to trips to the playground, or the Luneta Park which was relatively clean, safe, and unpolluted in those days.

Which stories you heard or read made the biggest impression on you as a child?

Jonathan Livingston Seagull by Richard Bach created a strong impact on me. The protagonist in this short novel epitomized in my young mind how important diligence and perseverance in life was. Subsequent to my reading this book, I agreed to my piano teacher's prodding to join piano competitions where I obtained a few medals.

What is the most unfair punishment you received?

Fortunately, I cannot really recall an unfair punishment growing up. My parents exerted efforts to bring us up in a fair manner except for our family system of 'seniority'. My parents placed a notable significance on their concept of 'seniority' or 'giving way to an older person' as a sign of respect. In my mind, you can be older and be wrong. There are quite a number of instances where I am certain of being

right. However, being the youngest in the family meant conceding to an older sibling almost all the time. It was pointless to argue because ultimately, I had to concede. Perhaps, this was one of the reasons why I pursued a law degree. Currently, I am quite pleased when they seek my opinion on any matter.

Did you have a school uniform – did you like wearing it?

My school uniform was nondescript. It consisted of a white linen blouse with blue piping, two pockets where the school's acronym was inscribed, and a blue skirt to match. I did not like wearing my school uniform because I felt it was shapeless, tacky, and at times, made us look like sales ladies from a particular department store which I decline to name. En route to our respective classrooms after the school's daily flag ceremony rights, a Chinese teacher would stand guard and pull out students from the line who, in her opinion, were not wearing 'pristine white' blouses and socks, or for simply failing to wear a camisole underneath. On hindsight several years later, I do not think my uniform was as bad as I thought it was.

What did you do in your spare time?

Being sickly as a child, my spare time was occupied by non-athletic activities such as reading, playing the piano, and spending hours in the kitchen in my attempt to acquire my mother's culinary expertise.

Chung-tien Chou

Professor, National Taiwan Normal University, Taipei City, Taiwan

What is the first thing you can remember?

It should be the trip we took to move to a new place. I was only 2 or 3. Few people had cars, and there were even no taxis in Taiwan then. We rode on a tricycle, which carried the people and our

baggage and other household items.

Which stories you heard or read made the biggest impression on you as a child?

I like reading. As a child, I liked Chinese mythological stories, such as 'A Journey to the West', with all kinds of brave and humorous characters fighting against witches and eventually arriving at the heavenly court to get the Buddhist bibles. Those characters were my heroes in childhood.

What is the most unfair punishment you received?

I seldom got punished. And I found most punishment I received was quite fair. As a matter of fact, I managed to get away with some misconducts, which I really should have been punished for.

Did you have a school uniform – did you like wearing it?

Yes, we did. I felt quite happy to wear it, partly because mine was considered a good school in the community, and partly because we could not afford to buy more expensive clothes.

What did you do in your spare time?

Reading, playing with kids in the neighbourhood.

Bozena Dzuganová

Foreign language teacher, Jessenius Faculty of Medicine Foreign Language Department, Martin, Slovak Republic

What is the first thing you can remember?

I remember jumping into deep water with other kids although I could not swim at all. Then catching river lobsters and cooking and eating them. Now they are very rare and protected by law.

Which stories you heard or read made the biggest impression on you as a child?

I admired my grandmother who trained my memory by reading short stories from the Bible or her own stories and

then I had to retell them to her. She was a very clever woman who knew a lot of herbs we collected together, could help other people and animals with minor injuries or diseases and as a midwife she helped to bring a lot of children (including me) to this world (nearly half a century ago – a discrete note).

What is the most unfair punishment you received?

If there was any punishment, it was not any physical one because I do not remember any. It was me who tortured my mum by refusing meals when I disliked something or wanted to get something.

Did you have a school uniform – did you like wearing it?

No, we did not have any uniform but I would like to wear one.

What did you do in your spare time?

To the age of seven I played a lot with other kids from my neighbourhood. But I also liked to do some manual jobs such as embroidering, knitting or other techniques before I started to go to school without having been taught it by anybody. I have an excellent observing talent for manual jobs. When I was seven my father died and I became an adult. I had to help my mum with three younger brothers and sisters. I had less time for entertainment and more duties.

Anna Gonerko-Frej

INSETT co-ordinator for British/American Studies, Szczecin University, Poland

What is the first thing you can remember?

I remember some strong visual images, like sitting in the kitchen with my grandmother desperately trying to feed me (some horrible porridge stuff) and praying for my parents to come back home quickly to save me.

Which stories you heard or read made the biggest impression on you as a child?

Some horror stories (my father's mother specialised in those) like the one about people waking in their graves after death.

What is the most unfair punishment you received?

I remember my father smacking me and my brothers for something I didn't do – trying to force one of us to admit we've taken something from their closet.

Did you have a school uniform – did you like wearing it?

I had a kind of school apron (black) with white collars – as far as I can remember I didn't mind wearing it.

What did you do in your spare time?

I read books, went for walks with my father, spent a lot of time with my friends at ballet school, scouting organisation, etc.

Elda Gjergji

Lecturer in linguistics and literature, University of Elbasan, Albania

What is the first thing you can remember?

The first thing I can remember is my family (when I was 3 years old).

Which stories you heard or read made the biggest impression on you as a child?

The stories about the important persons made the biggest impression to me.

What is the most unfair punishment you received?

I was punished by my family to stay at home for a week.

Did you have a school uniform – did you like wearing it?

Yes, I had a school uniform, but I didn't like it at all.

What did you do in your spare time?

I used to play with my friends.

Gabriela Grigoriu

Senior lecturer and pre-service teacher-trainer, University of Craiova, Romania

What is the first thing you can remember?

Mother, holding and rocking me in her arms when I was sick. My nut-tree: up there I was day-dreaming, I felt closer to the sky and the whole world was mine.

Which stories you heard or read made the biggest impression on you as a child?

Cinderella, Snow-White: I gradually learnt that you are never given a wish without the means of making it true. They inspired me in writing the stories of *Trainerella*, about the adventures of a teacher-trainer in the ELT world. A Romanian story about a land of permanent youth, where no one grew old or died. But there was a spring with clear tempting water which mortals had to avoid drinking because they got homesick. It is a very sad story: the prince who had searched for that place to keep away from death, drinks from that spring and the fairies were helpless and could not do anything to prevent him from going back home. But in the meantime hundreds of years had passed and on his way back he is growing older and older...

What is the most unfair punishment you received?

I was in primary school and the teacher created an awful atmosphere of competition. It was between a boy and myself: she was lenient with the boys' mistakes and tough with mine. Whenever she gave us different marks for the same mistake, that was punishment for me. Mother told me to learn as well as I could so that I should not make mistakes any more and make the teacher give me good marks, and I did so.

Did you have a school uniform – did you like wearing it?

Yes, I wore them for twelve

years. I disliked them, because I could do very little to make them look nice on me or to feel comfortable. But there are strange feelings that come again which are associated to the image of my mother, to being young, carefree and knowing that somebody else is in control and responsible for your life... and that fragrance of the fresh cleaned uniform I enjoyed every Monday morning...

What did you do in your spare time?

I played or read stories. I had my favourite toy: a teddy bear which I carried with me everywhere; I don't have it anymore but he is still there in my thoughts. I liked to play school with my toys – asked questions, answered for them and kept a roll. I tried to be impartial. I played on my own because my parents did not want me to mix up with other children and learn bad things. So I created a world of my own, in my mind and by reading stories under the nut-tree. No wonder I am a teacher now.

Stanislava Ivanova

English teacher, Naval Academy, Varna, Bulgaria

What is the first thing you can remember?

Probably the sea. My parents used to take me to the beach when I was quite small. I loved it there.

Which stories you heard or read made the biggest impression on you as a child?

I loved fairy tales like every child but probably the biggest single impression on me was left by the Greek myths. I knew the names of all the gods, goddesses and heroes, like others know the names of sports stars.

What is the most unfair punishment you received?

I don't really remember. I hated it though, when my parents tried to limited my reading because I was short-

sighted. I used to hide and read with a torch under the blanket.

Did you have a school uniform – did you like wearing it?

Yes, all school children in Bulgaria used to wear an ugly uniform – navy dress with white collar for girls, white shirt and navy/black pants for boys. They were all of regimented length, cut and look. We all tried to personalize them somehow. I remember I used to wear a crocheted collar my grandma had made for me.

What did you do in your spare time?

I used to read a lot, I collected many things (stamps, coins, etc). I loved receiving letters and had many pen friends.

Ewa Komorowska

Secondary school teacher, Warsaw, Poland

What is the first thing you can remember?

It's the tiny front garden where I was never allowed to play because the landlady wouldn't have her flowers picked by 'this naughty child'. My parents didn't like her and neither did she like us, but rooms to rent were hard to find in those days so we had to put up with her. Yet, I remember very clearly that when reading stories about witches they somehow always used to have her face.

Which stories you heard or read made the biggest impression on you as a child?

They were stories about princes and princesses and dragons and there always was a happy end. However the most important thing about them was that they all came from a very old book of fairy tales that belonged to my grandmother. The pages smelled of old print and the pictures had a kind of charm though they were far from beautiful. I still have the book and it now belongs to my daughter, who is 14. She

intends to pass it on to her child when it comes of reading age.

What is the most unfair punishment you received?

I will never forget the years of spanking experience the nuns who ran my school had. They were real experts and the effects of their beatings would never be visible, so the parents could not complain to the authorities. At home I never used to be spanked and all the matters were discussed with me.

Did you have a school uniform – did you like wearing it?

I did. At first I was very proud to have it but later on I didn't really care. Things changed when I was a bit older when I had to wear a hideous one – it was greyish green and never looked clean. Also, as I attended school in a communist country, the uniform made spying on students easier and we all wanted to be free to do what we wanted. I simply hated wearing it.

What did you do in your spare time?

When I was a little girl I would play with my two favourite dolls and teddy-bear. We pretended to be in hospital where I was the doctor and my toys were patients. The poor things got lots of injections and in order to better disinfect their bodies I used my mother's bright red lipstick. My teddybear is still red! Later on I would do a lot of reading, but that started in grade two of primary school. The books dealt with two topics only: ancient Egypt and Rome. At that time I was a real expert at history.

Ivan Kulekov

Freelance writer, Sofia, Bulgaria

What is the first thing you can remember?

Windy winter day. I am staying by the window in my aunt's house and staring at the smoke that comes out of

the chimneys across the street. My aunt has told me that she'll come back home when the smoke starts coming out in a straight line.

Which stories you heard or read made the biggest impression on you as a child?

A fairy tale that tells about a man who found himself on 'another' earth (in another world). On his way back he was riding on two eagles and feeding them with his own flesh so that they could take him back.

What is the most unfair punishment you received?

I was wearing my only Sunday best clothes when I tripped and fell in a puddle. My mother beat me.

Did you have a school uniform – did you like wearing it?

In my first years in school I didn't have one, but I wanted to, later I had a uniform, but I didn't want it.

What did you do in your spare time?

I used to fantasize that I'm both a motorbike and a rider. I was setting speed records.

Maya Khemlani David

Head of English Language Planning (Distance Education), University of Malaya

What is the first thing you can remember?

At 3 returning from a holiday in India with my grandma and a head shaved bald because of the lice contracted in India!!!

Which stories you heard or read made the biggest impression on you as a child?

My grandma's story that if one sees a really shiny star – the one that gleams the most that is the much loved child who had died in his youth. That my mother could do everything, run the house, manage a retail business, produce (knit) the items for the store, handle 4 of us, stay up all night and sew both our party dresses and even our pyjamas, and still read books, go to the movies and

community functions. My mother has made the biggest impression on me.

What is the most unfair punishment you received?

We had to return home by 7.30. We went out with a friend's elder brother in his car, enjoyed ourselves so much that we came home after the 7.30 curfew and my father was livid and we hid under the bed so that we would not be beaten. He should have realised that we had so enjoyed ourselves that time had flown.

Did you have a school uniform – did you like wearing it?

Yes, I enjoyed it – the great equalizer.

What did you do in your spare time?

Read all the Readers digest, played badminton and listened to the radio (songs, news, anything).

Yvetta Koleva

Assistant and associate, Union Miniere Pirdop Copper, Pirdop, Bulgaria

What is the first thing you can remember?

I can remember a very vivid **nightmare** I had after my mother read the usual evening fairy tale. I dreamt about huge birds and animals walking in my bedroom.

Which stories you heard or read made the biggest impression on you as a child?

A book of Bulgarian fairy tales with folklore motifs about supernatural characters (werewolves, vampires, wood-nymphs). It was also richly illustrated, another Bulgarian book with two children comic characters and their adventures. There is also a book of Indian stories very well illustrated.

What is the most unfair punishment you received?

I can't remember such a punishment. I remember, however, that all punishments (well, nearly all) seemed unfair to me.

Having a two year old daughter now I see that one cannot go without some punishments if s/he wants to raise a well-behaved child.

Did you have a school uniform – did you like wearing it?

Yes, an ugly dark blue dress with a white collar. I am not against uniforms but I think they should be comfortable and modern, so that even if pupils are not fond of them, they could gradually grow on them and see them as an emblem of a fraternity of their own.

What did you do in your spare time?

I was an avid reader of all kinds of books and also a TV addict (this sounds funny of course as we only had 2 official TV channels back in the socialist times). In neither of these was there a system of doing it, nor could my mother spare the time to direct me. I am very grateful to her, nevertheless, for having bought a lot of books, for introducing me to the first novel at the age of 10 and for letting me watch films in the evening (8.30-9.30 p.m.). She let me watch the TV version of Nana for example when I was 10-11 years old, notwithstanding some naked scenes. I remember these because my cousin who is a year younger was forbidden to watch it by her parents, who both were University graduates and thought very highly of their intellectual and decision-making abilities. I agree completely with my mother's judgement as serious literature/films should be watched read/ watched when the child is ready for it. Moreover children should be encouraged to perceive the world as it is.

Mary Rose Mifsud

Assistant Director of Education, The Curriculum Centre, Msida, Malta

What is the first thing you remember?

The harbour scene when one of my sisters came back from her college in England.

Which stories you heard or read made the biggest impression on you as a child?

The Hunchback of Notre Dame. I was mortally afraid of his hump.

What is the most unfair punishment you received?

No answer.

Did you have a school uniform – did you like wearing it?

My first school uniform in kindergarten was a white apron. I hated it. There were two types, one sensible, offering plenty of cover, the other not so useful but very pretty. My family chose the former and it made me feel horrible. The next uniform was almost identical in primary and secondary school. I disliked the pleated skirt because I was too thin at the back and the skirt always drooped on me. Later on I changed it to a tight fitting one and didn't mind wearing it.

What did you do in your spare time?

Go to the cinema, listen to music, read comics and magazines, played with dolls and/or racing cars. We spent a lot of time at the beach or along the promenade. Mostly however my spare time was spent interacting with my brothers and sisters, we were a large family and often entertained ourselves.

Abdeljalil Naoui khir

Chair of the Department of English, Faculty of Arts Sais, Fez, Morocco

What is the first thing you can remember?

When I was three years old, two unforgettable events happened to me: The first was when I was in Tangiers on holiday with my parents and I got lost. The second (in the same year) was my circumcision.

Which stories you heard or read made the biggest impression on you as a child?

My grandmother used to tell me stories about the ghouls (Amti Ighoula), a devilish

woman who would eat children who misbehaved. Also, the story of Hdidan Lahrami, a very cunning boy who would play tricks on people regardless of their age, and whom the king would consult whenever he needed help. Finally Seif Do Yazan/ the sword of Do Yazan, a legendary warrior capable of killing many men at the same time with a mere blow or sword strike.

What is the most unfair punishment you received?

When my elder brother broke a precious vase and told my parents that it was me. I could not defend myself, for if I tried, my elder brother would beat me. At least, that's what I thought.

Did you have a school uniform – did you like wearing it?

I had to wear a blue apron, which I used to keep in my schoolbag until I reached my school. Then I would put it on.

What did you do in your spare time?

I used to play games with other boys of my age. Sometimes, in summer – when my parents were not on holiday – I was forced to go to a Koranic school, which I hated.

Svetlana Stojic

Senior lecturer of English for Academic Purposes and British Cultural Studies, Belgrade University, Yugoslavia

What is the first thing you can remember?

Boarding a plane. I was between 2 and 5 years old and was about to fly with my sister and grandma from Belgrade to Sarajevo to see my newly-born cousin. I was very excited. Hence my love for planes to these days.

Which stories you heard or read made the biggest impression on you as a child?

The Sleeping Beauty because I was given a part in it when I was 3. My cousin was Flora, my elder sister was Fauna,

and I was Merryweather and had to behave accordingly. When I was four, my mother took me to the cinema to see 'Bambi'. I started crying when Bambi's mother died and didn't stop till the end of the film.

What is the most unfair punishment you received?

When my father spanked my sister and me because the boat engine had broken down. He was sure we had done something. I thought it was a great injustice and refused to talk to him for several days. I was about 10.

Did you have a school uniform – did you like wearing it?

My primary-school uniform was navy blue with a white lace collar and I didn't mind wearing it, but I hated my secondary-school uniform which was black and I felt like a nun. I would carry it in a bag and put it on only when I reached the school building.

What did you do in your spare time?

In pre-school days and later I played with my sister, my cousins and the kids from the neighbourhood. I had a doll's house and a lot of dolls. When I started school I didn't have much spare time because I played the violin, which I hated from the bottom of my heart. After two years I stopped playing and attended ballet school every afternoon. At twelve I started playing tennis and that's what I still do in my spare time.

Katsuhiko Taniguchi

School teacher, Matsusaka, Mie, Japan

What is the first thing you can remember?

When I was in kindergarten. I took a bus to and from the kindergarten. One day, at the bus stop, I was absorbed in a book and missed my bus. I didn't know what to do. I cried and cried. I didn't know that there were other buses which go to my house.

Which stories you heard or read made the biggest impression on you as a child?

Stories of dead people coming back once a year in summer.

What is the most unfair punishment you received?

I have never been treated unfairly. I deserve all the punishment I have received so far.

Did you have a school uniform – did you like wearing it?

Yes. I had a school uniform in junior and senior high. At that time, I took school uniforms as a student's 'must' and I had no question about it.

What did you do in your spare time?

Playing soft ball, watching TV, reading.

Anna Tomczak

English teacher, Teacher Training College, University of Bialystok, Poland

What is the first thing you can remember?

My Mum dressing me up in a summer dress full of frills.

Which stories you heard or read made the biggest impression on you as a child?

Two types of bed time stories: My Granny telling me about ghosts and cemeteries, and my Dad summarizing librettos of great operas and singing.

What is the most unfair punishment you received?

When I wasn't allowed to go to the cinema to see a film with Brigitte Bardot.

Did you have a school uniform – did you like wearing it?

Yes, I had one and I liked it.

What did you do in your spare time?

In my spare time – I played cowboys and Indians. (I was a chief of an Apache tribe) I loved to cut out figures from magazines.

Childhood Survey: two lesson suggestions

Naomi Clift
Literature Department, the British Council, London

Level: late intermediate upwards

Suggested procedure

If there is time, the teacher may want to do both lessons, with a break of at least a day between them. In this case, it would be advisable to start with the 60-minute lesson to introduce the theme. If the teacher wishes to do the shorter lesson only, it would be advisable to precede it by step 1 of the 60-minute lesson, in order to introduce the theme of childhood.

A 60 minute lesson

- 1 First in pairs then as a group, brainstorm words around the theme of childhood. Put results on the whiteboard using a mindmap/spidergram (10 min.)
- 2 Put students into small groups. Each group chooses two different themes from the diagram (e.g. TV programmes, school dinners) and writes 3 questions for each. Make sure that each group chooses different themes (10-15 min.)
- 3 Each student joins up with other students from different groups
- 4 Students interview each other (20-25 min.)
- 5 Brief feedback as a class (10 min.)

A 35-40 minute lesson

- 1 Choose a selection of about eight questionnaires from different countries, photocopied and cut out, with names and countries missing. Give each questionnaire a number or a letter in order to be able to identify it
- 2 Divide class into small groups and give each group a copy of the questionnaires
- 3 Each group discusses the questionnaires and tries to guess which country the person is from (obvious textual clues might need masking) (15-20 min.)
- 4 Feedback and discussion as a class. What made students come to their conclusions? What similarities and differences did students note between different cultures? (15-20 min.)

Follow up activities

Students carry out their own questionnaire with English speakers: other teachers, local expatriates, contacts from the WWW, e-mail, pen pals etc and compile a class report on the findings. Gender differences could also be explored.

British Studies Now Anthologies 1 & 2



Around the world, studying Britain is popular – but do we know what Britain is?

The answer is no longer simple and there are many Britains to understand: Scottish, Welsh, Irish and English Britain; European Britain; the Britain of Thatcher, Major and Blair; Britain, the laboratory of constitutional change and new artistic practices which flow across borders; it's Britain *on* the Web and Britain *in* the web of its former imperial connections – not one Britain but many diverse British cultures. The choice has never been greater and with it comes the difficulty of knowing how to embark on British Studies.

In 1992, the British Council founded *British Studies Now* a twice yearly magazine to meet the international demand of teachers and students, many of whom agree that studying another society enables us to see our own in a new perspective.

- **The first anthology** based on issues 1–5 of *British Studies Now* showed how the British Council became involved in British Studies. It contained 24 articles on language and culture, national identity, history, and interculturalism.
ISBN 0-86355-293-5 £5.95
- **The second anthology** explores new themes such as language and social identity, geography and contemporary arts. The section *Taking a View*, brings together fresh insights into central questions about the subject and there are documents from the *Re-inventing Britain* project, including the original manifesto by Homi K. Bhabha and an introduction given at the London conference by Stuart Hall.
ISBN 0-86355-410-5 £6.95

These anthologies will be useful for any teacher in school or university wanting an update on changing Britain. It also offers an introduction to new ways of teaching the English language as a tool for intercultural understanding.

Order from your local bookshop or in case of difficulty from the suppliers: Celtic International, Order Department, 39 Alexandra Road, Addlestone, Surrey KT15 2PQ, UK.
Tel +44 (0)1932 854 776, Fax +44 (0)1932 849 528.

Sixth Warwick International Seminar and
Conference on British Cultural Studies

Looking into England: English identities in the context of UK devolution

University of Warwick, Coventry, England, UK

12–18 December 1999

A seminar and conference for an international audience and all those wanting to explore new perspectives on political devolution in the UK, organised by the British Council and the Centre for British and Comparative Cultural Studies, University of Warwick. Director: Professor Susan Bassnett.

The unique political entity of the United Kingdom is in the process of radical yet peaceful change. The devolutionary agenda set by Tony Blair's New Labour government has placed Welsh, Irish and Scottish identities centre-stage in the national debate. By contrast, serious discussion of what might constitute English national identity has hardly begun. Some say it never should; others that it is a huge vacuum in the debate about the future of Britain. Taking such disagreements as a promising starting point, this conference breaks with tradition to look at the whole picture of UK devolution – one which will offer a changed role for England as much as it will for other parts of the UK.

The conference aims to enrich a national debate with the perspectives of an international group of scholars whose speciality is the study of Britain. International delegates will be invited to discuss a commentary on a number of aspects of English culture and society from the viewpoint of other nations and cultures. Representatives from Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales will brief the conference on the latest devolutionary developments and join writers, film-makers, political and cultural commentators, 'Looking into England'.

Speakers invited include **Meera Syal**, **Amryl Johnson** and **Jeremy Paxman**.

Confirmed speakers include:

Charlotte Brunson, author of *Screen Tastes: From Soap Opera to Satellite Dishes*

Billy Bragg, musician and songwriter (including *A New England*)

Michael Bracewell, journalist and author of *England is mine: pop life in Albion from Wilde to Goldie*

Nicholas J Cull, Leicester University on *The Great Escape of the Self-Preservation Society: Englishness in Popular War and Crime Film*

Antony Easthope, Manchester Metropolitan University, author of *Englishness and National Culture*



Christopher Harvie, author of *Scotland and Nationalism*

Helena Kennedy, QC author of *Eve was framed: women and British Justice*

Andrew Motion, Poet Laureate

Julian Rathbone, author of *The Last English King*

Gisela Stuart, MP for Edgbaston, England, UK

Richard Weight co-author of the forthcoming Dictionary of 20th Century British History

...and more speakers to be announced shortly.

Papers are invited on the following topics:

- Forging the Nation
- Comparative identities
- Britain 2005
- Inter/Intra-national perspectives on England
- Multilingualism in England
- Being English
- Englishness and Heroism
- Representations of Englishness

The organisers, the British Council and the University of Warwick, are planning a mini-conference day on Friday 17 December to increase participation from the UK. Details of the mini conference will be available in the Autumn.

Cost of whole event is £500 or £425 (depending on accommodation chosen), based on full board accommodation and including the mini-conference day 17 December. Mini-conference costs £45.

Deadlines: for papers 17 October – for places 22 November

For further information and a registration form please contact:

Naomi Clift
Literature Department
The British Council
11 Portland Place
London W1N 4EJ
fax: +44 171 389 3175

e-mail: naomi.clift@britishcouncil.org

Updates on the WWW at www.britishcouncil.org/studies



British Studies Now is the British Council's international magazine for everyone involved in teaching and interpreting new trends in British culture and society.

Published by the British Council. © The British Council 1999.

The British Council is registered in England as a charity no. 209131.

The views expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the British Council.

Design and artwork by Bob Wells. Printed by Philtone Litho Limited.