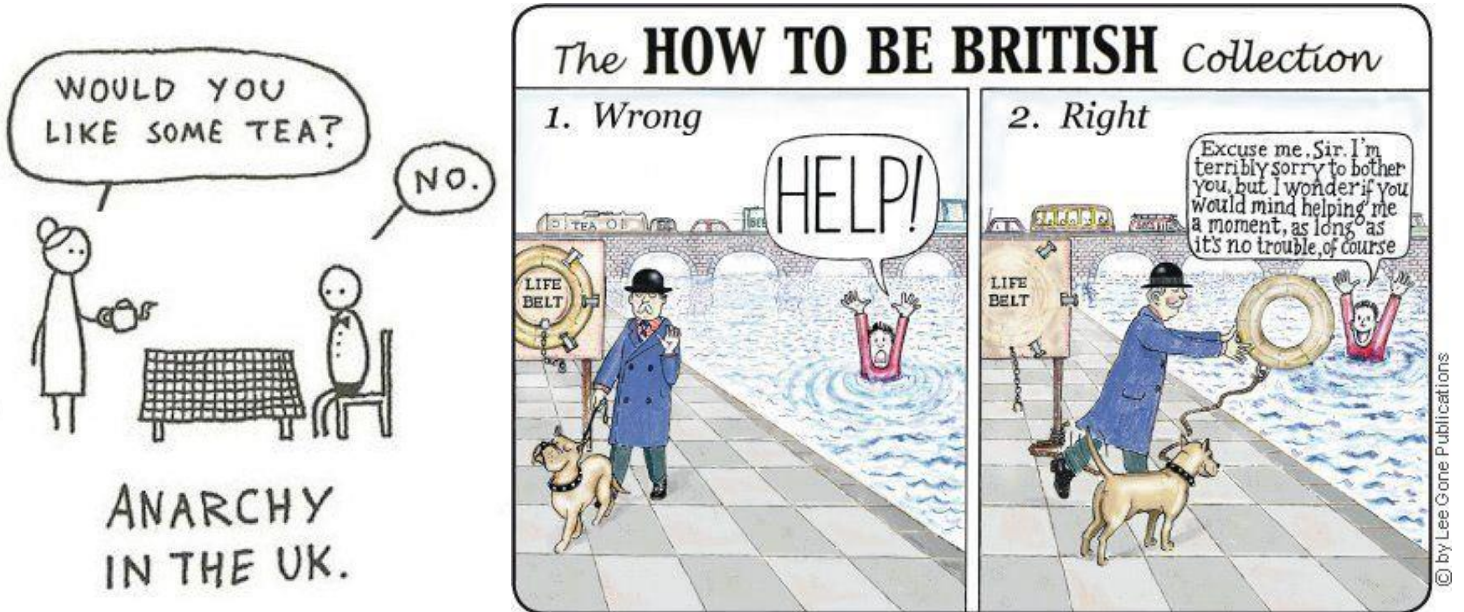


BRITISH HUMOUR

Get ready

- 1) In your opinion, which of these two pictures is the funniest? Describe the one you prefer and explain what made you laugh. (For help with descriptions, go back to page 52 of “Escaping”)



- 2) Now use both pictures on this page to guess what defines British humour.

Document 1 A beginner's guide to British humour

By Simon in Language Learning on Education First (www.ef.com)

Britain's unique humor may seem **baffling** at first and can feel like a whole new language. But don't worry, we've put together a beginner's guide to understanding (and using!) it.

Laugh at yourself

5 The key to understanding British humor is knowing not to take yourself too seriously. Our default humour is to highlight our own **flaws**. We **make light of** our **failures** so as to appear more humble, approachable and **relatable**. There is no room for egos in British humor. **Clumsiness** and embarrassing moments are all well-established **self-deprecation** material.

Examples: "I'm really not very good at self-deprecation comedy." "I look like I got dressed in the dark this morning!" "I'm so bad at cooking- I could burn water."

10 Wait, were they joking?

Combine self-deprecation with a dose of **understated** sarcasm and you have the key ingredients of British humor. Sarcasm and irony are in our DNA. They are produced with world-class timing and nearly always with a **deadpan delivery** that will leave you wondering as to whether it was indeed a joke (or not?). Sarcasm can be hard to spot in a new language. Be sure to use the tone, context and non-verbal clues as a guide.

15 *Examples: "Oh, so you do know how to answer your phone?" "I absolutely love it when my train is delayed." "I really like how loud you play your music."*

Don't take what we say seriously

20 Brits are famous for being very, very polite, but a sure sign that a Brit likes you is if they happily 'offend' you with the occasional **witty, tongue-in-cheek** comment. These are not **mean-spirited** statements, but rather a playful exchange of **verbal sparring** delivered with a smiling face and no apology. It can be used to **make light of** differences with new friends in an attempt to start a conversation. A vital aspect of mastering British humor is judging what the people you are with find funny. A tongue-in-cheek comment is not always appropriate.

Examples: "How have you never seen Frozen?! What's wrong with you?!" "I can't be friends with someone who doesn't drink tea!" "I can't be seen in public with a Manchester United supporter!"

25 Brits find humor in almost everything

Brits use humor to lighten even the most **unfortunate**, miserable moments. There are few subjects we don't joke about. It's not used to shock and offend but rather because Brits turn to laughter as a form of medicine when life **knocks** them and those around them **down**. **Misfortune** is commonplace in British comedy. In most cultures, there is a time and place for humor. In Britain, this is not the case.

30 **Example:** "I tripped and fell over in front of everyone but at least I didn't embarrass myself!"

A. Comprehension

1) General comprehension: what is the goal of Document 1? Who was it written for?

2) Vocabulary: match the words bolded in the text with their French equivalents.

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| a. Baffling | 1. La maladresse |
| b. Flaws | 2. Joute verbale |
| c. Make light of | 3. Failles |
| d. Failures | 4. Malheur |
| e. Relatable | 5. Malheureux |
| f. Clumsiness | 6. Echecs |
| g. Self-deprecation | 7. Plein d'esprit |
| h. Understated | 8. D'une voix inexpressive |
| i. Deadpan delivery | 9. Discret |
| j. Witty | 10. Prendre à la légère |
| k. Tongue-in-cheek | 11. Ironique/moqueur |
| l. Verbal sparring | 12. A qui on peut s'identifier |
| m. Unfortunate | 13. Déroutant |
| n. Knock down | 14. Malmener |
| o. Misfortune | 15. Auto-dérision |

3) Detailed comprehension

True or false? Circle the right answer and justify with a quote from the text.

a. T / F: British people's humour shows that they are very proud.

b. T / F: It isn't easy to hear when a Brit is joking.

c. T / F: British humour is meant to be offensive.

d. T / F: British humour is only used in specific circumstances.

B. Language

1) Grammaire : présent simple vs. présent progressif

In the picture, a man is drowning. He is asking the gentleman to help him.

Brits use humour to lighten sad moments. They turn to laughter as a form of medicine.

- a. Servez-vous des exemples ci-dessus pour rappeler l'emploi du présent simple et du présent be+ing : dans quel(s) cas utilise-t-on l'un et l'autre ?

Présent simple : _____

Présent progressif : _____

Ce dernier ne s'emploie généralement pas avec les verbes de perception involontaire (*see, hear*), de croyance (*believe*), d'apparence (*seem*) et de goût (*like*), ainsi que *be* et *have* (=avoir).

- b. Rappelez les règles de conjugaison de ces deux formes.

	Présent simple	Présent progressif
Forme affirmative	_____ Ex : he _____	_____ Ex : I _____
Forme négative	_____ Ex : she _____	_____ Ex : it _____
Forme interrogative	_____ Ex : ____ I _____ ?	_____ Ex : ____ they _____ ?

- c. Pour rappel, BE au présent simple se conjugue de la façon suivante :

I _____ / You _____ / He-she-it _____ / We _____ / You _____ / They _____

- d. Conjuguez les verbes entre parenthèses au présent simple ou au présent progressif.

1. My mother _____ (work) at an office in Paris, but right now she _____ (be) in the USA. Right now, she _____ (probably - eat) breakfast or maybe she _____ (run).

2. _____ (you - speak) Spanish? / No, I _____ (know) a single word.
But I _____ (think) about taking some classes.
3. He _____ (be) so late ! What _____ (he - do)? _____
_____ (you - think) he _____ (still - sleep)?
4. They _____ (come) from Ireland but they _____ (have) an American
accent. They _____ (sound) really strange!

➔ For more practice, you can use EPIGRAM: <https://cours.univ-paris1.fr/fixe/EPIGRAM>

2) Vocabulary: moods and feelings

1 Basic vocabulary 1

Match the situations with the feelings below:

1. I didn't understand any of the questions.
 2. A huge dog came running towards me.
 3. We're taking the kids to the zoo on Saturday.
 4. I've got my driving test tomorrow.
 5. I've been up since half past five.
 6. I forgot my Dad's birthday again.
 7. My Mum and Dad arrived at the club and started dancing!
 8. You only say you don't like Steve because you haven't got a boyfriend.
- a. I'm starting to feel really tired.
b. You're just jealous.
c. I was really scared.
d. I was really confused.
e. I feel so guilty.
f. I'm really nervous.
g. They're really excited.
h. I was so embarrassed.

2 Basic vocabulary 2

Now do the same with these situations:

1. I can't believe I got so drunk.
 2. I didn't expect the film to be so violent.
 3. Why didn't you phone to say you'd be late?
 4. There's a huge spider in the bath!
 5. They talked about computers all evening.
 6. I got the results back from the hospital today. They're negative, thank goodness!
 7. When my daughter became a doctor, I was really pleased.
 8. She came home to find we'd organised a big party for her.
- a. I'm really frightened of them.
b. I felt so proud.
c. We were very worried.
d. I was so bored.
e. I'm so relieved.
f. She was so surprised.
g. I feel so ashamed.
h. I was quite shocked by it.

3 Moods and feelings

Use the correct form of these verbs in the situations below:

show hide get be (2)

1. If you love Kay, you've got to tell her. Don't your feelings from her.
2. Why you in such a bad mood today? Have I upset you?
3. Ann's a very emotional person. She isn't afraid to her feelings in public.
4. I've mixed feelings about leaving. I'll be glad to say goodbye to this place, but I'll miss all my friends.
5. You seem to in a good mood this morning! Have you won the lottery?

Now go back and underline the complete expressions.

If someone is a bit moody or in a funny mood, they are not very happy.

4 'Get' + feeling

'Get' is a common verb to use with emotions. Use the correct form of these expressions:

get a bit tired	get a bit worried
get really excited	get bored
get nervous	get a bit confused
get really jealous	get embarrassed

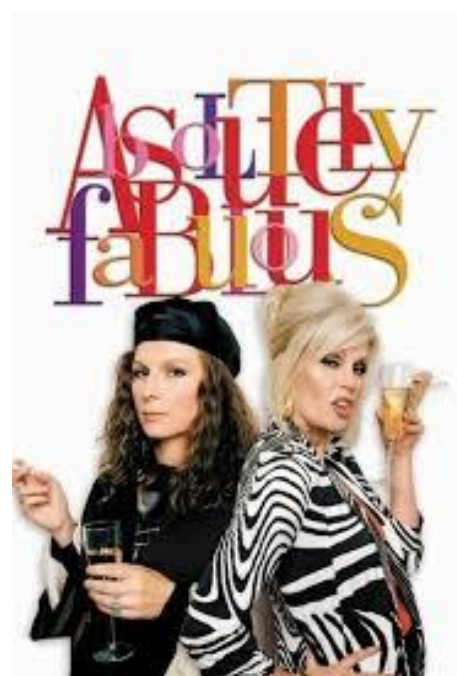
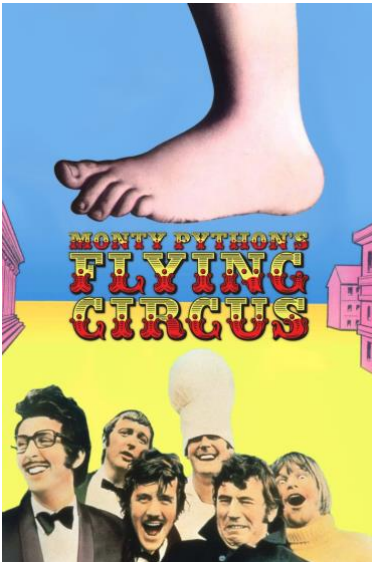
1. My boyfriend doesn't like it if I speak to other boys when we're out. He
2. Lisa said she'd be home by eleven. I'm beginning to
3. Can't we go out and do something? I'm just watching TV.
4. Shall we stop and have a rest soon? I'm
5. We're taking the children camping next weekend. They're about it.
6. Don't keep asking him about his girlfriend. Can't you see he's ?
7. These instructions aren't easy to follow. I'm
8. I've got my driving test next month. I'm already about it.

C. Speaking

Do some research about the following British comedians, actors/actresses or comedy troupes and present them orally. Here are a few examples you can pick from, but feel free to speak about other artists you know!

Take notes so that you can speak about the following aspects:

- Who they are/were and what they do/did:
- Why they are a good illustration (or not) of British humour:



If there is a video you really like, you can also present it and explain why you like it!

Document 2



Stapler in Jelly [<https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x8kbri9>]

The Office, Season 1, Episode 1 (2002)

A. Comprehension

1) Get ready

a. Read this article from Wikipedia

The Office is a British television sitcom first broadcast in the UK in 2001. It has since been one of the most successful British comedy exports and has led to a number of local adaptations, including the American remake starring Steve Carell.

The show is a mockumentary based in a large paper company called Wernham Hogg. The office is headed by general manager David Brent (*Ricky Gervais*) who desperately tries to be liked by his employees often with embarrassing and disastrous results. Dawn Tinsley, the company's receptionist, Gareth Keenan, David Brent's assistant, and Tim Canterbury, one of the company's salesmen are the three other main characters. (Wikipedia)

the office



b. Watch the first 12 minutes of the show and answer the questions below.

- What does the word "mockumentary" mean? _____
- What does David Brent do to be liked by his employees? _____

- Why are the results "embarrassing and disastrous"? _____

2) **General comprehension:** watch the "stapler in jelly" scene once and say:

- a. what practical joke Tim plays on Gareth: _____
- b. what Gareth's reaction is: _____
- c. how David Brent *should* react: _____

d. how David Brent *actually* reacts: _____

3) **Part 1 (12'44-13'19)**: watch this part again and say:

a. how many times Tim has done this: _____

b. why Tim started doing it: _____

c. why David asks Gareth to eat the jelly: _____

4) **Part 2 (13'20-14'01)**: watch this part again and fill the blanks in the lines below.

a. Tim: "Gareth, it's only a _____ matter!"

b. New colleague: "You should go and put him in _____!"

c. Now look up the words "trifle" and "custard" in a dictionary and try to explain the puns.

5) **Part 3 (14'02-14'20)**: watch this part again and say how Gareth explains his reaction (give two justifications).

B. COMMENT ON THE SCENE

a. How did this scene make you feel? How would you describe the type of humour used here?

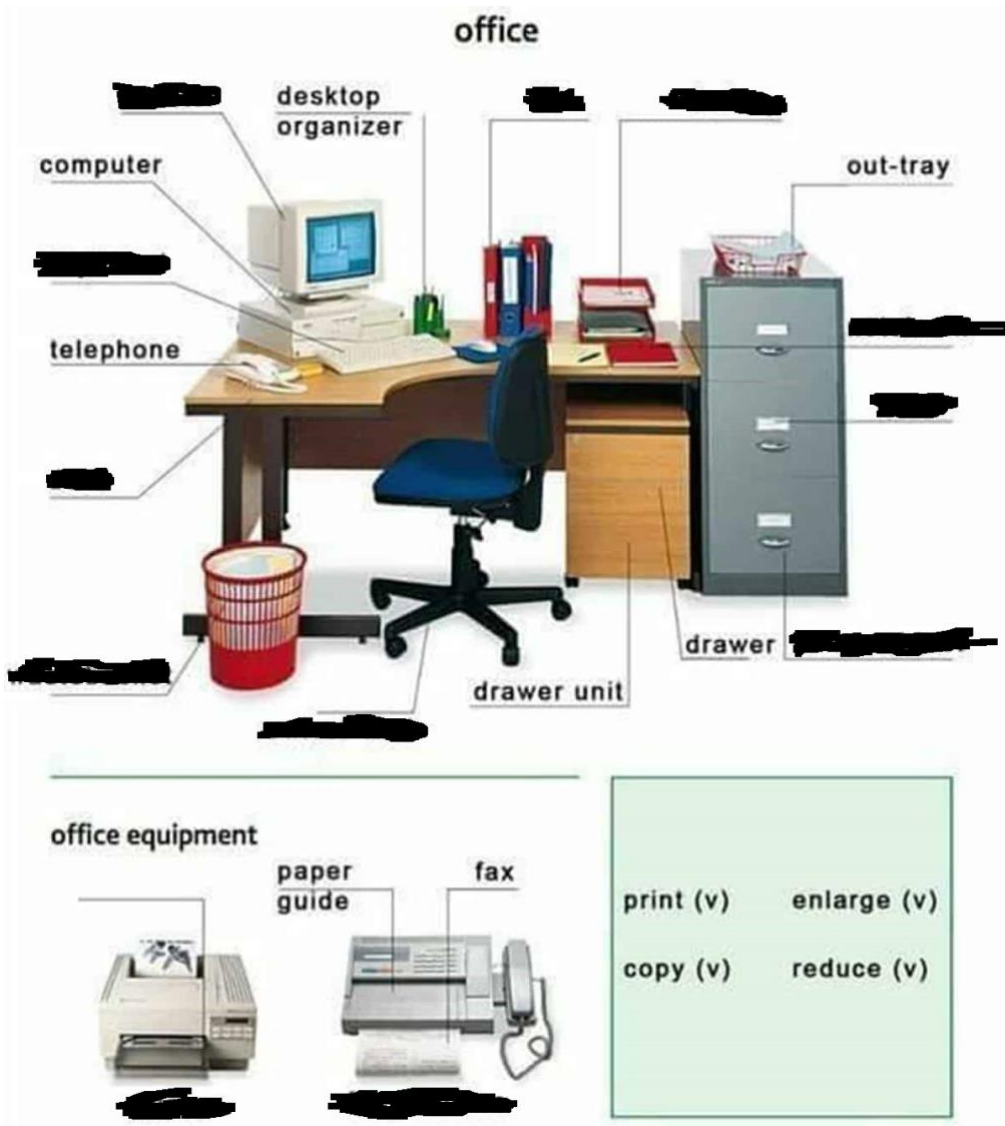
b. In your opinion, is David Brent a likeable character? Why/why not?

C. Language

1) Vocabulary: the office

Tim has erased half the words in this picture, just to annoy you! Complete it with words from this list:

label; fax machine; swivel chair; filing cabinet; in-tray ; printer; desk; notebook; monitor; file; wastebasket; keyboard



2) Grammaire: l'impératif

a. Observez quelques formes impératives employées dans cet épisode.

*Take care! Please leave a "massage"! Slow down!
Do not be fooled by their job descriptions! Don't do that!
Let's go out for a drink! Let's get you started!*

b. Maintenant rappelez les règles de formation et d'emploi de l'impératif.

L'impératif sert à donner des _____ ou des _____. Il peut aussi servir à encourager et à inviter son/ses interlocuteur(s) à faire une action. L'impératif de la 2^e personne se forme avec la _____ seule (sans le _____ devant). A la forme négative, il se forme avec _____ + _____, et l'impératif de la 1^e personne du pluriel de la façon suivante : _____ + _____.

c. Traduisez les phrases suivantes à l'aide de formes impératives.

1. Attends-moi ! Ne pars si vite ! _____

2. Allons-y ! Prends ton manteau et n'oublie pas tes clés ! _____

3. Et si nous regardions la nouvelle saison de The Office ? Allume la télé ! _____

4. Et si nous ne regardions pas la télé pour une fois ? _____

Document 3

The Difference Between American and British Humour

By Ricky Gervais, November 9th 2011, Time.com

5 It's often dangerous to generalize, but under threat, I would say that Americans are more "**down the line**." They don't hide their hopes and fears. They applaud ambition and openly **reward** success. Brits are more comfortable with life's losers. Americans say, "have a nice day" whether they mean it or not. Brits are terrified to say this. We tell ourselves it's because we don't want to sound insincere but I think it might be for the opposite reason. We don't want to celebrate anything too soon. This is due to our **upbringing**. Americans are **brought up** to believe they can be the next president of the US. Brits are told, "It won't happen for you."



Left: Michael Scott from *The Office US* /Right: David Brent from *The Office UK*

20 There's a **received wisdom** in the U.K. that Americans don't **get** irony. This is of course not true. But what is true is that they don't use it all the time. We use it in every day speech. We **tease** our friends. We use sarcasm as a **shield** and a weapon. We **take the piss out of** people we like or dislike basically. And ourselves. This is very important. [...]

25 I guess the biggest difference between the U.S. version and the U.K. version of *The Office* reflected this. We had to make Michael Scott a slightly nicer guy, with a **rosier** outlook to life. He could still be childish, and insecure, and even a **bore**, but he couldn't be too **mean**. Network America has to give people a reason to like you not just a reason to watch you. America rewards **upfront** niceness.

Recently in the USA I have been accused of being a shock comic, and cruel and cynical. But nothing could be further from the truth.

30 I never actively try to offend. That's pointless and frankly too easy. But I believe you should say what you mean. Be honest. No one should ever be offended by truth. That way you'll never have to apologize. I hate it when a comedian says, "Sorry for what I said." You shouldn't say it if you didn't mean it and you should never regret anything you meant to do. As a comedian, I think my job isn't just to make people laugh but also make them think.

35 I'm not one of those people who think that comedy is your conscience taking a day off. My conscience never takes a day off and I can justify everything I do. There's nothing that you should never joke about, but it depends what that joke is. The subject of a joke isn't necessarily the target of the joke. When dealing with a so-called taboo subject, the discomfort of the audience is what's under the microscope. Our own preconceptions and prejudices are often what are being challenged. I don't like racist jokes. Not because they are offensive. I don't like them because they're not funny. And they're not funny

40 because they're not true. They are almost always based on a falsehood somewhere along the way, which ruins the gag for me.

As for cynicism, I don't care for it much. I'm a romantic. From *The Office* and *Extras* to *The Invention Of Lying* and *Cemetery Junction*, goodness and sweetness, honour and truth, love and friendship always triumph. For me, humanity is king.

A. Comprehension

1) General comprehension: briefly present the text (type, headline, author, source, date, topic).

Part 1 (II.1-25)

2) Vocabulary: match the words bolded in the text with their French equivalents.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| a. Down the line | 1. Comprendre, saisir |
| b. Reward | 2. Ennuyeux |
| c. Upbringing | 3. Être élevé |
| d. Brought up | 4. Un bouclier |
| e. A received wisdom | 5. Méchant, mesquin |
| f. Get | 6. Plus optimiste |
| g. Tease | 7. Taquiner |
| h. Shield | 8. L'éducation |
| i. Take the piss out of | 9. Récompenser |
| j. Rosier | 10. Charrier qqn |
| k. A bore | 11. Franc, direct |
| l. Mean | 12. Sincère, sans filtre |
| m. Upfront | 13. Une croyance populaire |

3) True or false? Circle the right answer and justify with a quote from the text.

a. T / F : Ricky Gervais thinks Brits are more optimistic than Americans.

b. T / F : He claims Brits use irony more often than Americans.

c. T / F : Michael Scott has nothing in common with the original character from *The Office*.

Part 2 (ll.26-end)

4) Vocabulary: find the English for the words below in this part.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| a. Inutile, sans intérêt | e. Sous la loupe |
| b. Prendre un jour de congé | f. Mis à l'épreuve |
| c. La cible | g. Le mensonge |
| d. Préjugés | h. Ne pas tenir à qqch |

5) What is the role of a comedian in Ricky Gervais's opinion? What strategies does he use to achieve this goal?

B. Language

1) Vocabulary: countries, nationalities and languages

- a. _____ live in Britain and _____ live in Scotland.
- b. _____ is the language of Poland. But the _____ are the residents of the country.
- c. I love _____ food like paella, tortillas, etc.
- d. I think Anthony Hopkins is originally _____. He comes from Wales.
- e. I come from Beirut, I'm _____.
- f. _____ are often nicknamed "kiwis".
- g. One of the biggest St Patrick's Day parade is in the USA because there's a very large _____ community there.
- h. Following the independence of Pakistan, _____ immigration drastically increased.
- i. I wonder how the _____ coped with all the austerity measures imposed on Greece.

- j. "In April 2013, the _____ queen, Beatrix, abdicated in favour of her son."
 "Well to tell you the truth, I didn't even know the Netherlands was a monarchy!"
 "What about Denmark? Did you know that the _____ too have a queen?"
 "Yes, I did actually. But I should definitely read more about _____ culture."
- k. I spent the weekend in Brussels and bought tons of _____ chocolate.
- l. Many political analysts compared Turkey's protests with the Arab spring, calling it the
 "_____ spring".
- m. Angela Merkel is a _____ politician. She has been the Chancellor of Germany since 2005.
- n. Here are the languages spoken in Iraq: _____ speak mainly Arabic, but also Kurdish, Armenian, Persian and Shabaki.

2) Grammaire : le comparatif

We had to make Michael Scott a slightly nicer guy, with a rosier outlook to life.

- a. Repérez les deux adjectifs au comparatif dans l'exemple ci-dessus. De quel type d'adjectif s'agit-il ?
 Quelle est la marque du comparatif dans ce cas ?

- b. Comment fonctionne le comparatif dans les autres cas ?

- c. Quelles sont les exceptions à ces règles ?

- d. Comment fonctionne le comparatif d'égalité (autant/aussi que) _____

- e. Comment fonctionne le comparatif d'infériorité (moins que) ? _____ ou

f. Mettez les adjectifs entre parenthèses au comparatif de supériorité (+), d'égalité (=) ou d'infériorité (-).

1. My book is _____ (+ interesting) yours.
2. The weather today is _____ (+ bad) yesterday.
3. John is _____ (+ tall) his sisters.
4. This house is _____ (- expensive) his flat.
5. Yellow roses smell _____ (= sweet) red roses.
6. The suitcase is _____ (+ heavy) the bag.
7. This car is even _____ (+fast) a Ferrari.
8. He is _____ (= slim) his father.
9. He is _____ (+ clever) his brother.
10. The weather is _____ (- cold) last week.
11. Tom's exercise is _____ (+ difficult) Ben's.
12. This hotel is _____ (- comfortable) the other one.
13. English grammar is _____ (+ easy) French grammar.
14. My French is _____ (+ good) my English.
15. The USA is _____ (+big) Europe.

