

Text D

The Relationship Between “Britishness” and Success

British people have always received success in a way quite unfamiliar to, for example, Americans and Chinese. To some extent, this is the “stiff-upper-lip” — held, untremblingly, by countless generations — concealing emotions in good times just as in bad.

Such implacability may simply disguise shyness or arrogance. But, I argue, in the case of the British, there has, for a long time, been something deeper than merely “hiding” success. There has also been, perhaps, a shame in success itself.

Neither British teachers nor students refer often to “the top of the class”. If one mentions the academic success of a classmate, boy or girl, one does so with a sneer, perhaps calling such a student “swot”, insinuating that their success resulted only from effort, or worse, the sacrifice of social life. Successful students might also be termed “teacher’s pet”, attributing success to the teacher’s favour. Such accusations are usually, of course, unjustified. But life in British schools nonetheless creates ambivalences even for gifted children. Their culture and language discourage excellence. And it is rare to find a British student, of any ability, graduating from university, without having enjoyed a sustained period of rebellion. For the majority of the time, perhaps, the scorn for success is merely rhetoric. Still, it’s rare to find anyone for whom the message has never entered consciousness.

In adulthood, likewise. Whereas the American or Chinese will willingly discuss their salary with a stranger, along with the exact monetary value of possessions, few from Britain would mention such things outside close family. We British would like you to think that, in not mentioning such quantitative details openly, we are not even thinking about them.

Don’t believe us.

All Britons read the *Times Rich List*, the annual newspaper supplement containing the nation’s hundred richest men and women. We look down on those we see reading it, even on the paper itself, for “cheapening themselves”. Those listed inside the paper we label *fat-cats*. Those who choose to “flaunt” their successes are described as *show-offs*, *big-heads*, or *too big for their boots*. Many Chinese resent Zhang Yimou for portraying his country, internationally, in an “unfavourable” light. British people resent Rowan Atkinson (Mr. Bean) because he is internationally successful.

There is the feeling that anyone blessed with success, wealth or fame should be made to pay the price for it. They should be brought down a peg or brought back down to earth.

As soon as a Brit becomes a “star”, at home or abroad, they become prey to the paparazzi. Invasive photography, telephone tapping, rummaging in rubbish bins — such techniques are condemned by most newspaper readers. But in buying such a paper, in choosing a specific issue to buy, every member of the reading public is involved in voting for and hiring such agents.

Part of this is related to “class” — the idea that the “responsibilities” of money should be granted only to those with generations of experience in owning and spending it. Part, too, may relate to boredom — boredom with seeing the same people, in politics, TV, business, even in the local community, enjoy success. Part of this, no doubt, is jealousy. We each revel in the assurance that no one will remain in a position higher than us for very long. It may also relate to Christianity, which preaches that it is harder for a rich man to enter the temple of heaven than for a camel to pass through

the eye of a needle. Post-colonial regret, or guilt may play its part in a nation still coming to terms with having lost one quarter of the world. But a big part of this, I suggest, is the healthy belief that beauty, talent and intelligence should be their own reward — that “doing a good job” should be satisfaction in itself.

Sport is the arena in which success is most obviously and instantly measurable, The British, it is said, all love the “underdog” — the unfancied, unqualified, “plucky” “outside bet”. It is the defeat of established teams or players, more than any display of skill, that motivates the impartial British sports viewer.

In the case of Eddie “the Eagle” Edwards, failed British ski-jumper in the 1986 Winter Olympics, laughable amateurishness was celebrated nationally. But traditionally it is not the failure who most captures the British heart but the good sport — the competitor willing to accept victory or defeat with equal geniality. It is essential that the good sport appears to have a life outside the game — that he refuses to take it too seriously.

Times are changing. American influence in Britain increases by the day. Professionalism and competitiveness have entered every aspect of life. But still we have the character like Prince Hamlet, lacking “killer instinct”, destroyed, by the imminent achievement of desires. In this peculiar failing, and in the bashfulness with which a British person receives praise, I invite you to witness our national ambivalence to success.

I. Choose the correct answers.

1. Be declaring “Don’t believe us.”, the author actually means that _____.
A. the Brits still focus on those rich people
B. the Brits hide their hunger for success very deeply
C. there is the complexity of the Brits’ feelings about success
D. British people hold a consistent attitude towards success

2. Which of the following is not the reason for Brit’s coldness towards success?
A. Being resentful of the good fortune or achievements of another.
B. The general sense of hierarchy and Christian belief.
C. The visual fatigue caused by those celebrities.
D. The hidden regret for the passing prosperity.

3. The phrase “to be brought down a peg” is the closest in meaning to _____.
A. to be made feel less proud
B. to get the short end
C. to be taught a lesson
D. to be cracked down

4. Which of the following cannot be inferred from the passage?
A. The Brits prefer a detached attitude towards the mundane world.
B. Mr. Bean is referred to scornfully in Britain.
C. The Brits enjoy their gentle pace of life.
D. The author actually appreciates the unique attitudes towards success in Britain.

5. In the author’s opinion, the Brits’ unique success view will _____.

- A. be replaced by the sense of competitiveness
- B. be passed on as the central value of the British culture**
- C. keep on perplexing most of British people
- D. be affected by the spirit of American dream

II. Do the following statements agree with the information given in the passage? Are they true, false or not given?

- 1. British people's coldness in their manner is a family inheritance.
- 2. British students don't like to talk about their academic scores.
- 3. Success is a humiliation in Britain.
- 4. British tabloid newspapers love to dig up scandals of successful people because their culture approves of it.
- 5. The Brits are less competitive than Americans because they are afraid of failure.

Keys:

I. 1. C 2. C 3. A 4. C 5. B

II.

- 1. Not given
- 2. True
- 3. False
- 4. True
- 5. False

Text E

Enjoy a Cuppa in Kyoto

Planning a trip to Japan? In between sushi sampling, geisha spotting, temple trekking, and of course shopping, add a bit of Zen to the day with one of the most traditional Japanese Arts: the tea ceremony.

Picture a tatami room, empty except for a hanging scroll, vase of flowers and a line of guests padding across the floor. The guests squat before sliding paper doors that open onto a garden. Legs turn to pins and needles as they twist into the traditional seiza position (legs tucked under the bottom). At the front of the room, the kimono-clad host slowly stirs the green tea powder and hot water using a bamboo whisk. A silence streaks across the room. The assistant steps to the first guest and presents the bowl of tea with a bow.

The ritual of tea ceremony has grown as part of the Japanese Culture since the 12th Century when a Buddhist monk carried the tradition home from China. Four centuries later, a Zen Monk perfected the ceremony into what the Japanese practice today.

In Japan, a full-scale tea ceremony may not be easy to locate or fit into time constraints (a proper tea ceremony can take up to four hours), but a short class may hit the spot for busy travelers.

Classes are also widely available in Kyoto and teach the basics of participating in a ceremony as well as the tools and history behind it.

A class usually begins with a lesson in entering the room and sitting seiza (traditional Japanese style). But not to worry, the Japanese understand this position is difficult for many foreigners

and will understand if anyone shifts to a more comfortable position. The host enters the room with a bow. Often an assistant assists guests and sees that the class runs smoothly. As the host begins the exact movements of preparing the tea, the assistant presents sweet and teaches the correct way to cut the sweet and pass the tray.

As the host prepares each bowl of tea, the assistant offers the tea to each guest with a bow. After bowing in return, take the bowl and set it to either side and say, “Osakini,” an apology for going first.

Tea ceremony consists of three separate schools. The way of enjoying tea differs between schools, for example, the tea may be finished in two to four sips depending on the school. Before drinking, support the tea bowl with the left hand and turn the bowl twice clockwise with the right until the shomen (front side, beautiful part) faces away, and drink.

When the tea is gone, rest the bowl on the left hand, wipe the rim with the thumb and index finger and turn the bowl counterclockwise before placing the bowl in front of you.

So much work for a cup of tea!

The goal of tea ceremony is not just to consume the tea but rather, emphasis rests on the process itself: on making and appreciating tea in the company of the guests and the host.

Tea ceremony, which finds its roots in Zen Buddhism, seeks reality and beauty through simplicity. The main principles are explained in four words:

Wa- harmony with people, tools and nature

Kei- respect

Sei- purity of all people and things

Jaku- a peaceful heart

Perfecting the art of tea ceremony takes many years of practice. During the ceremony guests discuss only things related to tea, the ceremony, utensils, and the tearoom. Talk of worldly things is discouraged in order to create an atmosphere of harmony and simplicity.

I. Choose the correct answers.

1. In the first paragraph, what does “Zen” mean?
 - A. A Chinese monk’s name.
 - B. A school of Mahayana Buddhism.
 - C. A tea culture in Japan and China.
 - D. A simple and harmonious life style.**

2. What’s the author’s suggestion for foreigners on learning the Japanese tea ceremony?
 - A. Ask the assistant about the correct tea etiquette.
 - B. Observe the process carefully and abide by the etiquette.
 - C. Take part in short-term courses.**
 - D. Bow to the host before enjoying your tea.

3. Which of the following principle does the action of turning the bowl signify?
A. Wa **B. Kei** C. Sei D. Jaku

4. Which of the following will be dissuaded in the Japanese tea ceremony?
 - A. Sitting on your heels.
 - B. the host makes the tea themselves.
 - C. Keeping silent when making the tea.
 - D. Drinking the served tea deeply.**

5. Which of the following is not true about the Japanese tea ceremony?
 - A. All of the equipment used in the tea ceremony is of the very highest quality with intricate decoration.**
 - B. It was originated as a habit of Chinese Buddhist monks to aid their meditation.
 - C. It involves a spiritual element, a shared moment of calm and renewal for its participants.
 - D. It is a cultural tradition involving very particular places, procedures, and equipment for drinking green tea.

II. Complete the summary below by using words from the passage.

The ceremony takes place in a tea house (cha-shitsu), usually a _____ room. At one end there is an alcove, called the tokonoma, in which is displayed a hanging _____, a flower arrangement, or both. The Japanese tea ceremony consists of the host first bringing the tea _____ into the room, offering the guests special _____, and then preparing and serving them tea made of pulverized tea leaf _____. The serving of sweets and tea may be preceded by a light meal. After the tea is consumed, the guests are free to inquire about the various implements, which are afterward carried from the room and the ceremony concluded.

Keys:

I. 1. D 2. C 3. B 4. D 5. A

II.

1. tatami

2. scroll

3. utensils

4. sweets

5. stirred