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Vorwort

Liebe Schülerinnen und Schüler,

„Warum darf eigentlich das britische Staatsoberhaupt, die Königin oder der König, das Unterhaus nicht betreten, wo dort doch die Regierung und die gewählten Volksvertreter sitzen?“ „Warum heißt jeder britische Thronerbe eigentlich immer ‚Prince of Wales‘?“

Manche britischen Traditionen und Bräuche erscheinen uns auf dem Kontinent zuweilen als ziemlich ausgefallen oder bizarr – selbst Briten und Britinnen ist manches unerklärlich. Dieses Buch soll Ihnen helfen, Ihr **Wissen über Großbritannien** und seine Bürger zu **erweitern** und so hinter die Bedeutung mancher Eigenarten zu kommen. Sie werden einen besseren Zugang zu Sachtexten und zur englischen Literatur erhalten, wenn Sie das britische Selbstverständnis, wie es sich in der Geschichte und den Institutionen darstellt, verstehen lernen. Etwas trocken heißt dieser Bereich des Lehrplans für Englisch „Landeskunde“ oder „Cultural Studies“ – in Wahrheit ist es eine spannende und interessante **Entdeckungsreise** in ein anderes Land. Dazu möchte Sie dieser Band einladen.

Das Buch ist in **allgemein verständlichem Englisch** gehalten und so für die Vorbereitung auf mündliche oder schriftliche **Prüfungen** gut geeignet. **Schlüsselbegriffe** sind im Text **farbig** hervorgehoben. **Schwierige Wörter** werden **auf Deutsch erklärt**. Am Ende jeder Einheit steht eine Art „**Lernbox**“, wo in einer knappen Übersicht das Wichtigste noch einmal zusammengefasst ist.

Übrigens, die Antworten zu den beiden Eingangsfragen finden Sie in den Kapiteln über die Monarchie bzw. über Wales.

Viel Spaß auf Ihrer landeskundlichen Entdeckungsreise wünscht Ihnen



Rainer Jacob

British Society

The Welfare State

The term ‘welfare state’ is used to describe a system which ensures social security for all people, which means the state secures a basic standard of living for its citizens when they are unable to provide for themselves. People are entitled to **unemployment benefit** when they are out of work or they can draw **old-age pensions** after they have retired from their jobs. The welfare state in Britain also provides a **free health service** and many other social services especially for the weakest members of the community – e.g. children, elderly, physically disabled and mentally ill people. The system is financed by taxes and insurance schemes. Today over a third of all government spending goes to **welfare**, which is more than the government receives in income tax and corporation tax combined. When the modern welfare state was first introduced in the late 1940s public spending on social security amounted to only 10 %. The difference between these two figures demonstrates the enormous growth in expenditure and the main question to be asked today is: How can the welfare state be maintained today?

No Social Security in the 19th Century

The technical developments of the 19th century did not only revolutionise the country’s economy they also brought about a far-reaching transformation of the British society. The gulf between rich and poor became wider and wider. Those who were strong enough to work were in a position to participate in the new prosperity. The rest – the unemployed, the sick and the very young – were less fortunate. Workers who lost their jobs because of illness or old age were completely dependent on charity. In order to survive many had to beg for food or shelter, and some turned to crime. Gangs of thieves, for example, roamed the streets and made it dangerous to be out and about at certain times of the day in the poorer quarters of the cities. To fight the increasing crime rate severer punishment was introduced, with over 70 crimes carrying the death sentence – including petty theft and assault. In addition, a civilian police force was set up in the 1820s by **Sir Robert Peel**. The nickname for policemen – “bobbies” – is derived from Sir Robert’s first name.

The hunting of foxes with horse and hounds has a long tradition and was regarded as a typical pastime of the landed gentry and the upper classes. Years of protests from people all over Britain – led by animal rights activists of the RSPCA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty against Animals) – resulted in the Hunting Act of 2004 which banned hunting wild mammals with dogs.



Many upper class parents send their children to public schools like Eton or Harrow and later to the universities of Oxford or Cambridge. The high cost of this tuition limits the number of those who can afford it and guarantees an exclusive circle. After completing their university education upper class graduates usually stay in close contact, with their connection often being referred to as the old boys' – and old girls' – networks. With these “**old school tie networks**” the “old boys” see to it that doors are opened for the “young boys” to help them into appropriate positions.

The Middle Class

This class is also referred to as the service class and it comprises people who occupy the **white-collar jobs** and are often university-educated: for example teachers, bank clerks, managers, engineers, foremen, shopkeepers. The most important aspect of this class is its considerable **growth in the 20th century**, due to the decline in manual occupations because of continuous mechanisation, computerisation and digitalisation. This changing social pattern has also affected the old Labour Party, traditionally made up of working class supporters. Convinced that “we are all middle-class” Prime Minister Tony Blair (1997–2007) once staked New Labour's claim to be the natural party of the expanding middle.

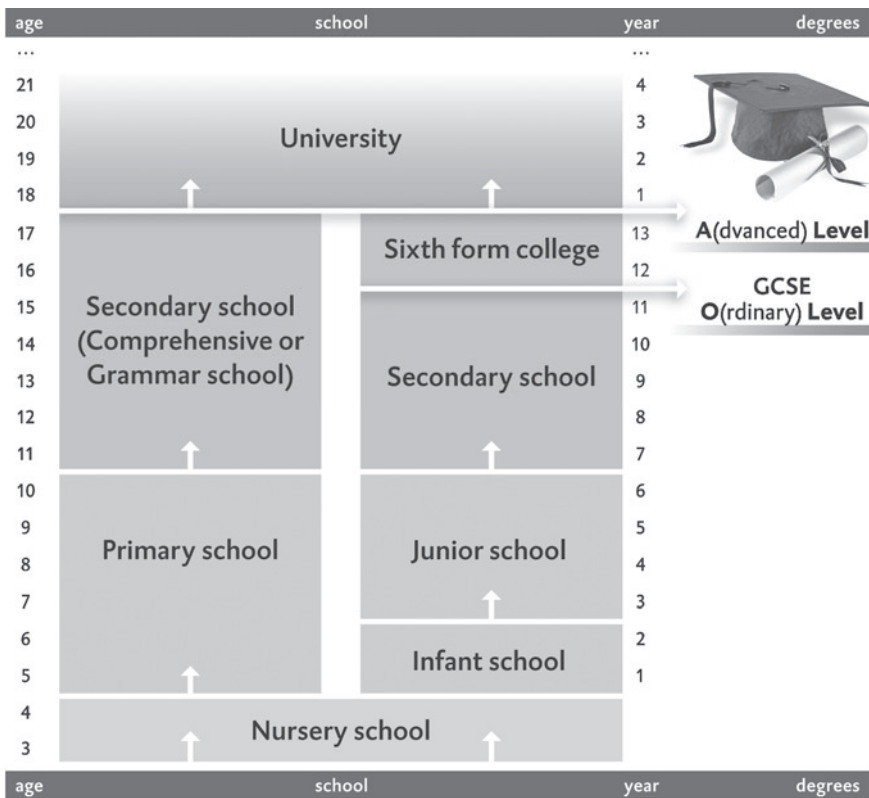
The Working Class and Britain's Changing Social Structure

Traditionally, the working class comprised skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers (**blue-collar workers**). In the mid-1970s the class system began to change substantially when jobs disappeared in Britain's industries. Plants, car factories, wharfs and textile mills closed down in large numbers,

dium generale from Pope John XXII. Both, Oxford and Cambridge enjoy a world-wide reputation for their outstanding academic achievement.

Open University

Since 1971 adults who have not acquired A-levels at school may enrol at the Open University which has its headquarters at the new town of Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire. There are no academic prerequisites for enrolment because the aim of this university is to extend educational opportunities to all. The **correspondence course** (distance learning) is the principal educational technique, which means students study at home in their free time and send their test answer by post. TV programmes may supplement a course, and sometimes students meet in groups and summer camps at centres scattered throughout Great Britain.



The English education system



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