

How has tea shaped British history?

A

Tea etiquette



GROUP WORK

Group A

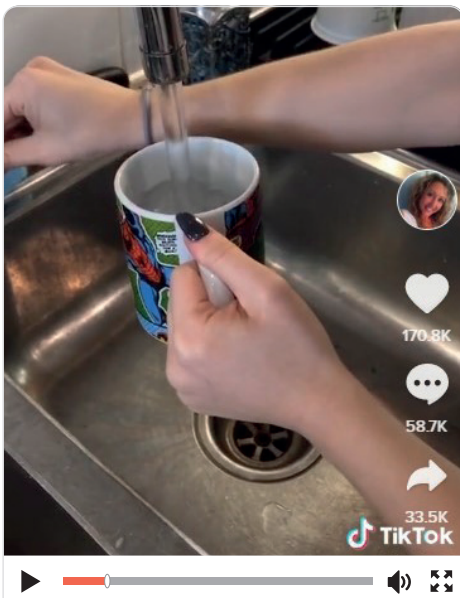


Culture Tip

The **Boston tea party** was an incident that took place in Boston in 1773. American colonists who were protesting a tax on tea, threw overboard 342 chests of tea that had been imported by the British East India Company.

◆ Tea etiquette

Group B



◆ Americans making hot tea

GROUP WORK

- 1 Present your document (source, topic, goal).
- 2 Explain how tea is presented (decorum, historical references).
- 3 Show how important tea is for British people. Give examples.
- 4 Exchange your findings with a classmate.

5 Phonology break

- Listen to the beginning of the first video (from 0'18 to 0'54), paying particular attention to the pronunciation of the /t/ consonant in the following words: *take, it, tea, strainer, stir*. What do you notice?
- Listen to and repeat the following words. Focus on the pronunciation of the letters in bold: *crease, loose leaf, dissolve, sandwich, pastry*.

- 6 **Pairwork:** React together to the tik tok video. Explain why it is shocking to Britons.



The British drink more than 60 billion cups of tea a year – so what is it about this humble brew that refreshes them so?

Whether they take their tea with milk, sugar, lemon or just plain, it's clear that the British have a fondness for its flavour. There's something about that firm bitterness that sparks devotion: the British consume 60 billion cups per year, according to the Tea and Infusions Organisation. That's more than 900 cups a year for every man, woman and child in Great Britain – though we no doubt all know someone who likes many more than that.

Tea has become entrenched in the British way of life, from the humble tea break to the afternoon tea to be enjoyed – in a jacket and tie, of course, gentlemen – at the very swankiest of London hotels. [...]

Anthropologist Kate Fox writes in her book *Watching the English* that there are several clear messages sent whenever a Brit makes a cuppa. She observes that the strongest brews of black tea – with the largest doses of these molecules – are typically drunk by the working class. The brew gets progressively weaker as one goes up the social ladder.

Milk and sweetener have their own codes. "Taking sugar in your tea is regarded by many as an infallible lower-class indicator: even one spoonful is a bit suspect (unless you were born before about 1955); more than one and you are lower-middle at best; more than two and you are definitely working class," she writes. Other rules involve when and how milk is added, if any. Making a point of drinking smoky Lapsang Souchong with no sugar or milk can be a sign of class anxiety in the middle class, Fox suggests: it's as far as possible as one can get from sweet, strong, milky mugs of the no-nonsense 'builder's tea'.

As for why the British drink an infusion of imported dried leaves at all, there are historical reasons aplenty for why tea came to wash up on Britain's shores. And one could come up with any number of rationales for why the current state of affairs was inevitable (boiling



◆ Kirin advertisement

water to make tea, for instance, made it less likely to give you a stomach bug).

A food scientist I once corresponded with pointed out something that seems to apply here. "In my opinion, food choices are driven by one's environment – the context," he wrote. You like what you like not necessarily because of any intrinsic quality, though obviously one can develop a taste for almost anything. A food or drink's real importance in your life may be because of everything the surrounds it – the culture of it.

Fox observes that in truth, alongside its chemical properties, tea is an infallible social space-filler. After having detailed the cultural meanings behind different methods of tea preparation, Fox writes, "Tea-making is the perfect displacement activity: whenever the English feel awkward or uncomfortable in a social situation (that is, almost all the time), they make tea."

It's also interesting to note that some of the molecules involved in the flavour of teas likely evolved as defenses against being eaten by birds, insects and other creatures. That is somewhat ironic, given how vigorously we humans seek it out – and how many social meanings we've attached to it.

◆ Veronique Greenwood, BBC, June 2006

- 1 Look at the illustration. Explain the difference between high tea and low tea and comment on the message of this ad.
- 2 Match the social classes with the type of tea they drink. Explain what it reveals about Britain.
- 3 Explain the 'culture of tea' and what it symbolises.
- 4 You are a consultant of the advertising department at Unilever. Discuss with your manager what should appear on a new ad for black tea to appeal to young people. Student A you are the consultant / Student B you are the manager.

Culture Tip

Builder's tea

Expression used to describe a cup of tea often brewed in a mug instead of a tea pot and generally made with cheap tea and often very strong with usually two or more spoons of sugar. It is called builder's tea as it is traditionally favoured by construction workers.



Traditional cups of tea are falling out of vogue with young people in the UK, according to PG Tips and Lipton owner Unilever.

The consumer goods giant has said that Generation Z and millennial consumers much prefer herbal teas and coffees instead. As a result, the firm is struggling to grow its black tea brands in western markets like the UK and the US. But why have young people's tastes changed so much?

Unilever's chief financial officer Graeme Pitkethly says that although young people do drink tea, it tends to be "quite high-end, expensive products". "I drink five or six cups of builder's tea a day, but unfortunately we are dying at a faster rate than generation Z and millennials are consuming it," he told investors. (...)

Nadia Sinel, 20, is a big fan of green tea and bubble tea. "Black teas are too strong and in some cases quite bitter, and then you have to put a lot of sugar or honey in to sweeten it," freelance songwriter Nadia Sinel, 20, tells the BBC. "I prefer green tea as it's more of a light floral taste and there's less caffeine."

Ms Sinel thinks young people like to drink green tea because of its health benefits and the fact "it tastes nicer", and other popular drinks include bubble tea – a beverage that originated in Taiwan in the late 1990s – and a lemonade drink from the US called Calypso.

Fran Mcmonagle, 28, a lifestyle blogger living in London, agrees that the traditional builder's brew is not so popular with millennials any more either. "It's not as ingrained in our culture anymore. I feel that we've become more of a nation of coffee drinkers," she says.

Another reason for the fall in demand is that many younger people are trying to reduce their intake of

dairy amid concerns about the industry's impact on the environment.

"Dairy alternatives don't go as well in cups of tea. The texture of soy milk and almond milk are completely different, so it changes the cup of tea, making it thicker or more watery," Ms Mcmonagle adds. "In coffee, I find it's not as noticeable."

Plus, a renewed demand for afternoon tea has led to people serving their own version at home, using expensive teas purchased from upmarket tea shops and independent brands.

Ms Mcmonagle also says that the rise of Instagram means that beverages need to make a big impact so that people want to take a photo of them.

"People are more likely to post a photo of their iced latte or Unicorn Frappuccino – a viral drink made popular by Starbucks in the US – and share it with their friends, than a standard cup of tea."

The UK has also seen an explosion of demand for bubble tea in 2019, with new shops popping up in several UK cities. [...] Bubble tea is now so popular it can be found all over London. Biju focuses instead on using a range of freshly-brewed loose leaf black, green and herbal teas, fresh milk, as well as vegan milks and a variety of toppings. [...]

Given all the new teas available on the market, a resurgence of the traditional cuppa is unlikely, believes Ms Mcmonagle.

"The builder's brew is quite old school, it's not necessarily a brand that anyone associates with being modern anymore," she says.

♦ Mary-Ann Russon, *BBC News*, 18 October 2019

1 Read the title and the first paragraph. Explain what Unilever worries about and what is at stake.

2 List what is now fashionable and why.

3 Identify the elements (people, ideology) responsible for the new trend and explain how this can be linked to British culture.

4 You are an influencer. Write a tweet to promote a new black tea you have just tasted and really enjoyed.

Word Spot

Nouns

builder's tea
brew
beverage

Adjectives

trendy
cultural
shocking

Verbs

rule over
trade with
spy on
protest
debunk: show to be
false

colonise
abuse of so
be deprived of sth

Expressions

make an impact on
a win win situation

Tea at all costs

A

For all the tea in China



There was a time when Maps of the world were redrawn in the names of plants, when two empires, Britain and China, went to war over two Flowers: the poppy and the camellia.

5 The poppy, *Papaver somniferum*, was processed into opium, a narcotic used widely throughout the Orient in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The drug was grown and manufactured in India, a subcontinent of princely states united under the banner of
10 Great Britain in 1757. Opium was marketed, solely and exclusively, under the aegis of England's empire in India by the Honourable East India Company.

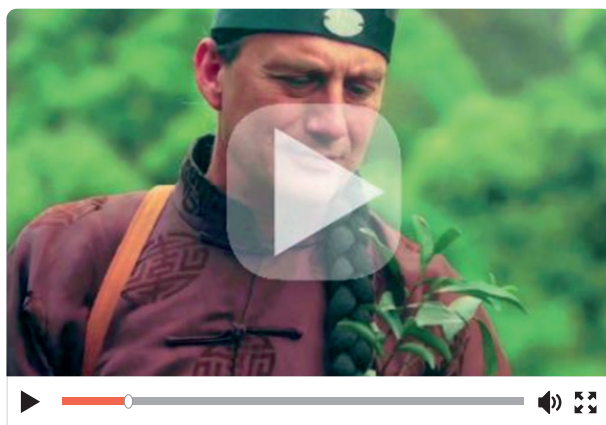
The camellia, *Camellia sinensis*, is also known as tea. The empire of China had a near complete monopoly on tea, as it was the only country to grow, pick,
15 process, cook, and in all other ways manufacture, wholesale, and export “the liquid jade”.

For nearly two hundred years the East India Company sold opium to China and bought tea with
20 the proceeds. China, in turn, bought opium from British traders out of India and paid for the drug with the silver profits from tea.

The opium-for-tea exchange was not merely profitable to England but had become an indispensable
25 element of the economy. Nearly £1 in every £10 sterling collected by the government came from taxes on the import and sale of tea – about a pound per person per year. Tea taxes funded railways, roads, and civil service salaries, among the many other necessities of
30 an emergent industrial nation. Opium was equally significant to the British economy, for it financed the management of India – the shining jewel in Queen Victoria's imperial crown. [...]

The triangular trade in botanical products was the
35 engine that powered a world economy, and the wheels of empire turned on the growth, processing, and sale of plant life: poppies from India and camellias from China, with a cut from each for Great Britain.

By the middle of the nineteenth century the British-Chinese relationship was a tragically unhappy. The
40 Exalted and Celestial Emperor in Peking had “officially” banned the sale of opium in China in 1729, but it continued to be smuggled in for generations after-



◆ *Tea War: The Adventures of Robert Fortune*, 2016

wards. (Notably, the sale of opium was also forbidden
45 by Queen Victoria within the British Isles. She, however, was largely obeyed.) Opium sales increased quickly and steadily; there was a fivefold growth in volume in the years 1822-37 alone. Finally, in 1839, the leading Chinese court official in the trading port
50 of Canton, rankled by the profligacy of the foreigners and the pestilence of opium addiction among his own people, held the entire foreign encampment hostage, ransoming the three hundred Britons for their opium, then worth \$6 million (about \$145 million
55 in today's dollars). When the opium was surrendered and the hostages released, the mandarin ordered five hundred Chinese coolies to foul nearly three million pounds of the drug with salt and lime and then wash the mixture out into the Pearl River. In response,
60 young Victoria sent Britain's navy to war to keep the lucrative opium-for-tea arrangement alive.

In battle, Britain trounced China, whose rough wooden sailing junks were no match for Her Majesty's steam-powered modern navy. As part of the peace
65 treaty, England won concessions from the Chinese that after a century of diplomatic entreaty no one had thought possible: the island of Hong Kong plus the session of five new treaty of trading ports on the mainland.

◆ Sarah Rose, *For All the Tea in China: How England Stole the World's Favorite Drink and Changed History*, Penguin, 2010

- 1 Explain the trade relationship between China and Britain.
- 2 Show it was not a win/win situation.
- 3 Watch the trailer and describe the strategy used by Britain to keep selling tea.
- 4 Indicate the consequences of this “tea war” on global trade and history at large. Link these past events to the present situation.

B

The sun never sets on the British Empire

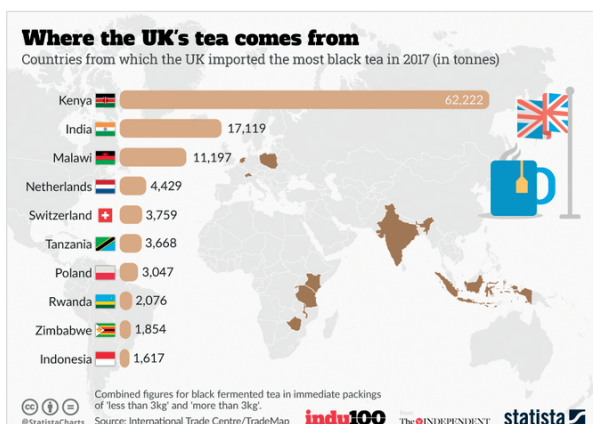


◆ British Empire, 1920

- 1 Explain the famous saying: “The sun never sets on the British Empire.”
- 2 Imagine how tea trade could have been instrumental in mapping this Empire.
- 3 You are a historian. Use the map to illustrate how Britain used its colonies for tea trade.



C Modern tea trade



♦ *The Independent*, March 2018



♦ Kenyans say colonial UK stole land for tea, October 2019.

- 1 Look at the infographics and compare the different countries from which the UK imports black tea. Use the map to explain why Kenya was chosen as leading country for tea importation.
- 2 Watch the video. Show how both countries are still linked today.
- 3 Explain what Kenyans call on the UN for.

4 Grammar break

- Explain why the past perfect is often used in the text.
- Complete the following sentence: The past perfect is used in English to describe an action or an event which occurred or was completed ... another event in the past.
- Put the verb in brackets into a more suitable form, simple past or past perfect: Before the first Opium War ... (break out), Britain ... (become) a nation of tea drinkers, and the demand for Chinese tea ... (rise) dramatically.

- 5 You work for the UN. Prepare a plea to defend one of these Kenyan tea workers.

Your task



You represent the UK at the yearly World Tea Conference in the USA. Explain the importance of the UK in the history of tea trade.

- 1** Find more information on the World Tea Conference on <https://www.worldteaexpo.com/>
- 2** Browse the net and list key elements in the history of tea trade.
- 3** Prepare key figures and strong arguments to make your point.
- 4** Think of rhetorical questions to make your speech livelier.
- 5** Check your pronunciation on online dictionaries.

Language challenge

Parler d'histoire : prétérit simple et *pluperfect*

- Quand on relate des événements historiques, le temps à utiliser est le **prétérit simple (V + -ed)** : il s'agit du temps employé pour évoquer des événements révolus, en rupture avec le moment présent, de la manière la plus objective possible.
- On utilise également parfois le ***pluperfect*** formé avec l'auxiliaire *had* et le participe passé du verbe (*had* + V-EN). Il s'agit d'un équivalent du plus-que-parfait.
- Le *pluperfect* indique qu'un événement est antérieur à un autre événement passé, lui au prétérit :

The Emperor had banned the sale of opium in China in 1729, but it continued to be smuggled in for generations afterwards.

- On trouve parfois le *pluperfect* dans des propositions de temps introduites par *after*. Il est également souvent utilisé, dans un contexte passé, avec des adverbes qui expriment une antériorité ou qui permettent de faire un bilan (*just, already, (never) before*)...

He went to the drawing room where tea had already been served.

Britain started to harvest its own tea in India after Robert Fortune had stolen the secret of tea production from China.

❶ À partir de la chronologie suivante, écrivez un texte. Utilisez le prétérit et le *pluperfect*, ainsi que des compléments circonstanciels de temps introduits par *after* ou *before*.

- a. 1657: Tea is sold for the first time as a health beverage in London at Garway's Coffee House.
- b. 1662: Catherine Braganza, a Portuguese princess, marries King Charles II. Her taste for tea causes a fad at the royal court and spreads to the wealthy classes.
- c. 1669: The English East India Company monopolizes British tea imports.
- d. 1680: The Duchess of York introduces tea to Scotland.
- e. 1717: Thomas Twining opens the Golden Lyon in London, the first tea shop in England.

❷ Mettez le verbe entre parenthèses au prétérit simple ou au *pluperfect*. Attention aux verbes irréguliers !

- a. When she ... (arrive) home, her husband ... (already / prepare) tea and her daughter ... (just / set) the table.
- b. In 2016, my husband ... (break) the tea set that my mother ... (buy) in China a few years before.
- c. Throughout the 18th century, tea ... (grow) in popularity in all segments of society, so that, by the early 19th century, it ... (become) Britain's national drink.

L'aspiration de /p/, /t/ et /k/ en début de mot

- Les consonnes /p/, /t/ et /k/ sont prononcées avec une aspiration quand elles apparaissent en début de mot : *park, tea, coffee*...
- Il n'y a pas d'aspiration si la consonne est précédée d'une autre consonne (*stop, space, scare*) ou si elle apparaît en fin de mot (*it, rock, soap*).

❶ Écoutez les mots suivants et répétez-les. Soyez particulièrement attentif.ve à la prononciation des consonnes en gras (aspirées ou non aspirées).
tea pot • taste • tax • people • treaty • trade • culture • cup • power • country • pound sterling