

Boris Johnson – UK's controversial new foreign secretary

16th July, 2016



The new British Prime Minister Theresa May has caused a stir around the world with her appointment of the UK's new Foreign Secretary. She has chosen the controversial former Mayor of London Boris Johnson. Mr Johnson led the campaign for

Britain to leave the European Union and has now been given the job of Britain's top diplomat. This has surprised many as Mr Johnson has a track record of being very undiplomatic to world leaders and countries. He once referred to Hillary Clinton as a "sadistic nurse in a mental hospital." He compared Russian President Vladimir Putin to a creature from Harry Potter. He also made racist comments about African countries and the nation of Papua New Guinea.

The British newspaper 'The Independent' said Mrs May, "had managed to unite the international community in bewilderment by her appointment of Boris Johnson as Foreign Secretary". France's foreign secretary said Mr Johnson had lied to the British people during his campaign to get Britain to leave the EU. TV presenters and journalists in Germany speculated whether British politics was becoming a farcical comedy show. The Washington Post asked how Mr Johnson could become Britain's top diplomat after having offended much of the world. Mr Johnson shrugged off comments that he was not the person for the job. He said his task was to reshape Britain's identity as a "great global player".

Sources: CNN / Washington Post / independent.co.uk

Writing

Britain is one of the world's most important countries. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

appointment / foreign secretary / controversial / campaign / diplomat / hospital / unite / community / bewilderment / journalists / comedy / comments / identity

True / False

- The article says Theresa May likes to stir things. T / F
- Boris Johnson was a key campaigner for the UK to leave the EU. T / F
- Boris Johnson has a history of not being very diplomatic. T / F
- Mr Johnson made racist comments about Papua New Guinea. T / F
- A newspaper said the UK leader had united the international community. T / F
- Boris Johnson called France's foreign secretary a liar. T / F
- The article says Boris Johnson will soon star in a German comedy. T / F
- Boris Johnson said Britain's identity does not need to be changed. T / F

Synonym Match

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| 1. caused | a. wondered |
| 2. chosen | b. remarks |
| 3. campaign | c. job |
| 4. track record | d. selected |
| 5. comments | e. ridiculous |
| 6. unite | f. history |
| 7. speculated | g. created |
| 8. farcical | h. disregarded |
| 9. shrugged off | i. drive |
| 10. task | j. unify |

Discussion – Student A

- What do you know about Boris Johnson?
- Why is the world shocked Boris Johnson is the UK's foreign secretary?
- What do you think of your country's foreign secretary?
- What do you know about recent politics in Britain?
- What qualities should a top diplomat have?
- What advice do you have for Boris Johnson?
- What do you think of Boris Johnson's comments about world leaders?
- How can someone who makes racist comments be foreign secretary?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|---|---------------------------|
| 1. the controversial former | a. community |
| 2. Johnson led the campaign for Britain | b. mental hospital |
| 3. a track | c. a farcical comedy show |
| 4. a "sadistic nurse in a | d. Mayor of London |
| 5. He also made racist | e. to leave |
| 6. unite the international | f. diplomat |
| 7. British politics was becoming | g. of the world |
| 8. Johnson could become Britain's top | h. comments |
| 9. offended much | i. Britain's identity |
| 10. his task was to reshape | j. record |

Discussion – Student B

- Is Boris Johnson good or bad for Britain?
- What should Boris Johnson do in his first few months?
- What do you think of France's foreign secretary saying Johnson lied?
- Why might people think British politics is "a farcical comedy show"?
- How important is the UK to your country?
- How could Mr Johnson reshape Britain's identity?
- Are any of your leaders embarrassing?
- What questions would you like to ask Boris Johnson?

Spelling

- with her mntpetopani of...
- led the nmiacgap for Britain to leave
- the job of Britain's top maltiodp
- a iscsiatd nurse
- a etcuraer from Harry Potter
- He also made iartcs comments
- unite the international community in nmreeidlewtb
- TV presenters and sojtraliusn
- a ifcacral comedy show
- Britain's top tompliad
- ondedfef much of the world
- Johnson gerdguhs off comments

Answers – Synonym Match

1. g	2. d	3. i	4. f	5. b
6. j	7. a	8. e	9. h	10. c

Role Play

Role A – A strong currency

You think a strong currency is most important for a country to be a global player. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their things aren't so important. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): military strength, a popular culture or a universal language.

Role B – Military strength

You think military strength is most important for a country to be a global player. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their things aren't so important. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): a strong currency, a popular culture or a universal language.

Role C – A popular culture

You think a popular culture is most important for a country to be a global player. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their things aren't so important. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): military strength, a strong currency or a universal language.

Role D – A universal language

You think a universal language is most important for a country to be a global player. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their things aren't so important. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): military strength, a popular culture or a strong currency.

Speaking – Global player

Rank these with your partner. Put the things a country most need to be a global player at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|-------------------|------------------------|
| • strong currency | • military strength |
| • long history | • popular culture |
| • stable economy | • natural resources |
| • strong leaders | • a universal language |

Answers – True False

a	F	b	T	c	T	d	T	e	T	f	F	g	F	h	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.