

Reading Guide for *The Age of Walls* by Tim Marshall

Chapter 8, UK

*Tim Marshall dedicates this last chapter to the United Kingdom (UK), which is comprised of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and the current challenges of national identity it faces. Specifically, the UK is struggling with how to pull away from the European Union (EU) and “go it alone” (this is called the **Brexit**) while keeping the four regions together in a united kingdom. Nationalism is resurgent in the UK, as it is all over the world, driven by fear of **unrestricted immigration** and the perception that Britain has lost too much **sovereignty** by joining the EU. These are very challenging times in the UK indeed.*

p. 221-225 A history of **Hadrian's Wall**, built in 122 CE by the Romans: civilization (Romanized Britons) on one side, Barbarians (the Celts, or Scots & Picts) on the other.

p. 224 “Look to your own defenses.” Rome (Europe) declined to help the British... and today the British are rejecting Europe (with the Brexit). S

1745 Scotland rose up behind **Bonnie Prince Charlie** (Charles Stuart) and his **Jacobite** followers to break free of England. This last attempt at Scottish independence ended with the Scots' defeat at the Battle of Culloden, the last major battle on British soil, in 1746.



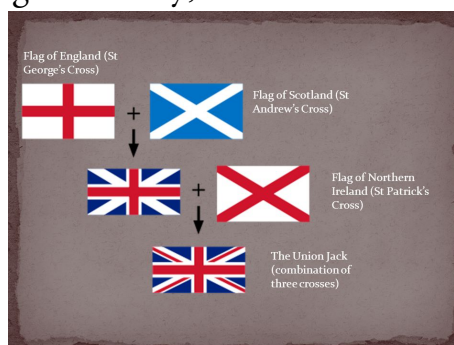
Hadrian's Wall



The Battle of Culloden, 1746

p. 226-228. A summary of Scottish and English history, from the 1200s to 1707.

1707 The Act of Union united England and Scotland. The British flag is a combination of the English flag of St. George and the Scottish flag of St. Andrew, and, later, the flag of Northern Ireland.



226. The Welsh and Cornish are also Celtic peoples. Celts speak **Gaelic**.

227-228. Scotland has gradually acquired more sovereignty from the British government (known as Westminster.) In 1997 the Scottish people voted for **devolution** (“The transfer or delegation of power to a lower level, especially by central government to local or regional administration”); in 2007 the Scottish government proclaimed itself, and in 2014 an independence referendum (vote of the people) decided 55%-45% to stay with Great Britain.



Westminster & the Houses of Parliament, London



The UK

229. Similarly, the Welsh—the people of **Wales**—have also acquired more sovereignty from Westminster. But the Welsh number only 2.5 million people. England has almost 70 million.

230. **Northern Ireland** (sometimes called Ulster), with only 1.8 million people, may be the most volatile of the four regions. Split between a dwindling Protestant majority—descended from Scottish settlers—and a growing Catholic minority of Celtic peoples, this is a land deeply divided. The Catholics, historically discriminated against, are **nationalists** who want to be part of the independent republic of Ireland, while the Protestants are **Unionists**, fiercely loyal to Great Britain.

p. 230-234. It has been a history of violence, marked recently by **The Troubles** between the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the Ulster Freedom Fighters. 3,500 dead and 50,000 injured between the 1960s and 1998.



231. **The Good Friday Agreement** ended the violence in Northern Ireland but did not end the tension between Catholics and Protestants, the Green versus the Orange. The series of ramshackle walls—Belfast has about 100 of these walls—that separate Catholic from Protestant neighborhoods preserve peace for now, but they do not ensure peace.



231. “Kneecapping” -- “**Kneecapping** is a form of malicious wounding, often as [torture](#), in which the victim is injured in the [knee](#). The injury is typically inflicted by a low-velocity [gunshot](#) to the [knee pit](#) with a [handgun](#).” It was a common form of punishment inflicted by the IRA on informers.

234-246. [One of the biggest divides has been between the economic/social classes in British society.](#)

236. Imbalances in society: The **Russell Group universities**...the UK’s 24 leading universities... their graduates dominate the highest positions in the UK as well as the public conversations in the media. Before the **Brexit** vote in 2015, the other point of view—the less educated, more working-class point of view—was less heard, and so the Brexit vote shocked the business, political, and media classes. The “left-behinds”—people from the poorer regions of England voted for the Brexit because their complaints about the changes in their country were being disregarded.

To what extent does the UK’s resemble economic and social distinctions in the U.S.?

2237. David Goodheart’s 2017 book, *The Road to Somewhere*, describes the **Anywheres** and the **Somewheres**.

Even Britain’s Labour Party, the traditional party of the working class, had shifted to a more middle-class **progressive** set of values. Once they cared most about jobs, housing, and crime, now they focus on **identity politics*** (*A tendency for people of a particular religion, race, social background, etc., to form exclusive political alliances, moving away from traditional broad-based party politics.)

238. Major issues dividing people in the UK today are **identity, nationalism, and immigration**.

239. “Being anti-immigration does not necessarily accord with being anti-immigrant.” The creation of the EU allowed for free movement of peoples within the member states. The experts misjudged how many would come. The wave of immigrants from Poland and Hungary into the UK was a shock, and such a large influx of immigrants led people to wonder if these immigrants were taking jobs away from British workers. This led to a reaction against the EU rules. Many Britons felt the character of the country—its very Britishness—was changing too fast. Pundits labeled these people xenophobes or bigots.



240. Tim Marshall’s Definitions (*Are these fair definitions?*)

Patriotism—Love of one’s own country and respect for those of others.

Nationalism—Love of one’s own country and contempt for those of others.

241. The issue of **religion** in the UK. The UK is slowly becoming less religious, less church-going. Fewer claim to be Christian (72% in 2001, 59.3% in 2011).

241-246. **Muslims** are a small fraction of the UK, but **Islam** is the fastest-growing religion in the UK due to birth rates, immigration, and devotion. And in some Muslim communities An “**us and them**” mentality has emerged. Fear of radical elements in the Muslim communities (“Islamists” or “jihadists”), fear that traditional Muslims do not embrace the individual freedoms that the UK has largely embraced (eg, same-sex marriage, reproductive rights), and they are concerned. “Will there be a Europeanization of Islam, or an Islamification of Europe?”



244. “*Racism* is an increasingly easy, shallow term to throw around and in many cases deflects from our understanding of what is actually going on in our society.”

245. “England is perhaps the only great country whose intellectuals are ashamed of their own nationality.” –George Orwell

Definition of *Commentariat* – 1. Members of the news media considered as a class. 2. The journalists and broadcasters who analyze and comment on current affairs.

246. “Our worst nightmare is a future in which we retreat into our various enclaves-the sum of the parts not equaling, but weakening, the whole.”

