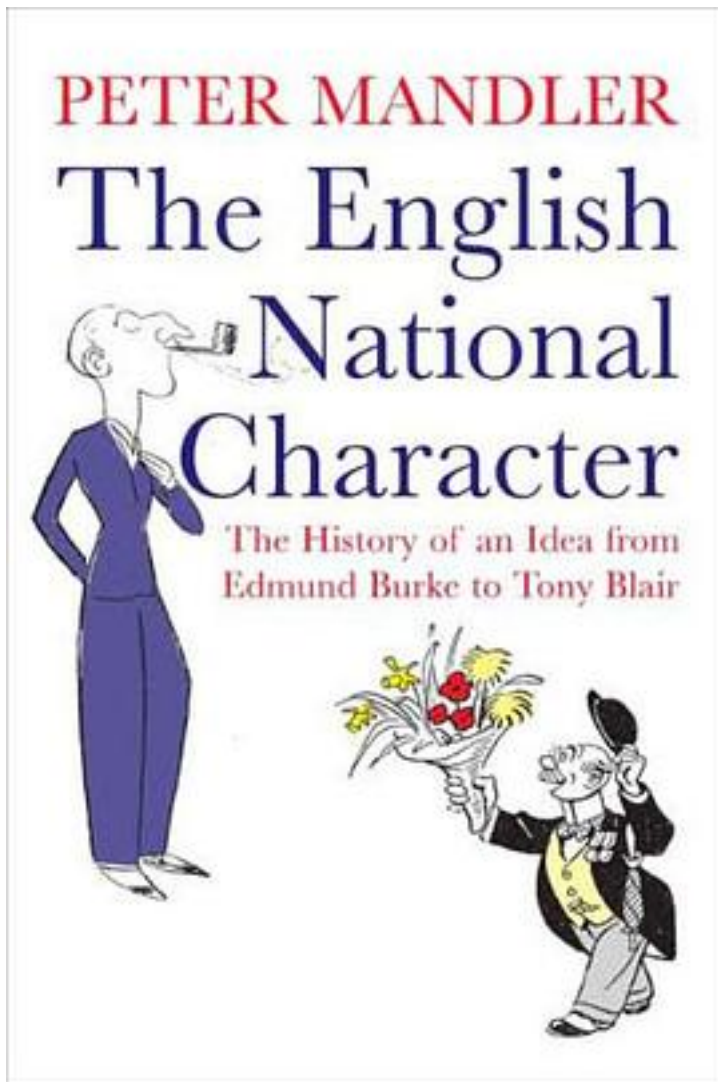


# The English National Character



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What kind of people are 'the English' - what are the characteristic traits and behaviour that distinguish them from other people? This highly original and wide-ranging book traces the surprisingly varied history of ideas amongst the English about their own 'national character' over the past two centuries. In Edmund Burke's time, 200 years ago, the very idea of a 'national character' was novel and not very respectable - what could a duke and a dustman have in common? In our own time, when we like to think of ourselves as unique individuals, it's hard again to think of a 'national character' that binds us into a national unit. But in between, as Britain became a democracy, 'national character' became part of the national common sense, in depictions of John Bull and his twentieth-century successor, the 'Little Man', and in a set of stereotypes about English traits, follies and foibles. Throughout, this idea of an English national character has always had to struggle against snobbery, wider identities based on Britain, the United Kingdom or the Empire, and above all the jostle of rival ideas about what made the English truly English - are they blunt and candid, or reticent and polite? Are they family-loving and sentimental, or pragmatic and cold-hearted, sending their children off to boarding schools at a tender age? Are they globe-trotting and enterprising, or insular and over-civilized? Do they pattern themselves after the 'gentleman' or are they locked in class struggle? As these contrasts suggest, far from being shy of talking about themselves, the English have produced over the past two hundred years a vast outpouring of material on what it means to be English - material on which this book draws: lectures, sermons, political speeches, journalism, popular and scholarly books, poems and novels and films, satires and cartoons and caricatures, as well as the most up-to-the-minute social science and public opinion research. In this comprehensive, lucidly argued account of the history of thinking about the English national character, one of the leading historians of modern Britain challenges long-held assumptions and familiar stereotypes and offers an entirely new perspective on what it means to think of oneself as being English.

作者介绍:

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书评

初衷都这本书是想和领导搞好关系，是个英国人。当时对我意见相当大，都不和我说话的。知己知彼，就买了这本书。读了一半，那哥们回老家结婚去了，主动辞职，走时喝多了和我聊的蛮多。其实要懂英国人，晚上一起去pub就可以了。

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