

# NATION OF WHINGERS

Language Function: describing character traits; discussing issues; reading comprehension

Vocabulary/Topic: national traits of character; Britishness; words related to: COMPLAIN  
adjectives of personality; nouns derived from adjectives

advanced  
 upper-intermediate  
 intermediate  
 pre-intermediate

## focus on talking

**Activity 1. Discuss these questions in pairs or small groups.**

1. Do different nationalities have different psychological characteristics? To what extent does someone's nationality determine his or her traits of character?
2. Are you a typical representative of your nation? Do you think you share a lot of traits of character with other people of your country?
3. English people are often told that they have lost their national identity - that there is no longer such thing as "Englishness". Is your country undergoing such identity crisis? Why yes / why not?



**Activity 2. In pairs, write a list of adjectives describing traits of characters of a) a typical person from your own country, b) a typical person from you partner's country, c) a typical Briton. Compare your lists. Are they similar or different? How good was your partner in describing psychological characteristics of your nation? How similar is your perception of the British people? Did you use the same adjectives or different?**

- A) A typical person from my country is .....
- B) A typical person from your country is .....
- C) A typical British person is .....

## focus on comprehension

**Activity 3. Read the article to find out answers to these questions.**

1. Which character trait do almost 35 per cent of British people associate with their own nation?
2. What percentage of surveyed people are happy with their modern-day manners?
3. What annoys Britons the most?
4. Why, according to Professor Cooper, has Great Britain become a nation of whiners?

# Britain has become a nation of whingers

British Press

A new survey carried out by the Post Office has shown that Britons are losing their stiff upper lip attitude, and are becoming a nation of whiners.

When asked what qualities British residents associated with their own nation, one in three questioned cited a tendency to moan.

Only ten per cent found the stiff upper lip attitude to be a defining character trait, and just 3 percent said formality was a defining characteristic. One in five said Britons were sarcastic.

Seven per cent of respondents believed British people should be proud of their modern-day manners, pointing to such qualities as: humour, wit and tolerance.

According to the survey, the things that annoy Britons the most are rudeness and anti-social behaviour.

"We've inherited a lot of these traits from America over the past few years as we have become a consumer-orientated society," the Daily Mail quoted Cary Cooper, Professor of Organisational Psychology and Health at the University of Lancaster.

"In a more prosperous society we expect it all to be done for us and complain when it isn't. In years gone by we'd just get on with it and do those things ourselves," Cooper added.



## focus on vocabulary

### Activity 4. Complete the sentence beginnings with appropriate endings.

1. If you keep a stiff upper lip, you ...

- A. speak rudely or disrespectfully to someone.    B. keep your emotions to yourself.
- 

2. *Whining, whinging* and *moaning* are words ...

- A. with similar meaning.    B. words with different meanings.
- 

3. The ability to combine words, ideas, etc to produce a clever type of humour is called ...

- A. wit    B. sarcasm
- 

## focus on vocabulary: COMPLAINING

### Activity 5. Look at these sentences and then match the bolded words to their definitions.

1. She was **beefing** about having to go to work on Saturday.
2. I wish you would stop **bellyaching**.
3. We **bewailed** our misfortune and the loss of our most treasured possession.
4. They are always **bitching** about other people in the office.
5. I can't stand the way she is always **carping**.

6. I still harbour a **grievance** against my employers for not promoting me.
7. I hate when clients are in a **grouchy** mood.
8. He spent the evening **grumbling** to me about his wife.
9. My wife is always **nagging** me about my diet.
10. My main **gripe** is that I'm not told things!

- A. to complain or criticize somebody continuously  
.....
- B. to complain or protest in a bad-tempered way, usually not loudly  
.....
- C. to complain (informal verb)  
.....
- D. to complain especially repeatedly and without good reason (2 words)  
.....

- E. a complaint (informal noun)  
.....
- F. complaining or bad-tempered (informal adjective)  
.....
- G. to complain about something expressing sorrow  
.....
- H. to make unkind or critical comments; to complain (informal verb)  
.....
- I. a real or imagined cause for complaining  
.....

## focus on vocabulary: adjectives of personality

Activity 6. Complete the sentences with adjectives from the box below.

sensitive	selfish	trustworthy	loyal
clumsy	proud	polite	tolerant
gentle	sensible	stubborn	rude

- Despite so much criticism, he remained ..... to his principles.
- She was too ..... to admit she was wrong.
- He's as ..... as a mule - you will never persuade him to apologize.
- He's very ..... about his baldness, so don't mention it.
- I have always found her ..... - you can be sure you can rely on her.
- I have never met such a ..... child behave - I really don't understand how his parents can put up with this sort of behaviour.
- I'm so ..... - that's the second glass I've broken today!
- How can you be so ..... ? You care only about yourself!
- She's quite ..... for her age - she always seems to make sound judgements.
- It wasn't very ..... of you to serve yourself without asking.
- Contrary to popular belief in the western world, Islam is traditionally very ..... towards other religions.
- He is such a ..... person - he wouldn't hurt a fly.

Activity 7. Write nouns for all the adjectives used in Activity 5.

sensitive - .....	selfish - .....	trustworthy - .....	loyal - .....
clumsy - .....	proud - .....	polite - .....	tolerant - .....
gentle - .....	sensible - .....	stubborn - .....	rude - .....