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Regimes of Language Ideologies, Polities (i.e. Politics), and Identities, Paul V. Kroskrity, 2000, Social Science, 411 pages.

The mad hatters great sporting eccentrics of the nineteenth century, Douglas Sutherland, Jan 1, 1987, Biography & Autobiography, 208 pages.

Sex, Drugs & Chocolate The Science of Pleasure, Paul Martin, 2008, Science, 390 pages. "In Sex, Drugs Chocolate, Paul Martin looks at changing attitudes to pleasure over the centuries, including religious and legal attempts to control it, together with the ....

The Go-between Level 4, L. P. Hartley, 1999, 152 pages. "The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there." Summering with a fellow schoolboy on a great English estate, Leo, the hero of L. P. Hartley's finest novel ....

The Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine, Volume 2, Edward Hungerford Goddard, 1855, Includes proceedings of the annual general meetings of the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society.

Identity of England, Robert Colls, 2002, History, 409 pages. In this text, Robert Colls traces the constitutional, legal, racial, cultural and geographical dimensions of Englishness, from medieval times to the present day, with a ....

The English character, Spencer Leigh Hughes, 1912, History, 299 pages.


Living and Working in Britain, David Hampshire, Feb 1, 1999, 508 pages. Informative and practical, here's essential information for those who move abroad or relocate due to business. Each entertaining guide includes chapters on finding jobs ....

Charters and Records of Neales of Berkeley, Yate, and Corsham, John Alexander Neale, 1906.


What is it about the English? Not the British overall, not the Scots, not the Irish or Welsh, but the English. Why do they seem so unsure of who they are? As Jeremy Paxman remarks in his preface to The English, being English "used to be so easy". Now, with the Empire gone, with Wales and Scotland moving into more independent postures, with the troubling spectre of a united Europe (and despite the raucous hype of "Cool Britannia"), the English seem to have entered a collective crisis of national identity.

Jeremy Paxman has set himself the task of finding just what exactly is going on. Why, he wonders, "do the English seem to enjoy feeling so persecuted? What is behind the English obsession with games? How did they acquire their odd attitudes to sex and food? Where did they get their extraordinary capacity for hypocrisy?" He ranges widely in pursuit of answers, sifting through literature, cinema and history. It is an intriguing investigation, encompassing many aspects of national life and character (such as it is), including the obligatory visit to that baffling phenomenon, the funeral of Princess Diana. Yet Paxman finds something fresh and interesting to say about even that now rather threadbare topic. In the end, he seems to find further questions to ask instead of answers. But why not? To him it is a sign that the English are acquiring a new sense of self. And some indication of this might lie in the obvious response to his remark that the English, being top of the British Imperial tree, had nicknames for the fellow nationalities--Jock, Taffy, Paddy and Mick--but there was no corresponding name for an Englishman. Of course, there is now, and it comes from one of the bits of empire to which so many undesirables were exported: Whinging Pom.

This is a book which seems to have annoyed a lot of people; few bestsellers get such a low star rating. Why? Paxman's subtitle is "A Portrait of a People", and I suspect this may be where the problem lies. I cannot imagine anyone bought this book without seeing Paxman on television. His style, whether accosting politicians or taking ignorant students to task on University Challenge, is abrasive, opinionated and impatient. Also, of course, intelligent, witty and direct. So when we find these qualities in his book, it can hardly come as a surprise.

I've read "The English" three times now since it came out. It is certainly enjoyable, undoubtedly provocative. But it isn't so much a portrait of the English people as a collection of human beings, as a discussion of the IDEA of Englishness; the idea which English people have about themselves, and which foreigners have about us. This idea of Englishness, like most people's self-image, is only very slightly the product of honest self-examination, and consists in bulk of vanity, self-deceit and wishful thinking. Perhaps, when we see this self-image reflected back in such a harsh light, we are a bit taken aback.

Of course not all English people share the same view of what it is to be English, and Paxman gives a lot of time to the particular myth of Englishness which was developed to keep up civilian morale during the Second World War; the extent to which we embraced that image, and the way it has been undermined in the decades since. This is an interesting tale, but has relatively little to do with what "The English" are really like.

Paxman's jolly rant is highly amusing, and helps us see both the weakness and the strengths of this national mythology. Only by turning on it the same cool, appraising gaze that Paxman does will we be able to break free of our own PR and come to terms with our place in the 21st century. For a book on what "The English" are really like in their daily lives, try Kate Fox's gentle and self-depreciatory anthropological expedition through the country in Watching the English: The Hidden Rules of English Behaviour.
I really enjoyed this book. A great read for anyone who has had the pleasure of observing that unique species; the English, from some sort of objective view. Paxman packs the book full of little interesting anecdotes, views, stories, and visions of the English. It provides some insight into these people, but that isn't really the point. The book is simply showing their facets, how they look at life and those core values that they have. I'm not sure if you can enjoy this book as a proud English nationalist, it hacks away the nice curtains around the English world and exposes it to the sunlight a little too much. I read passages out to my friends; the non-English, or those who have lived abroad for many years, fell about laughing. The English... well some of them were quite offended actually. Still, it's all in good fun. Enjoy!

So what is it about The English that makes us what we are - so confidently superior yet crippled by a sense of failure? That fascinating question never quite gets an answer, but maybe that doesn't matter so much. Paxman takes us on an eclectic, entertaining tour of history, fiction and anecdotes that weave a colourful tapestry. At the end of it all, I'm not much closer to understanding The English, but it was fun on the way!

I enjoyed this book, Paxman examines many influences on the English nature, the Church, Schools, the Empire both in its accumulation and its decline, geography, women, war, Europe, to name but a few, more than giving us the English now it shows us where we were and why, perhaps now, there is this crisis of identity. Paxman indicates where we might go, but the book is mainly historical. To answer our German friends criticism, the reason no identification is given, is because the English are lurching between the old ideals and something new. It is just that we do not know what that is yet, but Paxman does give us his thoughts on this point. The witty observations and style of the book, make what could be a heavy subject a first class read.

About two years ago, a Romanian friend of mine asked me for some help on a dissertation she was preparing called 'The National Identity of the English'. This, to her was a completely natural request for help: she could have easily answered, as could any half-intelligent Romanian, the reverse question on Romanian national identity, even in these troubled times. However, to me, this 'simple' question posed enormous problems. I could not find one book to help me. Scotland... yes, Wales... yes and even Britain but not England.

Eventually, after weeks of fruitless search, the best I could come up with was a book on the 'Empire English'. However, even here, it was a story of the British national identity which bears little resemblance to the England of today with a 'crisis' of devolution of Britain and prospects of further 'encroachment' on our England from Europe.

This book takes us on a journey through time. The move from the typically British identity to a new English one of today. Paxman's sharp, if journalistically cynical, observation and writings lead us towards the recognition of a new English nationalism and the picture of one that will emerge after Britain has finally separated. It could be recommended to any Englishman or women who want to express their idea of England and to any foreigner who wants to know who we are.

Many reviewers of The English on Goodreads seem to be more concerned with the author, Jeremy Paxman, than with the actual book. I suppose this is one of the hazards of being a well-known TV face. Since I don't live in the UK and don't watch television, I'd barely even heard of him before I picked up this book, so you won't find any prejudice in this review.

As the poet Burns suggested, it is hard to see ourselves as others see us. This is true of nations as of people, and Paxman's struggles to describe and define his compatriots are understandable. He comes to no grand conclusions, apart from noting that, while much that is external has changed since the end of the Victorian era, the English are still recognisably the same people they always were. As a student of history and a foreigner who knows the English pretty well, I think this is true, even obvious.
The charm of a book like this, though, is not in its conclusions but in the tapestry of fact and suggestion woven by the author out of his considerable erudition (as well as, doubtless, a great deal of research). I learnt quite a few interesting, amusing and surprising things while reading this book, even though there weren't any shattering revelations or insights to be gained from it. I enjoyed the writing; its friendly, conversational tone wears its learning lightly. As for its politics, which appear to have infuriated a number of reviewers on this site, I found them generally fair-minded and unobtrusive, though the attempt to be 'gender-inclusive' falls rather flat and probably won't satisfy ardent feminists either.

The one glaring omission, as far as I could see, was music. Paxman does refer, once or twice, to the enormous effect England has had on contemporary popular music; in this regard it is second only to the USA. However, apart from speculating that the English weather, which tends to keep people indoors, may have something to do with it, Paxman says little about the subject. Surely any study of the English people and character must try to explain how the English, not much known for their music before the second half of the twentieth century, suddenly came to produce so much brilliant and inspired music. But perhaps this is a task for a specialist.

As a non-English reader, I found this book not only fascinating but widely enlightening for as to understand much more clearly the "why's" of Englishness. Through a recent business trip in England, I found this book in a convenience store and immediately found myself reading the most reveling story of the origins, habits, customs and even vices of this incredible culture that has given so much (in good and bad) to the world. For the first time I could krystal clear comprehend the differences (huge...more As a non-English reader, I found this book not only fascinating but widely enlightening for as to understand much more clearly the "why's" of Englishness. Through a recent business trip in England, I found this book in a convenience store and immediately found myself reading the most reveling story of the origins, habits, customs and even vices of this incredible culture that has given so much (in good and bad) to the world. For the first time I could krystal clear comprehend the differences (huge) between Scots, Irish, Welsh and English, which as a foreigner are not always clear (from the outside, you are in great risk of believing for all of your life that Jack's Union flag is the English flag, and never understand either the difference between St. George, St. Andrew and / or St. Patrick). Take the case of Renaissance; this is the first time I understand why are there so many outstanding representatives of literature or choral music in England and not so sculptors or painters for instance. Why French food is an art and not so English food is was another interesting discovery. Being "English" as a choice vs. being British as a convenience, well, fascinating hipothesis. It definitely is a "must"; read it.

Paxman, the famous UK television presenter known for his caustic interviewing - and generally coming across as a sneering, aggressive, pedantic and lecturing bully, also has written a few books. While I cannot stand his personality http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SIE5cT... , I did enjoy his book On Royalty - A Very Polite Inquiry into Some Strangely Related Families from a few years ago, where his vain, egotistical and superficial tone was somewhat dampened, perhaps because it was too difficult for him to sneer through a typewriter. With The English, that judgmental tone - condescension and superiority to all those who do not see the world in the same, simplified way as him (a rigid and monotone liberalism), coupled with an arrogance and irreverence to the rich and 'elite' - both hallmarks of a permanently embittered and irredeemably spiteful man - color every page of The English, an inquiry into what traits and attitudes are essential to the English character, with forays into English cultural and political history. Even when Paxman uncomfortably strays into simpering emotionalism, his boorish and judgmental tone colors every thought. Paxman should be boiled down to a saucy, viscous ooze and used to scrub away otherwise intractable rust and embarrassing stains and spills.
Reading this in 2012, & not on its first publication in 1998, I was struck by its out-of-date feel; 14 years has changed England still more from a cozy place we reminisce about over tea-and-crumpets to an alarmingly uncomfortable dystopia of everything that we English have held close to our hearts for centuries! England, as a viable country has ceased to exist except in works of fiction.

From his insufferable intellectual arrogance, his belief that he holds some kind of moral high ground, to his unconscious snobbery, he puts the English to his avenging sword, no doubt made in Germany! As an example of his agenda is the use throughout of the word/epithet 'soccer', instead of 'football'... showing his public-school prejudice against the working-man's game. Paxman is not an American, so this usage is gratuitous abuse, knowing that no football fan would use 'soccer' except as an ironic jibe at 'rugger-buggers' or 'egg-chasers'!!

A surprisingly readable account of the historical events and influences that have contributed to the development of Englishness and the unique character of this island race. Whether you are proud to be English, riddled with guilt about our historical associations with colonialism and the slave trade or are looking for an insight into what makes the English who they are, this makes a pretty good fist of things. Paxman differentiates the national characteristics of the English from the British as a whole and traces the changes that have brought us to where we are today; less sure of ourselves and, arguably, in search of a new identity, both at home - as we cope with the influx of Europeans - and in trying to establish where we stand in the wider world order. Whether you are a Paxman fan or find his intellectual snobbery and smugness irritating, this account is undeniably well-researched and is delivered with wit and self-deprecating humour, if at times it is a little rambling. A good read.(less)

In Jeremy Paxman's, The English, A Portrait of a People, the author attempts to establish a national identity for the English, not British, people. With their Celtic roots, he argues that the Welsh and Scots have a strong â€œnationalâ€• identity. The Welsh have managed to hold on to their language and their songs while the Scots have their bagpipes, Parliament, legal system, and field their own football teams in World Cup competitions. So what about the English?

Paxman traces the history of the British stereotype, beginning with the obese, meat-eating, ale-drinking John Bull in the 18th Century, followed by the stiff-upper-lipped Englishman of the 19th and early 20th Centuries. The latter stereotype is the result of the British public (private in the U.S.) school system in which boys are treated badly as a matter of course, made to eat vile or tasteless food, and are expected to just â€œtake it.â€• Their training served them well in the two world wars. But what about their 21st Century identity? That is the essence of the book.