How to be an alien was written by George Mikes, a Hungarian who came to live in Britain. It was first published in 1946 and has since been reprinted over forty times.

George Mikes said in his book, “When I arrived in England I thought I knew English. After I’d been here an hour, I realized I didn’t understand a word”.

In England many things are the other way round. On the continent people seldom speak about weather. If they do, it usually means they have no other topics to discuss. In England you must never contradict anybody when discussing the weather. Should it hail and snow, should hurricanes uproot the trees from the side of the road, and should someone remark to you: “Nice day, isn’t it? — answer without hesitation: “Isn’t it lovely!”

On the continent Sunday newspapers appear on Monday; in Eng­ land (the country is really hard to understand) they appear on Sunday. On the continent some people like pets, others don’t. If an Englishman goes out for a walk with a friend, he doesn’t say a word for hours. If an Englishman goes out for a walk with his dog, he keeps chatting to him.

When the English plan a town they never build a street straight. They always call streets by different names: street, road, place, ave­

nue, lane, way, promenade, path, walk, broadway, gate, terrace, view.

You can offend people on the continent in many ways, for exam­ ple, if you laugh at them or make jokes about their life and jobs. But the English take everything with a sense of humour. You can easily offend them only if you tell they have no sense of humour. People on the continent either tell you the truth or lie, in England they hardly ever lie, but they don’t tell you the truth either.

On Sundays on the continent even the poorest person puts on his best suit and tries to look nice and respectable. In England even the richest man dresses in some old clothes and doesn’t shave.

Tea is another popular topic for discussion on the British Isles. The English suggest you do not drink it clear, but pour a few drops of cold milk into it and no sugar at all. This colourless and tasteless liquid they call their national drink. There are some occasions when you must not refuse a cup of tea. If you are invited to an English home, at five o’clock in the morning a cup of tea is brought in by a smiling hostess. You have to declare with your best smile: “Thank you so much. I do adore a cup of early morning tea”. Then you have tea for breakfast, then you have tea at eleven o’clock in the morning, then after lunch, then you have tea for tea, then after supper and again at eleven o’clock at night.

Match the words and make up word combinations.

A lovely drink

Sunday person

A respectable weather

Tasteless newspaper

A national hostess

A smiling tea