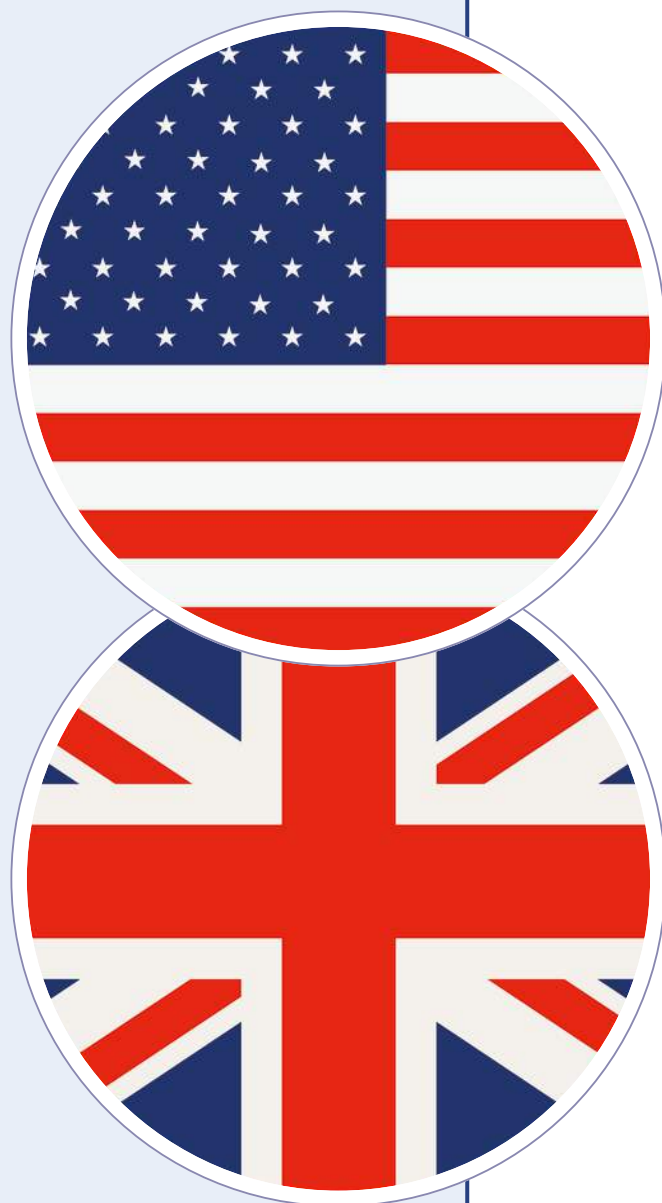


Englisch betrifft uns

EBU on the Web 2019/3

Topical texts
in English lessons

- *Comprehension*
- *Analysis*
- *Creative writing*
- *Background Information*



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The Topic

Brexit: "Dear Germany" – A letter by the editor of The Sun

While representatives of the European Union and the United Kingdom were negotiating a compromise Brexit deal, a group of over 20 German politicians, celebrities, athletes and business leaders wrote an emotional letter to the British *Times* newspaper in January 2019, urging Britain to stay in the EU and insisting that the door to the European Union would always remain open to their "British friends". Some days later the editor of the British popular newspaper the Sun published a reply to this letter, in which it was made clear that there is no alternative to Brexit.

Reference to obligatory topics

Britain and Europe; Britain and Germany; the British press; the role of the press; analysis of newspaper articles

Background information – further links

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-32810887>

"Brexit: All you need to know about the UK leaving the EU": this section of the BBC website provides a variety of background information about the EU and Brexit, including links to further resources.

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/world/europe/what-is-brexit.html>

"What Is Brexit? A Simple Guide to Why It Matters and What Happens Next": this section of the website of the New York Times also gives background information about Brexit including a detailed map of the EU referendum.

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/0/european-parliament-elections-2019-date-does-uk-vote-even/>

"European elections 2019: What date does the UK vote – and why are we even taking part?": this section of the *Telegraph* takes a look at why the British are still expected to take part and what it means for British MEPs.

The Text

The Times Letter: 'German friends' urge Britain to stay in EU

18 January 2019

"DEAR GERMANY: Beckenbauer, Beck's, Bosch, BMW, Brahms, bratwurst ... we LOVE you too, Germany. But we still want Brexit"

The Sun 23 January 2019

The Link (URL)

- <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/8258239/we-love-you-too-germany-but-still-want-brexit/>
- <https://www.franziska-brantner.eu/2019/01/18/times-letters-german-friends-urge-britain-to-stay-in-eu/>

Annotations

The *Times* letter from 'German friends'

ale – a type of beer made from malt

Channel – the English Channel: the area of sea between southern England and northern France

for good – permanently

irreversible – irreversible damage or change is so serious or so great that you cannot change something back to how it was before

panto – (*infml*) pantomime: a type of play for children that is performed in Britain around Christmas, in which traditional stories are performed with jokes, music, and songs

The *Sun*: 'Dear Germany'

affectionate – showing in a gentle way that you love someone and care about them

Berghain – a nightclub in Berlin

to boast – to talk too proudly about your abilities, achievements, or possessions

bouncer – someone whose job is to stand at the door of a club, bar etc. and stop unwanted people coming in

Burberry – a British fashion company which is famous for the check pattern that it uses on some of its high-quality clothes

Classic FM – a UK radio station broadcasting classical music

to cut your teeth – If you say that someone cuts their teeth doing a particular thing, at a particular time, or in a particular place, you mean that that is how, when, or where they began their career

delight – a feeling of great pleasure and satisfaction

divergence – the process or fact of separating or becoming different

drill – a tool or machine used for making holes in something

to fancy – to want something or want to do something

fee – an amount of money that you pay to do something or that you pay to a professional person for their work

gallon – a unit for measuring liquids, equal to eight pints. In Britain this is 4.55 litres, and in the US it is 3.79 litres

glee – a feeling of satisfaction and excitement

gorgeous – extremely beautiful and attractive

Great British Bake Off – a British television baking competition, in which a group of amateur bakers compete against each other

to guzzle – to eat or drink a lot of something, eagerly and **quickly** – usually showing disapproval

to haul oneself to one's feet – to get out of a miserable situation with a lot of effort

a match made in heaven – a marriage of two people who are exactly right for each other

mob-handed – (*infml*) together, in a large group

to mock – to laugh at someone or something and try to make them look stupid

to nab – (*infml*) here: to get something or someone quickly, especially before anyone else can get them

oaf – someone who is stupid or awkward, especially a man

odd – *here*: occasional, from time to time

regulatory – a regulatory authority has the official power to control an activity and to make sure that it is done in a satisfactory way

rest assured – (*formal*) used to emphasize that what you say is true or will definitely happen

rubbish – (*infml*) here: stupid

slidey – sliding door: a door that slides across or over/under an opening rather than swinging away from it

stag party – a party for men only, especially on a night before a man's wedding

sunlounger – a light chair like a folding bed, which you can sit or lie on outside

temerity – when someone says or does something in a way that shows a lack of respect for other people and is likely to offend

Topshop – a British shop in many towns in the UK that sells clothes for young women

touching – making you feel pity, sympathy, sadness etc.

unreliable – unable to be trusted or depended on

to urge – to strongly suggest that someone does something

in the wake of something – if something, especially something bad, happens in the wake of an event, it happens afterwards and usually as a result of it

wallet – a small flat case, often made of leather, that you carry in your pocket, for holding paper money, bank cards etc.

Assignments

1. Leading German politicians, celebrities, athletes and business leaders wrote a quite emotional letter to the British newspaper the *Times* newspaper in January 2019, asking their „British friends“ to stay in the European Union.
Think of reasons that could have convinced Britons to change their minds, possibly in a second referendum.
(Pre-reading assignment I)
2. Read the letter and summarize the main ideas put forward by the German signatories. Are there any parallels between their ideas and the reasons you could imagine (see Task 1)?
(Comprehension I)
3. Do you think the letter might influence any of the the *Times* readers?
(Evaluation/Comment I)
4. Some days after the letter had been published, “an affectionate reply to our friends on the Continent” appeared in the British popular paper the *Sun*, which can be compared to the German *Bild Zeitung*. Speculate on how the editor might have reacted to the Germans’ appeal.
(Pre-reading assignment II)
5. Read the letter by the *Sun* with the help of the annotations and explain how the editor of *The Sun* sees the relationship between Germany and Britain.
(Comprehension II)
6. What is the function of the national stereotypes that are put forward in the article?
(Analysis I)
7. Characterize the mood of the *Sun*’s letter and analyze the stylistic and linguistic devices that create this special mood.
(Analysis II)
8. Comment on the *Sun*’s letter. Is this the sort of letter you expected before you started reading? What readership do you think is being aimed at?
(Evaluation/Comment II)
9. Choose one of the national stereotypes mentioned in the *Sun* letter and express your personal opinion about it.
(Evaluation/Comment)

Suggested Solutions

1. Individual answers

2. Britain is a great nation and has contributed to Europe's freedom and prosperity; after World War II supported Germany so that it could become a sovereign nation and a European power > gratefulness; respect for Britain's decision to leave the EU, but it will always have friends in Germany and Europe; if they should make a different decision, the door will always be open; Germany would miss Britain and the British people („our friends across the Channel“), in particular the British black humour, going to the pub after work, tea with milk, driving on the left-hand side of the road, the panto at Christmas and above all the British people themselves > Germany wants the British to stay in the EU

3. Individual answers

4. Individual answers, e.g. probably quite emotional reactions can be expected, a tendency towards national views; emphasizing their wish for independence, sovereignty
5. Concerning the relationship between Britain and Germany the editor thinks Brexit will not necessarily change very much because GB is leaving the EU not Germany (although the logic of this statement is not particularly clear); there is still considerable admiration in GB for great German products and people and this will not change in the future; there are a lot of similarities between the two countries, which have each contributed to the culture of the other; Brexit should not be allowed to come between the two countries which have so much in common and so much to offer each other; Brexit will be easy to manage with the appropriate treaties.

6. The function of the national stereotypes:

Germans: successful, make reliable products, arrogant, look down on the British, efficient (get to the pool before the Brits)

British: slightly irresponsible do not apply enough (any? sun cream), lose out in the battle of the sunbeds, consume large amounts of beer, The national stereotypes underline the differences between the two nations, which will presumably never change.

7. The mood of the letter: the editor makes it very clear that an exit from Brexit is completely out of the question; occasionally a touch of criticism of the Germans and a hint of mockery can be observed, but on the whole the letter is light-hearted and, as said in the letter itself, affectionate with a positive view of the Germans and their achievements.

Language: exaggeration/hyperbole > mocking the signatories of the letter; enumeration of reliable German products and famous German composers (underlines the positive attitude towards Germany and the Germans as a whole); repeated use of the personal pronouns „we/our“ > referring not only to the editors of the *Sun* but to the British people as a whole, creates the impression that the *Sun* is speaking for the British people; relatively colloquial English, e.g. 'guzzle', 'hab', 'fancy', 'panto', 'slidey'; repeated use of positive adjectives in connection with Germans and German products; syntax: a relatively large proportion of simple sentences, which are easy to read

8. Individual answers

9. Individual answers