**My Inspiration**

**The Person I Admire**

Carolyn Mikhael, Syria, Reading High Intermediate

There are many people that inspire me, but the person I admire most is my mother. She is an indulgent person. She absorbs all the problems with equanimity. She has a big heart, and she takes care of her family without complaining. Since I was little, I lived without a father. My father’s death had affected my spirit and the spirit of my brothers and sisters. My mother was a great help to us especially during difficult times. She gave us the strength and the courage to overcome these difficulties. My mother inspires me every day to have a better life. I wish one day I can be like her.

Ana Lucy Salcedo, México, Reading High Intermediate

There are many people that inspire me in my life. The person who has inspired me the most is Carlos Cuauhtémoc, who is the author of my favorite book. He helps me change how I think. For example, he tells me if I want to learn English in a short amount of time, I can do it because my mind also wants to. Also, he teaches me how I can talk to people and never argue with them. Moreover, he speaks about the best way to be a good mother, and I like this part because I am a mother. I do not have a lot of experience at parenting. He can guide me to make better decisions in my life, and he can provide me the inspiration that I need to persevere in what I want.

Maria Garcia, Mexico, Reading High Intermediate

I have lots of things that inspire me. One of them is plants. I admire how they grow. They are interesting, beautiful, and really delicate from the roots to the flowers. It’s incredible how they live adjacent to many other kinds of flowers. When I start watching them, they engross me for a long time because they enhance every place they grow. They are as cheap and plentiful as the sunshine, but it’s sad if you don’t take care of them. They may become obsolete. That is why there is an implication that everybody should take time to take care of them. Without them, our life could change a lot. Without flowers, you can’t enhance places. That’s why flowers are my inspiration.

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What Surprised Me about the U.S.

Kimheak Him, Cambodia, Writing High Intermediate

The United States is a country that has a lot of development in construction, law, commerce, and a lot more. It has many things that are very interesting which make people all around the world want to visit. The United States has surprised me because I see everything different from my country, especially the freeways. In Cambodia the roads are very small, and there is only one way. The cars work hard to avoid each other. The United States built a lot of roads to make it easy for people to travel. One more thing that has surprised me is the law because it is very important in this country that all people obey the law. For example, when someone drives a car faster than the speed limit, they will get a ticket. However, people here live a long life, and I think they live very happily with their new developments. Also, they live very safely because of the law. Everything in this country is perfect for life.

Dora Morales, Mexico, Writing High Intermediate

In the United States there are many things that can surprise you when you visit for the first time. One of the things that surprised me the most is the trust in the word of the people. One time, I went to Wal-Mart to buy groceries. When I came home, I realized that some articles that I had bought were missing. I got back to the store, and explained it to the employee. He did not ask me for my ID or the ticket. He immediately trusted in my word, and he gave me again the articles that I had forgotten. This fact really surprised me because in my country it is impossible. You cannot trust in the word of the people, and people cannot trust in your word. You must show evidence of what you are saying. When you forget something in a store, you can give it up for lost. It’s wonderful that you can still find honesty in most people here.

Mac Morales, Mexico, Writing High Intermediate

Something that I saw when I came to the United States was the great quantity of teenagers that quit their studies. I know that dropping classes is a reality in some poor countries of Central America, Asia or Africa. But when I found that it also happens in the United States, I was very surprised. For me seeing teenagers that are US citizens working in burger joints, pizza stores or auto shops is very sad. It is not bad. However, they have excellent opportunities for studies here in the best country in the world. I know that possibly one reason why teenagers do not finish their studies is the enormous cost. However, I believe that it is not enough of an excuse to drop their studies. If a teenager makes more effort and can get good grades, then they can obtain scholarships or financial aid. Then they would have so many possibilities for studying at universities. I think that teenagers’ parents ought to motivate their children more so that they finish the university. Finishing their studies, teenagers would have a better level of life.

Ni Zhuo, China, Writing High Intermediate

The United States is a wonderful country, and I am very thankful to live here. I lived in the southernmost province in China before coming to America. The weather was warm and humid with lush tropical plants all around. My city was beautiful, and my whole family lived close to each other and we could visit anytime. When I arrived in America, in Detroit, Michigan, I was surprised that it was so cold. It was hard to get around. We had to walk 30 minutes to the nearest grocery because we did not have a car. We could not go out of the apartment at night because it was not safe. I was surprised that some people did not live in nice houses, and many were very poor. I thought all Americans had a nice house and were rich. I remember my first day at school. I was surprised that my classmates in school were not very friendly. They were very mean and did not want to get to know me. I was so sad at that time and helpless. After a month I moved to Kansas City to live with an American family, the family of one of my friends in China who had come to America four years earlier. The houses were nice, there were very many tall beautiful trees, and the weather was hot in the spring and summer. I was surprised that people in Kansas City were friendly and treated me very nicely. I was happy that my classmates and teacher in high school were also very nice. Everyone helped me to learn English and to adapt to American culture. I was surprised that in different parts of America the cities looked so different and the people who lived there had different accents when they talked. I am surprised that my life in America, which started so very badly, has turned out so very good.

Guadalupe Flores, Mexico, Writing High Intermediate

Many things have surprised me in this country. For instance, this is a country where people have freedom to express their ideas. For example, I have seen on TV the protest of people who are against abortion in front of the hospital where the doctors are practicing it. Also I have seen thousands of people walking on the street pleading for immigration reform. I have always observed reporters asking people questions about their feelings and disagreements, but I have never seen any aggression or persecution from the police. This shows that the government respects the people’s ideas and beliefs. Another thing that has surprised me is how in this country the people with a kind of disability are embraced, for companies give them the same benefits as other people. They are allowed to compete and interact without any limitation. The last thing that has surprised me is the easy access to having things. When I came in this country, my idea was to stay only for six months, but I started to work, and I became an independent person. I have been able to get all that I have needed, and also all that my family has needed. These above are some of the things that have surprised me.

Technology, the Bridge for Development and Organization

Bibiana Barajas, Colombia, Writing High Intermediate

I am surprised by everything here. If I want to define why this country has a lot of development, the right answer for me is: organization. Although many countries around the world are organized, for me this is the best one, and the technology helps the people to be more organized. Since I have been here, I have seen technology facilitate each process in the daily- routine for everybody. For example, a homemaker has plenty of machines for doing activities at home more quickly. If she has to work and is worried about her children, she can see them through cameras, if she wants. Regarding transportation, in this country everybody can have their own car, and if you get lost, you only need to put a GPS inside your car. I love the internet, and here I have access every day, twenty four hours a day, to facilitate my communication around the world. Another remarkable example is when I go to a restaurant and do not want to eat inside, I can order from my car and bring the food to my home. Also, I have wondered about how the banks work; in my country you waste a lot of your time trying to do transactions, but here the same transaction only takes a few minutes, or generally people here make them online. For these reasons I am surprised at the organization of this country, and how technology helps us to save time, and in some situations, money. I hope that one day my country can work in the same way to improve our quality of life.
That is the principal reason that this beautiful country is going down. People have turned their backs on God, and they have forgotten Him. Finally, the most important thing that I am surprised at is how some truth is to see how this powerful country is owned by foreign countries. Latin America where there are only two levels, rich and poor. The sorry but the people are divided. Everybody is pulling for his or her own phone calls and to control our identity. The U.S.A is a great country, of them are the technology that the government uses to monitor all suffers from this. I think the solution is in our own homes, inculcating something easy to prepare for their hurried lives. This is something that in my country. I think that there are some things that promote obesity, for example, television, video games or internet. They cause children not to want to do physical activity or sports. And also, some people have poor eating habits. They are very accustomed to eating too much fast food. Fast food or frozen food is cheap, and some families prefer to eat poor eating habits. They are very accustomed to eating too much fast food. And also, some people have not want to do physical activity or sports. And also, some people have poor eating habits. They are very accustomed to eating too much fast food. Day after day the news shows how obesity in children has increased over the years and even still, it keeps increasing. Why is the United States the only country that suffers from obesity? Why has this situation surprised me?

In my own experience, when I came to this country, everywhere I looked -- at the store, at a restaurant, on the street -- I saw at least one obese child. This always has surprised me because I never saw an obese child in my country. I think that there are some things that promote obesity, for example, television, video games or internet. They cause children not to want to do physical activity or sports. And also, some people have poor eating habits. They are very accustomed to eating too much fast food. Fast food or frozen food is cheap, and some families prefer to eat something easy to prepare for their hurried lives. This is something that surprised me because I am a mother, and I do not want my children to suffer from this. I think the solution is in our own homes, inculcating good habits to our families. The solution is in our hands and we should act now!

Obesity in a Wonderful Country!
Angela Viviana Rey, Colombia, Writing High Intermediate

Is it possible to live in a society where obesity has become a lifestyle? Day after day the news shows how obesity in children has increased over the years and even still, it keeps increasing. Why is the United States the only country that suffers from obesity? Why has this situation surprised me?

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Life in the U.S.
Jiao Lui, China, Writing High Intermediate

I've been living in Houston for almost five months now; I know it is a short time but I think I've seen enough to tell that are huge differences between the United States and Guatemala. The most significant difference and what surprised me the most is how people behave and how people think.

When I came here five months ago, a friend of mine also came from Guatemala and we spent almost all the holidays together and went to a lot of different places, like San Antonio, or NASA. We also went to the USS TEXAS, and the Alamo, so when we were visiting all these places I knew something was different. Since I came here, I've been thinking about what makes this country different than mine. I realized that people think differently here. That is what surprised me, that all the people here want their own benefit, but they're always also thinking about other people's benefits, too. What I saw is that people are more polite with each other. The United States is a great country, and I know that every person that has had the opportunity to visit knows it's a unique country in which everyone is committed to make it a better country every day, by doing everything the right way.

Elsa Torres, Venezuela, Writing High Intermediate

Before moving to the U.S. my knowledge about American food was very vague. Once, I moved to Baton Rouge, Louisiana. There, I realized that America has many other cultural influences that have made its cuisine very different in each state. I was pleasantly surprised about Louisiana cuisine. No hot dogs, hamburgers or fast food. There were other varieties of American dishes. Louisiana was a delightful experience for me. I still have the taste of Cajun and Creole food in my mouth. I tried the spicy, well-seasoned Jambalaya rice in many festivals in town and the unforgettable etouffee, one of my favorite dishes served over rice. I remember the red juicy crawfish boiled in a big pot that I ate in each Louisiana house where I was invited. And last but not least, the delicious gumbo soup accompanied by the jazz music played in every corner of New Orleans. America is a big melting pot of cultures, which makes its food rich and varied in every state. I am so glad I have the opportunity to enjoy this wonderful experience and learn a little more about America.

Luis Peralta, Guatemala, Writing High Intermediate

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Deysi Cruz, El Salvador, Writing High Intermediate

There are many things that surprise me about the United States. Some of them are the technology that the government uses to monitor all phone calls and to control our identity. The U.S.A is a great country, but the people are divided. Everybody is pulling for his or her own way. Nowadays the middle class is disappearing. It is becoming like Latin America where there are only two levels, rich and poor. The sorry truth is to see how this powerful country is owned by foreign countries. Finally, the most important thing that I am surprised at is how some people have turned their backs on God, and they have forgotten Him. That is the principal reason that this beautiful country is going down. God Bless The United States of America.
Karla Reyna, Mexico, Writing High Intermediate

I have been living in the U.S. for almost 10 years and what surprises me is the variety of people that this country has. Since I have lived here, I have met a lot of people from different countries. One place where I have met a lot of people is here at Kingwood College. For example, my good friend is from China, and she always explains to me about the traditions of her family and her country. I am very surprised of the variety of people and cultures that the college has. I very much like to meet people from other countries because I like to know about their culture and traditions.

Another thing that surprises me is that some people stereotype the Latin race. I do not like this situation at all because sometimes when you say that you are a Latin person, everybody thinks that you have done some criminal activity, or worse, they think that you are in a gang. This problem surprises me a lot, and I hope that people can change their minds about the Latin race. We are good people, and you should not think like this just because three or four Latin people do criminal activities. This does not mean all the Latin people are criminals.

Ursula Molski, Poland, Oral Communication High Intermediate

I have been in the United States for many years, and a lot of things and situations have surprised me in this large country. The first surprising thing in the United States for me was the very big airports in New York and Dallas when I came from Poland. At that moment I was very upset and felt that I could easily get lost. Everything in Texas is huge, for example, houses, cars, and highways. Everywhere I have been in Texas I have seen giant super markets where I can buy almost anything. In the past in my country I saw just small businesses, but now in Poland there are large shops, too. For a long time I didn’t feel comfortable living in Texas because of the distance and the hot weather. I had to drive everywhere by car, and that was very difficult for me because I felt isolated here. In Poland, it is different because we use the metro, buses or trains when we travel, and we can walk everywhere to meet friends there. I am always surprised when I travel in this country because the United States is a great and gorgeous country and has a variety of cultures.

Javier Correa, Colombia, Writing High Intermediate

Since I arrived in the U.S., I have been very surprised by many things. Some of them were surprising because we do not have them in our country or I did not have the possibility to buy them because of the expensive cost. But something that has really impacted me is the behavior of the people that live here. My first days living in Houston were a little difficult, but then I started to meet many people from many different countries. This kind of opportunity is one of the most important and valuable in my life. With these people I have learned so many things, and I have had the possibility to change my mind about some thoughts that I had before I came to the U.S. All of this makes me feel better because I was really scared about this new world that was opening for me.

Looking back at all of this I also wondered, “what do the American people think about all these people who have arrived in their country, looking to make their dreams reality?” I was worried about the attitude they could have had with me. But again, I was surprised. They always have tried to help me as much as they can, and they have been very patient. I am very grateful to this entire wonderful group of people and with this country for all that they have done for me.

Audelia Yoc, Guatemala, Reading High Beginning

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How Can You Make a Difference?
Joseph Gallegos, Mexico, Writing High Intermediate

What was your first surprise when you got to the United States? For me it is really hard to pick just one. I remember when I got to this country. When I got started high school, everybody was speaking about community service. I was thinking it was a job that you got paid for, but actually community service is more than a job. It has surprised me how everybody helps in times of need here in the United States. One example is back in September 2008 when the Hurricane Ike hit the Gulf Coast. It was in my senior year high school. I remember we had to evacuate the city. I was scared and began thinking the worst. Thanks to God nothing too bad happened here, and the worst was in the areas across the Gulf Coast. However, almost half the city was without power, and some trees damaged houses. That is when I heard about many people helping at the local food pantry. I volunteered at a local church. I spent three days giving food to people. That's when I saw how people can join together in times of disaster. Many people were helping others. It really surprised me how people can work together in times of need. When I help somebody, I feel excited and happy. It only takes a little time to help somebody. Please consider helping an individual. It surprises me what a simple individual can do to help others. You can make a difference by volunteering at local food or hospital. You can be the difference by making a miracle happen. Please consider volunteering.

Amazing Swim Team
Carmen Kuzmik, Germany, Writing High Intermediate

The giant amount of power given to kids, even to the smallest and slowest, at the swim team really has surprised me! Each day and each weekend, kids and their parents need to work on the goal of swimming faster. The time and efforts parents do for swim team are amazing.
Especially for the youngest group, six years and under, a swim team is a fantastic opportunity and absolutely worthwhile. Well, for a mom like me it means staying in front of the pool each day while my kids practice, but that has improved my oral communication skills a lot. It also means being at the pool every Saturday at 7 a.m. for many weeks, but there is an end. Of course, there is also a lot of volunteering done in the burning summer heat during Saturday swim meets. But for your efforts, you get a safely swimming child. Secondly, the little ones improve themselves so much every week that they always feel like a winner. When my daughter received the cup for being the most improved swimmer of the week, her eyes shone full of pride the whole day and even longer. At her first meet she was so shocked by the hundreds of people around the pool, she did not jump in the water when it was her turn. But everybody supported her in a fantastic way. For sure, she got a second chance. Her coach came in the water and motivated her face to face. Finally, it was a huge success for every little kid. The surrounding adults cheered enthusiastically for everybody, no matter how long their course took.

Doing swim team is a wonderful experience for kids who love being in water, and who does not? They do have meets, but they are not so competitive. I think that especially the kids in the group six and under can feel the thrill of a giant sport event without being perfect and super athletic. The parents enjoy seeing so much fun in their kid's faces that they forget about the extra work.

Chintan Patel, India, Writing High Intermediate

What has surprised me about the U.S. is their culture, self-dependency, education system and traffic rules. I am from India, a small country but with the second highest population in this world. So when I came to the U.S. I was totally surprised at the traffic rules. Here people follow the signals, signs, speed limits, and other traffic violations. People who don't follow the rules get tickets and are punished by the government. In my country, people usually do not follow the traffic rules and regulations. They think that “rules are made for breaking,” and there are no restrictions to breaking the rules. Also we do not have a certain speed limit nor the camera system. So these two things have really surprised me.

Another thing that surprised me was the food. In my country, everyone cooks at home and eats homemade healthy food while in the U.S. people prefer fast food. You can find fast food restaurants on each and every corner. So that was pretty amazing to me. In addition, one more thing that has surprised me was the drive through system. People do not have to get out from the car. In my country we have Mc Donald’s, Pizza Hut, etc., but we do not have this kind of drive through system.

When I first came to the U.S., I was totally scared because of the language and the culture. But I have seen here that people respect each other's culture and languages. Finally, what last surprised me about the U.S. were all the resources students have to attend school. In the U.S., the government provides students with transportation, breakfast and lunch during the school hours. Also they provide scholarships and financial aid for the students who have low incomes. Also students have good job prospects. They can work part time to cover their expenses. In my country, we do not have these kinds of good resources. Usually parents struggle to provide their children with a good education. Also, 50% of the people do not read or write in my country. Because of financial problems, they never attend school, but in the U.S. that ratio is very low. It seems that this country is well organized and has a good operating system.

Gloria Pedraza, Mexico, Reading Intermediate

When I came to this country there were many things that surprised me. The first thing was its infrastructure; its large cities with enormous buildings and also, its interstate highway system. It has beautiful scenery like the forests and lakes. I like the fact that this country cares for the green areas. I also like the variety of trees. Second, I like the weather. The weather in this city changes often. Sometimes it is raining, and the next day it is sunny and humid or even cold. The third thing that surprised me was the variety of shopping centers, restaurants and big malls. Those things really surprised me.

Finally, I was very surprised of the diversity of cultures and customs. For example, in our school you will find people from all over the world all in one place. You can learn about their culture and customs. That is one of the main reasons I am taking English classes, so that I am able to communicate with others and learn more about their culture.

Wonders of the U.S.A.
Angela Santos, Colombia, Writing High Intermediate

The United States has surprised me in many positive and negative ways. This beautiful and amazing country has a lot of ways to make life easier. For example, you no longer need to go outside to settle your accounts; with just a click on your computer, you are able to check your bank account, pay some bills, check your balance, transfer money, and complete some errands. This easy access for completing regular daily tasks makes your life better. You can save important time that will be spent in the way you want. Maybe you will need that time if you have a family or at least you will have time to rest if you have two jobs. Another wonderful thing is that that time is considered like gold. Time has high value. People here are very punctual. They always arrive on time. That is why Americans are capable of doing a lot of things. I learned that they manage their time in order to be 100% productive, so they will have productive lives.

In addition, I love the organization of American people. They are organized for each thing they do. What surprises me is how that organization is seen in everything. Americans love to program events with a lot of time ahead. I like this because you can also organize your schedule. If you look at the city, you can see the planning of lots of things. The streets are clean, and the facades of the buildings and houses are kept in good shape. People care about maintaining the city without trash, and there are a lot of rules to keep the neighborhoods in good shape. There are home associations for this purpose. Organization is also reflected in how they proceed in case you have an accident on the road. There will be an immediate response of the police, or fire department. They will assist you, so you can get out of the way. As a result, the traffic can continue without any problem.

I have to say also that there are some things that I have found that surprise me in a negative way, like poverty. I found that the United States has a large percentage of people that live in poverty. People are struggling to survive. There are a lot of families that live off of welfare. There are many that cannot pay for their expenses because of their economical situation. They lose their jobs, so it is difficult. Moreover, I find that the health system is too expensive, and that there are millions of people left behind. For me it is unthinkable that a country that leads in so many ways does not have a better system.
What Surprised Me about the U.S.

Yionary Reynaga, El Salvador, Reading High Beginning

My name is Yionary Reynaga. I’m from El Salvador; this country is located in Central America. When I came to the United States, what surprised me the most was the cold climate. I clearly remember when I arrived at the airport. I saw a lot of people; they were dressed differently than I was. For example they had big jackets, and scarves. I was wearing shorts with a tank top. Later on, I walked out of the airport, and that’s when I realized why people were wearing big jackets, the weather was freezing. I wasn’t expecting that because in my country El Salvador it is never cold. Eighteen years later, I have finally adapted to the climate.

Rosidyl Stivers, Philippines, Reading Intermediate

The U.S. has huge medical supplies and resources. Medical workers are amazing. In case of an emergency, help is a phone call away, and it will not take long for help to arrive. The population, for the most part, follows the rules and regulations of traffic laws. In my country, it is sad to say, the people are not very obedient with traffic rules. The U.S. is a very blessed country for being so helpful. The government is always there to support other countries when they need help. The government is always sending medical help and food to countries that need the help. The recent disaster in Haiti is a good example of how helpful the United States is. I am glad that I am living in the U.S. today.

Technology in the U.S.
Olga Najar, Mexico

Something that really surprises me in U.S. is the easy and convenient access to different kinds of technology. Most of us came from other countries, where we do not have this diversity of technology. Here in the U.S. we have access to a lot of technology, such as DVRs, router systems in our computer, satellite radios, and GPS. All those technological advances make our life easier and more efficient.

The technology in the U.S. is more affordable and makes our life more comfortable and offers better communication. First, we can get access to DVR in our TV from home. With this technology, our life is made easier because we can watch our favorite shows, movies, or even soap operas at any time. We can record any show without commercials; in that way we can save time. Also, it makes our life more efficient because we do not have to be in front of the TV for hours. So we can save time and be more efficient in our busy lives. Second, here we can have access to computers in schools, public libraries, business and homes. With this situation we have access to a lot of information; the internet truly makes our work go faster. Other examples are the video games, iPods and shuffles; with these you have easy access to the internet, Wikipedia and social networks like Facebook. Third, here in the U.S. you have access to another technological system in your home and business which simplifies our life; this is the router system. This system makes your computer “wireless,” which means you can get access to the internet in every part of your house. Some businesses use “wi-fi,” meaning you can get a connection outside or inside. With this technology, our life is more comfortable because we can work on our computers from almost anywhere. For example, I can cook and check my e-mails, or do homework and check my banking accounts at the same time. This technology is very useful because we can be multitask and save time. Finally, another very sophisticated item is the GPS that we can have in our phones, cars and watches. This helps us to find addresses and never get lost. It is very practical for our daily activities, especially if you like to do some sport or hobby outside.

With all this technology in the U.S., sometimes I feel like I am in another world, but at the same time we are better able to communicate, be comfortable and efficient. That is one of the most remarkable experiences that still surprises me, even today after ten years in the U.S.

The Child-Friendly Country
Susanne Voges, Germany Writing High Intermediate

My name is Susanne and I am from Germany. I never have seen a country with so much friendliness towards children like in the U.S. That surprised me when we moved here almost three years ago. Our first big experience with child friendliness was when we arrived the first time to the U.S. All of us were very tired from the long trip, and we had only one wish: to get our baggage as fast as we could and go to our hotel. Suddenly, my son noticed that he had lost his backpack. In there was all his most important stuff, like a small computer, books, games and his best stuffed animals. He was very sad and cried in my arms. It was unbelievable, how many airport employees helped us to find and look for the backpack. They were ready to help and showed us their sympathy for our sad son. Two hours later one employee told us that the backpack was at the police station. They had found it, and the police wanted to make sure that no bomb was in there. Our son was so thankful and happy to hear that, and we picked the backpack from the police station that evening.

Another example of friendliness towards children in the U.S. is when I was in a grocery store for the first time. I could not believe what I saw; they had a lot of car-shopping carts for children. The child can imagine him or herself driving a car while they are watching a movie, and their parents can go shopping relaxed and stress free.

Also, every subdivision has one or more playgrounds; restaurants have enough highchairs for everyone; and kids’ meals are cheap or sometimes even free, and they always have paper and pens for drawing. Most of the fitness centers have childcare and every doctor or dentist has a play corner in the waiting room. Therefore, this has been a very positive and surprising experience here in the U.S., and I wish it for my country, too.

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My Most Unforgettable Childhood Memory

Unforgettable School and Beach
Minh Nguyen, Vietnam, Oral Communication High Beginning

My most unforgettable childhood memory was when I went to school for the first time. I was seven years old and was very excited. My school’s name was Le Ngoe Han. It was very big and very ancient. I remember that I was very happy there. Also, when I was ten years old, I usually spent time with my family going to a beach named Ha Long-Quang Ninh in Vietnam. I loved it. I liked to sit on the beach and play with the sand by making many sandcastles. I often ran after small crabs and captured them alive. I would like to go enjoy the beach and its beauty again. I liked to spend time on the beach. I love the beach.

The Little Bird
Nozha Aref, Syria, Oral Communication High Beginning

Since I was a little girl, I liked animals. I especially liked birds. Next to my window, there was a huge olive tree. One day, on the tree, I saw a mother dove sitting on an egg. After a few weeks, the eggs hatched and I saw a little dove. I watched her from a distance until she grew fluffy feathers. The chick wasn’t ready to fly or feed itself. The next day, the mom was not there and the chick looked helpless in its nest. My uncle and I decided to take care of the bird at home. Then I took care of it. When she grew big enough to fly, I let it go to her world. This is truly something that happened to me. Whenever I hear a chirp, I remember the little bird.

Sancocho by the River
Marcela Lopez, Colombia, Oral Communication High Beginning

When I was around ten years old, I remember that my dad had a Suzuki car. Every weekend, he picked up my brothers and me and drove to a town named Melgar. It is a small town with a lot of tourists due to its very hot weather. It is crossed by the Magdalena River - one of the most important rivers in Colombia. It is along the Amazon River. I remember that we swam in the river and had a good time. We had fun and made the most traditional Colombian food named “Sancocho.” It is only made in the river by families. It is a kind of soup with beef, pork, chicken, potatoes, and corn. It is very delicious! I like Sancocho because it is made by families to share special moments. The most important thing is for everyone to have close families.

My Happy Childhood
Marisol Buolo, Argentina, Oral Communication High Beginning

When I was a little girl, I used to live in Buenos Aires, Argentina. I lived in a big house with my mom and dad. I had one brother and two sisters. Their names were Viviana, Jorge, and Stella. I was the youngest one. My parents always protected me because I was the youngest. When I did something bad to my sisters, I would run to my mom so I could escape from them. In kindergarten, I always moved a lot. It always angered me because I talked a lot. I have good memories of my childhood. I was so happy and I wish I could go back in time.

A Childhood Memory
Ingrid Yepes, Colombia, Writing Intermediate

When I was young I loved playing with my bicycle, but it was very old and rusty. I wanted a new bicycle, but they were too expensive. One day my uncle went on a trip, and I thought he would not bring back anything. When he came back, to my surprise he brought my family a brand new, sleek red bicycle. I loved that bicycle. I cannot forget it.

Family Memories
Nancy Begazo, Peru, Oral Communication High Beginning

My memories are from when I was a girl. They are very happy because I played with my three brothers and sister. After school, we always played and watched movies. The best moments in my life were during Christmas because we had many presents. My mother would buy dresses, and we would sometimes travel to the city to visit an uncle. During that celebration, we ate turkey. After eating, we would dance with family until the next day. In my country, at the beginning of summer and every weekend, going to the beach all day was fun. We had many beautiful moments. At night, our body was tan and would hurt. My mother put cream on us. We would calm down and sleep quietly thanks to our mother’s care.

Sea Animals, Brothers, Soccer, and Horses
Ricardo Jijon, Mexico, Oral Communication High Beginning

I am from Veracruz, Mexico. Some of the memories that I remember are when my dad would take us to the ocean. I also remember when my mom took me one day to the aquarium of Veracruz. It is a beautiful place where I saw a variety of animals such as sharks, dolphins, and turtles. I loved that day. I remember that I used to like going with my family. I liked having dinner with everyone. I liked playing with my brothers. We played soccer after school every day. I remember when I was 10 years old. I played my first soccer game in school. Since then, I have not stopped playing soccer. I will never forget when my grandparents would ride horses and would always care for me.

My Loving Family
Leidi Pocasangre, Guatemala, Oral Communication High Beginning

I had a very good childhood. I was happy with my family. I had two brothers and two sisters. I was the smallest and they always took care of me. As a child, I loved playing with dolls and Barbies. I had four friends of the same age with whom I played all the time after studying and completing school work. I always felt happy with my life, my family, and friends. And now, I feel pretty good, too. I miss my family in Guatemala. One of the moments I remember with great emotion was when I had my first communion. I wore a long white dress. For me, it was very nice. Well, I can only say that in my childhood, I felt very lucky to have the parents and siblings that God gave me. I love my family.

Bao Bui, Vietnam, Writing Intermediate

I have a childhood memory I will never forget. When I was a child, on my 6th birthday, I celebrated a birthday party. I invited my close friends. I was very happy when my uncle gave me a remote control car. I loved it so much. I was glad and I ran around so fast that I fell down. It hurt a lot. I cried a lot. But it was a good memory because I had the toy I always wanted to have.

Trang Hoang, Vietnam, Writing Intermediate

When I was a child, I played with my cousin in the garden. We saw a snake. It was scary, and I screamed very loudly. The snake was very ugly and colorful. It was big and long. When the snake came near us, we did not know what to do. Somebody in my group said, “Get a stick to fight the snake.” I went out and found a stick. When I came back, the snake went away. After that we said to be careful playing in the garden.

Continued >>
My Most Unforgettable Childhood Memory

**My Pet, Cathy**
**Alida Luciani, Mexico, Oral Communication High Beginning**

When I was 12 years old, my grandfather gave me a beautiful brown squirrel for my birthday, which was so special for me. I called her Cathy. Every day my sister and I played with her. I enjoyed dressing Cathy in clothes. One day I woke up, and I put Cathy inside her cage outdoors. I gave her food and water, but I forgot to move her out of the sunlight. Nobody saw Cathy in the sun all morning. When my dad came to eat lunch at home, he finally saw her, but it was too late. Cathy was dead and stiff. He picked her up and put her in a position like she was sitting. When I returned from school, I went to the cage outside the house to play with her. I told her “Hi!” but something strange was happening. I shouted at her, “Cathy, Cathy!” Then I touched her with my finger, and she fell over. I began to cry and I felt bad. My dad told me that I should be careful when I had a pet. I will never forget Cathy, the special gift from my grandfather.

**Many Childhood Memories**

**Noemi Prado, Spain, Oral Communication High Beginning**

When I was little, I loved to play soccer. I spent hours and hours playing in the park with my friends. I loved to sing. Wherever I went, I went singing. I have always loved music. I loved Christmas because it was a time when we ate everything. We were with the whole family together. My grandmother cooked delicious food. I remember one winter, it snowed in so much that we fell on the ground to make snow angels. It was too cold! As we caught the snow with our gloved hands, we hardly felt the hands! Even the memory makes me smile. I have fun memories of school. One was when doctors came to vaccinate us. They always wanted to give us the vaccine in the spleen. After that, they would complain that they could not write! It was very funny. As a child, I loved to travel, walk, hike, and go to the movies. I also liked being with my family, playing with the Play Station with my cousins and friends, and going to church to sing and act. That was tremendously spectacular! I think that when one is small, life seems wonderful. When you grow up, you realize that life is not as easy as you imagined it. It is far more wonderful than you ever think.

**Trip to Michoacan**

**Vicky Perez, Mexico, Oral Communication High Beginning**

The happiest day in my childhood was when we went on vacation to Michoacan with the whole family - grandparents, cousins, sister, and mom. They made that trip a wonderful trip. I remember that we were in the car and my grandpa was very funny. He made us laugh a lot all the way. My grandmother was more serious but that inspired my grandpa to make jokes! We went to nice places, swam, played, ate very well, and bought shirts for all the children.

**The Emergency Door**

**Alfonso Cuevas, Mexico, Oral Communication High Beginning**

Some time ago, I used to go to high school by foot, bike, and car during my first two years. It was difficult to go to school. After two years, the school bought a new school bus. The bus picked us up and dropped us off at school. One time, when I got dropped off at home, I ran behind the bus and pushed on the emergency door. When I pushed it, I broke the glass of the emergency door. I cut my wrist and started to bleed badly. My dad got mad at me and we had to pay $500 pesos for the glass. This was too much money for my dad.

My Ten Year Old Party

**Zulma Nava, Venezuela, Writing Intermediate**

When I was ten years old my mom prepared my birthday party. It was my first big party in my whole life. My mother wanted it to be a surprise, but I found out. My cousins told me about my surprise party, and I never told my mom. After I found out about my party, I paid close attention to everything my mother was doing. I was very excited and anxious for my party, so I was counting down the days to my birthday. My mom found out that I knew about my surprise party, and she did not tell me. I did not sleep the night before my birthday, and I woke up very early waiting for my party. I did not know why, but my mom only got birthday cake for me and my brothers and sisters, but no party. I felt so sad, but I did not tell my mom anything. I thought my cousins were playing a joke on me. That day I went to sleep early, and the next day I woke up late. My older sister invited me to the movies and to the mall. When we got home after the mall, I opened the door to our house and the lights were off. I turned on the lights, and all of my friends and family shouted, “Surprise!” I felt so happy, and I never forgot my tenth birthday party.

My Favorite Summer Vacation

**Erzsebet Halasz, Hungary, Writing Intermediate**

When I was a little girl, I used to spend the summer vacation at my grandmother's house. Not too far from my grandmother's house was a big haystack. My sister and I climbed up the haystack, and we jumped down. We did that for hours. When the night came, we both were covered with scratches and mosquito bites. The next day we were jumping up and down on the haystack again. By the end of the day we had even more scratches and mosquito bites. When my grandmother saw us, she did not let us go out for the next two days. It took a long time to recover from the scratches. My sister and I had an unforgettable summer vacation.

Democratic Republic of Congo

**Kitanda Shotwani, Writing Intermediate**

I had a bad experience when I was ten years old, at my elementary school in the city of Lubumbashi. My teacher whipped me because I could not answer questions correctly. One day, I forgot to bring my grammar note book. My school was far away from my home, and it was impossible to go back and get my book. Most days I would sit in the front, but this day I changed places and sat in the back. Unluckily that I was, my instructor noticed that and he began at the place where I was. He asked me a question, and I did not give him a good answer. Therefore, he used a stick to discipline me because he thought that I was not prepared. I had a terrible day that I will never forget.
Lost in the Capital City
Jose Luis Quintanilla, El Salvador, Writing Intermediate

When I was a child I got lost visiting the capital city of my country. I was eleven years old, and I did not request my parent's permission. I took the bus to go to the capital city of El Salvador. It was three hours away from my house. After I walked a few minutes, I was totally lost. It was very funny, but at the same time I was a little scared. I had never been lost before. I was lost around five hours. I started to ask people how I could take the bus to get back to my town. An old woman told me how to take the bus. She left me in the door of the bus and even paid the money for my bus ticket. My parents were upset and punished me, but they recognized I was smart to get back from the capital city by myself. This day I learned the lesson to never go out to the capital city alone, because I could get lost again.

My Childhood
Jiseong Kim, South Korea, Writing Intermediate

My first job was as a ferry man. I was born in a medium size city, but I moved to the country side when I was four years old. There is a fairly big river in my village. It was about one hundred meters across. It was clean and clear. There was no bridge in my village, so we crossed the river by small boat. Many of my village people could row a boat. I was interested in rowing a boat, so I sometimes went to the dock. I had already learned to row a boat when I was seven years old. One summer day I went to the dock. There was no ferry man at the dock. The ferry man liked to nap in the afternoon. In fact, there were no passengers in the afternoon. While I sat on the boat, two outsiders were coming to cross the river. They wanted to cross the river. They shouted to me, “Could you row us over to the other side of the river?” That was a piece of cake, so I said, “Okay, I will go there.” I rowed the boat well. I arrived on the opposite side, and I rowed those people in the boat. The boat arrived safely. They praised me and said, “You are so young, but you are a good ferry man.” They paid me. It was a lot of money to me, so I was very happy. After that I used to go the dock and earn money.

Party at the Ranch
Citlali Hernandez, Mexico, Writing Intermediate

I still remember the reunion at my grandparents’ ranch when I was eight years old. My family, my cousins, and my grandparents were all there. It was a very special party that we celebrated for a couple of days. I do not remember exactly the reason for the celebration, but I do remember the food. My grandmother cooked very good food for all of us. We also enjoyed some activities at my grandparents’ ranch. For example, we went to the river to swim and play around it. Beside the river, my grandparents had orchards of different fruits and vegetables, so we harvested oranges, bananas, watermelons, sweet potatoes and corn. We ate the fruit and vegetables during the party. I did not usually go to my grandparents’ ranch, but I went for the party. After that I began to go there more often. My family usually had big celebrations, but this was different from the others because it was the first party I remembered. Sometimes when my relatives and I get together, we talk about this great party.

My Most Unforgettable Childhood Memory
Shang-Chien Chiang, Taiwan, Writing Intermediate

I had a bad experience of learning piano when I was five years old. My mom let me take a piano class, but I hated it very much. My classmates usually made fun of me in class because I always messed up when I played piano. I had to spend more time in the class instead of using the time to play with my friends. Practicing something you don't like is a very difficult and boring thing. Because of these reasons, I will not do that to my kid. If I have children one day, I will give them wonderful childhood memories instead.

My Bad Childhood Memory
Patel Vick, India, Writing Intermediate

I had a bad experience when I was eight. My friend Harry and I were playing near the pool. While we were playing we got into an argument. We started fighting. I got angry. I pushed him. He lost his balance and fell into the swimming pool. He did not know how to swim, so he was drowning. He shouted for help, but I did not know how to swim either. I got very scared, and thought he was going to drown and die. Fortunately, his elder brother arrived there and saved him. I felt relaxed when he got saved. When I remember that incident, I get scared and feel guilty.

An Unforgettable Childhood
Hong Sok, Cambodia, Writing Intermediate

I have a lot of good memories from my childhood, but one of the best ones is when I started to skate. I learned to skate with my father's skates. They were much bigger than my size. Also I remember I was a super girl, and I wore my super girl swimsuit. I often enjoyed running in my house with my super girl swimsuit and my father's skates. I spent a lot of time skating in the house, and my family watched me. I remember skating in front of my house in my swimsuit while holding my doll. All the neighbors would be watching me when I did this. When I started skating, it was a great experience.

A Big Problem for a Small Guy
Raul Briceno, Venezuela, Writing Intermediate

Since I was a kid, I have always loved cars. Out of my first ten words, two of them were Mustang and Camaro. When I was eleven, my dad bought a brand new Toyota Corolla. The car was beautiful, and my dad loved it. I used to wash the car once a week. I was not supposed to drive it, so they never gave me the keys. One time I finished washing the car, and I thought, “I can drive the car.” I came into the house, took the keys, and started the car. I pushed the gas, and of course, crashed the car against the wall. I thought nobody would notice, but my dad found out right away. I was grounded for months, but this accident did not end my passion for cars.

Continued >>
My Most Unforgettable Childhood Memory

Rosa Cuatianquiz, Mexico, Writing Intermediate
I had a scary experience when I was eight years old. One day I was playing in the back yard with my friends. We were playing for a long time, until dark. One day I stayed alone, and I wanted to play more time. When I saw that it was too late, I wanted to go home, but I felt afraid, and I did not see anybody. I was alone in the dark. I saw a shadow and I felt scared, because I saw that shadow and it moved. My mom found me afraid and crying. I never forgot that shadow, and later I found out that shadow was my sister's bunny. I was scared, but it was funny.

Jose Ventura, Venezuela, Writing Intermediate
As a child I liked going to my grandparents’ house. They lived in the countryside in a big house with seven bedrooms and five bathrooms. It had a great fence and a very nice garden next to the swimming pool. In the mornings, my grandfather always rode a horse around the farm and checked on the animals. My brothers liked swimming in the pool with my uncles. At night my grandparents liked to read us stories before bedtime. Once my parents left on vacation for two weeks, and I was able to stay with my grandparents that whole time. On school holidays we wanted to go to their house on the very first day because we felt very good there. My memories of that time are very good. As time went on my grandparents died, the farm was sold, my parents also died and each of my brothers live in different countries. It has been a long time since we spent time together like the time we spent during childhood. I wished that time would have never ended.

When I Was a Child
Augusto Bovio, Uruguay, Writing Intermediate
When I was a child, I spent time in my aunt’s orange plantation, and I had an unforgettable experience. My aunt had a lot of orange trees; actually it was my favorite fruit. I was eating some when my aunt said to me, “Do not eat anymore, because you can feel sick.” Of course I did not listen to her. I just waited, and when everyone in the house was working, and my aunt took a nap, I went to the tree and sat on the top of the tree. I ate oranges all afternoon. It is important to say the oranges from the tree were delicious and hot, too. I concluded my visit in the hospital with a heavy intestinal infection.

Karla La Court, Mexico, Writing Intermediate
When I was 4 years old my mother decided to involve me in ballet classes. She wanted the best for me, so she decided to take me to the best professional school. To be accepted in that particular school you have to audition. I auditioned. It was not easy because there were 2,500 girls trying to make it. The judges decided to select me. That day was a happy day for me and my mother. I studied in that school for the next 10 years. I had a lot of great memories. In conclusion, that day was one of my best days, and I was only 4 years old.

Marina V. Ebel, Russia, Writing Intermediate
When I was 7 years old, my aunt told me that we were spending the weekend together at the zoo. I waited for that day to come. I woke up early, but outside it was raining hard. While I was laying in my bed, I thought about all animals at the zoo. Then the rain stopped. When my aunt came, we left the house. It was so exciting to see the animals. It was my first time at the zoo! I had a good time and I learned a lot about new animals. That weekend at the zoo is my favorite memory of that year.
I believe in hope, but what is hope? It is to wish for something with the expectation of its fulfillment. There are many people in the world who live their lives with hope. Bad experiences may have ruined their lives, but they maintain the hope that they can forget the past and start a new life. Obstacles are a part of life, but we have to face them if we want to live a better life. Everything in our lives, our moments of joy and our hours of darkness, happens for a reason. Throughout all our personal struggles, we must live in hope that one day, everything will get better.

In fact, we have many reasons to hold hope for the future, not just in our personal lives, but globally. We are constantly making outstanding developments in science, technology, and medicine. We continue to revolutionize these fields through the hard work of scientists and researchers. Just as these men of science have the faith and confidence in themselves to drive them in their pursuits, we all must have hope to give us the strength to overcome adversity.

Susan Cabanillas, Peru, Writing Advanced

I believe in the power of the mind when you have a dream to accomplish. There are many moments in life that bring us many things to deviate our thoughts. It doesn’t matter how difficult life is or how many obstacles confront us. If we focus our mind and believe in our hearts that we will accomplish what we desire, then life will open doors for us.

Changeun Kim, South Korea, Writing Advanced

I believe in the power of laughter and humor when you have a dream to accomplish.
**This I Believe**

**Going Forward**  
*Maria Paula Christenson, Argentina, Writing High Intermediate*

I believe in going forward no matter what. Perseverance is our responsibility. But how can we soften those inevitable hard times in life? How can we prepare ourselves for the arrival of hard times? As human beings, we go through many changes and challenges. Many of them just happen naturally as we progress in our journey called life. Sometimes there are challenges that just surprise us; other obstacles are a consequence of our decisions. In my life, there are a few things that have helped me face difficult situations.

One of them is having faith in my Heavenly Father and in His promises. How could we go forward in life without having a conviction, a faith that could strengthen us and give us hope during difficult times? It would be even harder and more painful to confront obstacles alone in life. I believe that with God in our hearts we can overcome any challenge or trial, because He doesn't give us more hardship than we can handle. He is always there for us. He is our Father, and, as any Father, He listens to us and will be on our side if we believe in Him.

Secondly, having a good attitude in the face of adversity is important. When we go through turbulent, uncertain times, it is easy to feel discouraged. Usually, it is kind of hard to understand why we have to go through it. Questions and feelings of injustice sometimes overcome us. We need to understand that without challenges and trials, it would be impossible for us to progress, discover our highest potential as human beings, and be better prepared for what God has prepared for us in the future. So, even though it is not easy, we need to try to face challenging times with faith, courage, and a positive attitude. Laughing could help to ease our burden in times of trouble. It would also help to spread the light of hope to those around us instead of bringing more tension to a desperate situation.

In conclusion, as we know, there is opposition in everything. Adversity will come to our life and we can be prepared for it. Having faith in our Heavenly Father and a good attitude can help us to overcome those difficult times and get edified by them.

**School Uniforms**  
*Felicitas Papa, Mexico, Writing High Intermediate*

People dress up according to the situation they expect to find themselves in. For example, when people go to the beach, they wear swimsuits; if they are going to a wedding, they wear their Sunday best. In the business world, CEOs, managers, office workers, and teachers all dress professionally. I believe all students in elementary and middle school should wear uniforms in order to save parents money, improve school safety, and encourage children take their role as students more seriously.

In some countries, like Mexico for example, all students are required to wear uniforms. By doing this, parents are able to save a lot of money because they do not have to buy name brand clothes for their children to wear to school. Moreover, they can buy two or three uniforms instead of five changes of clothes. Uniforms also eliminate social and economic boundaries. In my experience as a teacher, I have observed those students whose parents could afford name brand clothes teasing other students who cannot wear such expensive clothes. As a consequence, these students feel self-conscious about their clothing. This is a problem that I believe can be resolved if schools require students to wear uniforms.

Uniforms could also improve the safety of our schools. Some of today's fashionable clothes, like baggy pants, could make it easier for student to conceal guns or other weapons. This is a huge problem, but I believe we can minimize it by making students wear uniforms.

Wearing uniforms in elementary and middle school also makes the students take their role more seriously. If you wear jeans, a cowboy hat, and boots you will feel like a cowboy. If you wear sweatpants, t-shirt, and tennis shoes you will feel more like an athlete. Likewise, if students wear the uniform of a student, they will behave more like a student should. Required to wear uniforms, their behavior will improve.

One criticism of a school uniform policy often includes the argument that wearing uniforms in elementary and middle school prohibits students from being themselves. However, students are limited only in how they can dress. All students are unique, and they are still free to express themselves in their work, speech, and personality. As the uniforms are just for school, students are still able to wear what they want after school and on the weekends.

I believe requiring school uniforms can make a difference! In order to ease the financial burden on parents, promote school safety, and help children become more responsible students, uniforms should be required in all schools.

**A Second Chance**  
*Santana Herrera, Mexico, Writing High Intermediate*

How would you feel if you or someone in your family needed an organ transplant in order to live? If you have never been in that situation, you probably do not really know. Well, I do not know either, but I imagine that I would be praying everyday for that person to get well, for someone to donate the organ that would save their life. Sadly, many people do not believe in donating their organs after they die. There are a variety of reasons for their refusal. Some are motivated by a fear that in the case of an emergency, doctors might not make every effort to save their life, knowing that their organs could save other lives. Others say that they want their body to be complete for the resurrection. For these reasons, they do not help the people that really need it. I believe in being an organ donor for many reasons.

First, I believe that when you register to be a donor, it does not mean that doctors will let you die in order to save another person. It means that when you die they can immediately save someone else's life. The doctors will try to save lives regardless of race, sex, or religion because this is their job. They are not going to let somebody die just to take their organs and save another person. These statements are irrational. I also believe that God will not be angry if you help somebody else to live by donating your organs, because he knows that you are trying to help someone else. Think of it as another form of charity. We often give what we no longer need to charities. I believe it should be the same with our bodies. After we die, we will not need our body organs anymore, and they are going to decompose underground. It is not good to waste something that is reusable. You can donate your organs to someone that could use a second chance at life.

I believe that everyone needs to stop and think about this, give thanks to God for being healthy, and pray that they remain that way. Also, pray for those who are not healthy and are waiting for a miracle to happen. By being an organ donor, you can make that miracle happen.
I Believe in Confidence
Saurabh Patel, India, Writing Advanced

Confidence is the belief that one will perform in a correct, proper, or effective way. This belief, in my opinion, is the key to succeeding in many things we do. I can recall several circumstances in which the possession of confidence was the deciding factor between my success and failure. Taking tests is one of the most prominent instances in which confidence is the key to success. I recently received an “A” on an important test in my VM Ware View4 class. The reason I performed well on the exam is because of the confidence I had in my knowledge of the test material. I prepared well for the test; therefore, I entered the classroom with the expectation of scoring high. In contrast, while studying for many previous tests, I continuously told myself the material was too hard, and I would never learn all of it. Although I had studied a great deal and probably retained much of the material, my mind was focused on certain failure; consequently, I flunked the tests miserably.

Speaking publicly is another circumstance in which confidence is mandatory for success. Last year I was presented with an award from VMware certification course program. The program administrators had planned on giving a scholarship to the student who receives this certificate; however, in order to receive the award, this student was required to present a speech before the entire audience to explain why he or she deserved it. I was frightened because I had never spoken in front of an audience this large before. I prepared my presentation, but my confidence level was still very low. I was glad to have a podium to hide behind; my knees were shaking with nervousness. As I stepped up on the stage and faced the audience, I recognized many familiar people and noticed that most of them seemed to be smiling at me. At that moment I realized that it was not going to be the end of the world if the speech did not come off right. I realized that I had done lot of work in order to achieve the award, and this helped me build up my confidence. I remembered my parents and their dreams for me to become successful in life. Certainly I gave a speech in front of the audience without repeating a single word, but it wouldn't have been possible if I lacked confidence.

I Believe in Fitness
Polina Kosogoeva, Russia, Writing Advanced

I believe in fitness and everything about it. Nutrition and exercise to me are the biggest part of fitness. Personally, I hit the gym about 5-6 times a week and have a very balanced diet. Yeah, yeah I know, you think I am seriously messed up in the head and have become a workout junky. Maybe you are right, but this is what I strongly believe in, I believe that fitness can benefit anybody and is extremely important. Not only does it transform the body; it transforms your mind and gives you confidence in life. Here is why.

First of all, nutrition is the biggest part of a healthy lifestyle. Everybody tends to overeat or skip meals. Both of these actions are wrong and destroy your metabolism. Some people do not know it and it is very sad to me. I see them everywhere; some are a little chubby, and some are fat. I want to help them. Maybe they are happy the way they are, you would say, but we all know that obesity is the number one health problem in the US. The cause is awful eating habits. I used to be one of those people. I had a busy schedule and let myself gain 25 lb. It was hard. I felt heavy and old and was not able to do simple things that were done easily before. Eventually I found strength to change my diet and was successful.

The second part of fitness is exercise. I believe in the gym with its own charm. I love to watch people doing new exercises. I get inspired when I see somebody running faster than I and it sets my goal. I believe in pumping iron, sweating, and seeing results. Growing up as a sickly child with a low immune system, I was never involved in sports. Very often I found myself standing at the court and watching other kids playing basketball at school. My will to play was desperate but I was too scared to try. I was mentally weak and could not overcome it. Running a mile or doing pushups was impossible for me. I can do it now and I absolutely love it! Pushing myself forward is not hard for me anymore! Some things that I do now I could not do at sixteen.

I believe in fitness and a healthy lifestyle. I think in my case it has changed me mentally and helped me become stronger. It has given me confidence to overcome my fears and move forward. Fitness gave me power to believe in myself. Through fitness I found the new me. I believe that fitness can bring happiness to anybody. “Float like a butterfly and sting like a bee” - as Mohamed Ali said is my mantra of life now and it keeps me going.

I Believe in the Elderly
Yasmin Leon, Venezuela, Writing – Advanced

I believe that elderly people should work until they want. It is ridiculous that some people think that the elderly cannot contribute to the society. Specifically, I want to talk about my environment because I know it very well. There are societies where the work of the elderly are appreciated and people are respectful of them. However, in many places old people are retired and discarded when they are 60 years old like an object because they are considered very old to work. Unless they have their own business or are professionals, many elderly have to accept their retirement too early in life. I have seen how these people feel anxious and worried when their retirement is approaching. It is unjust that they feel this way. They should retire when they want to.

Sometimes, society itself makes elderly people feel old. I have seen elderly working in big supermarkets and stores here in the United States. I have never seen that in my country Venezuela. For example, one of the things that surprised me when I came to the United States was seeing old people working. In contrast, in Venezuela I have never seen older people working in private or public businesses because one piece of information that people have to provide on a job application is their age. If they are 50 years old or more, they will never be employed. As a result, they will not find a job the rest of their lives.

I think that society should use the elderly people’s knowledge. It is true that employing old people is expensive for public or private companies, but they cannot be discarded. In addition, employers should consider opening jobs that elderly can do when they have many years of experience working in the same company, and they are not professionals; or the government can open institutions where the elderly can teach their knowledge and experience, which have great value when they are professionals.

In summary, I believe that older people are good sources of information which society should take advantage of. I think that allowing older people to continue work will provide them with motivation to live. Moreover, society must allow them to decide when they want to retire as long as they are healthy.
I Believe That We Make Our Own Destiny
Maria Isabel Román Algara, Mexico, Writing Advanced

When I think about destiny, what comes to my mind is how people live their lives. Many people believe that everyone has a predetermined destiny. Even though this sounds true, I have no doubt that each and every one of us can decide our personal destiny based on our decisions and our actions. Factors such as luck, fate or destiny can be controlled if we strive to do so. We can’t live our lives expecting that everything is going to fall in our laps and happen for any reason.

Nothing in life is pre-destined as in the people you meet, the job you get, the opportunities you have, or even the person with whom you will build a family and share your life. If all of these were true, life would turn out to be monotonous and senseless, for your actions, behavior, mentality and abilities would then be the same as any other individual’s. Similarly, life would only have one road to follow, and would have absolutely no unexpected turnovers and no challenges to face, and humanity would see no improvement in any parts of our existence.

Occasionally, people think of destiny as an excuse for the fortunes/misfortunes that they encounter in life; however, quoting a well known Mexican poet called Amado Nervo, “…I realized I was the architect of my own destiny.” I, too, share this philosophy, for it has been said for a very long time that you get what you deserve, mainly based on what you have done or have stopped doing during your existence, since the effort you put in your everyday duties can turn out to give you benefits. In addition, positive behavior plays an incredibly big role on how you can develop yourself as a professional. Finding the things you like and being able to do them can bring you satisfaction and give you the desire to keep moving forward.

Since we are born we are predestined to have a life until we die, but what happens in between those events is our complete responsibility; as we are the architects of our destiny, we choose what decisions to make and what things to do. All of this gives our life a shape and a direction, and we begin creating our destiny. It is always important to have in mind that we have to start our journeys seeking for the things that we like, so that life can turn out enjoyable and pleasant.

I Believe in Education
Selven Wolelmal, Micronesia, Writing Advanced

I believe in education. Education is any experience that has a formative effect on the mind or on the physical ability of the individual. It is the process by which society freely transmits its knowledge, skills and values. Some people think that education has an end, but honestly it does not. I think that once we educate ourselves it becomes easier to make better choices. Education has steps that if followed can make it a meaningful word. The first thing that comes to mind is knowledge gain. It seems that education gives us ideas about the world. It develops in us a view of looking at life. People think that education is the only way that we can attain skills. Some say that education is just the process of achieving ideas about things while knowledge is something extremely different. Both ideas are right. But I think the exchanging of information of knowledge comes from education. Education is not all about skills we learn in school, but it also relates to lessons about life. Schooling just lays the fundamentals because we specialize in a field while pursuing a degree. Education is a lifelong process.

Encouragement is one of the common words associated with education. Once these two are separated it is difficult to find who we are. Once we encourage ourselves we become successful in life. The purpose of encouragement is to lead us to better choices by developing our mind and preparing us to deal with reality.

One of the most crucial reasons education is important for us is because if we educate ourselves, we can make choices and determine whether these choices are good for the next generation or not. If you do not seek education, someone else will make choices for you, or they disrespect you. Furthermore, attending school helps to perform the day to day activities of life more perfectly, like locating the right teacher, finding a new job, searching for a good place, or improving skills.

In conclusion, education is the study and evaluation of different theories. The purpose of education is to develop theories and evaluate the success of these concepts in practice.

I Believe in Spending Time with Family
Rosana Leal, Mexico, Writing Advanced

I believe in spending quality time with my family. My mother was a very busy woman with all kinds of responsibilities on her shoulders. But the most important time for her was dinner. My most beautiful childhood memories in Mexico are the family time at the dinner table every evening. Sometimes my father came very tired and distressed from his work, but at the moment he sat at the table he started talking and making jokes about his day. The hour that we spent together was not always pleasant because my father sometimes took the opportunity to discuss our report cards; however, for me those evenings were the most exceptional moments that I spent with my parents.

Now I am a mother of two beautiful daughters and live in United States. Sometimes it is hard for my family to eat together because my husband works long hours. Consequently I had to adapt my family schedule to spend quality time with my family. My belief is that if you invest one hour of your day with your family doing any activity that your kids want, you will be raising a very united family. I have promised to my daughters to give them an hour of my day to do anything they want. Sometimes we just talk or play a game, and they love to see their mother play rock band or do crazy things. I believe that we should let our kids know that no matter how busy is our life is, we will always be able to make time for them.

When my husband takes a day off from work, we always try to make this day special. We cook our daughters’ favorite food, or we go out to dinner to a restaurant of their preference. I want to offer my daughters the pleasure of spending time together in the same way my parents did with me.

Here in the United States, I think people live very busy and stressful lives. Frequently families eat dinner in the car or on the way to their children’s activities. We keep our children so occupied with heavy schedules to compensate our missing time with them. Frequently school problems are discussed on the way to football practices or in front of the TV. We are losing communication with them. Sometimes parents give priority to useless things like watching reality shows or soap operas, instead of spending time with their family.

Spending time with your family is a good investment in your family life. One hour a day is 365 hours a year from the 8,760 hours that we have during one year of our lives. Just imagine what we could do if we spent more than that. Quality time with my family is very important for me, and this is what I believe.
I Believe in Perseverance
Sory Mingo, Dominican Republic, Writing Advanced

During my childhood, I did not know or understand the meaning of perseverance. Now as an adult, I have realized that I have been a perseverant person all my life. “Perseverance is the act of continuing, regardless of obstacles.” I think there is always going to be a tomorrow. I have been very persistent with what I wanted, what I have wanted, and what I want right now.

When I was a little girl, I wanted to change my life, especially the economic situation that I was experiencing. I came from a poor family where sometimes we did not have breakfast, lunch, or dinner to eat. Furthermore, I wanted to grow up fast and get out of that situation as soon as possible. My childhood was really penniless! Besides, I used to live in a really dangerous community where drugs, prostitution, gangs, and robbery were very common in the neighborhood. Thus, I decided to study hard. I started to participate in educational programs and to keep my dreams; I wanted to build the necessary skills to improve my life and become a successful woman.

It came to my mind how some of my childhood’s best friends’ lives ended in the cemetery or jail. They used to laugh at me and ridicule me. However, I did not want my life to end up as miserable as theirs, and I never paid attention to their comments. On the contrary, I knew that I had a purpose, and I was determined to achieve it.

Looking back to my past, I consider myself lucky. I have come to the conclusion that I have been a perseverant person since I was a little girl. I never stopped dreaming. Neither my economic limitations nor my friends stopped me from achieving my goals. My dreams came first, and then everything came afterward. Thanks to God and my perseverance, I am what I am now, a successful human being.

Bilingual Education
Gladys Sanchez, Colombia, Writing High Intermediate

I believe in Bilingual Education as a foundation for a good education overall. However, I don’t believe that the bilingual education kids are getting in some parts of the U.S.A. is good enough. There are different points of view about bilingual education; the parents, school district and teachers all have different opinions. But for me, the most important thing is the cultural impact of bilingual education on a child’s life.

I believe in bilingual education as defined by Loretta Nannini of Seton Hall University. “A teacher’s education must include multicultural awareness and foster an acceptance and respect of different cultures and linguistic traits, to facilitate students in acquiring a second language and learning the modes of a new culture, while maintaining an appreciation of their own cultural heritage.”

There are some obstacles to realizing the goal of high quality bilingual education. First, some school districts are more interested in getting the kids out of the program quickly, rather than ensuring the students are well prepared to succeed at the next level. Second, few educators have an in-depth knowledge of other languages and cultures. In order to improve the education system, we have to resolve these problems.

I believe in bilingual education so that new generations get new opportunities. Bilingual children can understand more than one culture, and this helps them appreciate the differences and similarities of other people. It also helps them discover their own identities. This kind of education helps kids feel proud about their own ethnicity and culture and prepares the new generation for the future bilingual world.

I Believe in Love
Sydia Flor, Ecuador, Writing Advanced

I believe in the power of love. The belief came to me vicariously through what happened to my friend. One night I was having dinner with one of my friends when suddenly her cell phone rang. She could not stop crying. She had received some terrible news. Her grandmother had been taken to the hospital. She had suffered a heart attack. We left the restaurant and went to the clinic. One of the doctors told us, “Only a miracle could save her.” She was in a coma. My friend and I sat on a bench outside of Intensive Therapy Unit. Suddenly a person approached. We felt deep peace and these words came out of her mouth. “Love will bring her back to life.” We just looked at each other. The lady walked through the hall and disappeared.

Her grandmother meant everything to my friend since her parents had died when she was two years old. My friend, Lida, would visit her grandmother everyday and talked to her as if she were conscious. She remembered the best moments that they shared together, such as the day when her pet Kite was barking its shadow. Lida would pray and repeat these phrases, “You have to wake up. You are life, you create life, and when you love someone nothing is impossible.” Almost six months had passed when the doctor told my friend, “We cannot do anything for your grandmother.” My friend asked the doctor to let her see and talk to her. Lida went inside the room and said to her grandmother, “Mom this is our last opportunity to be together. Love makes miracles. Wake up if you really love me”. Next morning was an amazing surprise. Her grandmother, Mrs. Toll, had awoken. From that moment I believed in the power of love more than before. Love can cure, love can keep spirits up. Love is an abstract word, but you can feel it, you can touch it, and you can live it.
This I Believe

Love for family is sometimes determined by instincts. Love between parents and children, siblings, cousins, and other relatives, has some biological roots, but in most cases that love goes beyond those roots. Although my family is not close to me because they live in another country, the love for them is and will always be with me. The happy memories in my childhood were always with my family, and they keep their love in my heart alive despite the distance. They are always there in good or bad situations, no matter where we are.

Love between friends is sometimes because of the attraction we have for people who are similar to us. People who share certain qualities, like the same things, do the same activities. However, sometimes we are attracted to people who are different and like different things; in these cases one person can complement the other. Anyway, friendship is the love that two good friends feel for each other. I have a lot of friends with whom I share and have fun, but I only have two good friends. One of them lives in Canada and the other in Venezuela. Anytime we can talk or chat we share our stories, good or bad. As my family, they are always there, no matter that we live in different places.

Love is in every place around the world. At the end love is to care about someone else. If they feel pain or happiness, I feel the same for them. Strong love also involves sacrificing your own happiness for the other person. Love can hurt sometimes but without it, human beings cannot exist. I believe in love.

I Believe in a Better Future

Amonrat Woranan, Thailand, Writing Advanced

I believe that tomorrow will be a better day, even if it seems to be hopeless at some point, because I believe that every day that I live helps me to be strong, faithful, and to be better than yesterday, not worse. Some people might be celebrating their success and dreams, others might be full of happiness with the way they live. In contrast, some people might be hiding in the darkness full of depression and stressful situations. That means that they are experiencing trouble in their lives without finding a way to solve the problem. I believe if people who are willing to face the issues in their lives and are ready for tomorrow to begin a new day and new accomplishments, they will be successful even if it does not seem to be easy. I believe that if today I am going through a hard situation in my life, I should still have hope for the new day, new beginning to get out of darkness, because I have learned to be strong and faithful, and make my life better. There is nothing that can get in my way if I am willing to fight for my accomplishments and dreams. I have experienced going through darkness when I have nothing else to do to solve a problem. As difficult as it may be, as hopeless as I may feel, all I know is that I should learn from each step I take and believe that tomorrow will be a better day.

I Believe in Education

Qing Cao, China, Writing Advanced

There are several reasons why I believe in education. First, it will change my life. Research shows 80% of people who have a high school degree cannot find a good job. Therefore, if I have a good education I will find a better job and make better money, and have a better life. For instance, if I just graduate from high school, I can join the navy and become a sailor Between E1-c3. On the other hand, if I graduate from college, I can join the navy and become an officer. In addition, with a higher education degree, I can get a better job. Doctors, lawyers, and scientists are just some of the jobs on my list. I can also make more than one million dollars per year. Furthermore, the reason I believe in education is that I believe knowledge is power. The higher education I have, the more abilities I will have. Also, education will help me deal with difficult things easily and become a useful man.

As a result, I feel my life is more valuable when I have a good education. I feel more comfortable with people. For example, everywhere you go people may ask you what you do for a living. I will be proud to say that I am a doctor, a lawyer, or a businessman. Once again, I believe that education will change my life.

Astonishing Victory

Jaypee Navata, Philippines, Writing Advanced

I believe that unexpected incidents could occur anytime. I believe that it doesn’t choose anybody. It doesn’t matter who you are or what you are. It will happen in an unforeseen time.

The Philippines is the commonwealth where I grew up. Back then as a young boy, all I wanted was to finish my studies and get a better job. I didn’t expect anything more than that because I knew that I had a poor family. When time passed by and I reached the age of 8, my biological father attempted to go overseas. Traveling to the other realm was a very impossible decision to make, especially when you live in a third world country like the Philippines. My father was a courageous man. He said, “You will not lose anything if you try something.” It was true, and I was very proud of him because he luckily made it and he chose the U.S.

Even though my father was already in the U.S., my desire was still identical. When I went to college, I registered in Bachelor in Science and Maritime Technology for four years. I just finished one year in this major, and then I changed to another one when my father said he was going to petition for me. He told me I only needed two years of college courses. So I started studying computer programming, but I still didn’t finish because my father came home before the spring semester started. He came home to take me, and I was surprised because I didn’t anticipate it.

My life has changed since I came to America in September 2007. I got my first job and started to work in November of the same year. I had my first car in December 2008 and I was very proud of myself. Neither one of them was in my plans. They just happened unexpectedly and this is all that I believe.

I Believe in Me

Daniela Mocofan, Romania, Writing Advanced

I believe in me. I believe in my power to choose the right thing to do with my life. I was born in a poor family, and my parents worked in a factory. They were working hard to give a decent life to my brother and me. When I was three years old, my mother died, and my grandparents raised my brother and me. We lived in two small rooms, and we did not have a bathroom. In my childhood I dreamed about having a good life, a life with prosperity. I was hoping to go to a university, so I could have a good life.

I managed to finish my high school with good grades, and then I started the university. But life has a lot of surprises. Soon I met my husband, and we married. My daughter came one year later. I needed to leave the university because I had a family, and I needed to take care of my daughter. I helped my husband to finish the university, and my daughter to start school. Again life joked with me. After my husband finished the university, we divorced. At that moment, my daughter was the most
important thing for me. I was working hard to give my daughter the comfort she needed. My dream and my hope were lost, but my new dream was about my daughter: she would study in a university, and she would have a good life. She would do everything I couldn’t do. When my daughter was in her last year of high school, I met my second husband. My husband was born in my country, but he had been living in U.S. for 20 years. Since 2007 we have been living in Houston, Texas. My daughter finished high school, and in this moment she is in the United States Marine Corps.

Once again I believe in me. Before I came to the U.S., I did not speak English, drive or use a computer. I started to learn English and to drive. This semester I am taking my first class in college. It is a big commitment for me to study in English because I have a job and family. After I finish my work, in the evening I do my homework and study for my school. I believe in me and in my power to finish college. I need five years to finish college and to obtain my degree. What I was thinking in my childhood will come true. With little steps my dream will come true. I have the power to believe in me.

I Believe in the Diversity of Beliefs
Laura Tilley, Mexico, Writing Advanced

“When in Rome, do as the Romans do,” meaning that when you are visiting a new place, you should try to do as the people do who are from the place. I learned these words through the years after I started traveling and living in other countries. Many people probably think that they cannot do different things or follow traditions of other cultures. When you start to have a relation and contact with different cultures, you are going to start to understand and start to respect their traditions and beliefs. My name is Laura Tilley, and I believe in different cultures’ rights, beliefs and traditions. There are a couple of reasons for this belief.

Traditions are the main things in this subject. Traditions in other countries can be conservative or liberal or even wild. When we take shape in our mother’s body, we are safe, warm and comfortable but if our mother’s body is having problems we are going to feel uncomfortable and probably not too safe. When our parents raise us, they can be strict or can be with no control. These points show us that our traditions are our environment. We are used to doing things and sometimes we do not even understand why.

Our beliefs are another important reason. Beliefs and religion go together, and for some reason for years people have been fighting over who has the right religion and which one has the blessings of God. Religion is made of faith and should stay like that. God has different forms: It can be blue, yellow or red but it is our God and is our belief. Nobody can see God and get a picture and for sure a lot of people see their God through their faith. Respect is the word our God teaches us no matter what color it is. We do not need proof to believe because if we have proof, it is not faith anymore and we need our faith because it is part of us.

Ancestors in Latin American believed that the sun, moon, rain and birds were Gods and we are from them. Now a lot of people believe in Virgin Mary because our Spanish ancestors were Catholic. We turn out the way we are based on the way we take. Why don’t we try to see things through different eyes or points of view? I believe that will help us to understand and respect others and learn.

I Believe in Generosity
Katty Flores, Peru, Writing Advanced

I believe in generosity. Giving to individuals in their time of need brings self-satisfaction of knowing you’re doing something not required to help someone less fortunate. Life brings us a lot of opportunities to give on a daily basis, and I see those opportunities around me all the time. There are times when I did not have to look very hard to know when to give. Opportunities to be generous to others arise in a variety of ways. Sometimes they come through celebrations; and other times they come through disasters, but most opportunities come along when people go through tough times and hardships.

Special celebrations give an opportunity to give something to someone who can enjoy a gift. For example, if the celebration is a wedding, it is essential to give something to the new couple that they are going to need for their new home. If the celebration is a birthday, it would be wise to give a certain gift that you know that person would enjoy.

When disasters, like an earthquake or hurricane occur, it provides an opportunity to give when others need assistance. It is important to believe that if something bad is to ever happen to you or your family you are going to receive help, help from those you don’t even know you or have ever met you. For example, Peru has earthquakes from time to time, and it is difficult to know when it is going to occur. For instance, two years ago an earthquake occurred near the capital of Peru, and many people died and were affected in other ways. Thankfully, my neighborhood was not affected as much as many others were, but it was sad to see how other people were suffering from the tragic event. However, it gave those devastated and even those unaffected hope to see the entire country come together and give a lending hand to make things as they were before the earthquake. Even my own family and I contributed to the cause by donating clothing and food. In the same manner, neighbors were helping one another and different organizations were helping the people who were affected. Giving to the people was very important; I gave from what I had those days. There were many times that people made a sacrifice to help others that had less than they did.

Overall, in my personal experience helping other people by giving a gift or helping out people devastated by tragic events makes me feel like I am doing something worthwhile. A gift may not necessarily be something expensive, but it can be priceless to others. I believe it is always better to give than to receive. The selfless act of being kind can stretch infinitely; it can make the most saddened face smile, give hope to those who have nothing left, and give those with no will power the ability to believe that everything will be good again someday. I am certain that those who have also given and been generous in the past can agree with me that the feeling achieved by a simple act of kindness can make you feel good in many more ways than one.
What I Like Most about My Country

Lina Giraldo, Colombia, Writing High Beginning
I am from Cali, the capital of Valle del Cauca administrative district in western Colombia. Cali is located in the Cauca Valley, to the west of the Cauca River and to the east of the Western range (Cordillera Occidental), near the hills known as Farallones de Cali. Cali is the second largest city in the country with a population of 2,525,548. Because of its geographical location, it has one of the fastest growing economies and infrastructures in the country. The city was founded on July 25, 1536, by the Spanish conquistador Sebastian de Belalcazar. From December 25 through New Year's Eve, Feria, our biggest festivity of the year, takes place and is celebrated with a parade, salsa events and a beauty contest. Cali is said to be a city of beautiful women.

Araceli Lucero, Mexico, Writing High Beginning
I like Hidalgo state in Mexico because that is where my parents live. Most people in Hidalgo are friendly and they are great to each other. I like to vacation there because time seems to go by slowly. Also, the food is delicious and fresh. My favorite meal is barbacoa, a dish made of goat meat. I also enjoy drinking the milk and eating the cheese of Hidalgo. In the summer, going to Hidalgo’s water parks is my favorite time there. The water at the water parks is naturally hot. Also, there are two rivers in Hidalgo. One of the rivers is cool, and the other one is hot. What I like most about going to Hidalgo is the quiet and peaceful time we spend there.

Angelica Silva, Mexico, Writing High Beginning
Guadalajara is the most beautiful and exciting city in Mexico, and I was born there. Everyone there makes you feel like you are part of their family, as people are very friendly there. The one thing that I love most about Guadalajara is its beaches. The waves glow as the sun shines on them, and you can find magnificent seashells on the seashore. If you ever wanted to visit Guadalajara, you should sign up for a tour. They take you to the market of the main plaza, where you can see and buy handmade jewelry and pots made by very talented people. Food is also sold at the market, and the most common food is fajita and salsa verde (green sauce). Stop thinking and plan your next vacation to Guadalajara, and explore all its wonders! I hope that you will enjoy it.

Homero Garza, Mexico, Writing High Beginning
I am from Mexico. It is a big and beautiful country. I like Mexico for its delicious food, its traditions and its different kinds of songs. I was born in a little town in the northeast of Mexico. The name of the town is Nueva Ciudad Guerrero in the state of Tamaulipas. Some people there are fishermen, and others work on ranches. When I lived in Nueva Ciudad Guerrero, I worked on ranches. I used to ride horses, work with cattle, go hunting and occasionally go fishing. I liked the weekends very much because everyone would go to the park for a walk, they would talk to each other, and then they would go dancing together. I miss my city.

Adan Espanza, Mexico, Writing High Beginning
What I like most about Mexico is the city I was born in. Zamora, Michoacan, my city, is the most important city in Michoacan state. Zamora is a commercial and agro-industrial city with a wonderful climate. We have delicious Zamoran chongos (a type of dessert) and bread pudding. My beautiful city has unbeatable strawberries, the best in the world due to their consistent flavor.

Minh Nguyen, Vietnam, Writing High Beginning
I was born and raised in Vietnam. I like the food there. I also like my country because it has many beautiful places. I visited many famous places in my country. I often go fishing there too. I usually go out on the weekend in Vietnam. Also, I like to watch Vietnamese movies. What I like most about my country is that my family and friends live there. I like to spend time with them. I love my country.

Amos Goncalo, Brazil, Writing High Beginning
I like my country because we have cultural diversities, beautiful landscapes, nice beaches and very hospitable people. A mix of different ethnicities and cultures forms Brazilian people and makes them always happy. If we go to the south and visit cities like Porto Alegre, we find people of German and Italian descent. In the city of Bahia to the north, we can meet the descendants of slaves and taste their several types of exotic foods with very strong seasoning. I have to say that the one thing that I most love in my country is the soil, where everything we plant we can harvest.

Marcela Lopez, Colombia, Writing High Beginning
I like Colombian food, especially lechona, which is a dish made of pork skin filled with rice, beans and pork meat. Lechona tastes very good, and it is a traditional food of my hometown. Because Colombia is located in the north of South America, it has a coast by the Pacific Ocean and a coast by the Caribbean Sea. I really like going to the Caribbean beaches, especially to the beaches by Cartagena and Santa Martha with blue and green clear water and a lot of history around them. I like the food of the north coast, such as fried fish with coconut rice or patacones, a dish made with fried plantains. Colombia is a very diverse country. It is divided into five principal regions with a lot of cultural and gastronomic differences making them very interesting. Due to this diversity, each region has its own carnival. I very much like going to the world-famous Barranquilla’s Carnival in the Caribbean, which takes place in February each year. After all, what I like most about my country is its very polite, friendly and happy people.

Dominican Republic, an Inexhaustible Paradise!
Gyllsy Caccavelli, Dominican Republic, Writing High Beginning
When we refer to an inexhaustible paradise, you may ask how we can have paradise on earth. Our paradise is our beaches, rivers, mountains, waterfalls, special foods, friendly people, tranquility … and much more!

The Dominican Republic is a special island in the center of the Caribbean with 10 million inhabitants, most of them good people. This small island has many thousands of kilometers of clear beaches with white sand. Some of these beaches are inaccessible by automobiles and have an exuberant beauty. You can arrive to these beaches by small boats or horses, and enjoy a beautiful day in the company of native birds, tranquil blue water and ethnic food.

A trip to the Dominican Republic is not expensive. The currency is peso, and 36 pesos are one U.S. dollar. You can buy a liter of soda or a sandwich with 36 pesos.

Everything is near to each other on the island. In one day, you can visit mountains, waterfalls and beaches; you can have different types of adventures. For example, in one day you can visit Cayo Levantado beach, a beach island, and Los Haitises, which consists of a lot of small islands,
caves, rivers, and is a natural reserve. Another day, you can go whale-watching (from January to March), and also see the El Limon waterfall in Samana. When you are finished with your adventures in Samana, you can move to Jarabacoa or Constanza, and experience ecotourism. One week in the Dominican Republic will return you to life!

Roberto Izquierdo-Peraza, Cuba, Writing High Beginning

I was born and raised in Cuba. I am from a little town by the name of Pinar Del Rio located on the west side of the island. Its land is considered one of the best for tobacco growing, and for sure some of the most special Cuban cigars come from Pinar Del Rio. Another of the beauties of my town is the beaches; they have white sand and big palms trees. My family still lives there, and they do enjoy the beauty of my home town. The bad thing about my country is the communism we have there. If it was not for communism, Cuba would be a beautiful island. It is really sad for Cuban people living in the U.S.A when Christmas and New Year’s Eve come because we miss our families, the food and the sharing with friends and loved ones.

Olga Venegas, Mexico, Writing High Beginning

Today, I am going to talk about what I most like about my country. My name is Olga. I am from Oaxaca, a city in Mexico. I am going to talk about the food of Oaxaca. I like Oaxaca’s food because it is healthy, fresh and natural. In Oaxaca, people consume a lot of natural products like beans, corn, chickpeas, onion, jalapeno peppers, tomato, cactus, squash and more. You can make a lot of recipes with these natural and fresh products. No canned or frozen food! With the corn, we make tortillas, tacos, gorditas (small, stuffed tortillas), tostadas, tamales, quesadillas, flautas (crunchy tacos) and more. These foods with different fillings are rich in vitamins, protein, calcium and minerals. They are very delightful, too. So next time when you visit Oaxaca, you can try one of these delicious foods.

Vicky Perez, Mexico, Writing High Beginning

In Mexico, there are a lot of places to visit. We have wonderful places like the beaches of Cancun, where you can dive and see a lot of sea animals. It is awesome! The dessert of “Cuatro Cienegas” in Coahuila has an amazing oasis with a lot of different types of blue. “The Monarch Butterfly Sanctuary” is another wonderful place in Michoacan. It has a lot beautiful butterflies that fly from Canada to Mexico. Mexico City has the famous “Turibus,” a double-decker bus that goes to a lot of beautiful places of the city. People can enjoy the architecture of buildings in downtown Mexico City, our beautiful “Chapultepec Castle,” where the “Boy Heroes” died for our flag, or our famous and spectacular “Angel de la Independencia.” Mexico has a lot of museums, too, where we can learn about the history and the important people of the country, among others. We also have one of the seven wonders in the world, Chichen Itzá! Mexico is rich in culture. I love my country!

Day of the Dead
Natali Alvarez, Mexico, Writing High Beginning

The day of the dead is the most important holiday in Mexico. The festival of the Day of the Dead takes place each year from the end of October to the beginning of November. Families celebrate the return of the souls to earth by laying “senpasuchil” flower petals, candles and offerings along the path leading from the cemetery to their homes. The dead loved one’s favorite food is prepared and placed around the home shrine or “altar” and the tomb alongside flowers and typical handicrafts, such as paper cut-outs. The decorations include colored paper garlands, little skeletons performing daily tasks and sugar skulls with the name of the deceased written on them. The most important days are November 1 and November 2, when Mexican families visit, clean and decorate the graves of loved ones. There are parades with big bonfires, and people get dressed as saints, angels or devils.

Victor Marquez, Mexico, Writing High Beginning

My country is Mexico. It is very rich in culture, history and has a lot of riches. In Mexico, there are some very famous beaches like the beaches of Acapulco and Cancun. There are also deserts like the De los Leones desert. As you can see, Mexico has all types of climate in its 32 states. The city I grew up in is Monterrey in the state of Nuevo Leon. It is a city with a mixture of modern and traditional cultures. Monterrey has a lot of tourist attractions all around the city and its surroundings. It also has a nice night life with many bars in downtown Monterrey, where the city transforms itself to a party. When I lived over there, I liked to go to the theater with my friends and family. I also liked to go out to eat because the food is very good in Monterrey. People are very passionate about soccer all over Mexico. There are soccer fields everywhere in Monterrey, and people like to go to them every weekend. Every Saturday at 7 p.m., the whole city stops to live the soccer passion. Sundays are also for the family, and people go out to the parks. In the summer, people like going to “balnearios” to take baths and do picnics. Living in Mexico is a lot of fun.

Rebeca Caballero, Mexico, Writing High Beginning

My name is Rebeca Caballero. I am from Mexico City. This is the world’s largest city filled with culture, history, and exciting things to see and do. It is just an incredible place to visit. The center of the city is called Zocalo, or town square. It is built on the same spot where Moctezuma’s Palace once stood. He was the ninth Aztec Emperor of the great Tenochoitlan people, and the ruler at the beginning of the Spanish conquest of Mexico. Let me tell you something about the great Tenochoitlan people. The empire was located on an island in Lake Texcoco in the Mexican Valley. It was founded in 1325 and it became the seat of the growing Aztec Empire in the 15th century. This empire consisted of the native people, known as the Nahua speakers. The people of this culture were refined workers, merchants, farmers, and fishermen. Also, they were fervent worshippers of many gods. One of the goals of the warfare was to capture victims for ceremonial use. Prisoners of war were sacrificed on huge alters in front of large crowds. The heart of the victims was cut out, and the lifeless bodies of the victims were rolled down the long stairs, staining the steps with blood. The fall of the Aztec Empire was based not only on the actions of the Spaniards, but also on the revolt of the smaller surrounding communities. Many of these people despised the Aztecs and wanted freedom from their rule. They completely dismantled the Aztec Empire. Finally, after the city of Tenochoitlan became infected with the smallpox epidemic, Hernan Cortes seized the city and laid it in ruins. This is the history of my forefathers which is amazing. Our architecture is also famous all around the world, so I am very proud of being Mexican.

Continued >>
What I Like Most about My Country

Nelly Vega, Mexico, Writing High-Beginning

My name is Nelly, and I am from Coyuca de Catalan in the state of Chilpancingo Guerrero. I will tell you what I like about my state. In my state, the food is a little different from other countries, like Venezuela, Peru and the United States. We have different varieties of food. We usually eat spicy food; but Venezuelans do not eat spicy food and neither do people from do Americans. My favorite dishes are Enchiladas Verdes, Mole with Chicken, Pork Carnitas, and tacos and to drink, I like Jamaican water and orchata. Sometimes the weather is hot in my country, and in December, it isn't too cold. Here in the United States, its, very cold in the winter time.

Country

Alma Figueroa, Mexico, Writing High-Beginning

Ciudad Victoria is the capital city of the Mexican state of Tamaulipas. It is located in the west central part of the state. I was born in this city. I like the people. They are very friendly. I want to talk about what interesting and fun activities my city has. There is a museum called the Tamux. It is a very interesting place. You can find things to do such as seeing the planets, learning new things, and viewing movies. In Cd. Victoria, we have a zoo, too. It is called Tamatan's Zoo. It is a nice and beautiful place to have a relaxing time with your family. Everyone can enjoy this place, children and adults. It is an interesting place because there are different animals, and they have people that can take care of the animals. I love the place where I was born.

My Colombia

Carmen Rosa Sierra, Colombia, Writing High-Beginning

Colombia is my country. It is small, and I like the weather. It only has two seasons: winter and summer. In the summer, the flowers are different colors, but what I like most is the joyfulness of the people, their parties and dances. I love my country with its delicious fruits, of which there are many varieties such as apples, pears, bananas, melons, berries, mangos, watermelon and many more. Plus, the food is delicious. When I return to my country for Christmas, I will return to eat as much as a little pig. My country has many economic problems and violence caused by the guerrillas who are in it, but we Colombians love our country and we are fighting because everything can change. We want to regain a peaceful and beautiful country once more.

Abraham Ocampo, Mexico, Writing High-Beginning

I am from Cuernavaca Morelos Mexico; I love my country. The weather is great! The city is beautiful and the people are friendly; Cuernavaca is called “eternal spring.” It has parks and gardens with tropical plants and flowers. I visited Hernan Cortez’s house. It is interesting because this house has murals of Diego Rivera. I like the cathedral in Cuernavaca. It was founded in 1526, and it is the most important architectural attraction of this city. I also like to dance with the “Chinelos.” They are probably the best known carnival dancers in Mexico and are in our state where there are more groups. They dress in long flowing robes of velvet. I don’t want to forget the traditional Mexican food. In my country, it is “Pozole,” and mmm, it is delicious. It is made with corn, pork meat, onions, etc. I don’t really know how to make it, but it is wonderful and I love it. You can also practice diverse sports like tennis, golf, volleyball, squash, swimming and horseback riding. Cuernavaca is an ideal place for all those who want to learn Spanish and experience the complete Mexican culture.

Juan C. Albarracin, Colombia, Writing High-Beginning

What I like most about my country are the holidays in November, the Barranquilla Carnival, and the beaches. The holidays of November are when they choose the queen of Colombia. That choice is made in Cartagena, Colombia, where I was born. This happens from the 1st through the 10th November. All the schools and universities do not have class, and all the people go on holiday. The Carnival of Barranquilla is at the beginning of February. It is a carnival similar to the one in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. There are concerts, dances, and various samples of different types of culture. I love the beaches too because they are warm. I like to go there with many people and I have a good time with my friends there!!

Mario Peralta, Guatemala, Writing High-Beginning

I like Guatemala because of the people, it is close to everything, and the weather is good. The beach is an hour and a half away, the weather in the city is about 20 degrees Celsius most of the time… so we have nice weather. If you are looking for cold weather, there is a city called Xela. It's two hours from the center. There are two other very famous places: Antigua and Atitlan. Antigua is the oldest city in Guatemala. It is so old and touristy. Many people go there to visit. Another very famous and very nice place to visit is Atitlan; you can find people from all around the world there. It is very peaceful.

Refugio Hernandez, Mexico, Writing High-Beginning

Mexico is a country that is rich in culture and traditions. I have three favorite places in Mexico. The state that I like most is Michoacan. Nature in Michoacan is beautiful; it has beautiful lakes and waterfalls. The other state I love in Mexico due to its rich flora and fauna is Chiapas. Guadalajara, the capital of Jalisco state and my third favorite place in Mexico, is the land of mariachis and tequila.

My Country, India

Harpinder Kaur, India, Writing High-Beginning

My country’s name is India. I like the culture in my country. I like the food. Indian food is so good. There are many touristy places to visit in India. These are the most famous places: Kasmir, Mumbai, Tajmahal, Goa, Shimla, Jaipur. India also has famous festivals: Dipwali, Dushera, Holi, Loheri, Karva Chouth, and Christmas. I also like Indian clothes. I like temples and Indian weddings. I love my country, India.

The Beach

Johnnathan Mendoza, Venezuela, Writing High-Beginning

Why the beach? Because it is one of the things with which I identify myself. In my country it is one of the most beautiful things to see. The water is blue and very clear. You can suntan and attain a good color of skin. We have beautiful beaches: Los Cayos, Tucacas, Los Roques, Margarita, and the coast of Aragua and Puerto Cabello. Among all of them, I grew up in Puerto Cabello, 10 min from the beach. I learned to swim when I was 3 years old and from that time on I have loved everything related to swimming. And of course, I love the beach. We always went every weekend during the year when we could, but when summer came, we went every single day. After I grew up, I tried to go every weekend. There was always sun, sand, and a lot of girls. I have many anecdotes of my times at the beach; some are good, and some are not so good. One good one is that I saved a girl from drowning. I felt really good to know that the girl was safe and would be fine. I hope that this summer I will go back to the beach.
Claudia Moreno, Mexico, Writing High-Beginning
I am from Mexico, and what I like most about my country is that you can find a lot of natural and cultural scenery in its 32 states. There are all kinds of activities: eco-tourism, beautiful beaches, colonial cities, and a lot of traditions with a long cultural history. Mexico has a diversity of regions, climates, flora and fauna. Many states in Mexico have cities that have been declared “Cultural Heritage of Humanity” by the UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. The food of my country is delicious, and you can taste many flavors and varieties of peppers, fruits, vegetables, meat and fish. In Mexico you can enjoy a wide variety of traditional Mexican dishes as well as cuisine from around the world. I like very much the festivals in my country; they are very lively and often last several days. Each month, there is usually an important event, like the festivities in honor of saints. One of the most important celebrations is the “Dia de los Muertos.” I think it is the most characteristic celebration of my country.

All About Colombia, My Country
Flor Lozano, Colombia, Writing High-Beginning
Most people around the world have an incorrect perception about my country. However, I can tell you that we are much more than terrorism, news, and drugs. The beauty of my country is unknown to most people. Through this writing, I want to show you the best things about my country. Colombia is a land of talented people (Gabriel Garcia/Fernando Botero), hard working people, (like our President) and kind people. Colombia produces the best coffee among other goods. Colombia also enjoys beautiful landscapes: fauna and flora.

Lilia Cordova, Mexico, Writing High-Beginning
Mexico is a country that has many tourist places, beaches and beautiful landscapes, as well as very nice people. But what I like most about Mexico is its traditions and food, which are very rich. I like to visit the towns in my state, Michoacan, because they are magical places and each has its own stories, legends, and traditions. My city is Morelia. It is very pretty, has a pleasant climate and has nice places to visit. Its architecture is from the colonial period. Some buildings, squares, and churches are made of pink stone. It has tall cathedrals, and at night they are illuminated with the buildings around them. It is a wonderful city.

Maria Howell, Mexico, Writing High Beginning
Mexico is a great country that has a lot of fun places, colonial cities with great monuments, sunny beaches, and big hills that reach the skies. Also, Mexico is a great country that loves soccer. This was made evident when they won the World Cup game against Brazil. We also have great Mexican cuisine that is known for its varied flavors, colorful decorations, and many spices and ingredients. Many of these spices are native to Mexico. Mexican food varies by region because of the weather changes and geography. Also, ethnic differences among people, some of whom have been influenced by the Spaniards, explain the differences in food varieties. Mexico also has lots of legends that attract lots of tourists, and this makes it a more solid country.

Thailand
Sathaporn Watts, Thailand, Writing High Beginning
My name is Sathaporn Watts. I am from Thailand. Let me tell you about my country. Thailand is a beautiful country. We wear different clothes in Thailand. Thailand has a king and queen. My country has different religions, too. The Thai people are always smiling, and that is why they say that Thailand is a land of smiles. Thai food is also very good. If someone wants to visit, he or she is welcome!

Monica Riccio, Venezuela, Writing High-Beginning
My country called Venezuela is located north of South America. It is a country with many natural beauties: beaches, plains, mountains, deserts and jungles. The climate also varies greatly from place to place. We can say that there is something for everyone. It is precisely this diversity that makes me love my country because any day of the year you can go to the beach. We have a large coastline from where you see the Caribbean Sea with a variety of blue and warm waters in the west or cold waters in the east. We also enjoy delicious “Bouillon chipi chipi (mollusks)” or delicious “fried fish with tostones (fried green plantains).” And if you’re tired of the heat and want to enjoy a cold climate, grab your bags and travel to the Andes where we have a portion of the Cordillera of the Andes, which means cold weather. There are even snow-capped peaks. The eldest one in Venezuela is Pico Bolivar with 4,978 meters of altitude. In this region you can enjoy a “Pisca Andina” or “Mojito Criollo” of course with their respective “Arepa” made from wheat flour. And each region has its own style of cuisine. Just as we have a diversity of regions, climates and food, people are also diverse. We are a mixture of indigenous, European, African and other cultures. But we all have something in common: we are all Venezuelans regardless of our region, and it is the joy that characterizes us. I love my country for its beaches, mountains, plains, and cities. ☀️
What I Like Most about the U.S.

Alona Preutesa, Ukraine, Writing Intermediate
One of the things I like most about the United States of America is that I live in Houston, Texas. I like Houston weather and how warm it is here. I was born and raised in Ukraine. We had four seasons and winter was the hardest. Sometimes it snowed so hard that we could not leave our houses. Here in Houston the winter is very easy for me. It feels like fall in Ukraine. I like that even during Christmas time, you can see flowers blooming. I like the warm and sunny weather we have all year in Houston. I only wish we could have Ukrainian summers here!

Angela Gonzalez, Colombia, Writing Intermediate
The thing that I like the most about the United States is that it is a country of opportunities where the people express freely without fear. In this country, people can achieve their dreams with work and effort. This country opens our minds and helps us understand the cultural diversity that exists in the world and teaches us to be more tolerant. The United States is a great country with friendly and generous people. Now I understand why it is the best country in the world.

Hermelinda Zeno, Mexico, Writing Intermediate
In the United States, everybody is able to achieve their academic goals. There are universities, community colleges, and many other academic institutions everywhere. Some of them offer free classes. We can find a great variety of majors and flexible schedules, including classes on-line. Everybody may study whatever theme they want and attend classes almost at anytime during the day. Around the cities there are libraries too. They make it easier to find information in order to do homework. Anyone can study, no matter if the person works or comes from a different country. For example, students with economical problems can apply for a scholarship or a financial loan. Women's kids can be cared in many schools while the mothers are taking their classes. There are many ways to become successful in the United States of America; therefore, this is the thing that I like the most about this country.

Fernando Lastra, Mexico, Writing Intermediate
Living in a foreign country could be an enjoyable period in your life. What I most like about this country is the diversity of people living here and the opportunities that people can get. Whatever your purpose of living here is, you can realize that life is totally different from what a foreign person is used to. Every day you can meet different people from different parts of the world, which means that people here have more opportunities to have a better life than in their countries. Living in a foreign country, knowing new places, meeting new people from different parts of the world, and realizing that all of them have different purposes in their lives could be one of the best experiences in your life.

Nelida Leal, Mexico, Writing Intermediate
The things I love about the U.S.A. are so many because it is a wonderful country to live in. I enjoy the freedom of the U.S.A. I love the freedom of speech because we can express our ideas in the way we want. I like the way we are protect by the U.S.A. forces so we feel safe. I am proud of the people who are fighting for us to be free and secure. Another thing I am excited about is the diversity of so many cultures in this country. We can make a new culture from all of them without losing our own culture. We have mixed and got the best of all and enriched our lives. We need to have in mind that in this country we can choose the possibility of getting an education when we are old. There are many government programs to help you to have a successful life and to provide better opportunities for your family. Speaking of family, one better thing is the opportunity that we have to choose in what we believe so we can practice any religion and we can decide which is better for us and for our family. In the U.S.A., we can find very good places to visit, and you can find snow, beaches, forests, lakes, deserts and many things to enjoy. But the best thing in the U.S.A. is the people because as soon they get to know, you they treat you as a one of them. You are not a stranger to them; you are a part of this country. So for people like me, an immigrant person, I feel like I am home.

Jael Ham, Mexico, Writing Intermediate
What I like most about the United States of America is that it is a country of opportunities. People from all over the world come to this country. Many of them come to reside permanently, and others just to do business and then leave. In both cases, they leave part of their customs here and enrich their communities. In this country, I discovered many different cultures. I can distinguish the differences and similarities between them. Some big cities have festivals. We have the opportunity to get to see them. For example, Chicago has a festival called, “Taste of Chicago” and food is the core of this festivity. Thousands of people go there to enjoy the culinary arts, along with the music of many countries. This is a good chance to observe the diversity of humankind. The United States of America is a great country to live in and to coexist with a variety of mankind.

Samdy Tous, Cambodia, Writing Intermediate
People in the United States are the most interesting people that I have ever known. The first thing that I love about people in the United States is their friendship. Americans or people who live in this country are very friendly. They always smile and say, “Hello, hi…”, and ask, “How are you or how are you doing?” when they meet each other. They like to work in teams. They make their environment clean and beautiful. They love freedom and peace. They like sports, studying, art, and many other things. American people also love animals like they love people. Finally, I like the way people in the United States live, and I keep their kindness in my mind.

Carla Hinds, Panama, Writing Intermediate
What I like most about the United States of America are the liberties and opportunities which this country provides. As citizens of this country, we enjoy the liberty to vote freely, for anyone we feel strongly about. We also have a right to express ourselves without the fear of being punished or persecuted. We also enjoy liberties like freedom of religion; this gives us the right to practice any religion without being persecuted or discriminated against. This country provides everyone an opportunity to an education, no matter your age or race. Another opportunity is the benefit that low income families have to gain services that can provide them food, shelter and money, while they are going to school or looking for a job. This country is made up of a number of people from different countries. Their ideas and cultures are unique, and when that all comes together, it creates a stronger country.
Milo Fox, Ukraine, Writing Intermediate

I was born in Ukraine and lived there most of my life. I moved to the U.S.A. when I was 39 years old. I saw so many differences, and I started to learn a lot of new things. Most of the things I learned were very minor things. Some of them changed my opinion in certain ways. Americans have special places for people who have physical problems. I was surprised about the parking lots and public restrooms. Unfortunately, in Ukraine people do not have that privilege. Why? I really have no clue about it. I would especially like to talk about American people. My husband and I have many friends. I met them a few years ago. It shocked me that they knew all about me when I met them for the first time. It was because my husband had told them about me after he had met me in Ukraine. I was really surprised. They were very nice to me and still are today. It is the opposite in Ukraine. If you met someone for the first time, that person would be very careful about talking to you.

Soledad Graciano, Argentina, Developmental Reading II

Why do I need to improve my English? English is a language I have always loved. I have been studying English since I was a child. I remember that my mother always insisted on telling me that studying English was essential to success in life, but at that early age I did not understand the meaning of these wise words. At first, I did it as a game. Later on, it became an important key that has opened many doors in my life.

The first reason for me to study English is that it is a useful tool in my medical career. The most prestigious medical journals are written in English as well as the newest editions of many books. Knowing the language allows me to be updated with the most relevant medical news and scientific information. The second reason is that, as a matter of fact, I live in the United States. I think that it is important to know the language of the country where I live because it allows me to communicate with other people. The third one is that through my work I had the opportunity to travel to many interesting places around the world. I am sure that it would not have been possible if I had not been bilingual.

To conclude, I have many other reasons for why I need to improve my English, but the most important one is that I really enjoy speaking this beautiful language.

Heidi Herera, Costa Rica, Developmental Reading

It has been twelve years since I spoke my first words in English. In the beginning, the reason for me to understand this difficult language was to be able to communicate with a young man that I liked. I still remember how difficult it was and how much I struggled to get my message across. Now, as a grown woman, my desire to improve this language is so that I can achieve an optimum education. In my opinion, this is a country of endless opportunities for people who strive to work hard.

Being from a Spanish-speaking country, I want to improve my English because not doing so could be a real detriment to my development in the United States’ professional world. As a foreigner in this country, I see that with the right education, limitless possibilities are available to me. I believe that as human beings we are only limited by the desire of our hearts. Therefore, this language has become a real challenge to conquer in my life. I want to achieve a sense of accomplishment, and I feel it every time I find beautiful words to embellish an essay or I communicate almost as well as I can in my native language. Additionally, knowing this idiom gives me self-confidence, and, in the process, it empowers me with the ability to help others who are trying to learn like I have done.

Knowing English has opened many doors throughout my life. In my native Costa Rica, I met my husband, whose native language is English. Now, in Houston, this language is allowing me to continue my college education. Perhaps twelve years into the future, I will be one of those professors in a college who is teaching two of the topics I am most passionate about - History and Political Science. That is why on a daily basis I continue with resilience to overcome any difficulties that I might find along the way in this learning process.

Katalin Bartha, Hungary, Developmental Reading II

Have you ever experienced being lost in a foreign country because your language knowledge was not strong enough to help you find your way? When we moved here, I noticed this several times. I had difficulties with renting a house, making a contract with water and electricity suppliers, and registering my son for school. So my first reason for why I need to improve my English is to manage and solve our everyday problems better and easier. Second, I have to communicate with people in English. I am embarrassed when I do not understand what others tell me or when they do not understand what I am talking about. Third, my son attends middle school, and he usually needs help because of his limited English writing and reading skills. Moreover, I like reading and watching movies. The better my English knowledge is, the more I enjoy these activities and this language. In addition, English is an international language. Wherever we move, I could use this. I think that having a high level of English is an advantage to finding the perfect job anywhere in the world. These are my most important purposes for studying and practicing English almost every day.
Who Is My Hero

Mairett Rivas, Venezuela, Oral Communication Intermediate

My great hero is my mother. She is the most important person in my life. I can describe her in three words: fighter, persistent and optimistic. My mother is a single parent. She has been a great support throughout my life. I thank her for her perseverance. She motivated me to become what I am today. My mother never gives up and she always looks at the brighter side of things. I thank God for her. If I were to be born again I would like to have her as my mother again. I hope to teach my children what my mother has taught me.

Jorge Angeles, Mexico, Oral Communication Intermediate

My hero is who I admire the most. He was and he is a super hero. He teaches and he helps. He made miracles and he conquered hearts. He made a revolution in the world with his style of life and also he gave his life for me and for everyone in the world. He gave me super parents, brothers and a wife. My hero gave me a mind to think, feet to walk and hands to reach everything I want. He is also my guide to show me how to live my life with success. My super hero is JESUS CHRIST.

Roliana Campos, El Salvador, Oral Communication Intermediate

It’s difficult to identify a particular person as the hero in my life because a hero is someone who inspires you, whom you admire and who is a life model. I think there are so many people. My parents were my first heroes. They fought for their ideals, with few resources and many constraints. In spite of this, they still managed to raise a family, insuring that my brothers and I could do better. I admire people who struggle to achieve their goals, who dream big, and work daily to make their dreams a reality. What matters is that everything you do, from day to day, helps you to make your dreams a reality. I admire Monsignor Romero, who fought for seemingly lost causes. Without his fight we would never have heard the desperate cry of helpless minorities. His being the voice of the voiceless, whom no one hears, is a big responsibility and a tremendous show of solidarity.

These are my heroes, people who inspire me day by day to believe in myself and to keep fighting to achieve my dreams. I can only say thank you for existing and motivating me.

Yesenia Hernandez, Venezuela, Writing Intermediate

My hero was born in Spain during the civil war, in a humble working class family. He needed to immigrate to another country and worked for many years to raise his family. He cared for and taught his moral values to his family. When I was a little girl he played with me, and when I grew up, he taught me to work hard and to be independent. During my entire life, I saw how he helped many people when they needed something, and I learned that all people are the same with no distinction about race, religion, color or social level. Today he is my gentleman. I do not know if I have become all he hoped for me to be, but I am sure that he has been all I have needed him to be and much more. He is my hero because he is a good person, father and friend. I know that no one is perfect, but I look at him with loving eyes. He is my grandfather and I love him very much.

Maria Zenteno, Mexico, Oral Communications Intermediate

My hero is a man I never imagined could exist. He is strong in values. He is loyal, smart and has the most beautiful feelings I have ever known. When I was a child I always dreamed of a man like him: honest, responsible, tender and respectful. I’m deeply in love with him. The most important thing he showed me is to believe in God no matter what. This wonderful “hero” that I am talking about is Ovidio, my dearest husband.

Edwin Custodio, El Salvador, Oral Communication Intermediate

I want to start by saying that I am a pastor, so everyone can guess who my hero is. Jesus is not like any other hero. He is unique. He is the only Son of God. Jesus has impacted my life, because he gave his life for me. He has done something that nobody else can do. He is the most wonderful man of all times, and that is why many people talk about Jesus. There have been more books written about Jesus than about anyone else. He is the only savior, healer and the only way anyone can go to heaven. Jesus is the solution for any problem. I have decided to write about Jesus, as a testimony, so that everyone knows what he has done in my life. It has been more books written about Jesus than about anyone else. He is the only savior, healer and the only way anyone can go to heaven. Jesus is the solution for any problem. I have decided to write about Jesus, as a testimony, so that everyone knows what he has done in my life. It does not matter if someone is feeling lonely or hopeless; you can know for sure, there is an answer. There is hope! Jesus is powerful enough to solve anything and help anyone.

An Interesting Experience When I Arrived in Houston

An Interesting Experience in the City That Never Sleeps

Elisa Corsini, Brazil, Pronunciation 1

One of the most interesting experiences that I have had in the U.S.A. was my first trip to New York City. For so long I wanted to be there. I was so excited and overwhelmed when I first arrived in the city that never sleeps. It is such a big and busy city with so much to do and to see. My first time there I spent two days in the city. It is definitely worth every single minute that you are there. I am very happy that I had an opportunity to go visit New York. Last month I went back with my husband and my daughter and like always, we had a great time. I can’t wait to go back again and the next time, I would like to go see a Broadway show.

Cesar Valdivieso, El Salvador, Pronunciation 1

The first thing I saw when I arrived in Houston was Bush Intercontinental Airport. It is very big! The airport in San Salvador is small. All the signs in the airport helped me and I did not have any trouble. My uncle and cousins met me at the airport, but before I saw them, I saw the Security Police and the Immigration Officers. They all looked angry. They did not smile and I worried ALL Americans were like that, with no smiles and always angry. I discovered the United States to be a beautiful and clean country. The most important thing I discovered was I was happy because American people are normal. They do smile!
## Intensive English Program (ESOL) – Summer 2010

### 6-Week Courses (July 15–Aug 22)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Name</th>
<th>CREDIT Number</th>
<th>CE Number</th>
<th>Day/Time</th>
<th>Room</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developmental Reading II (64 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL 0305, 212E126717</td>
<td>CENGL 3000501, KC920 35960</td>
<td>MTWTh 10:00-12:45 pm</td>
<td>CLB 116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>For non-native speakers of English only. Lab included.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Developmental Reading II (64 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL 0305, 222E1 26718</td>
<td>CENGL 3000501, KC922 35962</td>
<td>MTWTh 6:00-8:45 pm</td>
<td>TBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>For non-native speakers of English only. Lab included.</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Skills Workshop (48 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL 0308, 21201 26720</td>
<td>CENGL 3100558, KC931 35971</td>
<td>MTWTh 8:30-10:20 am</td>
<td>TBA</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>This section focuses on pronunciation.</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Skills Workshop (48 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL 0308, 21202 26721</td>
<td>CENGL3100558, KC932 40836</td>
<td>MTWTh 10:30-12:20 pm</td>
<td>TBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>This section focuses on grammar review.</strong></td>
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### 8-Week Courses – Day Classes (June 28–Aug 22)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Name</th>
<th>CREDIT Number</th>
<th>CE Number</th>
<th>Day/Time</th>
<th>Room</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developmental Reading II (64 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL 0305, 218E1 26722</td>
<td>CENGL 3000501, KC921 35961</td>
<td>MTWTh 8:00-9:50 am</td>
<td>CLB 116</td>
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<td><strong>For non-native speakers of English only. Lab included.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>ESOL Oral Communication High Beginning (96 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL 0343, 21801 26725</td>
<td>CENGL 3004301, KC926 35966</td>
<td>MTWTh 8:00-10:50 am</td>
<td>CLB 201</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESOL Oral Communication Intermediate (96 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL 0344, 21801 26728</td>
<td>CENGL 3004401, KC933 40838</td>
<td>MTWTh 8:00-10:50 am</td>
<td>LIB 203</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESOL Oral Communication High Intermediate (96 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL 0345, 21801 26732</td>
<td>CENGL 3004501, KC934 40839</td>
<td>MTWTh 8:00-10:50 am</td>
<td>SFA 208</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESOL Writing High Beginning (96 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL 0353, 21801 26735</td>
<td>CENGL 3005301, KC931 40834</td>
<td>MTWTh 11:30-2:20 pm</td>
<td>LIB 201</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESOL Writing Intermediate (96 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL 0354, 21801 26741</td>
<td>CENGL 3005401, KC927 35967</td>
<td>MTWTh 11:30-2:20 pm</td>
<td>LIB 203</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESOL Writing High Intermediate (96 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL 0355, 21801 26751</td>
<td>CENGL 3005501, KC928 35968</td>
<td>MTWTh 11:30-2:20 pm</td>
<td>SFA 208</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESOL Writing Advanced (96 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL 0356, 21801 26753</td>
<td>CENGL 3005601, KC929 35969</td>
<td>MTWTh 10:00-12:50 pm</td>
<td>TBA</td>
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### 8-Week Courses – Evening Classes (June 28–Aug 22)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Name</th>
<th>CREDIT Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developmental Reading II (64 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL 0305, 228E1 26755</td>
<td>CENGL 3000501, KC923 35963</td>
<td>MTWTh 6:00-7:50 pm</td>
<td>LIB 201</td>
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<td><strong>For non-native speakers of English only. Lab included.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>ESOL Reading High Beginning (80 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL 0337, 22801 26756</td>
<td>CENGL 3003701, KC924 35964</td>
<td>MTWTh 6:00-8:20 pm</td>
<td>LIB 203</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESOL Reading Intermediate (80 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL 0338, 22801 26758</td>
<td>CENGL 3003901, KC925 35965</td>
<td>MTWTh 6:00-8:20 pm</td>
<td>TBA</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESOL Oral Communication High Beginning (96 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL 0343, 22801 26760</td>
<td>CENGL 3004301, KC932 35972</td>
<td>MTWTh 6:00-8:50 pm</td>
<td>SFA 208</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESOL Oral Communication Intermediate (96 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL 0344, 22801 26762</td>
<td>CENGL 3004401, KC935 40840</td>
<td>MTWTh 6:00-8:50 pm</td>
<td>TBA</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESOL Writing Advanced (96 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL 0356, 22801 26763</td>
<td>CENGL 3005601, KC930 35970</td>
<td>MTWTh 6:00-8:50 pm</td>
<td>TBA</td>
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## Intensive English Program (ESOL) – Fall 2010

### 16-Week Classes - Day Classes (Aug 30–Dec 19)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Name</th>
<th>CREDIT Number</th>
<th>CE Number</th>
<th>Day/Time</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language Skills Workshop Pronunciation (64 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL. 0308, 21001 40098</td>
<td>CENGL 3000801</td>
<td>MW 1:00-2:50 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Skills Workshop English in the Media (64 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL. 0308, 21002 40100</td>
<td>CENGL 3000801</td>
<td>TTH 1:30-3:20 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Skills Workshop Integrated Skills (64 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL. 0308, 21007 40107</td>
<td>CENGL 3000801</td>
<td>MW 1:00-2:50 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Skills Workshop Integrated Skills (64 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL. 0308, 21008 40623</td>
<td>CENGL 3000801</td>
<td>TTH 1:30-3:20 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESOL Grammar 1 (64 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL. 0308, 21003 40101</td>
<td>CENGL 3000801</td>
<td>MW 8:30-10:20 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESOL Grammar 2 (64 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL. 0308, 21004 40103</td>
<td>CENGL 3000801</td>
<td>MW 8:30-10:20 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESOL Grammar 3 (64 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL. 0308, 21005 40104</td>
<td>CENGL 3000801</td>
<td>MW 8:30-10:20 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESOL Grammar 4 (64 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL. 0308, 21006 40107</td>
<td>CENGL 3000801</td>
<td>MW 8:30-10:20 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESOL Writing 1 (64 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL. 0371, 21001 40109</td>
<td>CENGL 3000701</td>
<td>MW 10:30-12:20 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESOL Writing 2 (64 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL. 0372, 21001 40353</td>
<td>CENGL 3007201</td>
<td>MW 10:30-12:20 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESOL Writing 3 (64 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL. 0373, 21001 40359</td>
<td>CENGL 3007301</td>
<td>MW 10:30-12:20 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESOL Writing 4 (64 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL. 0374, 21001 40379</td>
<td>CENGL 3007401</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing II (64 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL. 0307, 21E01 40387</td>
<td>CENGL 3000701</td>
<td>MW 10:30-12:20 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESOL Reading 1 (64 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL. 0361, 21001 40391</td>
<td>CENGL 3006101</td>
<td>TTH 8:30-10:20 am</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESOL Reading 2 (64 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL. 0362, 21001 40394</td>
<td>CENGL 3006201</td>
<td>TTH 8:30-10:20 am</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESOL Reading 3 (64 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL. 0363, 21001 40397</td>
<td>CENGL 3006301</td>
<td>TTH 8:30-10:20 am</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading I (64 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL. 0304, 21E01 40411</td>
<td>CENGL 3000401</td>
<td>TTH 8:30-10:20 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading II (64 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL. 0305, 21E01 40415</td>
<td>CENGL 3000501</td>
<td>TTH 8:30-10:20 am</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESOL Oral Communication 1 (64 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL. 0381, 21001 40417</td>
<td>CENGL 3008101</td>
<td>TTH 10:30-12:20 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESOL Oral Communication 2 (64 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL. 0382, 21001 40430</td>
<td>CENGL 3008201</td>
<td>TTH 10:30-12:20 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESOL Oral Communication 3 (64 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL. 0383, 21001 40432</td>
<td>CENGL 3008301</td>
<td>TTH 10:30-12:20 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESOL Oral Communication 4 (64 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL. 0384, 21001 40436</td>
<td>CENGL 3008401</td>
<td>TTH 10:30-12:20 pm</td>
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## 15-Week Classes - Late Start (September 7–Dec 19)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Name</th>
<th>CREDIT Number</th>
<th>CE number</th>
<th>Day/Time</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ESOL Reading 1 (64 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL. 0361, 22001</td>
<td>CENGL3006101</td>
<td>MW 5:30-7:30 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESOL Reading 2 (64 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL 0362, 22001</td>
<td>CENGL 3006201</td>
<td>MW 5:30-7:30 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESOL Reading 3 (64 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL. 0363, 22001</td>
<td>CENGL 3006301</td>
<td>MW 5:30-7:30 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading I (64 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL. 0304, 22E01</td>
<td>CENGL 3000401</td>
<td>MW 5:30-7:30 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading II (64 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL. 0305, 22E01</td>
<td>CENGL 3000501</td>
<td>MW 5:30-7:30 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading II (64 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL. 0305, 29E01</td>
<td></td>
<td>F 8:30-10:30 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESOL Grammar 1 (64 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL. 0308, 22001</td>
<td>CENGL 3000801</td>
<td>MW 7:40-9:40 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESOL Grammar 2 (64 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL. 0308, 22002</td>
<td>CENGL 3000801</td>
<td>MW 7:40-9:40 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESOL Grammar 3 (64 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL. 030, 22003</td>
<td>CENGL 3000801</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESOL Grammar 4 (64 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL. 0308, 22004</td>
<td>CENGL 3000801</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESOL Writing 1 (64 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL. 0371, 22001</td>
<td>CENGL 3007101</td>
<td>TTH 5:30-7:30 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESOL Writing 2 (64 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL. 0372, 22001</td>
<td>CENGL 3007201</td>
<td>TTH 5:30-7:30 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESOL Writing 3 (64 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL. 0373, 22001</td>
<td>CENGL 3007301</td>
<td>TTH 5:30-7:30 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESOL Writing 4 (64 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL. 0374, 22001</td>
<td>CENGL 3007401</td>
<td>TTH 5:30-7:30 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing II (64 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL. 0307, 22E01</td>
<td>CENGL 3000701</td>
<td>TTH 5:30-7:30 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing II (64 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL. 0307, 29E01</td>
<td>CENGL 3000701</td>
<td>F 10:40-12:40 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Skills Workshop (64 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL. 0308, 29001</td>
<td>CENGL 3000801</td>
<td>F 10:40-12:40 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English in the Media</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESOL Oral Communication 1 (64 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL. 0381, 22001</td>
<td>CENGL 3008101</td>
<td>TTH 7:40-9:40 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESOL Oral Communication 2 (64 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL. 0382, 22001</td>
<td>CENGL 3008201</td>
<td>TTH 7:40-9:40 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESOL Oral Communication 3 (64 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL. 0383, 22001</td>
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<td>ESOL Oral Communication 4 (64 hrs)</td>
<td>ENGL. 0384, 22001</td>
<td>CENGL 3008401</td>
<td>TTH 7:40-9:40 pm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Summer registration and Fall registration are in progress.
• Students who do not have a Degree Plan need to schedule a visit with academic advisor Ita Jervis.
• The last day to drop a course for most spring classes is Tuesday, April 13th.
• Students need the instructor’s signature to drop a course.
• Reapply for Financial Aid for 2010-2011 if you are eligible.

Departing the U.S. soon?

If you plan to leave the United States to spend the summer with your family and will be returning for the continuation of your studies, you will need the items listed below for a smooth reentry into the U.S.:

• Certification of enrollment, which shows your past and present enrollment/registration status.
• Financial documentation, which shows proof of the financial support listed on your I-20. (This can be a bank statement, a letter from your academic department, etc.)
• A valid passport (one that is not expiring within 6 months)
• A valid visa: if your visa will expire before the date you plan to reenter the U.S., you will need to apply for a new F-1 visa for your reentry back into the U.S.
• Have your I-20 signed by the DSO (Diomi Burgin or Ita Jervis)

Featured ESOL Faculty: Juan Antonio Castillo

I was born and raised in Brownsville, Texas. I graduated from Sam Houston State University with a Bachelors Degree in 2001. I have taken most of my Graduate courses at this school as well. I will be taking more classes at New Mexico State University in the Fall. This is my 9th year as a public school teacher and my 4th working at the junior college level. This is my second year teaching in the ESOL program at Lone Star College-Kingwood. I have taught Writing and Oral Communication courses here. I truly enjoy teaching here and especially enjoy watching and listening to my students’ improvement each month. I plan to teach full time at the college level very soon.

Acknowledgements: I would like to thank our ESOL student contributors, ESL faculty, Pam Clarke and Designs in Print intern Ana Morales for their collaboration and assistance.

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