

French Connections



3. Conquest & Quarrels

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BRITAIN IN THE MIRROR OF FRANCE. Neighbors that have been connected for so long in war and peace tend to define themselves in part by looking into the mirror of the other. We will see how this applies in four different periods of British history.

An Englishman looking into the Norman mirror will see aspects of himself. But the mirrors of the first and second Hundred Years' Wars and the French Revolution reveal differences that have become very much part of the British self-image. The history of these events is complicated so, rather than attempt to explain it, we take various ways in which it has been expressed in British culture: in architecture and language; in the history plays of Shakespeare; in the folk songs of France, England, and Scotland; and in the English Romantic poets. *rb.*

A. Norman is the New Normal

The Norman Conquest of 1066 was by no means the only invasion of Britain; what is significant is that it was the last. This is due in part to the Norman genius for systematizing social and religious structures, defense, jurisprudence, and many other factors that continue to play a part in British life.

♪ **Video:** Bayeux Tapestry (with music from *Carmina Burana*, 11–12th century)

Maps: events of 1066

Tower of London (1078–) and other Norman castles

♪ **Video:** tour of Durham

Durham Cathedral (1083–)

Lincoln Cathedral (1072–)

B. Shakespeare in France

Englishmen of my generation grew up with Laurence Olivier's 1944 film of *Henry V*, made by at the suggestion of Winston Churchill. It was a propaganda exercise, of course, but then so was Shakespeare's play—and both of them worked.

- ♪ **Shakespeare:** *Henry V* (Kenneth Branagh film, 1989), speech before Harfleur
- ♪ **German:** *Merrie England*, "The Yeomen of England" (Peter Dawson)
- ♪ **Shakespeare:** *Henry V* (Laurence Olivier film, 1944), Harfleur speech and battle of Agincourt
- ♪ **Shakespeare:** *Henry V* (Royal Shakespeare Company, 2015), tennis balls and wooing scenes (Alex Hassell, Jennifer Kirby)
- ♪ **Shakespeare:** *Henry VI/1* (BBC, 1983), scenes with Joan of Arc (Brenda Blethyn)

C. French Wars in Folksong

Taking three pairs of folk songs from England, France, or Scotland, we examine the continuing quarrels between France and England in the 18th and early 19th centuries. Until Britain entered the Napoleonic Wars in 1803, the quarrels were less direct, fought out through proxies or coalitions, but that did not make them any less interesting.

- ♪ **Folksong:** *High Germany* (England)
- ♪ **Folksong:** "Malbrough s'en va-t-en guerre" (France)
- ♪ **Folksong:** "Wha'll be King but Cherie?" (Scotland)
- ♪ **Montage:** Bonnie Prince Charlie scenes from *Outlander*
- ♪ **Folksong:** Skye Boat Song (Scotland; Amanda Powell with Apollo's Fire)
- ♪ **Folksong:** "Boney was a Warrior" (England)
- ♪ **Folksong:** "Te souviens-tu?" (France)

D. Revolution & the Romantics

The outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789 was hailed as a new dawn by Wordsworth and many of his fellow Romantics, but he soon became disillusioned by the Reign of Terror. Only Byron retained a certain admiration for Napoleon, who appealed to his own revolutionary spirit.

- ♪ **Wordsworth:** *The Prelude*, dawn of the French Revolution
- ♪ **Wordsworth:** *The Prelude*, the September Massacres, as set by Benjamin Britten in *Nocture* (1958); Peter Pears, tenor
- ♪ **Byron:** *The Eve of Waterloo* (Tyrone Power)
- Byron:** *Napoleon's Farewell*
- Turner:** *The Battle of Trafalgar* (1822–24, Greenwich)
- Turner:** *The Fighting Temeraire* (1838, London NG)
- ♪ **Hardy:** *The Night of Trafalgar*
- ♪ **Newbolt:** *The Fighting Temeraire*

Benjamin **Britten** (1913–76, *British composer*), George Gordon, Lord **Byron** (1788–1824, *British poet*), Edward **German** (1862–1936, *British composer*), Thomas **Hardy** (1840–1928, *British writer*), Henry **Newbolt** (1862–1938, *British poet*), William **Shakespeare** (1564–1616, *English playwright*), Joseph Mallord William **Turner** (1775–1851, *British painter*), William **Wordsworth** (1770–1850, *British poet*)

The course website is www.brunyate.com/FrenchConnections
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