**The Scottish independence issue**

**Exercise 1**

Read the following text, which reflects upon national identity within the UK nations and answer the following questions:

1. What is the main difference between England on the one hand and the nations of the Celtic fringe on the other according to the columnist?
2. What allows the journalist to claim shared values with the Celtic cultures of Britain”? What elements in your opinion bind the UK nations together?
3. What, in your view, are the main cultural differences between England and the Celtic periphery?
4. Find synonyms to the words underlined in the text.

**I do not want to be English - and any attempt to create an English identity will fail**

I am the grandson of a Lithuanian Jew on one side, and some miners and weavers whose roots go back for centuries in the same square kilometre off the East Lancs Road. Neither side of this genealogy makes me feel particularly enamoured with the concept of England.

It’s not about the St George cross. [The glorious summer of Euro 96](http://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/0/football/18077057) arguably took it back from the racists. And the influx of working-class kids means I can now support the England rugby union team without feeling my class identity besmirched. But beyond sport, in large swaths of public life, there is almost no requirement whatsoever for an English person to self-identify as English. And that is because – as for no other nation on these islands – what it means to be English is completely subordinate to class, region, ethnicity and local culture. On each of these measures, if I examine my own gut feelings, I still have more in common with the Celtic cultures of Britain than with an Englishness defined around public schools and the officer class.

When it comes to cities, I only feel at home when they are built of brick and hard stone, and where the dominant culture is working class. Thus, while Manchester feels like home, so does Dublin, and so did Glasgow – even when the Yes campaign’s Jacobin wing were surrounding English broadcasters with hostility and chanting during the referendum campaign. By contrast almost everywhere in southern England – above all the tennis club belt around London – produces in me a sense of cultural alienation.

When it comes to class, there is no other nation in Britain where the cultural divides are so pronounced and so persistent as they are among the English. The Scots have lairds[[1]](#footnote-1) alongside poverty-stricken youth; the Welsh have their foxhunting set; but there are strong cultural signifiers the rich and poor share in these countries, which just don’t exist in England.

Because of the election result, and the English institutions it could call forth, sooner or later, somebody is going to try and foist an “Englishness” narrative on us. Even on the left the idea is gaining traction: [Irvine Welsh](https://www.theguardian.com/politics/commentisfree/2015/may/07/labour-risks-failing-the-english-just-like-it-did-the-scottish) has suggested the working-class, northern half of England might have to start playing the game of English nationalism, to prevent the upper-class southerners monopolising it.

But I don’t think it’s going to happen. And that is because, at the centre of English culture lies neither institutions, nor customs, nor sports teams, but a global language. This global language, whose base layer is a medieval mixture of Latin and German, has acted like a sponge, drawing foreign cultural influences so deep into our brains that they have taken root in our identity. My English is not just the language of Dickens, Keats and Milton. It is the English of Tolstoy, Orhan Pamuk and Flaubert in translation. It is the language of Thomas Pynchon, Peter Carey and Arundhati Roy – American English, Aussie English, Indian English. Because it is global, the English language is infinitely capable of ethnic and class inflexions.

Because of what’s happened in [Scotland](https://www.theguardian.com/uk/scotland), we’re certainly going to get more political control, and new institutions, for England and its regions. But please don’t try to burden me with yet another layer of bogus identity politics. The only identity I need can be created by speaking and writing in the most malleable language on earth.

Paul Mason, *The Guardian*, Sun 10 May 2015

**Exercise 2**

**THEME Brexit : le Royaume-Uni face au risque de la dislocation**

Le départ de l’Union européenne va-t-il coûter son unité au [Royaume-Uni](https://www.la-croix.com/Actualite/Europe/Royaume-Uni) ? Plus l’échéance approche, plus l’optique d’une dislocation du Royaume se précise malgré les dires du premier ministre conservateur [Boris Johnson](https://www.la-croix.com/Monde/Europe/Boris-Johnson).

Malgré le statut de Nations constitutives du Royaume-Uni, qui leur octroi une large autonomie vis-à-vis de Londres avec un gouvernement et un parlement local, l’Écosse, l’Irlande du Nord et le Pays de Galles sont liés à l’Angleterre dans le dossier de la sortie de l’Union européenne. Une situation qui provoque de nombreuses tensions.

En juin 2016, lors du référendum sur le [Brexit](https://www.la-croix.com/Monde/Europe/Brexit), les Écossais avaient voté à 62 % pour le *« remain »*, c’est-à-dire pour rester dans l’Union européenne (UE) alors que dans son ensemble le Royaume-Uni avait voté à 52 % pour une sortie de l’UE. Ce décalage sur la question de l’appartenance […] est devenu l’un des fers de lance de Nicola Sturgeon, première ministre écossaise. Lors de l’élection du 12 décembre 2019, le SNP a obtenu une écrasante majorité en Écosse avec 48 des 59 sièges de députés à la Chambre des communes du Royaume-Uni. Cette victoire permet à Nicola Sturgeon de réclamer la mise en place d’un nouveau référendum sur l’indépendance de l’Écosse afin que la région puisse rester dans l’UE.

Abridged from *La Croix*, Guillaume Fournier, le 2 janvier 2020

**Exercise 3**

Find synonyms to the words highlighted in the text

A new Scottish Independence Vote Seems all but inevitable

In the British general election on Dec. 12, 2019, the Scottish National Party (SNP) won a resounding mandate from its constituents, taking [48 of Scotland’s 59](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/election-2019-50766014) seats in the U.K. House of Commons and 45 percent of all ballots cast by Scottish voters. A week later, on Dec. 19, SNP leader Nicola Sturgeon sent [a letter](https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/nicola-sturgeon-s-letter-on-independence-sent-to-boris-johnson-in-full-1-5064919) to Britain’s newly reelected Conservative Prime Minister Boris Johnson requesting the power to hold a second referendum on Scottish independence.

On Jan. 14, the prime minister delivered his answer. “I cannot agree to any request … that would lead to further independence referendums,” […] “The people of Scotland voted decisively on that promise to keep our United Kingdom together … The U.K. government will continue to uphold the democratic decision [made in 2014].”

Johnson’s response came as no surprise to anyone, Sturgeon included. With the deadline for Brexit looming at the end of January and a raft of preelection [spending pledges](https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/jul/23/the-cost-of-boris-johnson-pricing-up-the-next-prime-minister-pledges) to implement, the last thing the Tory leader wants is a renewed battle over Scotland’s constitutional status and a scramble to shore up the U.K.’s increasingly tenuous political unity.

But that is precisely what he is going to get. Spurred by [widespread Scottish opposition](https://whatscotlandthinks.org/questions/how-would-you-vote-in-a-second-eu-referendum/) to leaving the European Union—and, after December, a fresh electoral mandate from the Scottish public—the SNP plans to intensify its campaign for independence in the coming months. The Tories are likely to boost U.K. public spending and redouble their attacks on the SNP in an attempt to contain Scottish discontent. But it may be too little, too late.

[www.foreignpolicy.com,by](http://www.foreignpolicy.com,by) Jamie Maxwell, January 24, 2020

1. A laird (Scot) = a landowner [↑](#footnote-ref-1)