

Reaping the Linguistic benefits of TV !!

Scandinavian countries are famed for their linguistic abilities. Having attended a year in the "Vejle Gymnasiet" (Vejle High School, Denmark) in 3^oG (T^oL) I can attest to the fact that the teaching there is no different from ours (except for the fact that we, as students, were allowed to knit or embroider while listening to the teachers). So how on earth do they do it? Why are their students so good at English, or German, for that matter?

It is important to remember that Denmark is a small country, with a population of only 5 million. They do not have the same national audio-visual resource as does France. Most of their programs are imported - from GB, from the USA, from Germany, from France... and these programs, rather than being dubbed, are simply sub-titled. This is not only the case for films, but also for cartoons, and children's series. Many (according to some statistics, most) children start watching TV at the tender age of two or three. What child, at that age, is capable of reading (and understanding) subtitles? The child is obliged to use his eyes, and to get his ears used to hearing, to listening to and to understanding the other language. So at seven, when the child starts to learn a foreign language he leaps forward (linguistically speaking) having the advantage of being able to recognize sounds, words and many expressions. For these very reasons, I have often counseled students to watch TV series and films in English, or to play their favorite video games in English.

If you would have liked to get away to an English-speaking country at some point, not only for cultural reasons, but also to brush up on your language skills, but have met with resistance from other family members (oh nooo, not England AGAIN?), why not do it in the comfort of your own home, in front of the TV?

Here is a suggestion of a marvelous series to watch, to enjoy.

From Britain - Case Histories, based on one of Kate Atkinson's novels:



Hero: Jackson Brodie
Marital Status : divorced (from Josie)
One daughter : Marlee, 9
One sister: Niamh, murdered at the age of 12
Previous jobs: soldier; policeman in Cambridgeshire
Current employment: private detective

Three seemingly unrelated murders are revealed to us (obviously having been presented to Jackson Brodie for solving). They are 'old' cases (or as the famous American TV series calls them 'Cold Cases'). Through them, Kate Atkinson presents her characters' issues of fatherhood, divorce, angst, abuse, parenting, incest, dysfunction, frustration, betrayal, fitting in, loneliness, and self-esteem - just about every human emotion and relationship - in a well-crafted story, which resolves in a most satisfying ending.



Kate Atkinson's novels are not unlike jig-saw puzzles - and Jackson Brodie's personality is complex, to say the least. Despite a 'tough guy' exterior, bit by bit, Brodie reveals to us his deeply empathetic heart. He's unable to resist 'coming to the rescue' and is a magnet for the bereaved, the lost and the dysfunctional.

While the novels were set in Cambridge, the screen adaptation has Edinburgh for a backdrop.



Kate Atkinson



Atkinson notes, "I think commonly when Edinburgh's used in films and in TV, it's this very dark side that's shown. It's often used for period dramas and tough crime shows because it has a sooty look and type of threatening darkness, but there's another side to Edinburgh that's nothing like that at all." In the series, the directors wanted a romantic, European feel to the city rather than saying, 'We're in

a gloomy place where bad things happen.' And they managed to make Edinburgh look beautiful, enticing, sparkling. As the program director said, "It's a gorgeous city - you just can't take your eyes off it. There's this extraordinary epic hill at one end, the castle the other end and a huge park. Everywhere you go there is extraordinary architecture and there's history and beautiful greenery and the sea."



Atkinson is the author of several novels ; her detective novels came fairly recently with heroes such as Jackson Brodie and, more recently, Tracey Waterhouse.



Roundhay Park



Monument on Calton Hill



Nelson Monument, Calton Hill

