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**Auszug aus:**

*Regional and social identity in the UK*

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# Regional and social identity in the UK

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## Competences and skills:

The overarching goal is the acquisition of **cultural competences**. To achieve this, students demonstrate their **reading skills** as they work with texts and their **viewing and listening skills** as they work with videos. They apply their analysing, presenting and writing competences as they work on the texts and videos. They frequently work with partners and, thus, use their **communicative** as well as their **social competences**. By completing various research tasks, they acquire additional **media competences**.

## Overview:

### List of abbreviations:

**A** Text analysis

**D** Discussion

**LVC** Listening/viewing comprehension

**PR** Presentation

**T** Working with the text

**C** Comment

**GW** Group work

**P** Working with a picture/cartoon

**R** Research

**W** Writing

Topic	Material	Methods/Skills
1: Regionalism	M1–M3	P, PR, R, T, W
2: Elitist education	M4–M5	C, D, LVC, T, W
3: Regional identity through cultural roots	M6–M7	A, GW, LVC, PR, R,

# Regional and social identity in the UK

## Facts

England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales all have noticeable differences; accents, legends, cultural heritage, the foods and the patriotic symbols that unite them. However, having a land of cultural and social differences often leads to neighbours not getting on together.

## Notes on the material

**Topic 1:** London is often criticised for drawing young and talented people to it like a magnet at the expense of the regions. This topic is a response to Boris Johnson's concept of "levelling-up" the country to overcome this, which essentially involves pouring money into disadvantaged areas. But this means to "level-down" London instead. Students work on the text, analyse a complex cartoon and do research on the UK's regionalism.

**Topic 2:** Class is an inescapable feature of the UK, with a privileged minority benefitting from educational elitism. A journalist comments about his experience at the prestigious Cambridge University and how he was made to feel unwelcome due to his northern working-class roots. Exclusive private schools, such as Eton, offer their pupils opportunities that state school pupils can only dream of, including contacts which secure top jobs. Students work on the text after offering their views on the financial costs of educational elitism and thereafter complete the video's multiple-choice worksheet.

**Topic 3:** After looking at the dis-United Kingdom, social class, elitist education and a pronounced north-south divide, this topic is an introduction to local regional identity, culture and heritage. Cornish people have been officially recognised as one of the UK's national minorities and students can read an extract from a parliamentary debate. Next, on video, they can experience *Up Helly Aa*, a dramatic annual festival on the Shetland Islands. The class should be divided into two groups, one to report on Cornwall and associated aspects, the other to research *Up Helly Aa*. This teamwork worksheet is primarily aimed to develop observational, research and presentational skills.

## Topic 1: Regionalism

### M1 *“If the regions are to rise, London must take a hit”*



I recall one word that dominated a business seminar in Manchester some time ago. The seminar was on the north-south divide, and the word was London. It was obsessive. Why does London keep taking our best people, everyone asked? Why do our children all want to get to London?

- 5 This week’s report by Lord Kerslake<sup>1</sup> on the north-south divide presents the problem in graphic terms. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) shows Britain with the widest regional inequality of any advanced nation. London’s economy is growing at between two and four times the rate of the north. It is blessed with better health, better trains, better skills.
- 10 The south-east has largely escaped austerity<sup>2</sup>, its public spending rising £2bn in a decade. The north’s has fallen by £6bn. Fixing this gap will require action “on a level with Germany post-unification”, the report says, when trillions were spent over decades on the former east.

- 15 Some of this gloom is misleading. Surveys claim London is the least happy region in the land, the north far more content. The OECD and the Institute for Fiscal Studies have also shown that inequality in Britain is less between north and south than between particular places. Leeds contrasts with Rotherham. East London is poorer than Harrogate.

- 20 In addition, low house prices are starting to draw people out of town, followed by companies such as Goldman Sachs, PricewaterhouseCoopers and JP Morgan. Just over 10 years ago only 1% of emigrants from London went northwards. That is now 13%. Big cities are critical to any revival, and some of these are clearly on the turn. They are developing “Latin quarters”, seen as crucial in keeping “young creatives” locally engaged, such as Birmingham’s Jewellery Quarter and Manchester’s Northern Quarter. The worst problems are the smaller places: the Barnsleys, Blackburns and Oldhams.

- 25 Kerslake is aware of the need, but he does not address the issue obsessing my Mancunians<sup>3</sup>. To them the issue was London, seen as exciting, creative, rich – an existential menace. Rulers since Elizabeth I have tried to reduce its appeal.
- 30 She tried to send her courtiers back to their country estates, and failed. London

has always been the goose that lays Britain's golden eggs, and is still – now more than ever.

My economics tutor used to warn us that much of what he taught might one day be proved wrong, but he hoped at least to have showed us how to recognise nonsense. A case in point must be Kerslake's solution to the north, which tallies with Boris Johnson's old-Labour cliché of "levelling-up". It lies in vast dollops<sup>4</sup> of public investment in infrastructure, in interconnectivity, skills and "cross-governmental, ministerially led" coordination. This is the same language used by Harold Wilson, Margaret Thatcher, Tony Blair – every prime minister – usually in the year after an election.

None of this addresses what Manchester understands, that you will not level up the north without levelling down London. The capital has to reduce its appeal to the north's most precious resource, its creative talent and entrepreneurial zeal. This requires big regional cities to develop "creative critical mass". They must treasure their heritage, their converted mills, their historic districts – anything to distract their young people from craving a move to London. This may involve sucking energy from their surrounding towns – as Leeds has from Bradford. Cities such as Frankfurt, Toulouse, Milan and Barcelona have established a cultural self-confidence that has succeeded in resisting the magnetism of their country's capital. The only city outside London to come near such magnetism is semi-autonomous Edinburgh.

In the case of demagnetising London, the task is near insuperable<sup>5</sup>, but it must be attempted. Revival will come from small steps, not giant infrastructures. These steps will never work if they depend on London, on its taxpayers, its civil servants, its government. Dependency economics has been the curse of Scotland and Wales. There is no such thing as public spending-led growth – as has conspicuously failed in eastern Germany. Growth comes from employers and investors being stimulated to exploit local skills and talents. They should pay local taxes and run local government. Northern cities will flourish only when London stops stealing their people, their ideas and their power.

If the regions are to rise, London must in some degree fall. It must stop gorging on infrastructure investment – as, mercifully, it may now do on Heathrow<sup>6</sup> expansion. It should stop drawing ever more commuters into its centre, which is what Crossrail<sup>7</sup> and HS2<sup>8</sup> (now running only to the Midlands) are about. It must stop cramming itself with students, the one truly energising factor



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