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The British Class System 英国社会阶层系统

John: Hello from everyone here at BBC Learning English. I'm John, and today we're answering your questions in Ask About Britain. With me is Chen Li.

Chen Li: Hi, 大家好。We've had this letter from Angelina in Kunming.

Insert

I was lucky to live in London for a few years, but one thing I never understood, exactly, can you tell me, what is the British class system?

John: What an interesting question, thanks Angelina for asking – but I have to say it's not an easy one to answer!

Chen Li: 我想首先, 我们需要弄清楚这是个什么意思? What is it?

John: Well sociologists define social class as the grouping of people by occupation, and some groups are given more status in society than others.

Chen Li: 社会等级就是根据不同职业划分的不同族群。The grouping of people by occupation 一些人获得的身份地位 more status in society 比其他人要高。

John: British society is generally thought to be divided into three main groups - the upper class, middle class, and lower or working class. Listen to this.

Insert

Upper class man: *I look down on him because I am upper class.*

Middle class man: *I look up to him because he is upper class but I look down on him because he is lower class. I am middle class.*

Working class man: *I know my place. I look up to them both but I don't look up to him as much as I look up to him because he has got innate breeding.*

Chen Li: 这里是一段录音, 取自一个非常著名的英国电视喜剧, 刻画三个来自不同社会阶层的男人。上层社会 the upper class 中产阶级 middle class 以及劳工阶层或者下层社会 working or lower class 英国社会的这三个等级族群很容易识别吗? It's easy, isn't John?

John: But it's not that easy!

Chen Li: Oh!

John: Yes, in fact the differences between the various classes are changing all the time, and there is a lot of blurring of classes.

Chen Li: There is a lot of blurring 模糊不清的 between the various classes. People have moved up the social scale 社会等级, 人们可以通过改善他们的就业前景, 使他们获得更好的工作, 从而提高他们的社会地位。

John: Traditionally, one class had very different opinions about another class. You are unlikely to hear these opinions voiced today but in that piece of BBC comedy we heard what each different class thought of the other. We'll hear it again.

Chen Li: Listen out for these words. I look up to 尊敬, 仰望。 And I look down on 轻视。看看您能不能发现他们对彼此的印象是什么。

Insert

Upper class man: *I look down on him because I am upper class.*

Middle class man: *I look up to him because he is upper class but I look down on him because he is lower class. I am middle class.*

Working class man: *I know my place. I look up to them both but I don't look up to him as much as I look up to him because he has got innate breeding.*

John: So you heard there the terms "I look down on him" and "I look up to him". If an upper class person looks down on a middle class or working class person they disapprove of them - they think they are not as good as them.

Chen Li: OK John, let me explain 一个上层社会的人可以轻视, 小看中产阶级或者劳工阶层的人, 他们并不认同这些人。They disapprove of them.

John: Meanwhile, the working class person looks up to the upper class person because it's thought they have innate breeding!

Chen Li: 他们具有天生的种族优势, 有修养。They have innate breeding 通常情况下, 劳工阶层的人羡慕, 或者尊敬上层社会的人, 因为他们有教养。Breeding.

John: Now not many people hold such beliefs these days but I would say there are still traces of it – and if you come to Britain you could have great fun trying to figure out people's class roots! Look out for what people wear and maybe what they say. Bye.

Chen Li: 再会。

Glossary

working class	劳工阶层, 工薪阶层
middle class	中产阶级
upper class	上层社会
sociologists	社会学家
social scale	社会等级
blurring	模糊不清
status	地位身份