

## II.1.7

### The World Facing New Challenges

# Contemporary History – Regional and social identity in the UK

nach einer Idee von Paul Jenkinson



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Diese Reihe gibt den Schüler:innen und Schülern einen kurzen Überblick über die regionalen und sozialen Identitäten im Vereinigten Königreich. Das übergeordnete Ziel der Einheit sind interkulturelle Kompetenzen, mit denen die Lernenden die Diskussionen infolge des Brexit besser einordnen können.

#### KOMPETENZPROFIL

Klassensstufe: 10–13

Dauer: 8 Unterrichtsstunden

Kompetenzen: 1. Leseverstehen: unterschiedliche Texte verstehen; 2. Hörverstehen; Hörsehverstehen: Videos und Bildmaterial verstehen, einordnen, analysieren; 3. Schreibkompetenz: Diese Reihe gibt einen kurzen Überblick über die regionalen und sozialen Identitäten im Vereinigten Königreich.

Thematische Bereiche: Großbritannien, Monarchie, Ständedenken, Zeitgeschichte

Medien: Texte, Bilder, Videos, interaktive Übungen, Cartoons

## Inequalities in the UK

M 1

“If the regions are to rise, London must take a hit”

I recall one word that dominated a business seminar in Manchester some time ago. The seminar was on the north-south divide, and the word was London. It was obsessive. Why does London keep taking our best people, everyone asked? Why do our children all want to get to London?

This week’s report by Lord Kerslake<sup>1</sup> on the north-south divide presents the problem in graphic terms. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) shows Britain with the widest regional inequality of any advanced nation. London’s economy is growing at between two and four times the rate of the north. It is blessed with better health, better trains, better skills. The south-east has largely escaped austerity<sup>2</sup>, its public spending rising £2bn in a decade. The north’s has fallen by £6bn. Fixing this gap will require action “on a level with Germany post-unification”, the report says, when trillions were spent over decades on the former east.

Some of this gloom is misleading. Surveys claim London is the least happy region in the land, the north far more content. The OECD and the Institute for Fiscal Studies have also shown that inequality in Britain is less between north and south than between particular parts. Leeds contrasts with Rotherham. East London is poorer than Haringate.

In addition, low house prices are starting to draw people out of town, followed by companies such as Goldman Sachs, PricewaterhouseCoopers and JP Morgan. Just over 10 years ago only 1% of emigrants from London went northwards. That is now 13%. Cities are critical to any revival, and some of these are clearly on the turn. They are developing “Latin quarters”, seen as crucial in keeping “young creative” nearby, as in Birmingham’s Jewellery Quarter and Manchester’s Northern Quarter. The worst problems are the smaller places: the Barnsleys, Blackburns and Oldhams.



A man passes a closing down shop in Manchester, Britain, Nov. 22, 2023.

© ddp / Jon Super Xinhua / eyevine

north-south divide must be countered. This will happen only if the “levelling” is real. London should ready itself for a hit.

Source: Simon Jenkins: *If the regions are to rise London must take a hit*, in: *The Guardian* 28th of February 2020, found at <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/feb/28/regions-london-northern-cities-young-people> [last access: 11/03/2024]

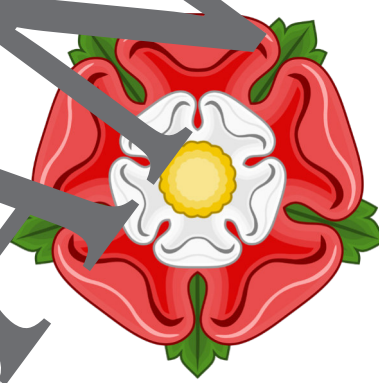
1 **Lord Kerlake**: former Head of the Civil Service and Secretary for Communities and Local Government – 2 **austerity**: a government policy to drastically reduce spending – 3 **Mancunians**: inhabitants of Manchester – 4 **dollops**: amounts (symbolic: like a large amount of soft food dropped off a spoon) – 5 **insuperable**: impossible to be successfully dealt with – 6 **Heathrow**: London’s largest and most important airport – 7 **Crossrail**: a new fast and frequent railway being built into London from the South East – 8 **HS2**: a controversial high-speed rail link to the north-west, now limited to the Midlands – 9 **subservient**: willing to do what other people want

### Tasks

1. Describe area inequalities in the UK and identify how some recent changes are being implemented.
2. Explain why the journalist is critical of the levelling-up concept and central government.
3. Identify and comment upon the changes the journalist suggests in order to make London less attractive.
4. Select a region that you are especially interested in and prepare a presentation about it. The presentation can be in any form you wish, from a short video in English to a traditional talk.
5. Research the origins of the national emblems of the four regions of the UK. Write a brief summary of each.



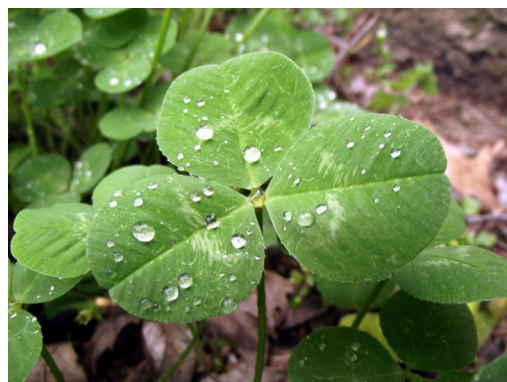
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## Educational Elitism – Is Class an inescapable feature of the UK?

M 3

### I'm northern and working class – I was made to feel unwelcome at Cambridge

Today, Labour MP for Tottenham, David Lammy, published the findings of a recent Freedom of Information request which looked to profile the diversity – in terms of ethnicity and socio-economic background – of students who received a place at Oxbridge<sup>1</sup> in the last seven years. And, not surprising to many, the results are bleak. The statistics show that more offers were made to Etonians<sup>2</sup> than to kids on free school meals across the whole country. 82 per cent of placeholders in 2015 came from the top two social classes, and only one in four colleges across Cambridge made offers to black applicants, each time offering a meagre one or two places. Another finding, perhaps surprising to many, shows that more offers were made to applicants from just five home counties<sup>3</sup> than to applicants from the whole of the North of England. Between 2010 and 2015, Cambridge made more offers to applicants from Oxfordshire<sup>4</sup>, than to applicants from Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester combined. And while both universities report an increase in admissions from state schools across the country, the figure fluctuating between 55 and 60 per cent since 2005, it's deeply unimpressive when a mere 7 per cent of the population is privately educated. The bias in favour of the country's social, educational and financial elite is shockingly unbalanced and irresponsible, especially when Oxbridge alone receives £800m a year of taxpayer money. It's not shocking to northern, working-class or BAME<sup>5</sup> students. This kind of bias from elite institutions is incredibly commonplace, even when the grades and talent are there – and in abundance, I might add. As a working-class person from Carnforth<sup>6</sup> (a small town right next to Lancaster), I was one of the lucky few who bucked the statistics and achieved an offer, which told me I'd never get a place, receiving an offer back in 2010. I studied medicine at Queen's College Cambridge – which according to Lammy's previous report was a marginally better year in terms of diverse acceptances. It was a dream come true, a "boy-done-good" story which made my parents, and myself, incredibly proud. Against the odds, from one of the town's roughest schools, I'd got the offer, got the grades, and excitedly purchased a suit from the discount section at Preston Debenhams<sup>7</sup> ready to "go up" – they call it – to Cambridge.



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Before I got there, I didn't have a clue about the class, race, or the North-South divides that apparently every other educationally or financially privileged kid did, and would spend their time patronisingly explaining to me. I, and the few other students in my year who fell outside

30 of the white, upper-middle class, public-school educated norm, knew how unwelcome our attendance at this crippling elite university was – and we were constantly reminded of it. People were proud of the bombastic fact that “they'd never been to the North”, and “anywhere North of Zone 2<sup>8</sup> is far enough for me”, their comments laced with classist implications that the apparently culturally barren “North” wasn't worth a visit. Professors and lecturers were

35 shocked by my accent, my mode of speaking and reasoning, with one Director of Studies once asking me if “Cambridge was really the right place for someone like me”, after I'd got a particularly mediocre 2:1<sup>9</sup> in a mock exam. In the end, I departed the Vet Med course, graduating in History of Science instead, desperate not to spend another three years in clinical school feeling like a leper because of my working-class background. There were so many

40 instances, shared by so many like me, of people explaining and through that reifying<sup>10</sup> – the class, North-South and race divides. These constant encounters solidified the feeling that nobody really wanted you there, but they had to take you because your presence was helpful for balancing out statistics like those published by Lammy<sup>11</sup> for you. I only ever felt tokenistic, like my presence was at worst an administrative error, and at best a tick to be ticked. Class and

45 race divides are entrenched both in the application and entrance system, and also once you're through the giant oak doors of whatever college you're unlikely to get a place at. While graduates of these two towering institutions continue to furnish our courts, banks and parliament, the country's elite will continue to fail them when they are put there to represent, their disconnection from people who fall outside of their social and racial category leading to no

50 real understanding of what someone like me is like. [...]

Source: Tom Rasmussen: *I'm northern and working class – I was made to feel unwelcome at Cambridge*, in: *Independent*, 20th of October 2017, found at <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/oxford-cambridge-david-lammy-diversity-north-class-race-not-welcome-a8011101.html>

1 **Oxbridge**: the prestigious universities of Oxford and Cambridge – 2 **Eton (Etonians)**: an elite private school at Windsor, near London – 3 **Home counties**: the counties neighbouring London and predominantly wealthy – 4 **Wiltshire**: one of the rich counties in the south of England – 5 **BAME**: black, Asian, minority ethnic – 6 **Carnforth/Lancaster/Preston**: towns in the poorer north-west of England – 7 **Debenhams**: a department store chain – 8 **Zone 2**: London's Underground Zone 2 surrounds Central London – 9 **mediocre 2:1**: a university degree grade which equals 60%–69% – 10 **to reify**: making something abstract into a fact/ (here) making a cliché into a fact

## Tasks

1. In the text, Eton College, an elite private school, is mentioned together with one of Britain's most prestigious universities, Cambridge. What is your reaction to the following costs of education and what conclusions can you draw from them?
  1. Eton's yearly fee: £42,500 basic; annual extras include, for example, £1,450 for a 45 minute music lesson per week and between £1,500 – £3,000 for activities
    - a) Cambridge University (UK undergraduate students) annual tuition fee £9,250 (all UK universities have their fees capped at this level) plus estimated living costs of £10,000 (the cost of books, study equipment, research materials, visits and field studies are in addition)
  2. Show how educational discrimination persists at Oxbridge universities.
  3. Describe the various emotions and feelings Tom Rasmussen experienced and account for them.
  4. Comment on the attitudes displayed by the public school educated students. Explain how this leads to continued social division.
  5. Write about one of the following topics:
    - a) "Everyone's potential from birth is defined by the class into which they are born." Discuss your view about this statement.
    - b) If you were an employer interviewing job applicants with similar qualifications, what would influence your final choice of a candidate? Provide an in-depth explanation of the criteria you would use and why.
  6. Watch the video *Should we abolish private schools?*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pN36jVSp1x0&t=219s> [last access: 14.03.2024]
 

While watching and listening to the first three minutes of the video end with "So what can we do about this?", tick the correct box to complete each sentence.

    - a) Graduates who went to private schools ...
      - more than those who didn't.
      - less than one expects.
      - the same.
    - b) Privately educated children get jobs from ...
      - their parents' friends.
      - people like themselves.
      - university contacts.
    - c) The percentage of the population who go to private school is ...
      - more than one expects.
      - very low.
      - increasing.
    - d) Eton has ...
      - an elitism.
      - a long list of prime ministers.
      - a parallel society.

The state school teacher complains about ...

    - her lack of resources.
    - unequal opportunities.
    - the number of private schools.

1) ... schools were founded to help ...

    - the church.
    - land owners.
    - people with little money.



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