Lickety splits: two nations divided by a common language | Science | The Guardian

English people knew little of America, and cared less about it. On our side the case was no better—actually it was worse. Campbell addressed the Commonwealth Club, and he attributed a variant of the jest to Shaw: In May a columnist in a San Bernardino, California newspaper presented another version of the saying: In June a newspaper in Bellingham, Washington printed an instance attributed to Shaw: It is a misfortune for Anglo-American friendship that the two countries are supposed to have a common language. A Frenchman in America is not expected to talk like an
American, but an Englishman speaking his mother tongue is thought to be affected and giving himself airs. However, the expression has been located neither in his writings nor in an interview. Also, many variant phrasings have proliferated over the years. Hence, there is some residual uncertainty about the quotation and its ascription. Perhaps future researchers will discover more.

The jest was similar to the remark attributed to Shaw many years later. Images have been cropped and resized. Great thanks to Brian Zack whose inquiry led QI to formulate this question and perform this exploration. Thanks also to Fred R. Shapiro located the September 5, citation and Goranson located the October 29, citation. Update History: On October 30, citations dated September 5, ; December 14, ; and June 3, were added.

The conclusion was rewritten. Skip to content. Here are four versions: 1 Britain and America are two nations divided by a common language. It may not display this or other websites correctly. You should upgrade or use an alternative browser. Thread starter bethemasterofenglish Start date Jun 18, Hello, The following is from Financial Times. Winston Churchill joked that Britain and America were divided by a common language. Today blue-collar whites on both sides of the Atlantic are speaking in the same idiom. They both yearn for the certainties of a lost age. Last edited by a moderator: Jun 18, Florentia52 Modwoman in the attic Wisconsin. The most likely looking source I found said:. So, I wonder if the phrase which has come into common usage is just a commonly used paraphrase, or whether it has a specific source of its own.

Also, although I have only heard it used in the context of Britain and America, I wonder if that's its only usage. If we can trust Google hits then it's George Bernard Shaw. Skimming some sites that pop up when searching for Oscar Wilde and Winston Churchill I recognized that all those pages do have one in common: They either conclude "No, they didn't" or "Whoever it said". The first source discussing differences between British and American English and how the division evolved states George Bernard Shaw as origin. And here again George Bernard Shaw is stated as origin but the other names are also mentioned. It adds spice to my conversation. Well, about the second part of your question. I don't think so. I live in Germany and with Austria and Switzerland there are two countries which do speak the same or just a similar language. But I've never heard that sentence in relation to these countries.

Besides the mentioned example I can't, off the top of my head, think of any other countries where it could be likely to be used as well, thus I conclude: Yes, it's the only usage in the context of Britain and America. It was Shaw, according to quote number 31 on Page , the fourth edition Oxford Dictionary of Quotations states:. Attributed in this and other forms, but not found in Shaw's published writings. The phrase's popularity may be spreading to other languages. In Dutch literar scholar Ton Anbeek used it though without providing a source to point to the difference between the variants of Dutch spoken in the northern part of Belgium Flanders and the Netherlands in an article in Dutch published in the Flemish literary journal Dietsche Warande en Belfort.

I briefly refer to Anbeek’s use of the phrase in my discussion of literature by authors of African descent in Flanders: Bekers, Elisabeth. In the movie " Patton", George C. Shaw by name as the source in a speech during wartime England. I'm willing to bet the screenwriters were probably old enough to have heard or read about it first hand to make it work in the script. The fact that they used Shaw as the source has got to be more than a coincidence. Churchill made it popular when he used this variant: "Americans and British are one people separated by a common language."

This is also true of Portugal and Brazil.

Two nations divided by a common language | WordReference Forums

This list is endless and you can even buy a dictionary on the subject! Anya : When you are from Canada, under the influence by the vocabulary of both British and American contact books, movies, tv, etc. The electricians arrived and started work on the 1st floor. Eventually convinced them to go up to the 3rd floor, which is the 2nd floor… aaahh! Sarah : Why do Canadians think Australians end up on the ground in fits of laughter every time they attempt to walk past a Roots store?! It does indeed! I offer one-to-one support and targeted help and advice to help YOU navigate your own expat journey. I can make sure you are well-prepared for expat life. Hop on a call with me to find out more. This site uses Akismet to reduce spam. Learn how your comment data is processed. Share this! Hop on a call with me to find out more Let's chat! UK Brit here, when I read that, que my morning coffee all over the place. A cookie has been placed on your device to help make your visit better for you. Cookies are completely safe and secure and will never contain any sensitive information. By continuing to browse ExpatriateChild you agree to our use of cookies. For Mrs Thatcher, he was a kindred spirit offering a clear, if simple, political vision. Big government was bad. Communism was wicked. And that led to clear but simple policies. Taxes should be low, government spending limited and defence spending high. It is worth recalling this complex historical background as Britain welcomes — if that is the correct word — Reagan's successor to the White House, Mr Trump.

Facing impeachment at home, he arrives in Britain in the middle of an extremely bitter general election campaign, having already controversially interfered in domestic British politics. He called the Conservative prime minister Boris Johnson a good man and Britain's Trump , as if he sees Mr Johnson as a kind of mini-me. Mr Johnson's party has been ahead in the opinion polls for weeks, suggesting he could win a comfortable parliamentary majority. So what could go wrong?

The US trade representative body that will negotiate any future US-UK trade deal has held open hearings, in which US lobby groups, including pharmaceuticals, meat production, health care and others, have stated how they would like to claim a big slice of the British market. It is impossible to overstate how sensitive this is. Few British people would care if American or other foreign owners bought British football clubs. Nor would many care if foreign owners bought British supermarkets or manufacturers or even chocolate makers such as Cadbury's. But any British politician advocating American-style health care is committing political suicide. Healthcare costs are the biggest cause of personal bankruptcy in the US and despite the understaffing of the National Health Service, it retains the affection, respect and trust of British people like no other major British institution.
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Another version of the saying:

Commonwealth Club, and he attributed a variant of the jest to Shaw:

Bernard Shaw In December the syndicated columnist Joseph Fort Newton presented another variant of the Shavian saying to his readers: 11

I am beginning to wonder whether you are aiming your publication at the USA rather than the UK, and whether the two newspapers are now American-owned. I am not anti-American, but I do not see why our language should be corrupted by sloppy writing, and why there should be so much emphasis on all things American. Whilst I appreciate that many are either American themselves, or have spent a long time in the USA, they are nevertheless writing for a British readership. Recent examples include clutch, rumbunctious, drag for High Street, dweebish and schleip.

However, the expression has been located neither in his writings nor in an interview. Also, many variant phrasings have proliferated over the years. Hence, there is some residual uncertainty about the quotation and its ascription. Perhaps future researchers will discover more. The jest was similar only regarding 'gotten' but several other Americanisms you deploy.

I find myself constantly having to reach for the dictionary to find out what your journalists are saying when I am reading the Guardian or Observer because of these ugly and unnecessary Americanisms. Why can't they use British English which we all understand, instead of American slang which in my view spoils otherwise interesting articles? More examples include upscale, lickety split what does that mean? The ghastly schlepping has made another appearance as well. American English is fine when living in America, but please stick to British English when writing for a British readership. Some go further. One reader referred to "the default Americanism required by the infamous [sic] Guardian stylebook" while another suggested we had changed "got" to "gotten" in a reader's letter, "to fit your style policy", adding: "This is far from the first example I have noted, not only regarding 'gotten' but several other Americanisms you deploy.

Here are additional selected citations in chronological order. Shaw wrote a thematically related comment about language that highlighted the American people knew little of America, and cared less about it. Osgood, McIlvaine and Company, London.

English language - Wikiquote

We drink at the springs of the same literature. We speak the same language. This citation was presented previously in this article: Swing I wonder. When we discussed this subject in we talked mostly about the need for knowledge and understanding. British knowledge of America was inadequate then and American knowledge of Britain was not so much better. And in the meantime I should say that what our two peoples actually know of each other has not grown to be anything like enough. England and America are two countries separated by the same language. Bernard Shaw. In December the syndicated columnist Joseph Fort Newton presented another variant of the Shavian saying to his readers: English people knew little of America, and cared less about it. On our side the case was no better—actually it was worse. Campbell addressed the Commonwealth Club, and he attributed a variant of the jest to Shaw: In May a columnist in a San Bernardino, California newspaper presented another version of the saying: In June a newspaper in Bellingham, Washington printed an instance attributed to Shaw. It is a misfortune for Anglo-American friendship that the two countries are supposed to have a common language.

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Here are a few examples. Jane: pointing to herself. Jane. Tarzan: Jane. Jane: And you? Tarzan: Tarzan, Tarzan. Jane: Tarzan. This line didn’t appear in any of Cagney’s many films. In a speech to the American Film Institute in he made a point of saying. Famous quotes and sayings at The Phrase Finder. Popular Misquotations. The line doesn’t appear in the film, although it was present in some early trailers. Boyer did epitomize the suave, debonair French lover and became somewhat typecast in such roles. I am beginning to wonder whether you are aiming your publication at the USA rather than the UK, and whether the two newspapers are now American-owned. I am not anti-American, but I do not see why our language should be corrupted by sloppy writing, and why there should be so much emphasis on all things American. Whilst I appreciate that many are either American themselves, or have spent a long time in the USA, they are nevertheless writing for a British readership.

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