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Introduction

Studying culture goes hand in hand with studying language. In order to really understand the hows and whys of a language, it is useful to understand the culture of the countries where that language is spoken. For students studying English in Japan, this would usually mean American or British English due to their prominence in Japanese Education. It therefore makes sense for students who study those varieties of English to be familiar with the countries and cultures they came from.

American and British English have both linguistic and cultural similarities and differences. In his short story *The Canterville Ghost*, the famous Irish playwright Oscar Wilde wrote, "We have really everything in common with America nowadays except, of course, language." A quotation frequently attributed to another Irish writer, George Bernard Shaw, is that America and Britain are two countries separated by a common language. Since the birth of the United States in 1776, changes in language and culture have evolved separately on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. In fact, the number of differences between them may come as a surprise to some students.

The aim of this course is to look at what makes these English-speaking countries the same and what makes them different, but it is sometimes hard to consider the cultures of countries you may have never visited. To help with this, we will use Japanese culture as a common reference. You will discover sometimes Japanese culture reflects American culture, and sometimes it more closely resembles British culture, and of course it frequently stands proudly different from either of them. These days, through global communications and travel, all three countries heavily influence each other while still managing to remain distinct. Together, let's explore why!



Unit 1

People and Identity



Discussion Questions

1. When you think about Japanese, Americans, and British people, what are your first impressions?
2. Do you know anybody from those countries?
3. Do they fit your idea of what people from those countries are like? Why or why not?
4. Where do you think these ideas come from?

Thinking about the Topic

Look at the three people below. Do you think they are British, American, or Japanese? What helps you to identify them?







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Exercise One

Work with a partner to complete this table. Write single words to describe British people, Americans and Japanese. Try to think of four words for each nationality.

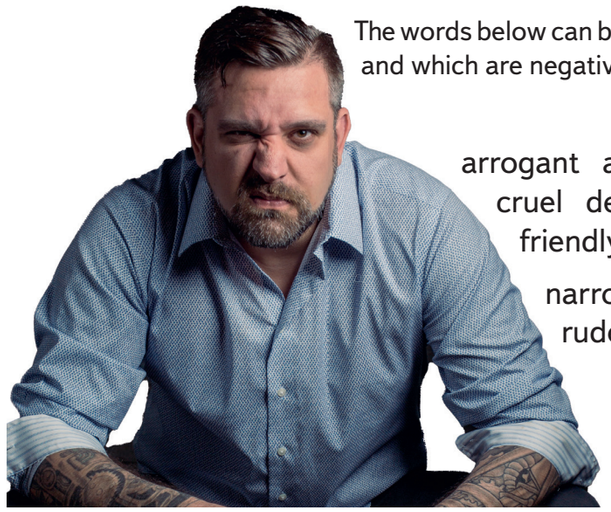
British	American	Japanese

Compare your ideas with another group.

1. Did you choose the same words, or different words?
2. Why do you think the same words might be chosen by different groups?
3. Do any of the words chosen by another group surprise you?
4. Where do these ideas come from?
5. Do you believe they accurately describe the people who live in those countries?
6. What is stereotyping? How do you think that affects your ideas?

Positive and Negative Adjectives

Adjectives are words used to describe people or things and often have positive or negative meanings. Other adjectives are neutral, meaning they are neither positive nor negative. Look at the words you listed in Exercise One. Mark your words with **P** for positive words, **Ng** for negative words, or **Nu** for neutral words.



The words below can be used to describe people. Which are positive and which are negative? Which are neutral?

arrogant awesome boastful bossy casual
cruel dependable dumb enthusiastic
friendly fun grumpy loud

narrow-minded neat quiet reliable
rude silly thoughtful trustworthy

Exercise Two

Write six sentences using positive, negative, or neutral adjectives. Write two sentences about Americans, two about the British, and two about the Japanese.

1. _____
   _____
2. _____
   _____
3. _____
   _____
4. _____
   _____
5. _____
   _____
6. _____
   _____

Read your sentences to a partner.

- Are your ideas similar or different?
- Do the sentences show the different nationalities in a positive, negative, or neutral way?

What is Cultural Identity?

What makes you Japanese, British, or American? The national group you feel closest to is part of your cultural identity, a set of characteristics that you share with other people. Nationality is only one aspect that can make up your cultural identity; it can also include your ethnicity, gender, and language. Japanese people, for example, share in common their language and ethnicity.

Exercise Three

Work in a group. Discuss of ways of thinking or doing things that identify your cultural group and makes it different from other nationalities.

My Cultural Identity



Discuss!

Think of similar ideas for people from the United States and the United Kingdom. In what ways are the cultural identities of those countries different from your own?

Exercise Four

Look at the objects in the pictures below. Which country do you associate them with and why? Explain them to a partner: what are they? Where do they come from? How can they be said to represent the cultural identity of their respective countries?



















Reading: Happy?

How do you think living in your country compares to other countries? Since 2012, the World Happiness Report has ranked 157 countries according to how happy the people living in those countries believe themselves to be based on opinions about wealth, health, social support, freedom to make life choices, trust and **generosity**.

How do the three countries we are studying **fare** on the World Happiness Report? According to the 2019 World Happiness Report, the United Kingdom has the highest rank at number fifteen. The United States is a few places below the UK at number nineteen, while Japan is ranked much lower on the scale at number fifty-eight. To understand better what these rankings mean, let's take a closer look at some of the categories that are measured.

Wealth is about the total gross domestic product (GDP) per capita: the total amount of money a country makes from selling its goods and services, divided by the number of people living in the country (per capita). For example, in 2018, the GDP per capita of the United States was $62,904, which is the total amount of money made by the United States in 2018 divided equally among every man, woman, and child living there. If GDP per capita is high, people feel they are in a rich country, while a lower GDP per capita gives the impression a country is not very wealthy and that affects the happiness of the population. The United States was the highest among our three countries, with the United Kingdom in the middle with a GDP of $42,442, and Japan the lowest at $39,295. If feeling your country is **prosperous** is very important, perhaps you should consider moving to the United States.



Another part of the World Happiness Report categories measures healthy life expectancy. In countries with modern medicine and better diets,

people live longer, and how long people live on average is referred to as life expectancy. Healthy life expectancy measures the amount of a person's life they can expect to live with good or very good health. Which of our three countries do you think topped the list for this category? If you answered Japan, you are correct! The Japanese have a reputation for having a good lifestyle, eating healthy food, and staying active much later in life. Japan scored 0.988 in this category, which indicates on average Japanese people live almost 100% of their lives in a healthy condition. The United Kingdom scored 0.883, while the United States scored 0.819. All three countries have quite high scores, but Japan comes out ahead. If living a healthy life is something you consider very important, then Japan may be the country for you.

One of the more interesting categories is the freedom to make life choices. Respondents were asked if they are **satisfied** with the ability to choose what they do with their lives. A person who feels they can try to be successful without too many **obstacles** in their way would be happier than those who feel they must follow a strict way of doing things. Which of our three countries do you think came out on top in this category? The United Kingdom was ranked tenth in the world for freedom to make life choices. The United States was ten places lower in the twentieth position, while Japan **lagged** in sixty-fourth place. Japanese society is often considered to be very strict. The Japanese proverb 出る釘は打たれる translates into English as, "The nail that sticks out is hammered down", and perhaps that **principle** applies here. The results **indicate** that the **perception** of the importance of **conformity** in Japanese society is still very important. If freedom to make changes in your life is important to you, then the United Kingdom may be the place you should live.

We must remember these questions do not represent everybody's true feelings. Wealth, for example, measures an average amount and is not an **indicator** of the money people have; some people will have higher salaries, while others will have lower salaries. Healthy life expectancy also has many variables such as what it means to have a healthy active life, and different people will have different opinions about the freedom to make choices. In the end, every person has a different point of view on what makes them happy. The World Happiness Index is a useful tool for understanding general trends in a country's happiness, but ultimately it is up to us as individuals to know whether we are truly happy or not.

Comprehension Questions

1. What are some different ways the World Happiness Report categorises happiness? Do you agree with their ideas? Would you add a different category?
2. Which country has the highest score for each of the categories? Do any of the results surprise you?
3. Do you agree Japan should be ranked very low on the "freedom to make life choices" scale?
4. What is a problem with the World Happiness Report?

Vocabulary

Match the words from the passage to the word with the closest meaning on the right.

1.	generosity	a.	show
2.	fare	b.	wealthy
3.	prosperous	c.	achieve less
4.	satisfy	d.	understanding
5.	obstacles	e.	kindness
6.	lag	f.	difficulties
7.	principles	g.	rule
8.	indicate	h.	perform
9.	perception	i.	being the same
10.	conformity	j.	happy with



Talk about it!

Discuss the following questions with your partner:

1. What do you consider to be your cultural identity? What ideas or behaviour do you identify with?
2. Which of the ideas from the World Happiness Report do you consider to be the most important? Why? Does your partner agree?
3. If you could live in Japan, the United States, or the United Kingdom in the future, which would you choose? What would you base your decision on?



Notes

Write any additional notes related to this unit on this page.

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Unit 2

Three Countries



Discussion Questions

1. How would you compare the geography of Japan, the United States, and the United Kingdom?
2. Think of at least three geographical features that are the same in all three countries, and three features that are different.
3. Could you easily find these countries on a map?

Thinking about the Topic

How would you describe the following places? Do you think you could find places like these in Japan, the United Kingdom or the United States?







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Exercise One

How well do you know Japan, the United States, and the United Kingdom?

Without looking at any reference materials, draw a map of each country in the boxes below.

Japan

The United Kingdom

The United States

Exercise Two

Geographical Features

Match the geographical features on the left to their meanings on the right, then write the number of the feature next to the correct picture.

1.	canyon	a.	A steep flat-topped hill.
2.	cliff	b.	A steep face of a hill or mountain.
3.	desert	c.	A mountain or hill from which gas, ash, or lava may erupt.
4.	forest	d.	A large flat area of mostly grasslands.
5.	mesa	e.	A large area covered with trees.
6.	prairie	f.	A very dry area with very little rainfall.
7.	swamp	g.	A deep valley with steep sides.
8.	volcano	h.	A very wet area with many types of plants, trees, and animals.



Exercise Three

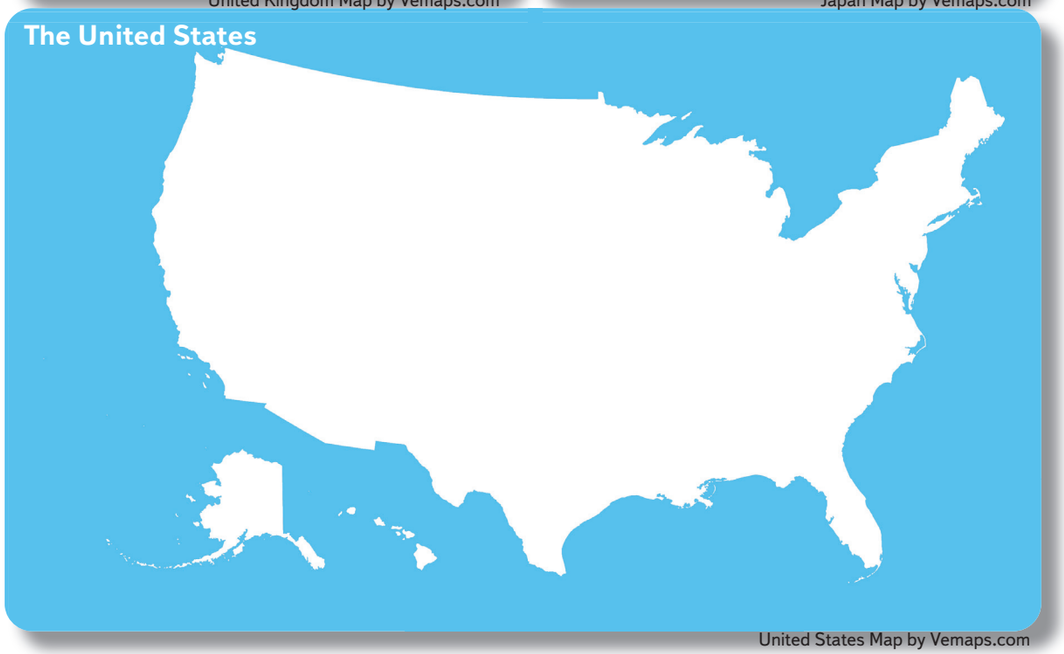
Below are outline maps of Japan, the United States, and the United Kingdom. Use these maps to check your answers from Exercise One. Can you label any places of interest, geographical features, or cities on each map?



Japan Map by Vemaps.com



United Kingdom Map by Vemaps.com



United States Map by Vemaps.com

Reading: Three Countries

When you think of Japan, the United States and the United Kingdom, which do you think are probably the most similar? Your first reaction may be the United States and the United Kingdom. After all, they **primarily** use English, many Americans are **descended** from British immigrants, and they share many cultural resemblances. Japan, on the other hand, seems to be far removed from them both. While some Japanese can speak excellent English, overall they have very little need for English in their everyday lives, and Japan has a long cultural history of its own which did not have any significant interaction with the British or Americans until the nineteenth century. However, it is worth **investigating** the comparisons and contrasts a little more deeply, and the results may surprise you!

In **geographical** terms, both Japan and the United Kingdom are islands, but the United Kingdom is more complicated than Japan, which we will come to later. In this respect, the United States is very different because it shares borders to the north with Canada and to the south with Mexico, and of course also contains the two states Alaska and Hawaii, neither of which are directly connected to the other forty-eight states. If we also think about sizes, the United States is the largest with an area covering almost ten million square kilometres. Japan is twenty-four times smaller, roughly the same size as the state of California. Japan's area of nearly 378,000 square kilometres is larger than the United Kingdom's roughly 243,000 square kilometres, which is about the same size as the state of Oregon.



Politically, the United States is a constitutional republic, which means the people of the US vote for their political representatives who must follow the rules written in their **constitution**. The United States has no king or queen or emperor. Instead, America has three branches of government: the executive (the President and his cabinet), the legislative (made up of the Senate and the House of Representatives), and the judicial (the Supreme Court). The three branches balance power so no one **branch** can become too strong. The United Kingdom has a king or queen and is called a constitutional **monarchy**. While the king or queen rules over the country to a limited degree, laws are decided by the government, known as the parliament. In the case of the United Kingdom, half the parliament is elected by the people, while the other half is made up of "peers" who have their position due to a **title** being

given to them by a ruling monarch. Some peers' families pass their titles down over generations and have been involved in government for hundreds of years! Out of these two systems, Japan is similar to the United Kingdom because it is also a constitutional monarchy, headed by the Emperor of Japan. However, the Japanese government has an upper and lower house, the House of Councillors and the House of Representatives, which is closer to the American legislative system than the British parliamentary one.



There is one other interesting comparison to be made regarding the way the United Kingdom is made up. Unlike the United States and Japan, which are both single countries, the United Kingdom is four different countries (listed in order of size): England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. They are joined together by the ruling monarch, Queen Elizabeth II, as their head of state. In other ways, there are many differences. Scotland, for example, has its own money and government, and in parts of Scotland and Wales, Gaelic and Welsh are still spoken and given **preference** over written English on road and shop signs.

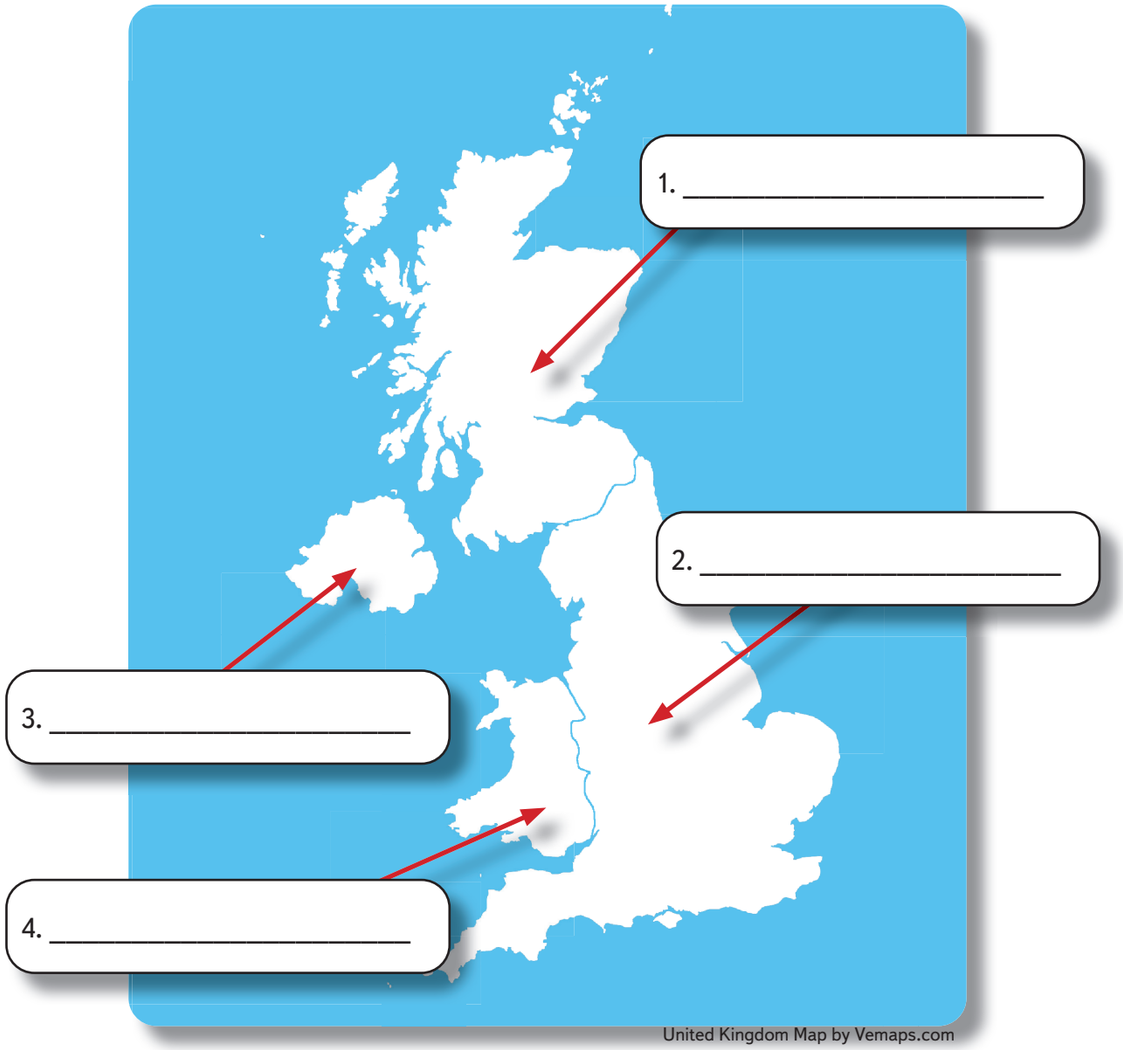
What can we conclude from this introduction to the United States, the United Kingdom and Japan? While at first, it may seem the United States and the United Kingdom would be the closest because of their use of English and having closely shared histories, in reality, all three have both surprising similarities and unique properties.



Queen Elizabeth II reigned for 70 years, longer than any monarch in English history. Her eldest son became King Charles III on 8 September, 2022, at age 73, the oldest person to become king of England.

Comprehension Questions

1. Which country is the largest, the United States, the United Kingdom, or Japan?
2. What countries make up the United Kingdom? Write them on the map below.
3. How many states are in the United States?
4. Briefly describe the similarities and differences in the systems of government of the United States, the United Kingdom, and Japan.



Vocabulary

Choose the best bold words from the reading passage to complete the following sentences:

1. The laws and rules for a country are written in its _____.
2. The Tokyo _____ was the first office opened in Japan by the British company.
3. A _____ is a system when a country has a king, queen, emperor or empress.
4. The police are _____ the robbery, but so far have found very few clues.
5. This map has many _____ features such as rivers, forests, and mountains.
6. Which one do you like more? What is your _____?
7. He was awarded the _____ of "doctor" after he graduated with his PhD.
8. Evolutionary theory states that animals today are _____ from a common ancestor.
9. The main focus of this meeting is to _____ decide who is going to be the new president of the club this year.
10. The English “library”' is _____ from the Latin word 'liber'.



Bonus Questions

1. How many states can you name? Write them on the map below or on a separate piece of paper and compare them with another student..
2. Who is the current President of the United States?
3. Who is the current Prime Minister of the United Kingdom?
4. Who is the current Prime Minister of Japan?



United States Map by Vemaps.com

Talk about it!

Discuss the following questions with your partner:

1. Do you think it is good for countries to be different from each other, or should they become more similar in the future?
2. What aspects of your country's culture would you like to see being adopted by other countries?
3. Look again at the geographical features in Exercise Two. Which can be found in your country? Which cannot?

Notes

Write any additional notes related to this unit on this page.

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Review 1: Units 1 to 4

Exercise One

Look at the following pictures. How do they represent the different cultures we are studying?







Discuss your ideas with another student. How do you think your ideas are influenced by stereotypes and cultural identity?

Happiness Survey

Interview a member of your class using questions based on topics from the World Happiness Report. Be prepared to discuss your findings with your class.

	Disagree				***Agree***
Wealth					
1. I have enough money to pay for my basic necessities (food, clothing, rent).	1	2	3	4	5
2. The difference between wealthy and poor people in my country is not very large.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I feel my country is wealthy.	1	2	3	4	5
Health					
1. I have a healthy diet.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I exercise frequently.	1	2	3	4	5
3. The cost of healthcare in my country is reasonable.	1	2	3	4	5
Freedom					
1. I feel I can do what I want with my life	1	2	3	4	5
2. There are no restrictions as to what kind of job I can apply for.	1	2	3	4	5
3. People in my country can follow their dreams.	1	2	3	4	5
				Total:	

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A higher score indicates a higher level of happiness. How happy would you say your class is overall? Do you think your class results are similar to the results mentioned in the Unit 1 reading passage?

Exercise Two

Look at the three photographs. In which country was each photograph taken? Describe the different geographical features seen in the photographs to a partner. Use words from Unit 2 or any other words you know to describe places in nature such as sea, ocean, lake, river, mountain, hill, and so on.



Country: _____

Features: _____ _____ _____ _____ _____



Country: _____

Features: _____ _____ _____ _____ _____



Country: _____

Features: _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

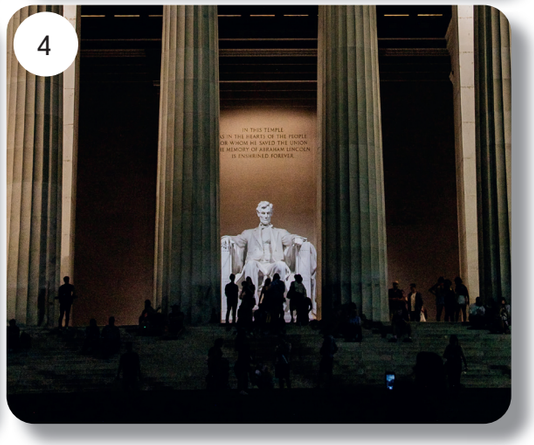
Exercise Three

Look at the pictures below. Take turns choosing pictures and describing them to your partner *without naming the famous attraction or the city/country they are in*. Your partner must guess which picture you are describing by naming the attraction and its country. All answers can be found in Unit 3.













Exercise Four

Look at the following menu for an international restaurant. With a partner, explain the different food items available to order. What would you order from this menu? What would your partner order?

Globetrotter's International Restaurant

This week, we present a mouth-watering selection of delicious dishes from Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States. All dishes come with your choice of a bread roll, fried potatoes, rice, or salad. Beverage menu is available upon request.

American Adventure

California Roll $8.00
Biscuits and Sausage Gravy $6.50
Chicken Fried Steak $10.99
Grits $4.00

British Traditions

Haggis $7.00
Toad in the Hole $5.99
Bangers and Mash $6.50
Welsh Rarebit $5.00

Japanese Favourites

Rice Burger $4.50
Shabu Shabu $6.00
Tempura $5.99
Sashimi $10.00

