

4 Ways British and American People Are Very Different

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qr5gqL4o1bE>

Transcript: <https://dontveter.com/ec/lostinthepond.people.pdf>

Hello, I'm Lawrence, and I'm on a quest to uncover all of the memos that Britain and America lost in the pond and one of those memos pertains to people.

What could be more important to the foundation of a country than its people, except maybe tectonics?

And one thing I can say about British people is we don't generalize and that's why I'm doing a video called ways British and American people are very different.

Believe you me, everything you hear in this video is absolutely true except this sentence because in truth it's impossible to get this video right.

Both countries are made up of millions of people, no one person is the same, so some of the generalizations I'm about to make about Americans could be true of some British people and vice versa.

It's just that on the whole, pound for pound, or dollar for dollar, there are certain things that separate British people from Americans and having lived in both countries now for at least a hundred years I'm here to tell you what those things are.

"dollar for dollar"

- 1) *considering the amount of money involved; considering the cost*
- 2) an amount equal to

Two colleagues are talking ...

Colleague 1: The deadline for making our recommendation regarding which production software to choose is Friday.

Colleague 2: We have developed a system of metrics to measure the effectiveness of the package. It should be a simple matter of simply choosing the best value based on price and performance.

Colleague 1: Then, **dollar for dollar**, Software Purple outperforms all the others. For the features it offers, it is the best value.

Here are four ways that British and American people are very, very different.

Funnily enough, the first entry on this list doesn't require any generalizations because it's backed by hard, cold science, and by science I mean the census.

Both countries have them and from this data we can determine the cultural backgrounds that make up the people of Britain and America.

Let's take a look each country's top 5 ancestral groups starting with Britain.

Actually in this case, the entire UK, 37% of us are Anglo-Saxon which accounts for how I'm 1500 years old.

22% of the people living in the UK are of Irish descent, and this is not just the people living in Northern Ireland.

Irish immigrants have been coming to Britain for hundreds of years and if they hadn't we wouldn't have had John, Paul and George and the Beatles might have been named Ringo.

1/5 of people living in Britain claim that European ancestry.

9%, and I believe this minutely includes yours truly, come from a Scandinavian background, which is definitely why I'm so good at assembling IKEA furniture.

4% of people in Britain trace their ancestry to Pakistan and India.

In America, the numbers are quite different but there are some surprises along the way.

Did you know that in the United States of America the largest incesstral group, incesstral? I just said incesstral, which is thankfully not a word but you can quite imagine what it would mean.

In the United States the largest ancestral group is German.

Apparently thirteen point six percent of Americans self-report German ancestry and if you think that that dates back to either of the World Wars that's not entirely accurate.

The majority of German Americans came here in the 19th century so if you encounter any Americans with German sensibilities, or facial structure, whatever that means, then that's why.

And there's a good chance you'll encounter a German American in one of the cold states like Minnesota, Wisconsin or the Dakotas.

The second largest ancestral group in the United States are African Americans who comprise about 12.5 percent of the overall population.

And conversely to the German ancestry groups, the highest concentration of African Americans is in the South and historically of course this is largely tied to the fact that many African Americans in the South are descendants of slaves that were kept and later freed from plantations there.

And here's a demographic that sets America apart from Britain, it's largely governed by geography and that's Mexican Americans, 11% of Americans self-reported Mexican ancestry.

Which may account for why I read the other day that Cinco de Mayo is more widely celebrated in the United States than it is in Mexico.

Mind you, you might be able to say something similar about St. Patrick's Day.

Every March, without fail, Americans turn green, not literally, unless they've had too much alcohol that night, and so it's no coincidence that 10% of American self-report Irish ancestry.

Of course if you're like me and you're 1500 years old, and an Anglo-Saxon, there's a very good chance that some Americans will be quick to tell you that they have a little bit of you in them.

I just mean a little bit of English, right, seven percent of Americans self-reported English ancestry.

That was an abbreviated look at the ancestral makeup of both countries and for not having the time to discuss all groups in this one video I apologize but then that would probably be very British of me.

Let's take a look at some of the unique tendencies of the people of both countries.

If there's one thing that really sets people apart, it's how polite they are and how fun they are at parties and don't worry I'm not about to extol the virtues of the famed British politeness while asserting that Americans are rude, because that's not my experience.

There are rude people in both countries, but that rudeness usually manifests in a very similar way and wouldn't make for a very entertaining video.

Actually, it might. Can we put it on the list?

The truth is people in both countries know how to be polite when they want to, the difference here is the manner in which they do it.

In my experience, British people go to greater lengths to let you know that they're listening.

What do I mean by this? Well, you're talking to me, not literally you're watching a video.

But let's say you are talking to me, you're conveying very important information right now, and so in between every single word I'm gonna go yes, hmm, yes, yes, yeah, mm-hmm, yeah, definitely yeah, yeah, yeah. I'll stop now, that's essentially the way it goes.

As a result, the conversation ends up being twice as long and all of those efforts to display that you were listening meant that you didn't hear a bloody thing.

Bloody adj. An intensifier (chiefly British). E.g. bloody moron, bloody hell.

Of the four in this list, "bloody" is by far the British swear word I hear most among Americans. Its main purpose, of course, is to intensify a noun – usually one with negative connotations (though one can declare something to be "bloody brilliant")

British people are very good at that and I should know because I'm very good at that, aren't I?

Right we're also good at adding on tagged questions.

That's when we make a statement but in order to not appear confrontational we add on a little question at the end.

So, for example, Marmite is brilliant, isn't it?

Americans would never do that, they'd simply state Marmite is awesome. (That's never gonna happen.)

Marmite is a brand of savoury food spread from the United Kingdom, based on yeast extract invented by German scientist Justus von Liebig. It is made from by-products of beer brewing (see Lees (fermentation)) and is currently produced by the British company, Unilever.

I remember when I visited home last year and we were in a restaurant and the staff apologized profusely to my wife because, I can't remember why, but I remember it not being warranted in the least.

The point is, British politeness is often governed by the need to save face. That's not a reference to the A-Team.

Don't get me wrong, it's also about being friendly, but in America I think that's all it's about.

I very rarely feel like Americans are trying to let me down gently. They just tell me I suck.

All right, I'm joking, it could be argued that Americans in this sense are just more practical much like their dress sense.

It's hard to talk about people without talking about the clothes they wear.

For example, when have you ever seen me without clothes?

(No, those videos were taken down about four years ago, not, not by me, by YouTube.)

On the other hand, it's almost impossible to paint an accurate picture of the clothing choices of both country's populations.

But there are some clothing items you'll see preventing people being naked in one country and not the other. That was really poorly worded.

So in America people might, for example, be recognizable by the fact that they're wearing a flannel shirt, particularly in some of the northern states which have extreme cold and Germans.

Moreover, Americans are more likely to wear sweatpants in public.

Definition Of Sweatpants /Define

- Pants having a drawstring or elastic waist and usually elastic cuffs at the ankle that are worn especially for exercise.

The sweatpant people, which is an ancestry group that I forgot to mention, sometimes meet up at the gym, but more often Walmart.

In Britain we all just dressed like Charlie Chaplin, at least the Charlie Chaplin impersonators do.

But there's an emphasis in Britain on style and this is a luxury that we can afford because unlike America we don't have weather that can kill bacteria.

So, depending on where you are, it might not be that unusual to see, say, a woman dressed more or less like Kate Middleton and that includes Kate Middleton.

Of course we're talking cheaper versions of Kate Middleton's wardrobe, or at least I am.

Now before it get carried away I do not want you to get the impression that all British people are super stylish, right. I'm doing this video in my underpants.

The thing I would say is that our casual clothes, or our comfort clothes tend to be less baggy than they are in the United States and we probably wear fewer baseball caps and more polo shirts.

I told you British people like me don't like to generalize.

I think in America baggy clothes are more accepted because A) there are harsh winters and B) Americans place more emphasis, I think, on comfort.

That's why you'll see Americans way into their seventies still wearing sneakers with jeans.

My grandfather-in-law did that all the time and I think if he saw that in Britain, that person would be considered eccentric.

Which, since we're talking about Britain, 50 percent of the population is eccentric.

And if you thought that that observation was funny, then you're very easily amused.

You put the U in humour especially if you're British. (humor)

You may recall a while back I did a video on British versus American humor but this focused on the televisual differences. Today we're talking about people.

There have been numerous times in my life when I've laughed my absolute ass off in the company of both Brits and Americans to the extent that I can no longer comfortably sit down.

But it's hard to deny that British people have a different sense of humor to American people.

It's also a little hard to define what that difference is.

Americans often write in the comments that they love my dry British humor and I always find it amusing that we have dry British humor. Because we also have wet British forecasts.

But when you're talking to a British person there are two ways that the humor can go, either that politeness that we talked about earlier goes out of the window and get rained on, or there arises something known as self-deprecation.

In the first instance a good friend of mine might jokingly remark, "Oh, Lawrence you wanker." I don't know too many cockney people.

[britannica.com](https://www.britannica.com/dictionary/wanker) › dictionary › wanker

WANKER meaning: a stupid, foolish, or unpleasant person

Definition Of Cockney

- A spoiled child.
- A squeamish woman.
- A native of London and especially of the East End of London.
- The dialect of London or of the East End of London.

Or in the second case of self-deprecation a British person might say something like, "I'm Lawrence and I'm a big wanker".

That is a terrible example, it's basically when people put themselves down for a comedic effect it's a powerful tool, but it's not a tool often wielded by Americans, who I don't know, maybe they see it as a weakness.

I've also found that Americans are less into their toilet humor and that, maybe that means they're more mature. It does mean that, doesn't it? The sweatpant people notwithstanding.

Definition Of Notwithstanding

•In spite of. Example: We went notwithstanding the weather.

Whereas toilet humor is basically how British people communicate.

Of course, this was once successfully parodied by Mike Myers, the comedian, not the serial killer.

But in America, or at least in the Midwest, my attempts at toilet humor have often been met with TMI, which to my chagrin does not mean Tickle Me Insane, but Too Much Information.

On the other hand, I think your average American is pretty good at wielding observational humor.

A favorite weather-related saying, and I've heard this in various states, is "if you don't like the weather just wait five minutes".

And they've got a point. I left my laundry hanging outside this morning and a tornado took it away.

That's it for this episode, let me know in the comments below if you've observed some of these characteristics of British and American people.

And if you want to hear / read more from this British person then why not follow me on Twitter at [lostinthepondus](#).

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