

HOW TO BE DUTCH

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The QUIZ



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XPAT Scriptum Publishers

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Welcome to *How to Be Dutch, The Quiz*: the questions that SHOULD be on the Dutch citizenship exam. At least that's what I think as the American Netherlander, who's been here 20 years.

This book is a follow-up to *How to Be Orange: An Alternative Dutch Assimilation Course*. Because how can you have a citizenship course without an exam?

In *How to Be Orange*, you can find some of the questions from the actual online Dutch assimilation quiz, such as this one.

You are sitting with a colleague at a terrace. At the table next to you there are two men kissing and caressing each other. You are bothered by this. What do you do?

A – *You remain seated and act as if you are not offended*

B – *You tell the men that they should go sit somewhere else*

C – *You say loudly to your colleague what you think about homosexuality*

ANSWER = A

If you answered C, I suppose you can stop reading this book now. As for the other answers, I understand the idea behind them. But what gets me is the wording of the question: *You are bothered by*

the BOOK

this. Personally, I wouldn't be 'bothered by this.' But – to answer the question correctly – I have to pretend to be someone who's bothered by this, who is pretending NOT to be bothered by this.

And – according to the wording – the men are not just kissing. They are 'kissing and caressing.' If any couple would put on such a Public Display of Affection, I know plenty of Dutch people who would have NO problem saying, 'Get a room! *DOE NORMAAL!*'

The online assimilation exam also gives examples of how some famous Dutch people have scored.

- ✓ Jacques d'Ancona (TV journalist) 4.7
- ✓ Howard Komproe (comedian) 4.6
- ✓ Victoria Koblenko (soap actress) 4.0
- ✓ None of them achieved a passing grade of 5.5.

One year, the Dutch Assimilation Test appeared on TV. The winners were Chinese food delivery guys.

So welcome to my self-made quiz. It can't be any worse than the official one. If you're looking for an official guide to the Netherlands, this is not it. If you're looking for some odd Dutch quirks – in snarky quiz form – then this book is for you.

PREVIOUSLY...

Before we take the quiz, let's review the Dutch track record so far. It includes a lot of things that you may take for granted. In fact, wherever you are in the world, you can play a game I like to call: Look Around the Room and Point to What's Dutch.

From Dutch product names to Dutch artists to Dutch innovations, there's a lot that's hiding in plain sight:

**The artwork hanging
on your wall.**

**The long-life light
bulb in your hall.**

**Household soap
like Axe or Dove.**

**The band who sang
'Radar Love.'**

**The microscope,
the pendulum clock.**

**The first publicly
traded stock.**

**Carrots that are orange.
Wow, who knew?**

**And WiFi. Yes, that's
Dutch too.**

**Capitalism as we
know it today.**

**Marriage for couples
who are gay.**

**The first-ever Fair
Trade coffee.**

**Cassette tapes,
CDs, LEDs.**

**Kuipers, the bald
guy up in space.**

**DJ Tiesto,
dropping bass.**

**Lady Melisandre on
Game of Thrones.**

**(And Daario, the
guy slipping Khalisi
the bone.)**

**The first operational
submarine.**

**That awful Senseo
coffee machine.**

**Keeping New Orleans
safe from the sea.**

***The Voice*, that annoying
show on TV.**

**Dairy cows of the
Holstein breed.**

***Basic Instinct*,
Robocop, *Speed*.**

**Miffy the bunny, so
cute you could eat.
And even blackface
*Zwarte Piet.***

**Philips,
Shell, KLM.
Unilever,
DSM.**

**WeTransfer,
Heineken.
Anne Frank and
Van Halen.**

**MC Escher,
Hieronymus Bosch.
Rembrandt,
Vincent van Gogh.**

**Erasmus, Spinoza,
René Descartes.
Barney, world
champion in Darts.**

**The word *Yankee*, the
word *cookie*.
And Johan Cruyff, RIP.**

**But – if you boast for giving
the world so much –
Then you've not yet learned
how to be Dutch.**

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Published by XPat Media, Van Boetzelaerlaan 153, 2581 AR, The Hague, the Netherlands
Tel.: +31(0)70 306 33 10 / +31(0)10 427 10 22 – E-mail: info@xpat.nl

COVER DESIGN Jan van Zomeren

INTERIOR DESIGN Bram Vandenberghe

PHOTOGRAPHS Afuk, Alex Boogers, ASS man, Bad puff, BARF menu, Big Dick Rabbit, Black Kids for Sale, Brain Wash, Choko, Cystiberry, Die Neger, Dik Kok, Dutch Detour NO, Homoes, KKK, Kut jas, Manwood, Robbers, Tiny Kox, TITS, VD Water, Vondel Kids, Woonshop Hardon, Worst Croissant

FINAL EDITING Stephanie Dijkstra

PRINTING DZS grafik

DISTRIBUTION www.scriptum.nl

ISBN 978 94 6319 015 2 | NUR 370

www.xpat.nl

www.howtobedutch.nl

www.gregshapiro.nl

This book is a work of non-fiction, based on the life, experiences and recollections of the author. The author reserves the right to adapt or streamline details for the sake of privacy or expediency. Quotes, events and details are not a reliable source of journalistic accuracy; rather, they are subjective tools used to tell a story. The author has stated to the publisher that, while certain details may have been changed, the essential details are based on true experience. Portions of the text have appeared in stage shows at Boom Chicago Comedy Theater, as blog pieces on Dutchnews.nl, and in *The XPat Journal*. The author extends his gratitude for the help he received in developing the material.



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INTRODUCTION

Congratulations! If you've completed your Dutch citizenship course, it's time now for the quiz. And if you've *never* taken a Dutch citizenship course, it's also time for the quiz. If you don't score well enough, yes you'll have to leave the country. But don't worry! The questions are so subjective that even most Dutch people don't get them right. They'll be leaving the country with you.

Note: *How to Be Orange* was an attempt to contain only the most poignant first-hand accounts and avoid generalization. *How to Be Dutch* is a blatant attempt to take personal experiences and generalize the hell out of them. Are these questions the textbook truth? No. Are they the most recognizable examples I could think of? Yes. And hopefully the silliest as well.



And bear in mind, this quiz was written by an American. As an American, my knowledge of any foreign culture is invariably limited. Perhaps it's that American, egocentric, chest-thumping chauvinism that allows me to compare everything to my own myopic vision of what a country should be. It's the same eager crassness that finds itself in a historic Dutch brown café and complains that the beers are too small. And maybe it's my total lack of inhibition that allows me to flaunt my own ignorance, while being so very loud in criticizing a foreign culture. Then again, maybe when I go back to the United States, I'll have to think twice. The personal freedoms are hit-and-miss. The vacation days are nowhere near as generous. And there's a lot more time spent in stuck in traffic than biking. Maybe it's not surprising I ended up staying over here.

FOR INEZ

CHAPTER 1

Dutch Identity

It can be difficult to understand the Dutch identity. Even Dutch people have a hard time figuring it out.

QUESTION 1

What is the name of this country?

A – Holland

B – Nederland

C – The Netherlands

ANSWER = ALL OF THE ABOVE

In Dutch, the name of the country is *Nederland*, and in English it's *the Netherlands*, but the official tourist website is holland.com. Their ad campaign is 'Holland, the Original Cool.' And the national airline's in-flight magazine is the *Holland Herald*. Oddly – of the 12 Dutch provinces – only two have *Holland* in the title. This may help explain the result of so many Dutch World Cup football teams. Yes, there are legions of orange-clad Dutch fans, but they yell 'Holland! Holland!' And when the ball goes to the guy from, say, Friesland, a part of him must think 'I'm not from Holland.' And he misses.

QUESTION 2

When Dutch people brag about their country, what examples do they use?

- A – Dutch sports
- B – Dutch water engineering
- C – Dutch brands

ANSWER = NONE OF THE ABOVE

Trick question: Dutch people rarely brag about their country. More likely, a Dutch person will first offer insulting opinions about another country. Then – when the argument has inevitably started – they'll most often defend their nationality with Dutch brands and perhaps Dutch sports. (That's C&A, respectively.)

In fact, one Dutch brand is 'C&A,' which stands for Clemens and Augustus Brenninkmeijer. (The Brenninkmeijers are like the Walton family of the Netherlands.) (But not quite as much money in secret offshore accounts.)

In sports, the Dutch have many reasons to be proud. In the 2014 Winter Olympics, the Dutch speed skating team set a record. No one team had won more medals in any Olympics, ever. At one point, speed skating coach Jillert Anema was interviewed on US television. Instead of talking about his own accomplishments, he started by insulting American football. And then – when the interview turned into an argument – he ended up defending the Netherlands by listing successful Dutch brands: 'When we'd sell our companies to the world, we'd all be billionaires. When we'd sell Shell, Unilever, Aegon ... man, you're broke!'

So yes, Dutch bragging does exist. You just have to insult them first.



Afuk

This is the Frisian language center,
where they give Afuk.

QUESTION 3

How many nationalities are represented in Nederland?

A – 179

B – 180

C – 181

ANSWER = A & C

The mayor of Amsterdam recently gave a speech, saying Amsterdam itself has more nationalities represented than any other city in the world. But he admitted that the exact number is unclear: one census reported 179 nationalities; another said 181. They may both be true. There must be one guy from, say, Burkina Faso, who's dating a woman from Guam – who lives in Utrecht. When he sleeps over at her place, it's 179. But when she sleeps in Amsterdam: 181.

QUESTION 4

Which of the following is NOT true?

A – Nederland is in the top ten happiest countries in the world

B – *Nederlanders* are the most energetic in Europe

C – *Nederlanders* are pessimistic and think they will be worse off than their parents

ANSWER = NONE OF THE ABOVE

They are all true, as reported by news headlines around the time of publication. Yes, Dutch people are happy and energetic, which they apparently achieve by complaining.

QUESTION 5

How many times does the Dutch national anthem reference other countries?

A – 1

B – 2

C – 3

ANSWER = C

The Dutch *volkslied* *Het Wilhelmus* starts: ‘*Wilhelmus van Nassouwe, ben ik van Duitsen bloed.*’ Literally translated, that’s ‘I’m William, founder of your country, and by the way I’m German.’ Yes, German. Where is Nassouwe? It’s in Germany. Another quiz question: Are there any other countries that start their national anthem by name checking another country? (I’m serious. I don’t know of any.)

Spain is the second country referenced. The final line of the song is: ‘*Den koning van Hispanje heb ik altijd geëerd*’ or ‘My allegiance has always been to the King of Spain.’ How many times does *Het Wilhelmus* mention the name of its own country? Zero. Now, that’s not unheard of (witness the USA). But can you imagine America starting off its national anthem: ‘O say can you see – our British history? And Canada’s nice. And a shout out to Mexico.’ No.

(Yes, there are more stanzas to the song. And yes, it’s an inspirational story of the Dutch revolution that bears a lot of resemblance to the American Revolution. But no one teaches us that in America.)

Het Wilhelmus also includes the line ‘*Een Prins van Oranje*,’ or ‘A prince from Orange.’ *Orange* is a city in France. Hence a total of three other countries are referenced. And not just any three countries. As you can read in any history book, these are all countries that have invaded and occupied the Netherlands. Hence, the question: ‘What kind of self-hating country has this as a national anthem?’

This would be the American equivalent of starting the national anthem: ‘O say can you see? Vietnam was a FAIL. And Iraq was a lie, but then no one went to jail. Everything we’ve done wrong, we have put it in this song. And no, we’re not done, because the list is quite long...’

Nederland, you have a lovely country. Lovely culture. But you deserve a better national anthem.