

# Culture and Customs

## ACTIVITY 1

**Read the text and choose the best answer (A, B, or C) for items 1-2.**

1. The writer

- A. gives detailed advice to UK visitors.
- B. compares British and German customs.
- C. explains how the English language works.

2. The writer is probably someone who has

- A. lived in England.
- B. moved to England.
- C. a family in England.

### Politeness By Willy Wiedenmyer

It's really true what people say about English politeness: it's everywhere. When squeezing past someone in a narrow space, people say 'sorry'. When getting off a bus, English passengers say 'thank you' to the driver. In Germany, people would never dream of doing this: bus drivers are just doing their job!

I used to think the German way, until I was in Britain for a few years. I understood that there were more polite ways of treating people and I began to adopt some of those ways too!

When people buy something in a shop, both customer and shop assistant usually thank each other, twice or more. In Germany, it would be unusual to hear more than one 'thank you' in such a conversation. British students thank their lecturers when leaving the room. English employers thank their employees for doing their jobs, but Germans think that paying their workers money is already thanks enough!

But there is another side to British politeness. One word that comes to mind here is 'artificial'. Although it is enjoyable to talk with friendly people, it has often made me wonder what the English really think. In fact, this confused me throughout my stay in England. Everyone at the University I attended seemed to like me and people in my class were kind and friendly but I found it hard to understand who was really my friend and who was 'just being polite'.

I must say that British politeness is a little puzzling to me. For example, I often wonder why the English lose it when they drink too much. And then I think: maybe, drinking is a good excuse for being rude once in a while... After all, having to be polite all the time can be stressful, right?

**Read the text again and choose the best answer (A, B, or C) for items 3-6.**

3. The writer

- A. used to apologise a lot.
- B. feels more polite now.
- C. hates to be rude.

4. The writer says Germans, compared to the British,

- A. have bad manners.
- B. say 'thank you' less often.
- C. think more about money.

5. How do the English change when they drink too much?

- A. They become loud.
- B. They joke a lot.
- C. They are less polite.

6. The writer is confused by English politeness and wonders if

- A. it's necessary.
- B. it causes tension.
- C. it's overemphasised.

## ACTIVITY 2

Read the information in the leaflet below and match the meaning of each underlined word (7-11) with options A-F. There is one option you do not need.

A. connected      B. influences      C. differs      D. cures      E. is caused by      F. seems

### What is dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a specific learning difficulty that mainly (7) affects reading and spelling. Dyslexia is characterized by difficulties in processing word-sounds and by weaknesses in short-term verbal memory. Its effects may be observed in spoken language as well as written language. The current evidence suggests that this difficulty (8) arises from inefficiencies in language-processing areas in the left hemisphere of the brain which, in turn, (9) appears to be linked to genetic differences. Dyslexia is life-long, but its effects can be minimised by literacy intervention, technological support and adaptations to ways of working and learning. Dyslexia is not (10) related to intelligence, race or social background. Dyslexia (11) varies in severity and often occurs alongside other specific learning difficulties, such as Attention Deficit Disorder.

## ACTIVITY 3

Read the text below and for each gap (12-16) choose the best option (A-F). Use each option only once. There are two options you do not need.

A. favourite      B. free      C. poor      D. cheap      E. best      F. next

Charles Dickens was born on 7 February 1812. He was ten years old when he discovered the magic of reading. His bedroom was (12) \_\_\_\_\_ door to his father's study. In his father's library, Dickens discovered his (13) \_\_\_\_\_ book: the Arabian Nights. He used to sit for hours alone reading the story of Sheherezade. He would hide in the top room of the house and spend his (14) \_\_\_\_\_ time, reading books. 'I remember everything I read then', he said in later life. The Arabian Nights is the book that had the greatest influence on Dickens as a writer. Dickens said these stories were the (15) \_\_\_\_\_ way to develop the child's imagination and the feeling about what is good and bad. The Arabian Nights, he said are 'simple, pure and innocent and they teach us to have sympathy for the poor and the old'. We see all these concerns in his books, especially his love for children. As Dickens was growing up, he saw London changing with the smoke and dirt of factories and (16) \_\_\_\_\_ children working in factories or begging in the streets. These are the things that he writes about.