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As regards social conventions, we must say a word about the well-known English class system. ǂ This is an embarrassing subject for English people, and one they tend to be ashamed of, though during the present century class-consciousness has grown less and less, and the class system less rigid. ǂ But it still exists below the surface. Broadly speaking, it means there are two classes, the “ middle class ” and the “ working class ” . (We shall ignore for a moment the old “ upper class ” , including the hereditary aristocracy, since it is extremely small in numbers. but some of its members have the right to sit in the House of Lords, and some newspapers take a surprising interest in their private life.) The middle class consists chiefly of well-to-do businessmen and professional people of all kinds. The working class consists chiefly of manual and unskilled workers. The most obvious difference between them is in their accent. Middle-class people use slightly varying kinds of “ received pronunciation ” which is the kind of English spoken by BBC announcers and taught to overseas pupils. Typical working-class people speak in many different local accents which are generally felt to be rather ugly and uneducated. One of the biggest barriers of social equality in England is the two-class education system. To have been to a so-called “ public school ” immediately marks you out as one of the middle class. The middle classes tend to live a more formal life than working-class

people, and are usually more cultured. Their midday meal is “ lunch ” and they have a rather formal evening meal called “ dinner ” , whereas the working man ’ s dinner, if his working hours permit, is at midday, and his smaller, late-evening meal is called supper. As we have said, however, the class system is much less rigid than it was, and for a long time it has been government policy to reduce class distinctions. 𐀀 Working-class students very commonly receive a university education and enter the professions, and working-class incomes have grown so much recently that the distinctions between the two classes are becoming less and less clear. 𐀁 However, regardless of one ’ s social status, certain standards of politeness are expected of everybody, and a well-bred person is polite to everyone he meets, and treats a labourer with the same respect he gives an important businessman. Servility inspires both embarrassment and dislike. Even the word “ sir ” , except in school and in certain occupations (e.g. commerce, the army etc.) sounds too servile to be commonly used.

1. The middle class mainly refers to people . A. who were born as aristocrat B. who have the right to sit in the House of Lords C. who speak in many different local accents D. who are prosperous businessmen or who work in some professions

2. The most obvious difference between the working class and the middle class in English is their . A. dress B. work C. accent D. meal

3. Why isn ’ t the word “ sir ” commonly used in Britain? A. Because it sounds too servile and is likely to cause embarrassment. B. Because it can only be used in some certain occupations. C. Because it is an impolite word. D. Because it shows that the speaker is not a well-bred

person. 4. The “ upper class ” in England today . A. are extremely small in number so that media pays no attention to them B. still uses old words like “ Sir ” in their everyday life C. includes the hereditary aristocracy D. refers only to the royal family 5. Which of the following is not true about the English class system? A. It is an embarrassing subject for English people. B. Working-class students cannot receive a university education. C. The class system is much less rigid than it was. D. The class system still exists below the surface.

Vocabulary 1. convention n. 习俗 2. embarrass v. 使困窘 3. rigid adj. 严格 4. hereditary adj. 世袭的 5. manual adj. 体力的 6. accent n. 口音 7. received pronunciation adj. (英语的)标准发音 8. well-bred adj. 有教养的 9. servility n. 卑屈 10. occupation n. 职业
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