

## **Stereotypes**

### **The Truth behind British Stereotypes**

A stereotype is a fixed view – usually of a group of people, such as women, or the Irish, for example. It's based on observation or assumption, and although it can be either positive or negative, it fails to recognise individuality. Nations in particular love to apply stereotypes to other nations, as it tends to give them a feeling of superiority, as well as a form of shorthand whereby they can recognise the  
5 character traits of other nations.

The problem with stereotypes is that, while there may be a germ of truth in there, most of them are wildly inaccurate. However, as they perpetuate through generations, they come to be seen as accurate representations of a particular group of people. These are some of the common stereotypes concerning the British, and the truth behind them.

10 British people have the world's worst teeth

This stereotype arises because the British – apart from celebrities – do not place so much importance on having a mouthful of gleaming white, even teeth as other nations. Many people attribute this particular stereotype to the Americans, who are known for wearing braces in adolescence and spending a fortune on products to floss and whiten their teeth. That in itself is another stereotype, but  
15 here's the real deal. A recent study found that British 12-year-olds had the healthiest teeth in the world, with Poland having the worst record on dental hygiene.

This particular stereotype arises because the British are not fanatical about having straight white teeth when they reach adulthood. Other things take priority.

The British love football, and everyone knows David Beckham personally

20 Okay, the British invented the game, but not everyone spends their weekends on the terraces or in the bars watching Sky Sports. This stereotype emerged at around the same time that footballers started to become celebrities, appearing on the front pages as well as the back pages of the nation's press.

It's the notion of celebrity that is the attraction, rather than the football itself. Other countries are far more fanatical about football than England, with Spain and Turkey being good examples. As for the  
25 notion that everyone knows David Beckham, that arises from another form of stereotyping – Britain is a small country, so everyone lives near everyone else. [...]

The British are a nation of heavy drinkers

This one goes back centuries – there are several references to the English as drunkards in the plays of Shakespeare, usually spoken by other nationalities. In the middle ages, water was unsafe to drink, so it  
30 was common to drink beer or wine, even with breakfast. More recently, the behaviour of the English abroad when exposed to cheap alcohol has earned them the unflattering nickname of 'Lager Louts.'

In truth, the British are no more a nation of drunkards than any other. A minority of badly behaved Brits who can't hold their alcohol has contributed to this stereotype. [...]

All nations exhibit a number of intrinsic characteristics, which other nations tend to use as a marker  
35 for identification. Stereotypes are not necessarily bad things – anything that raises a smile brightens the day, and stereotypes can be amusing. They only become threatening when the components of the stereotype are motivated by racism or real bigotry.

Stereotypes have been around as long as people have walked the earth, and they're never going to go away. However, as long as people continue to exercise sound judgement and evaluate people on their  
40 individual merits rather than their perceived stereotypes, there will not be too much damage done to international relations.

**Words: 598**

**Source: <http://www.pitlanemagazine.com/cultures/the-truth-behind-british-stereotypes.html>, 19/03/17**

## **1 Text comprehension**

***Answer the following tasks on the text in complete sentences. Use your own words. Don't quote.***

- 1.1 Define the main topic of the text.
- 1.2 Describe the term *stereotype* by referring to the text.
- 1.3 Point out to what extent stereotypes are to be seen as problematic.
- 1.4 Present the British stereotypes mentioned in the text.
- 1.5 Choose one of the British stereotypes mentioned in the text. Explain its emergence and show its untruth.
- 1.6 Describe to what extent stereotypes can be seen as positive.

## **2 Text production**

***Choose a topic and write a comment of about 250-300 words.***

- 2.1 *"All British people drink tea and speak funny English".*  
Discuss this statement.
- 2.2 *".... it would be interesting to find out what goes on in that moment when someone looks at you and draws all sorts of conclusions." (Malcolm Gladwell)*  
Comment on the quotation. You may consider own experiences or examples.
- 2.3 What do Germans usually have in mind when they think of the USA and the Americans?  
Discuss whether these stereotypes are true or false.