

B2.7 Culture and Society - Handout

- 1 These discussion questions focus on the cultural similarities and differences between your partner's and British culture. There are also questions about the differences between American and British culture, which learners of English are usually interested in, and which most British people have some opinions about (differences in attitudes to religion, politics etc.). Check that the term *culture shock* is understood: "The feeling of disorientation experienced by someone who is suddenly subjected to an unfamiliar culture, way of life, or set of attitudes." In terms of *cultural values*, respect for the law, the family, private property and personal freedom can be suggested if clarification is sought. In terms of cultural changes, the changing nature of British society with regard to multi-culturalism, feminism and same sex marriage could all stimulate discussion.
- 2 Some of these rules are obviously false. The first piece of advice about arriving early for dinner would be inappropriate as the hosts would probably be disturbed whilst still preparing for their guests. The third piece of advice is also erroneous. Britain can no longer be described as a religious country with weekly attendance at church comprising only 1.1 million in 2011 ("Statistics for Mission" 2011). And the fifth piece of advice is, perhaps unfortunately, also wrong. Leaving a third of the food served to us on our plates would probably be considered eccentric, if not rude (although it would doubtless help to solve the nation's obesity epidemic). The other pieces of advice are 'true' in the author's opinion. Key vocabulary includes: *barber, percentage, population, greedy and moderate appetite*.
- 3 The focus now shifts to society and societal problems. Of course, many of the same problems exist in a number European countries. Key vocabulary includes: *homelessness, alcoholism, the elderly, social cohesion, minority groups, discrimination, gender equality, military service, economic pressures and globalisation*.
- 4 This would be a difficult decision for anyone to make as the causes described are all certainly worthy ones. It might be an idea to individually rank them in order of priority (from 1 to 5), then justify your ordering having compared lists with your partner. Please do your best to discuss together until you reach a consensus.
- 5 As usual, if you can discuss with your partner their ideas about what would strike you, as a foreigner, as different or unusual if you were to come and live and work in your partner's country, then this should help to prepare them for the ensuing writing task.