

Book review on unveiling the cultural differences between americans and britons

[Countries](#), [England](#)



Introduction

The Anglo Files: A Field Guide to the British is a book that takes us through the life of a journalist who travelled to Britain for love. She was not prepared for the new cultural setting and thought there would be no much difference. Being her first time in Britain, and probably, with the information that Britain was a developed country, she thought there would be no much difference with what she has been accustomed to in United States. She had many expectations of which she ended up being frustrated (Lyll 29). From the accent, which was quite different, to the food, to how people related, there was a lot she was yet to experience. The book presents a typical view of an American who has had little experience with Britons and how they would react to the same. I found the book to be informative and a lesson to any other person who would wish to travel to a different place. It is always necessary to be acquainted with the environment through inquiry rather than assuming and being encountered with strange happenings.

Britain and America are two different nations, apart from the fact that they share a language; it is quite difficult for a typical American to understand a typical Briton. This is mainly because Britons are more reserved with their words compared to Americans. Unlike Americans who would call a spade a spade and not a big spoon, Britons consider it incorrect to mention some words directly. Sarah Lyall had a hard time figuring out what they implied until when she learned to relate the words to the situation. She also realized that Britons cherish ancient art pieces, this is displayed with the houses she visits where instead of having plain walls, and one would see traditional

equipments and art images of ancient times. Traditional artifacts are not only limited to their walls but also extend to their vehicles and public offices. In as much as this appears strange to Sarah, her Briton counterparts see it as normal and even appreciate it. The conservative aspect of the British culture is the main highlight of the book as the author describes it even when addressing serious issues that pertain to medication and education. It is a surprise that what is considered normal to mention like body parts in America is not normal in Britain. Teachers and medical practitioners have to use figures to explain what may be considered inappropriate to mention.

Similarities between Britons and Americans

Despite the many differences that the author found about the two countries, there remains to be certain similarities. Even though these were presented in a rather negative manner, the fact is Americans are reserved especially when it comes to personal privacy. The author mentioned about the neighborhood of the Britons where they socialize in a rather official rather than informal way. They rarely talk but are acquainted about each other through writing letters. Letters are written on a frequent basis of which the response is received almost immediately (Lyall, 93). This is compared to the American culture where not even a neighbor has a right to visit you when they wish. Everyone is considered to be busy and if you have to see someone, then you have to book an appointment. This is so serious that one can spend a whole month without seeing their neighbor. Unless the neighborhoods are flats where you can meet on the corridors, some

American homes are fences with tall perimeter wall that one cannot see what is happening in the next compound.

Another observable feature about the American and Briton culture is how a guest is introduced to a gathering. As long as it is a meeting that does not involve total strangers, the host will always be expected to introduce their guests. It does not sound right for a guest to simply introduce themselves unless they are talking on a one on one basis to stand and shout out their names. This is mainly because of other aspects of protocol and cultural differences which the guests may not be aware of. By allowing for an official introduction, it gives the host an opportunity to inform the congregation that he or she knows the person and that she is part and parcel of the meeting. This will also give the guest freedom to interact with the realization that she has been welcomed to be part of the gathering. An official introduction also allows the congregations as a whole to know about the guest who will save them the need of personally approaching him more her to ask about them.

Another similarity about the two cultures is public appearance. Dressing officially is a sign of seriousness in both cultures. This is the reason why [people have to go for official meeting dressed in official way. There are attitudes held towards individuals based on their dress code. Dressing will tell a third party more about the person they are addressing. It is always safe to make an appearance dressed in official clothes. This will minimize on any form of attention and question about the cultural inclination of an individual. It will also be easier for one to receive the needed attention when they dress in official. There is however on what is defined as official in United States and

United Kingdom. For instance, women are required to be in skirt suits in Britain as opposed to trouser suits. In United States, a suit is a suit for the women whether it's a skirt, dress or trouser, as long as it is accompanied by a court it is all acceptable. Officials for men are the same in both cultures, which saves them from any form of questions.

Differences between the American and Britain culture

Numerous differences have been displayed in the novel about the Britons and America. All this revolves around the conservative nature of the Briton culture and the liberal culture of the Americans. Compared to Americans, Britons cherish where they come, Americans care less about their original culture. To Americans, culture is history, which should be remembered in books rather than images. If people want to learn more about the culture, they will have to consult their history books. Britons cherish their culture in their possession, this acts as a reminder to them of where they have come from which is not only relevant to their ancestors but also to subsequent generations. The author mentioned about the artifacts on the walls of their houses as well as carvings in the cars, this plays a significant role in telling them of where they have come from.

Another difference that has been highlighted by the author is the figure of language used in United States and a modification of the same in Britain. Apart from the accent where by Britons and Americans strain to get what they are telling, there are those English words that are considered normal to mention. In Britain, words that pertain to differences in sexual orientation or mentioning certain body parts are not to be mentioned in public. Such words

are only known by heart and not publicly. The author describes of a scenario where his instructor avoided mentioning names such as nipple, breast and milk when explaining to her about a milk pump she had hired. The instructor used many words to explain without mentioning the words, which is considered inappropriate (Lyall, 132). The author also takes us through what sex education is like in Britain. The children are not given the real facts; teachers and parents have to use indirect words to teach their children about sex. They also avoid any direct eye contact when mention the subject of sex as it is considered inappropriate and more especially when addressing children.

The letter writing culture, which is considered ancient in the American culture, is a cherished practice in Britain. The author must have been surprised at the fact that in this error of technology where one can get the needed information through phone calls and emails, Britons depended on writing letters as the best way of communication. This is so serious that neighbors sharing a wall would rather write each other letters than spare some time to talk. It was even strange to say hi to a neighbor in the morning, this in Britain is considered an invasion and interference of privacy. Writing letters is considered to be an official way of addressing each other where the language will be precise and direct. This will also give the respondent time to calculate his or her words and ensure that what they are writing is acceptable. In America, even though neighbors do not interact frequently, they would rather talk over the phone than spend time drafting letters. Letter writing in America is considered time consuming where apart from the

fact that nobody has time to write them, nobody will also have time to read them. They hence look for other direct means of communicating where a response is guaranteed.

Opinion and analysis

Analyzing the literature work of Sarah Lyall, one can almost tell her attitude towards the Britain culture. This is a one-side opinion of how extreme the Britain culture is. This may hence be different from what another visitor to Britain may see. In as much as the author had a lot to criticize about the British culture, another visitor would have a lot to appreciate about them. There are in fact many Americans who feel Britons have a sense of identity compared to Americans who tend to pick on anything that comes their way (Lyall, 67). By maintaining cultural values, Britons are distinguished from other cultures and always gives them a reason to treasure what they believe is relevant. What the author has highlighted may appear strange to some Americans like Sarah, but for the Britons, this is a normal lifestyle. The opinion expressed by the author could be similar to what a visitor to another cultural environment would express. It is the interests that a person has, towards a different environmental setting that will make them strike a balance between what they like and what they dislike. They must be ready to compromise rather than criticize for them to adjust ultimately to the new setting.

Conclusion

Cultural difference is something that we have to accept and appreciate even as we relate with each other. In many cases, we are attracted to people not

realizing the backgrounds they are brought up in. in the process of striking a balance between our differences, we try to change them by suggesting that what they are following is not right and has to be changed. We do this also forgetting that there are a lot about our own cultural standing that does not necessarily please others. The book *The Anglo Files: A Field Guide to the British* is just a typical example of how most of us will react when we are encountered with a environment different from what we are used to. Just because a certain people do not follow what we are following does not mean that they are wrong. It simply means that we have a different perspective to issues, which we need to respect and appreciate. Americans have a tendency to believe that what they follow and adopt is the best in the world, which is the main reason why they walk around trying to influence people with their ideas and views. It is only a few countries such as Britain that has been able to stick to their cultural believes and retained them to the later.

Works cited

Lyall, Sarah. *The Anglo Files: A Field Guide to the British*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2009.