Editor’s Note:
Kingwood College Intensive English Program (IEP) was founded in August 2001 to help immigrant and international students learn and improve their English. In its fifth year, the IEP now has over 400 students from about 50 countries. One of the goals of the IEP is to promote intercultural understanding and diversity on campus and in the community. Diversity: The Kingwood College ESL Student Newsletter plays an important role towards this goal.

Interesting, Funny, & Scary Stories

My Embarrassing Moment
Nicole Huang, Taiwan, Reading & Vocabulary V

English is my second language. When I learned how to speak English, I made some funny mistakes. One day, I asked my host family if they were going to eat “snakes” after dinner. I scared them because it should have been “snacks” not “snakes.” On another day, when the waiter asked me what I would like to drink in a restaurant, I told him that I’d drink water with “lemo”. He didn’t understand me even though I explained it to him five times. Finally, he realized that I meant “lemon” not “lemo.”

In addition, I wrote sentences with meanings that I didn’t know. For instance, I would say, “I sleep with my sister every night.” How embarrassing it was! Even now, I still make mistakes and sometimes confuse Americans with vocabulary or pronunciation errors. I try to do my best to learn English and improve it to be better so I will not have any more embarrassing moments in the future.

Ordering Food
Juan Ventura, Venezuela, Grammar & Writing V

When I came to this country, like many people that come to this country to live, I did not know how to speak English. The change of life affected me in many ways. Today I can remember many experiences that happened to me; some are funny, embarrassing, excellent, and sad. For instance, in the first month I was in the United States, my sister asked me if I could go and buy something to eat because she did not want to cook. I said, “yes, why not?” I went alone to the Wendy’s, which is near my house. I waited as much as 10 minutes for my turn to order, and when it was my turn, I told the woman what I wanted. I told her, “I want five hamburgers”, but she did not understand what I wanted. I repeated the same thing four times before she understood what I was ordering. After I ordered, I went to the next window to pay. She told me “it is 50 dollars”. I said “Are you sure it is not too much for only 5 things?” She said, “No, it is not. You told me that you wanted 15 hamburgers”. I said “What?” She told me “You know what? I am going to talk with a manager because you do not speak English.” The manager came and said, “Okay, what do you want?” I said the thing that I wanted. After all that, he told me “Next time, ask to talk to somebody in Spanish”. I felt terrible about myself. That was the most embarrassing moment in the whole time that I have been here in the United States because before that I thought that I could communicate with any person that I wanted to, and I found that I was a little bit wrong!
Cash Fry!

Joann Chang, China, Reading & Vocabulary V

One of the most difficult parts of learning English is how to pronounce things like an English speaker. I used to work at a grocery store that sold Lotto. Everyday there were a lot of people that came to buy Lotto tickets. I still remember one Sunday early in the morning. There were not many customers, and everything was very slow. I was keeping myself awake. Suddenly, an old man came in and asked me for one “Cash Five” Lotto ticket. Then I answered him, “Yes sir, one cash-fry”. When I had just pronounced that “Cash- Fry”, I knew I had made a mistake. The old man started laughing loudly, and said “Oh! Young lady, in the United States, we do not fry cash! We spend cash. Ha…” At that moment, I really felt very embarrassed. At the same time, I thought that at least I had given the old man a good Sunday morning.

We all hope our English can really be like an American’s so we try harder and harder. We should not only learn from classes or books, but also learn from our mistakes. Even though we have a long way to go, one day we can make it.

A Day with a Bad Babysitter

Daisy Ruano, Mexico, Grammar & Writing III

My story begins when I was 9 years old. My sister was 7 years old and my brother was 8 years old. We were living in my father’s parents’ house. Nobody used to live in that house until we moved there. It was a small house, but it had two big bedrooms, 1 bathroom, a kitchen, a dining room and a living room. One day my mother and father had a fight and they got mad at each other. When this happened, my father left the house. My siblings, my mother and I stayed at the house. When my father left, he still gave us money, but it was not enough. Then my mom had to find a job. When she found it, she spent a lot of time working and she got us a babysitter. I remember the babysitter was young, like 17 or 18 years old. I don’t remember her name. Then one time, a Saturday morning about 8:00 o’clock my siblings and I woke up and didn’t see our mom. The babysitter told us that my mom was at her work and that she was going to take care of us for that day. When the babysitter stayed at home she usually cleaned the house, if the house needed it, and then she watched TV.

But that morning when she finished cleaning the house, she told my brother to go to the yard with her because she was going to show him something. I remember that my sister and I stayed in the bedroom where we slept. Then when my brother came back, he told us that the babysitter had shown him that in the front door of our house there was a lot of blood on the floor. My sister and I didn’t believe him, but we went to see the babysitter. When my sister and I went to see her, we told her that my brother told us that there was blood in our house. She told us that there was, but that she had already cleaned it. We asked her why there was blood. She said because the devil had been there and he killed somebody. And that she was going to keep us in a place where the devil wouldn’t find us, because he wanted to kill us. I remember that my mother had a big wooden box where she kept her clothes – it was something that people in Mexico used to keep clothes like a clothes cabinet-. We didn’t know very well what was going on but we were scared and we trusted the babysitter. Then she put my brother and sister inside of the wooden box. And she told me that I had to be under the bed. I am not sure what happened after that. I just remember that the babysitter told us that she had to leave because she needed to do something. Then I remember that my mom came from work and she asked us what we were doing and where the baby sitter was? We told her everything that had happened and she told us that the baby sitter was crazy and that we didn’t believe what the baby sitter told us. After that, my mom quit her job. She thought that we were more important and that we would find other ways to help ourselves but together. I will never forget that because I remember that my sister was crying and she was scared and my brother was scared too. A few days after that my father returned home to us. And we never saw the baby sitter again.

Help!!! Does someone speak French here?

Chloe Gostelli, Switzerland, Grammar & Writing VI

Not being understood makes one feel despair, but being helped brings self-confidence. During my second day in the USA, I realized that I forgot to bring adaptors in order to be able to use all my Swiss batteries, so I decided to take my bike, and go to the hardware shop to try to find one. Of course, I didn’t know what the adaptors were called.

I arrived there and tried to find one by myself, but quickly realized that I needed help. I went to the salesperson and tried to explain to him what I was looking for. Some English words are very close to the French one, so I tried to anglicize the French word for adaptor, which is “adaptateur”. I asked him for an “adaptator”. I rapidly realized that he did not get it; he was looking at me with wide-open eyes, trying to understand what I wanted. I felt really lost at that time; I did not know how to express myself. I began to explain to him that I wanted something to be able to charge the cell phone with my Swiss “whatever it is called”, “the thing you put in the wall and there is electricity”. It took him a moment, but he finally understood part of what I was saying and brought me to the correct section of the store. There he showed me different kinds of adaptors but still could not understand what kind I needed. I think he felt bad for me so he called on his microphone in the whole store, and asked the clients if anybody spoke French. He ran through all the hallways screaming “Does anybody speak French here!!?” I felt embarrassed, but at the same time the situation was funny and he was very helpful. The morale of the story is... don’t be afraid to ask for help even if you don’t know how to express yourself; there will always be somebody to help you with a smile.

The Worst Day of My Life

Sonia Miranda, Nicaragua, Grammar & Writing III

On November 26 my daughter had surgery. They pulled out her wisdom teeth. Before the surgery, they gave her local anesthesia. When they finished the procedures; they released her and they told me to take her home and have her rest. She wasn’t supposed to get up and walk. But she didn’t listen and started walking around. Since she looked ok, I didn’t say anything to her. When it was time to change the gauzes in her mouth; she got up to go to the restroom to clean her mouth. She called me to help her. When I got to the restroom to help her, I saw her face she was so pale and she had convulsions, and she fainted. I was very scared and I started yelling for my husband to help me. He got down the stairs and ran into the restroom. He helped me pick her up and take her to the couch. My husband called the doctor because I couldn’t even talk. He told him what happened. He told my husband it was caused by the anesthesia she still had in her system and if it kept happening we should take her to the emergency room. He told my husband to make sure she wasn’t walking around. This day was the scariest day of my life.
A Terrifying Ticket
Young Jeon, Korea, Grammar & Writing III
One time on my way to Kingwood College, I received two tickets from a policeman. They were tickets for speeding and not having an insurance card. I was given the tickets while I was driving over a bridge near the college. Generally most cars cross the bridge speeding at 50 to 60 miles. After the bridge, the cars slow down. As soon as I crossed the bridge a police car followed my car with its siren on. I was very, very nervous, and my heart throbbed with fear because at that time I had lived in America only for three months, so I didn’t know about the US laws and I couldn’t speak English. I stopped my car and I gave him my ID card. He wanted to see my insurance card, but I didn’t know what it was. Finally, on that autumn day, I received two tickets. After this I couldn’t drive my car.

El Duende
Gizelle Riss, Bolivia, Grammar & Writing III
I was more or less 7 or 8 years old when I got really scared. In my county a legend of “El Duende” exists. This person is very short with a big hat, so you can’t see his face. He takes the children and attracts them with candies, but he can appear like someone else. Kids follow him because they think that it’s another person. My cousin saw him appear as me, and she said that I called her with candies. She was going with him until he appeared and everybody saw me, but my cousin was following El Duende. My aunt came and took her, and she told us what happened, so I felt really scared at that time and I was always with my mother wherever she was going.

Believe in Ghosts
Kayo Ogita, Japan, Grammar & Writing III
When I was 17 years old, I went to my friend’s house with my friends at midnight in the summer. We were watching a Japanese scary movie in the living room. Then I wanted to go to the restroom. I had to pass through the front door. I felt scared because the movie was very scary. After the restroom, I came back to the living room while they were watching the scary movie. Then I looked at the front door. A Japanese front door has one step everywhere. I saw a child and a woman who were sitting down on the step. I thought they were my friend’s family, but I didn’t greet them. Then I started watching the movie again. The movie was too scary for me. The movie’s title is The Ring. I realized after the movie that my friend didn’t have a younger sister or brother. And I saw the people about 3am. I thought, ‘Why were they sitting on the step at that time?’ I asked my friend, “Who was sitting there?” But my friends said, “What did you say? What are you talking about? Oh, you just want us to be scared!” But I thought they wanted me to be scared. So the people did not exist. I didn’t believe in ghosts, but now I believe it.

My First Auto Accident
Jenny Castro, Colombia, Grammar & Writing III
It was a cold night in North Carolina when I traveled with my husband in his truck toward Atlanta. I remember that we were on the freeway. My husband was driving, and he signaled in time to change lanes when a small gray car appeared with rapid speed and collided with us. After that, we heard a thunderous sound, like it was demolishing something, and the truck started bouncing, but my husband controlled the situation. I screamed at him, “You killed them!” I was nervous. Next, we watched as the traffic went around us, and there was the car near the ramp that separated the freeway, and our truck was hit in the front. Later, a police officer appeared and he checked everything. He took notes and gave a ticket to the other person. It was a scary moment for me, but thank God nobody was hurt.

Snake
Behnam Janami, Iran, Grammar & Writing III
When I was 14 years old I went to my dad’s farm with my family, cousins, uncles, and aunts. We ate lunch and talked a bit, and when everyone was done my cousins and I started to play soccer. When we were in the middle of the game we saw a cobra. My female cousins started to scream, and my male cousins and I just stared at it. After a few seconds, the snake started to hiss at us. We were so scared that we didn’t even run. We just stayed in our spot. I yelled for my dad to come and hit the snake. When my dad finally came and saved our lives he told us not to be scared, but I told him that this snake was a cobra.

Scary Story
Antonio Ajucum, Mexico, Grammar & Writing III
My scary time was in my country five years ago. It was during my favorite game, which is soccer. One day I was playing in middle school. It was the championship game to see who would come to the USA to play different teams. My sister was watching the game in the arena. My friend didn’t see her, and he kicked the ball directly into my sister’s face. She went to my house, and my mother told me I couldn’t play tomorrow. I said, “It wasn’t my fault.” She said, “This is my last word.”

A Time When I Was Scared
Etsuko Lee, Japan, Grammar & Writing III
My husband and I were living in Hawaii between 1987 and 1991, when my daughter was born. It was 1991, and my daughter was just three and a half months old when my husband was sent to Japan for a year. I was scared because this was my first time living in the United States. I had just had a baby. I had Japanese American relatives, but they didn’t speak Japanese; I think that time was October, and I didn’t know about Halloween. When I watched TV, most channels had scary movies. That made me more scared. After one day, I never turned on the TV until my husband came home from Japan.

One of My Desperate Moments
Maricela Pesina, Mexico, Grammar & Writing III
The scariest moment that I have had was last year after Hurricane Rita came on the day when my family and I returned home. We got home around 6pm and the electricity was off, and my dad and I went to get a generator and gas, but the gas station had too many people, so we took a long time. My mom and my little sister were alone at home so finally we got out of the gas station. We got to one street where I could see my house, and I saw a lot of smoke. I told my dad, “Look, there is a lot of smoke down there.” My dad said, “Go that way so we can see what was happening.” We found that it was in the back of my house, so we got there and there was a home on fire behind my home. It almost got to my house. My dad told me to take the cars out because the fire was coming to my house. Those cars were going to explode, but it was so dark that we could not find the kids. Finally the firemen got there and nothing happened. At my house it was really scary because you could not see anything. I was really scared.
Destiny

Erika Vizzcarra, Mexico, Grammar & Writing III

One day I was in my friend's house. I was in her house because we needed to do homework together. When we finished the homework, we started to talk about some stories. She was talking about a little girl that her sister saw every night. At that moment it started to rain. She said that the girl was beautiful, with blue eyes and dark hair. Also, she wore a white dress. The girl scared her sister every night by running around the house laughing and saying, "Go from my house." My friend's sister always told her mom, but her mom didn't believe her.

After my friend finished telling me that scary story, I was afraid, but that was not all; suddenly, two minutes later the light turned off, and we listened to a sweet voice saying, "Go from my house." We screamed and began to cry. We ran outside and one minute later the light went back on and her mom came out too. Her mom brought me back to my house. Now, they are living in another house, but they can't sell the house because nobody wants to buy it.

Francisco Gomez, Mexico, Grammar & Writing II

This story takes place in Africa. Bob was a young man who raised horses. His favorite was Bess. One time during the summer Bob and Bess went to a fortune teller. The fortune teller said, "Your horse will be the cause of your death". Bob was scared. A farmer from across the country asked if he could borrow Bess and Bob said yes. Then, two months later, Bob went to see Bess, but the farmer said she had died. Bob got happy and said, "Can I see her bones". He saw that a snake had built a nest in her bones. Suddenly the snake bit him on the neck and Bob died.

Tropical Storm Allison

Thelma Cummock, Peru, Grammar & Writing III

In 2004 my children were camping for a week somewhere in the forest in the north of Texas, around Double Lake. That day, I was supposed to pick them up; I left about 5 pm, I drove about one and a half hours, and I passed a small bridge. There was a lake encompassing the bridge. The road was just dirt and forest everywhere. I found my boys. By that time, it was raining hard. I tried to go back on the same road. To my surprise, the bridge was covered with water. I decided not to cross; I was afraid, and I went on a different road. At the same time, I was stuck in the mud. There was a truck going in the same direction, and he pulled my car. I continued driving for half an hour more. When I stopped at the gas station and asked for directions, he said to continue on the road for fifteen minutes and I would be on I-45. The cars were stuck for an hour, and I decided to go on the feeder road; it was worse. Everyone was stuck there, and the water was getting higher and higher. I didn't know what to do. There were cars in front of me and behind me. My car died there, and the water was continuing to rise. People started to abandon their cars. My children were wet, cold, and crying because the water was rising. The water rose up to inside the car. I remember looking out the window. The water was at the same level as the window; I was so scared of opening the door because the water would come inside fast, and I thought there would be many snakes in the water. At the same time, if I didn't do anything, I would drown inside the car. I opened the door, and of course, the water went inside quickly, and I pulled each boy and held their hands. We were walking on through the road, and I found a shopping center. There were a lot of people in the same situation. In the shopping center there was a fight between three men. The fight was because one man bumped the car of the other men. The two men started to beat up the other man, and he started to run around the people. He finally ran behind me and a couple other families so they couldn't do anything to him. One of the guys had a gun. It was so scary. I pulled my children to me and I hid behind the bushes. Then it started raining hard with wind and thunder. Lightning struck one of the cables and the pole fell to the road. Sparks flew everywhere; this whole time the sky was pitch black with hardly any light. Later a policeman and fire truck came. With a microphone, the policeman said, "Don't move." The ground was too dangerous to walk on. Later we were rescued and taken to a shelter. My husband was watching on the TV, and there was nothing he could do because all the roads were flooded and closed. We couldn't communicate at all. We were waiting there until the water receded. Then, I was able to call my husband who came and brought us home. This experience was the scariest experience I have ever had in my life. I was more concerned about my kids than anything else. I also learned never to go to the feeder roads. They are more dangerous because they are lower than the highways. ***
Creating A Future For My Children
Blanca Lozano, Mexico, Grammar & Writing I

I need to learn English because I want to be able to speak in English with my family and with everyone else in my neighborhood.

I Have A Dream!
Ishibe Azuma, Japan, Grammar & Writing I

I need to learn English because I want to be able to speak in English to many people.

Speaking in English
Blanca Lozano, Mexico, Grammar & Writing I

I am taking ESL classes because I need to learn how to communicate with my family and with everyone else in my neighborhood.

Perfect English!
Sydia Flor, Ecuador, Grammar & Writing II

I came from Ecuador one month ago. I’m staying at my sister’s house. I decided to take ESL classes at Kingwood College because I had studied English in my country for four months. In general, I learned many grammar rules. At the beginning I felt a little upset because I didn’t understand my teacher, but now I feel better. I still don’t understand English completely, but everyday I’m trying to achieve it. My goal now is to learn English like my own language.

Why Studying English
Azuma Ishibe, Japan, Reading & Vocabulary III

I am studying English in America now. I am separate from my family. I am not living alone, but with a family in Humble. I have many friends and my host family is very good to me, and another friend makes delicious meals. I have met two wonderful people who have become my friends. They are playing an important role in my life. They are bass anglers. I also have the same dream as them. It is to be a Bassmaster Classic Champion. This is the reason that I am studying English.

Communicating in English
Ligia Rave, Colombia, Grammar & Writing II

I’m taking ESL classes because I realized that if I live in this country, I have to learn the language that they use here in the United States. I need it to communicate better with the people around my kids, my husband and me. I have to understand what people tell me. They must also understand what I am saying. Two of my kids were born here and they are being raised in Texas so I want to communicate with their teachers. I would like to finish my realtor courses in English.

A Great ESL Program
Roberto Covarrubias, Chili, Grammar & Writing II

Kingwood College is an institution offering different options for foreign students. At this college I can find people from different countries. The first option for everybody is to learn English to communicate more effectively with our families, in our job, and with different people. We need to go to ESL classes and complete different levels. The ESL teacher can teach and explain to the students many times to help students understand speaking, reading, and writing.

Studying ESL at Kingwood College

Miriam Cruz, El Salvador, Listening & Speaking II

My name is Miriam Cruz. I am from El Salvador. I came to the US 10 years ago with my husband. My daughter lives in El Salvador. I want to learn English for my citizenship interview. I think that Kingwood College has a good ESL program. Also, I want to learn English for my future to communicate with my friends, and for my job.

Never Too Late!
Jorge Chacon, Mexico, Reading & Vocabulary III

When I left college many years ago in Santa Monica, California, I always knew that I would someday return to college and finish my goal. At that time I could not complete enough classes because I got married and had other responsibilities. Little by little I’ve been finding ways to improve my English without taking classes. This was not the right way because I needed a teacher to help me with grammar rules, pronunciation, and listening. I believe in what my parents have always taught me, “It’s never too late to learn something new if you really want to learn it. Always think that tomorrow will be better than today.”

My main goal is to complete my degree as a dental hygienist in Texas. I promised to my family, especially my youngest son, that I would do this. My youngest son wants to become a dentist, DDS, which is a Doctor of Dental Surgery. My plan is to start my own clinic by the time my son graduates to fulfill his dream.

Citizenship
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My biggest challenge is still studying English, especially when it comes to settling down for my everyday life. Without my husband’s help, I have rented a house, bought a car, got my driver’s license, and even started working at school. Kayo helps me with the daily chores, but she will start working at school in February. Apart from my duty as a mother of three, I need a lot of time for my homework. But I am doing the best I can. Maybe, I won’t learn as fast as my kids, but I am leaning little by little. I enrolled my son in the Blue Tide Aquatic swimming team and he will play baseball as well since he has played in Japan for four years. I will also start my daughter with her ballet lessons this month. I am proud of my children. Because I wanted them to learn English while they are young that we relocated here from Japan. Life is not easy in a foreign country, but we are adjusting to it.

Last but not least, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Ursula who is always there for me when I need help, cafeteria staff, my teachers, Julie and Mihaela. They taught me not only about English but also about this country and life. We have become good friends, I would also like to thank my classmates Bobby, Ishi, Sandy, Nicole and Mona for helping me with moving. You have made me feel like home here with your friendship. Thank you.

Perfect English!
Lu Shu Yen, Taiwan, Grammar & Writing III

“I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands one nation under God, indivisible for liberty and justice...” My daughter Chizu, a fifth grader, says this proudly every morning in her school after being in the states for only six months. My son, Hiro, a seventh grader can now do his homework without his English tutor. My oldest daughter Kayo just got here a few months ago and is now attending her ESL courses side by side with me.

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myself want to learn perfect English and need this for my admission to college. When I go to my English class I listen to a lot of languages. For example, my teacher doesn’t speak Spanish, but she always says buenas tardes. Come to Kingwood College and you can experience a lot of different cultures in one class.

**Thank You, Kingwood College**

**Bertha Perez Juarez, Mexico, Grammar & Writing II**

There are many reasons why I’m taking ESL classes. The first reason is to continue learning. I like to learn. I speak other languages: Italian, French, and my native language Spanish. The second reason is to get a master’s degree in either cosmetology or graphic design. I studied graphic design in Italy and I enjoyed it very much. The third and final reason is that I’m setting a good example for my family. They like that I am learning and going to college. Every time that I have a quiz, they ask me about my grades. I know they are very proud of me and that makes me feel very good and excited about what I am doing with my life. Every time that I study, I meet people from other countries. This is good because I like people. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to attend your college.

**A Chance to Communicate with Others**

**Najwa Abdallah, Lebanon, Grammar & Writing II**

Six years ago, I left my country to come to Houston to start a new life. At the beginning, it was very hard for me because everything was different. The country, the land, the language were different. After a year, everything got better, especially when I tried to learn English so that I could speak to everybody and do many things. I couldn’t do it before because I didn’t know the language. Now I feel different. I have a lot of friends who I have a good relationship with. I like the Houston lifestyle and the areas next to the city. You can find everything you need like good hospitals, universities, and many other nice places. You have everything you need to live well. Houston is a big and beautiful city where you can find a mix of cultures. There are people from different countries that came to Houston to work or live a better life. We are here to improve our lives. There are many places and jobs where you can meet nice friendly American people. My life in Houston is good and beautiful. I would like to learn more English so that I can be closer to the people born in this country.

**It Is Never Too Late To Go To College**

**Jorge Soto, Mexico, Listening & Speaking II**

Some people will tell you that it is too late to go back to college. I grew up in a big family. There were eleven kids, so our parent couldn’t afford to send us to college. When I was twelve years old, I left home, moved to Mexico City and started working.

I couldn’t afford to pay tuition; therefore, I worked for four years to save money to pay tuition. Then, I told my brother that I wanted to go back to college, and I asked him for help to pay my expenses. But he told me “You are already four years behind. I don’t think you can make it through.”

Then, I came to the United States to look for better opportunities. I started to work in a construction company as a laborer. I was pleased that I was earning more money, so I thought that it would be a good time to go back to college and take ESL classes. I asked my co-workers who were all Hispanic, “Where is a Community College to take ESL classes?” They told me that I couldn’t take classes if I was not a legal resident. I remember an eighteen-year-old boy told me, “We don’t need to study to work as a laborer and anyway, you are too old to continue college.” I said, “I don’t think so!”

I have been in the United States for eight years and I have noticed that a lot of our Hispanic people including me, never attended our community college to enroll for classes. Recently, I decided to go back to college, and I’m happy that I did! I want to encourage everybody to go back to college. It doesn’t matter how many years you have missed, or what age you are. It is NEVER too late to go back to college!

**A Better Job in the Future**

**Arnoldo Yoc, Guatemala, Grammar & Writing I**

I came to the US three years ago with my sister and brother. We live here with our aunt. Our parents are in Guatemala. My father was in the army in my country for 18 years. He is a hero in my country. I am the youngest one in my family. I decided to come to college because I needed to speak English with my friends. Now I have a part-time job. I want to learn English to have a better job in the future. The ESL classes at the Kingwood College are very nice. All my classmates are very interested in learning the language.

**Communicating in English**

**Nohemi Castillo, Mexico, Grammar & Writing I**

I am taking ESL classes because I need to learn English and to be able to communicate with other people and interact in this country. Mainly, I want to have a good professional future and to give a good education to my future children. I am very happy with my class. I have learned a lot in these four weeks with the help of my family and especially with the patience and motivation of my grammar teacher, Mihaela Stir.

**Helping My Children**

**Nubia Herrera, Mexico, Grammar & Writing II**

I need to learn English because is the way people communicate with each other in this country. I lived in Mexico all my life, and my native language is Spanish. I need to continue my education and get a degree. I’m going to graduate in business administration in the future. Another reason for me to learn English is because I have two children, a little boy whose name is Antonio, and a daughter, Angela. They’re going to school, and they will need my help with their homework. Learning English is very important for me to be successful in life.

**Collaborative Work vs. Working Alone**

**Tai Ma, Vietnam, Reading & Vocabulary VI**

There are so many things we cannot finish by ourselves without help from other people. A country can become stronger when leaders bring the people together to lead their country. A family can be happy when all members love and take care of the other people. That is why collaboration and communication are the ways to help us to be successful in life.

I am taking one ESL class and some other college courses. In the computer class, I have to have a report and presentation before having the final test. In my report, I need to work with two or three American friends. That intimidates me because I am bad at English and no one will choose me to be their team-mate! That is a disadvantage when working together. However, collaboration can help us finish our
project or report more easily. When every member in the group tries to collect information, we can combine this information together. Our project will be more wonderful and plentiful. Besides collaboration, we can work alone to finish our project; however, it also has a mixed blessing. We can do and finish whenever we want before the due date. We do not need to discuss the project with other people. We make a decision by ourselves, and then we can do our work. However, our project can take us a long time and it may have less information than the projects that we work on with others. In addition, we may not have good ideas from other people. So we may have some mistakes, but we cannot realize them. Everybody has their own characteristics and personality. Each person knows how to work or choose their best ways to help themselves to be successful in their jobs. For me, if I have a choice, I will choose to work alone.

**English is the Key to Success**

*Sivakorn Kornkasem, Thailand, Reading & Vocabulary V*

One situation in my life in which I was tempted to give up but kept trying was studying ESL. Sometimes it is difficult for me to do something that I don't really like. I came to the United State of America because I would like to conquer myself. Actually, I don't really like English, but now I think the English language is important. There are three major reasons that contribute to this statement. To begin with, English is a worldwide language. Many people need to study English. For instance, I had a boss who was Irish. I needed to communicate with him in English. Second, most of the great books and high technology are produced in the United States of America or produced in other countries, but are in English. If I want to find a book to study, I need to understand English. The third reason is that the world population is likely to increase every year. Many types of businesses have to do work worldwide. If I want to do business, I need to know as much English as I can.

**Difficult Decisions**

*Jose Luis Larrea, Ecuador, Grammar & Writing VI*

Sometimes you have to make decisions in your life, decisions that may not seem quite logical to your friends, especially if their success is focused on the professional level. However, you cannot not reach success only in your professional life; you also need to reach success in your personal life, and that is the reason I am here. I quit my job, in a good career, to come to the States to improve my English. I am sure that I made the right decision because I am discovering myself, discovering things that I didn't know. My culture is focused on professional success, and when you are flexible and do not care about the money but only about yourself, society might look at you as an unsuccessful person. Society is wrong! I have goals that go beyond the professional, goals like improving my English. In my country you need more than one language to be competitive, and I am becoming competitive!

**You Can Do It!**

*Zarghona Jahan, Afghanistan, Reading & Vocabulary III*

My name is Zarghona and I am from Afghanistan. It has been 13 years since I moved to the United States. I moved to Houston in 1997. I am married and have 4 children. During my first year in the United States I made a lot of mistakes during conversations with people and I was embarrassed to speak English. I started ESL classes at Kingwood College to improve my English. I could not read or write in English, but now my English has gotten a lot better. I am very happy that I have gotten the opportunity to study English at this college. I never felt like an outsider. There is always a warm welcome to all students. I love the way the ESL program is taught. The teachers encourage their students in very exciting ways. My advice to ESL students is to listen carefully and follow directions. Try not to miss classes and be on time. You will see success in your learning.

**My Listening Was Terrible When I First Came Here**

*Betsy Barker, Peru, Reading & Vocabulary III*

You may laugh when you first read this! The first time I came to Houston I felt embarrassed about my listening because I did not practice conversation in English in my country. My speaking was pretty good, but my listening was terrible. For example, I tried to watch television programs, but I did not understand everything that they said. Also, when I listened to the radio stations, I tried to understand everything that they said, but that was terrible because the commentators spoke very fast. After a while I was very frustrated. I said to myself, “Where is the English that I studied in my country?” Oh God, I was so frustrated. My grammar and reading were pretty good, but I felt like I could not talk to American people. Furthermore, when my husband called me on the phone and I answered, I could not understand him very well and the only thing that I could say was “Oh, yes” to everything. Strangers would call and I did not know what they wanted at that very moment, because they talked too fast. Later I found out that they were telemarketers and talked fast because that was their job.

Studying English in the United States has helped me improve my English because there are students that speak many different languages instead of Spanish. I have improved my listening by talking to my husband every day. Likewise, living here is helping my listening because everything is in English. In conclusion, this problem about my listening made me feel embarrassed by that time; however, each time I remember this, it makes me laugh so much because that was a wonderful and funny experience for me, and also because my listening is so much better now.

**A Letter to Esmeralda**

*Rosalinda Munoz, Mexico, Reading & Vocabulary III*

Dear Esmeralda,

How are you doing? I hope you have been doing fine. I’m doing just fine at this moment. The weather over here is kind of cold in the morning, but in the afternoons, the sun comes out and the weather is warmer. I like it better in the afternoons. Well, I’ve been working in the hospital as a nurse’s aide. I decided to go back to school to get license to practice as a registered nurse. It is hard to work full time and go back to school, but I know it will pay off in the end. It was nice writing to you and I hope you write back soon. Take care and I love you.
How to Improve Your English
Linh Nguyen, Vietnam, Reading & Vocabulary III

In my opinion, learning English is a very big step for a newcomer who comes from another country to live in the United States. You have to adapt to a new culture, new lifestyle and a new way of communicating. How can you overcome these challenges well? The answer is learn English. Unfortunately, English is not an easy language to learn. If you have difficulties in learning and studying, you should be patient because you cannot learn English in just a short period of time. There are many useful ways for you to study English. You can take ESL classes at school. This is the best way for you to improve your English skills. On the other hand, if you don't have a chance to go to school now, you can look for a job where you have the opportunity to practice English with other Americans. Moreover, watching television or listening to the radio in English will help you to communicate with people around you. Speaking English in any situation is a good way to test your English. Also, read, and read everything you can – books, newspapers, magazines, and stories – whenever you have a chance. If you don't understand some words or even a whole sentence in reading, you can write it down and ask someone to explain it to you. Similarly, in conversation with other people, you can also ask them to repeat the sentences that you don't understand or that seem unclear. Hopefully the ideas mentioned above will help you to understand English better so you will be more successful.

Riddles

Who Am I?
I am a world traveler. I speak Spanish. I am short and have straight hair. I enjoy gardening, sewing, and woodworking. I love to bake and make new dishes from all over the globe. Can you guess yet? I also speak Turkish. In fact, I lived in Turkey for a year as a university student. I spent my other university years in San Diego, California roller-blading along the harbor and dancing salsa. I learned that while living in the Dominican Republic as a high school student. I have visited 13 countries in all, but am just getting started. I grew up along the Lost Coast in the redwoods in a very large family. My four brothers, four sisters, and I could almost make our own soccer team, a sport I enjoy playing very much. I have a very unique name, which doesn't fit my appearance, but compliments my personality. I am the mother to adorable little Adnan and a wife of four years. Any guesses? One more hint, I am a teacher. Who am I?

Pedro Morales, Mexico, Grammar & Writing II

1. Everybody happens through me and I do not happen through anybody. All ask for me and I do not ask for anybody.
2. I'm round like cheese, and on women I penetrate to the bone.
3. In the hands of ladies sometimes I am prim and other times timid.
4. I have 4 legs but cannot walk. I also have a head and cannot speak.
5. What thing has not been and must be, and when it is will not be?

(Answers on Page 15)
Perseverance Does Win!
*María Isabel Jordan, Mexico, Reading & Vocabulary V*

When I ponder my decision to come to the United States, I remember the many hardships I had to persevere. I was born in Mexico City in 1965 into a conventional family and began a normal life. I wanted to venture outside the turmoil of the city to provide a better life for my children, so I decided to come to Texas, but the difficulties of relocation were a strong deterrent. My desire to change began to escalate until one day I made a comprehensive decision to take action. The hardest part was leaving my children with my mother for a few months. I left Mexico and came here by myself and started a new life.

I was demoralized many times by the obstacles I encountered. One of the problems was the language. I couldn’t speak English and had to find a job. It wasn’t easy. I persevered and today I am living in Texas after raising my children in the United States. In a few months, I will become a citizen. The implications of my decision many years ago are amazing. The lives my children have compared with the lives of the people who stayed behind are astonishing. Nothing came easy, but the rewards were well worth the struggle. I have more now than I ever anticipated. Yes, perseverance does win.

My First Traffic Tickets
*Jean Young, Korea, Reading & Vocabulary III*

Three months after I arrived in the United States, on my way to Kingwood College, I received two tickets from a policeman because I was speeding and I didn’t have an insurance card. I left my house, and after 5 minutes, I passed over the bridge. Generally, most cars pass over the bridge going about 50 or 60 miles per hour. After the bridge, the cars usually slow down. As in the past, I drove my car over the bridge. As soon as I crossed over the bridge, I could see the policeman on the other side. The police car followed me with its siren on. I was very nervous and my heart was pounding with fear. I had lived in the United States for 3 months and didn’t know how to speak English. I stopped my car and gave him my ID. He wanted to see my insurance card, but I didn’t know anything about it. Finally, on this beautiful autumn day, I found out that I could not drive my car.

Immigration
*Ernesto Baquedano, Honduras, Grammar & Writing II*

This is a story from my friend named Dang Ho. He is from Vietnam. He came to the USA from the Philippines in 1995 after he escaped from the Vietnam government by boat. He told me that his boat was about the same size as an 18-wheeler truck, and was 5 feet wide. The boat carried 145 people. Six people died after they escaped from Vietnam. They ran out of gas, water, food, and lost control of the boat because of a big storm. Some people died because they were sea sick. Some people died because of hunger. Finally he came to the Philippines after 30 days on the sea. Two years later he came to the USA with no money, no English, no friends, no relatives, and no family. It was hard for him when he moved here, but he had to be strong and do the best to look for a new future. Now he has a nice family. He lives in Houston. He has a new home. He owns 3 cars and also speaks good English. This story is true and he is now very happy in America with his family and friends. This story makes me learn one thing from him. Try to do my best and work hard.

Living in the United States

Living in Houston
*Elena Morante, Peru, Grammar & Writing II*

I have lived in the Atascocita area of Houston for one year. My neighborhood is quiet and beautiful. I like it very much because it has a lot of trees and gardens. The Timberwood Middle School is in front of my house. In the corner, there is a gas station and next to it, there is a Community Learning Center. The Community Center is an institution that supports and helps people. I like the summers in Houston, but the winters are too cold and humid. I think I can get used to living in Houston. I have very nice classmates and friends. I like that because it makes me feel happy.

Job Opportunities in the US
*Enrique Martinez, Mexico, Reading & Vocabulary III*

Living in the US gives me more advantages because there are more opportunities for me to grow here than in other countries. The US has many new developments in work as well as living situations. Now that there are more skilled workers and greater numbers of jobs for people, the employment situation is better. My friend in Mexico is capable of working here in the US, but he is not working here because he needs more schooling. There are not many serious opportunities for him in this country at this moment. When he is accepted to a school he will be able to get his degree and secure the job he wants. He will get a better pay, which will result in a better lifestyle.

Realistic or Fantastic
*Kayo Ogita, Japan, Reading & Vocabulary III*

I am going to describe my future when I am 35 years old. Hopefully I will be married to an American born man and have a few children in the United States. Once I had a dream about my future. I wanted to get married to a rich American man, but I had to go back to Japan. If I have to go back to Japan again, I will look for a wealthy American man to marry.

By the way, if I were 10 years old, I would like to be a famous DJ or MC in Japan. Japan has the best DJ in the world. His name is DJ Kentaro. He is still 22 or 23 years old. I wanted to be friends with him. I hoped that we could play music together, start a business, and make a lot of money. It is very difficult to change dreams like this into reality, so eventually, I hope for happiness and peace are in my life.

“Sentimientos Encontrados”
(Conflicting Feelings)
*Sophia Villafuerte, Ecuador, Grammar & Writing I*

The fresh flowers that we can see and buy every day are produced in different countries of the world like Colombia, Ecuador, Holland and Spain. Ecuador, situated in South America, is the place where the best roses of the world are found. There are many companies that work in the field of growing and exporting roses. A woman used to work for one of these companies for 10 years, managing the production, growing, and delivering roses. She was an agronomic engineer. She loved her profession. She wanted to protect the nature by maintaining the environment, which is the only legacy for the future generations.

In order to make her dream come true, she made a big decision. The most important was to leave her country, family, friends, and job so as to be able to study English as a second language and get a Master's degree in Environmental Science. Things were not easy for her. In her heart and mind there were several contrasting feelings called...
“sentimientos encontrados”. On one hand, she finds herself in a financial struggle and a sentimental sacrifice, and feels frustrated for not being able to communicate with other people due to the language barrier. She is now part of a different culture. On the other hand, she feels secure because she thinks that her Master’s degree will open the doors of the future, helping her to accomplish her dream. Right now she knows that the most important thing is to work hard to make sure that roses sold in this country are still as beautiful as they are now, and that in the process of production, exportation, and delivery, no channels of nature will be broken, since they are unique and can not be substituted.

That woman is me — Sophia Villafuerte, an international student in the ESL program at Kingwood College.

MD Anderson Medical Center
Aida Green, Mexico, Reading & Vocabulary VI

Seven years ago I was taking a bath in my apartment in Mexico when suddenly I felt something was not right; I noticed a little bump on my right breast, and I started wondering what was wrong. Later I decided to come to the US for treatment. Illness, quality of life and insurance are some of the factors that obligate people to come to the medical area in Houston, TX. Many of these people are Americans living in the U.S. while many others are coming from outside the country: Mexico, Venezuela, Iran, Japan, Canada, Spain, Portugal. I will even say from all over the world. People are in need of better medical services, and Houston has one of the biggest medical centers in the world, and of course, one of the best.

When people get sick from a unknown disease, sometimes it is very difficult to find a cure in their own cities or even in their own countries. Some people have the opportunity to travel and consider Houston as an option to find the cure for their illnesses. Cancer is one of the main illnesses that bring people to Houston; while there is not a cure for it, there are many options to take control over this disease, and that’s what people need: options.

A person who suffers from a high level of pain has a disadvantage over healthy people. How can a person with pain do exercises, attend school, go to work, take care of their children, or even read a magazine or watch television? Those very minimal activities can turn into a challenge when a person is in pain. Believe it or not, in other countries, pain is not the primary worry of the doctors, and that can be one of the factors why people come to Houston. Once the pain is under control, the person and the doctor can search for the next step to take and that makes a big difference to a sick person.

The high cost of medical services in the U.S. requires the support of good medical insurance, and for people from other countries that could be one of the major obstacles. Once the parents or relatives of the child find their way to the hospital or emergency room, they find that everything looks impossible without medical insurance. It must be like cold ice in their hopes, but the medical area in Houston has a program for foreign children with diseases like cancer. This program is based on medical insurance that covers the medical care, the hospital room, parking, food for the children and their parents inside the hospital. Once the families are inside the program, the hospital hands out a series of information about hotels, shelters, events, transportation and even about families who desire to help and be part of the program. A big supporter of this program is the Ronald McDonald’s House; inside this house families can find a room for the family, kitchens, laundry room, free food, transportation, information and even game rooms for the little ones. Those are just some of the advantages of being in the Medical Center here in Houston, TX.

Needless to say, I have been part of the medical area for five years. I am a patient of the M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, and I know very well what they can do for me, and they are doing very well. I have a healthy five year-old girl, and I can take care of her without help. I can attend school, and I have been working these years planting flowers in my backyard, and as a result we have a very nice garden. Those are just some of the miracles I have experienced with them. For Information or New Patient Appointments call: 1-800-392-1611 or 713-792-6161 www.mdanderson.org

I Like Kingwood
Marisol Balderama, Mexico, Grammar & Writing II

I like Kingwood for several reasons. To begin with, there are a lot of trees. Kingwood is also a very quiet area. Finally there is no traffic.

How I Met My Husband
Silvia Aguilar, Mexico, Listening & Speaking II

My name is Silvia Aguilar. I have lived in Houston for thirteen years. I work for Cicis Pizza. I met my husband at Cicis and it’s crazy but I’m still working at the same place. I’m so happy. February 8th is my anniversary: twelve years with my love. ***

Poetry

That Name
Brenda Jerez, Guatemala, Grammar & Writing II

There is a name that is so precious
A name so wonderful to me
Because of him, I am made free
That name is Jesus, Ohhh! How I love him
The one who gave his life for me
Because of love so unconditional
I will have life eternally
His name speaks peace into my storm cloud
His name speaks calm unto my fears
And when I fear that no one loves me
His loving presence is so dear
That name of Jesus, oh how I love him!
Someday I will leave this earthly dwelling
Through time and space my soul will soar
An finally see the face of Jesus
And praise his name forever more.

I Love Cats
Margarita Flores, Puerto Rico, Grammar & Writing II

Once I had a cat named Chelsea, which was with me for many years. She passed away two years ago and my world felt empty. The pain was intense and I thought I could never replace my Chelsea, but to my surprise, God gave me two new joys. Now I have one fat cat named Rico Suave and one spoiled cat named Princess. I now have twice the pleasure and this reminds me of a lesson my grandmother taught me that,” “Time will heal all wounds”. In my case it has. I know that I really love cats.
My Country and Culture

Lunar New Year
Kim P. Nguyen-Wong, Vietnam, Reading & Vocabulary III

When I first moved to the United States, I would get very melancholy when the holiday season was approaching because it would make me homesick. Starting in October, Americans have Halloween, then Thanksgiving in November, Christmas in December, and New Year’s after that.

The Lunar New Year is the biggest celebration for the Vietnamese. People in Vietnam call it “TET”. We treasure this day deeply. From generation to generation we celebrate our customs. First, people start to plant flowers in October in order to make them bloom on New Year’s Day. We also have a special tree called “Mai Tree”. It has yellow petals, red stamens, and a very fresh scent. This flower blooms only for the New Year. It looks similar to an American peach tree. People always pick the Mai’s leaves off on the 15th of November on the Lunar calendar to make them bloom on New Year’s Day. In every house, people like to have few branches to arrange in a vase. A few days before the New Year, people start to clean up their whole house, repaint the walls and windows to make the house look new. The day before the New Year’s Eve, people begin to make “Banh Chung” and “Banh Tet”. This is made by wrapping banana leaves with rice sticks, then filling it with mung bean and meat and in the center. Another special dish that we make is the preserved vegetables and fruits such as tomatoes, green beans, ginger, winter melon, lettuce seed, carrots, yams, plums, strawberries, coconut, persimmon, tamarind, sour soup, etc. On New Year’s Day, relatives, friends, and neighbors visited each other, and people would welcome guests with the preserved fruits and vegetables and drink some tea. It is very delicious. We are very excited about welcoming the New Year, especially the kids, because they could not wait to put on their new clothes and get the “red envelope”.

In my family, I remember, early in the morning, on the first day of the New Year, everyone would put on their new clothes and form a line from oldest to youngest. My oldest brother represented all of us and wished my parents a prosperous New Year. Likewise, my parents wished us the same, and then gave us a red envelope. I miss that moment because I remember how happy I was. Now, every year when the lunar New Year comes around, which is usually sometime in February, I have emotional memories about this celebration. Normally, we should be celebrating and not working or going to school for approximately 10 days; however, in this country we follow the western calendar and work and go to school on the days when the celebration is occurring.

Love and Parents
Sandra Herrera, Columbia, Reading & Vocabulary III

Love towards parents is very important in my country. I remember and miss the time when I had meetings in my house with parents, friends, and family to play different instruments. We sang and ate delicious food that my mother made. I remember that they gave advice to us on things about life. They taught me to be a responsible, honest, and hard-working person. Being so far away from them has made me value everything that they have done for me. For this reason, I say to my cousins, friends, and my family, to stay close to your parents and love them. In this country, I don’t think that people value this very much. At 18, children leave their homes and make their lives in other places. Many parents are single and live alone. In my culture we hope to repay everything back to our parents that they have given us. Thank god that they are alive and I can say, “I love you” to them.

My family
Eugenia Vincent, Russia, Grammar Writing I

My country is Russia. The culture of my country is multinational. My family is small. My son is here in the United States with me. Back home I have a sister named Olga. She has a daughter named Baria. She is six years old. On September 1st she will be in the first Grade.

Colima City, Mexico
Maria del Carmen Portillo, Mexico, Listening & Speaking I

Colima City, in the Mexican Republic is one little city that has excellent weather. It is especially sunny and warm and a beach city. It also has a university, “Universidad de Colima,” which offers 114 professions from high school diplomas to degrees. This year Colima University has approximately 23,800 students. Colima is also famous for two volcanoes- fire and ice. Colima is a relaxing tourist city.

Amazonas Region
Luis Forero, Colombia, Grammar & Writing II

La Amazonia is the world’s largest natural region and river. The second largest river is there. It is 3,900 square miles. The superfi ce Amazonia is six million square kilometers. The countries in this area are Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Equador and Venezuela. The weather is equatorial. It is more humid and has a higher level of rain, one thousand to two thousand millimeters. This area is jungle, with many species of animals and native groups. Amazonia is called “The World’s Lung”. Amazonia cities include: Leticia-Colombia, Manaus-Brasil, Santa Cruz-Bolivia, Iquitos-Peru, Macas-Equador, and San Carlos de Rionegro.

Monterrey
Adriana Gonzalez, Mexico, Grammar & Writing II

Monterrey is a unique city. It is the third largest city in Mexico with 4 million people. It is a very modern city. Most of Mexico’s largest companies are based in Monterrey.

Monterrey means “Mountain King”. It is a city surrounded by mountains. The most famous is called the Saddle Mountain or “Cerro de la Silla”. It’s called this because the mountain has the form of a saddle. Monterrey is a city of contrasts. Because it is an industrial city, most of the visitors are business people. However, its diversity allows tourists to visit Monterrey’s natural surroundings like the waterfall called Horsetail, Cola de Caballo located 30 minutes south of Monterrey. It is a beautiful waterfall located on a natural path where visitors can rent horses to ride up to the waterfall. It is a perfect location for families and friends to picnic. Monterrey has hosted many international events like NASCAR races, music concerts, and entertainment events like Cirque de Solei. One of the things that people from Monterrey enjoy the most is soccer. Monterrey has two teams, Tigres (Tigers) and Rayados (Rayados Gang). In the last two years, both teams have made it to the playoffs and every other final. Rayados got second place in the National league last season. Like every city it has its shopping centers. It has a total of 13 shopping centers. They include international stores and national and traditional stores too.
Avelino Yoc: My Father’s History
Ovidio Yoc, Guatemala, Listening & Speaking II
In 1966, my father entered the armed forces in Guatemala when he was twenty-two years old. He became one of the greatest captains for many years. On various occasions, he almost lost his life fighting in the war that occurred during those years. At that time, Guatemala was going through difficult times. Then in 1970, my father became an instructor for sky diving and made almost one thousand jumps. This is why I admire my father Avelino Yoc.

Independencia de Mexico: Mexican Independence
Ruben Rodriguez, Mexico, Grammar & Writing IV
Every year on September 16, the country of Mexico celebrates its independence, which was won in 1810 from Spain. The celebration is held in the capital, Mexico City at the Zocalo Plaza. There are many events that take place, like a military parade and sporting games.

My Dear Grandmother and Her Recipe
Maria Juarez, Mexico, Reading & Vocabulary III
My grandmother Tere was the sweetest person that I have ever known in my life. She was my mom’s mother. My grandmother was so pretty, with white skin, curly hair, and two red-orange cheeks. With her, I learned to pray with the rosary every day. She also frequently told me stories about the Mexican Revolution, witches, and her husbands. She was married two times. The first time she was 20 years old, and had three children. But her husband died, and she became a widow too young. Then she got married again, and 7 years later, when she had a one-year-old, my mom, her second husband died, too. My grandmother was so poor. She lived alone without a husband to support herself and her family. She didn’t study and profession or trade, so she had to look for other ways to support her family. She only had a house and a big piece of land where she cultivated corn, beans, and around it, she planted a lot of magueyes. From magueyes, she got the pulque. Pulque is a drink, that if you drink too much of it, it makes you feel like alcohol. My grandmother preserved the pulque in big pots of mud. When the pulque was fermented, it made a lot of bubbles. I liked to play with the bubbles. Mom Tere sold pulque every day to the farmers so she could make money. Mom Tere worked very hard and she was always in a good mood. Although she died 20 years ago, I will never forget my grandmother. I love Mom Tere. She also cooked pozole to sell every morning for 33 years. Here is the recipe for pozole that my grandmother taught me.

Ingredients:
- 6 pounds of corn, boiled
- 2 Lbs. of chicken
- 2 onions
- 2 pieces of garlic
- 2 spoonfuls of chicken bouillon
- 5 avocados
- 2 chilies
- 4 lemons

Boil the corn, add onion, garlic, salt, and chicken bouillon to the water and boil for one hour. Next, add the chicken and boil for one more hour. Now serve the pozole in deep plate and add chili, onion, and chopped avocado. Also, add a little lemon juice and oregano.

Chinese New Year and Chinese Calendar
Xinping Zhang, China, Listening & Speaking II
January 29, 2006, is Chinese New Year. It is the first day of 2006 in the lunar calendar. Chinese use both solar and lunar calendars. Full moon day is 15th day of month in the lunar calendar. This is why every Chinese New Year is a different day in the solar calendar.

Also, the Chinese think an animal represents each year. For example, 2005 was the year of the rooster, 2006 is the year of the dog, and 2007 will be the year of the pig. There are 12 animal names representing 12 years. So, in this system, year names are re-cycled every 12 years. Sometimes when you ask a Chinese person, “How old are you?” (You can ask this question in China, it is not impolite. But don’t ask ladies), if he doesn’t like to answer this question, he may tell you that he was born in the year of the dog. You can count his age:
12, 24, 36, 48, 60, etc.

Below is each year of names:

Independence Day in El Salvador
Yionary Reynaga, El Salvador, Listening & Speaking II
Independence Day in El Salvador is a tradition. It is important to the Salvadorians because that is when El Salvador declared its independence from Spain in 1821. What people do on this fantastic day begins in the morning with fireworks and yelling at the top of their lungs. Later on, every kid in El Salvador gets out of school and they start to have a parade, which they call in Spanish “marcha”. In this parade they have food like pupusas, which is corn with cheese in a tortilla, beans, rice, and much more. They also do a type of Salvadorian dance. Women wear long dresses and do braids in their hair. Men wear Salvadorian clothes, with hats. This is what the Salvadorians do for the love of their country EL SALVADOR.

My Family
Wiselma Garcia, Puerto Rico, Grammar & Writing I
My name is Wiselma and I am 27 years old. I married ten years ago. I am a mom of two daughters. My older one – Richie - is ten years old and the younger one – Leeselma - is five. They are good girls. My husband is from Puerto Rico too. His name is Richie.

I work for a big company in the Injection Molding department. There are machines in that department that have to process different materials to make plastic billets for gasoline pump parts and other different things. I am a very good mom, wife, and responsible worker. I always help my family when they need me.
In the evening there are fireworks and live music. At midnight, the president of Mexico walks on the balcony of Los Pinos, the presidential house. The president addresses the country by shouting, Vivan los heroes de la independencia! Viva Mexico!, which means, Long live the heroes of independence! Long live Mexico! This tradition has been at the Zocalo Plaza for the last 196 years and will continue to be celebrated for the rest of the history of Mexico.

**Celebrations in Mexico**

*Nancy Vazquez, Mexico, Grammar & Writing IV*

Semana Santa: Holy Week is the most important week of the Christian religion.

Jueves Santo (Holy Thursday): Eucaristia: The Eucaristia begins on this day. Eucaristia is when Jesus told his apostles to eat bread and drink wine in commemoration of Him. The bread represents His body and the wine represents His blood. People celebrate by visiting seven churches because it means Jesus was taken to seven places for judgment. Inside the church, we make the representation showing when Jesus washed an apostle’s feet with oil. After that, Jesus had His Last Supper. Also, we remember Judas’ betrayal of Jesus. Judas was an apostle who turned Jesus over to the Romans.

Viernes Santo (Good Friday): On this day we remember the trail and crucifixion of Jesus. We relive the Via Crucis when Jesus wore a crown of thorns on His head and walked carrying a heavy wooden cross to the Monte del Calvario. The crucifixion is when the Romans put Jesus on the cross and hammered His hands and feet with nails and then stood the cross up. They kept Him on the cross until He died.

Sábado Santo (Holy Saturday): Saturday is the burial of Jesus and He ascended to Heaven.

Domingo de Resurrection (Easter Sunday): For Christians, this is the most important day of the entire year. It is a unique time of spiritual renewal, born of the hope promised by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. During this week, a lot of people try to be good people and better Christians.

**Tamalada**

*Ervin Calmo, Guatemala, Grammar & Writing IV*

In our family, there is nothing like Tamalada. In our tradition, there is nothing like the Tamalada to ring in the flavor of Christmas. Every year we revive the tradition in our family. It was my grandmother who kept this tradition. We celebrate the 24th of December, at midnight. Together, all the family eats hot tamales and it has to be 12 o’clock when everyone has to eat tamales. That is the reason we call it Tamalada. So, now, I always call my family and try to remember that tradition because I miss the Tamalada.

**Dia de la Bandera: Day of the Mexican Flag**

*Aaron Armendariz, Mexico, Grammar & Writing IV*

In our country, we have an important holiday which I want to write about, Dia de la Bandera. In 1821, Augustin de Iterbide devised the president’s flag and called it the flag of the three guarantees, which consists of three colors: green, white and red. Each color has a meaning: green means hope of the towns, white symbolizes purity; and red means the blood that spilled from the heroes for the mother country. Since then, on the 24th of February, all over the country, in schools, and public buildings, Mexicans honor our flag.

**Dia de los Muertos: Day of the Dead**

*Martha Carrizriles, Mexico, Grammar & Writing IV*

Day of the Dead is a traditional celebration in Mexico on the 1st of November each year. In some homes, the custom is to prepare the altar for the deceased placed in the living room or in the most visible place of the house. At the altar, people put all the objects the person used to enjoy in life. A photo of the person occupies the main place at the altar; on a side they put the saucers the deceased used to like the most, their favorite things; a book, cigars, their favorite bottle of liquor, tamales, mole, bunuelos, sugar skulls, dead bread (pan de muerto), etc. The altar has some religious images covered by Tzempaxuchitl flowers and also a path with the same flower. The copal and the incense invade the air and it gets a mystic smell, more heathen. Candles light up the altar at night in order to wait for them; “our deceased could come back to the house that day and be welcome.” We keep the altar for seven days and after the last day, we share with our family and friends and we eat all the offers that we put on the altar. In conclusion, this is how we celebrate the Day of the Dead in Mexico.

**Tet in Vietnam**

*Minh Le, Vietnam, Grammar & Writing IV*

Tet is a special name that Vietnamese call Happy New Year in Vietnam. It’s like Thanksgiving, Mother’s Day or Valentine’s Day. It’s a wonderful holiday and different from New Year in America. The Vietnamese enjoy Tet with the moon calendar. Tet begins on January 1st each year. There are a lot of activities in Tet, more than in America. The people go out to shop for food, drinks, new clothes, and something new in order to decorate the house or prepare for the New Year. The streets are decorated by thousands of flowers. They are very beautiful and look like a flower forest. The air is clean, pleasant, and warm. The city life becomes busier and more crowded. The people are from everywhere. They’ll come back to their families, so that they can visit their family members and friends, after working a long time. Everybody has the day of Tet off. Those are traditional activities when New Year comes in Vietnam, the most wonderful time for relaxing at the end of the year.

**The Big Celebration in September**

*Olga Najjar, Mexico, Grammar & Writing IV*

In my country, Mexico, we have a very important celebration on the 16th of September. Every year in Mexico we celebrate our independence on the 16th of September. It is a holiday in my country. The kids do not go to school; the banks and the government offices are closed. The president of our nation gives a speech for all the country in the morning. Every city in my country has its own parade. In that parade, kids wear costumes and it is mandatory for all the public schools to participate in the parade. The people who are watching the parade hold Mexican flags and people paint their faces and hair with our traditional colors: green, white, and red. We have traditional food such as tacos, quesadillas, and our very special chiles en hogada. We also have traditional candies for that important day. At night, we celebrate with fireworks in the zocalo. The zocalo is located in the capital city in front of the government house. The president and his family come out of the government house for the big celebration of our independence and hold our flag and ring a big bell, as a signal of the big celebration. After that, people can go out and continue the party at home, restaurants, or bars.
October: The Purple Month
_Emma Cabanillas, Peru, Grammar & Writing III_

Peru celebrates “The Lord of Miracles” in the month of October. It is a Catholic tradition to take a walk to the image of the Lord of Miracles. The devoted people dress up in purple. Some people walk barefoot for a promise.

Boun Bang Fai: The Rocket Festival
_Ketsalinh Tanpa, Laos, Grammar & Writing III_

Boun Bang Fai is the Rocket Festival, beginning around the middle of May. This is one of my favorite festivals in my country. The Rocket Festival is held at the beginning of the rainy season. The festival is a call for rain and a celebration of fertility.

In the morning of the festival, a religious ceremony is performed at the temple. In the afternoon, people gather in the fields on the outskirts of the villages and towns to launch self-made firework rockets. The rockets are made from bamboo with an explosive, huge climax, ornament with bright colors. I enjoy the parades of the rockets very much. They are so beautiful and fun. Also, there are a lot of foods and drinks. And the communities compete for the best decorated and the highest traveling rockets.

The rocket festival is staggered from place to place to enable greater participation and attendance. This festival is one of my favorite festivals in my country. I enjoy the parades and food. Also, I have fun looking up in the sky when they shoot a huge rocket and every time I have to cover my ears with my hands, because it makes a loud noise.

Guerrilla Salvadorena:
The Salvadoran Guerrillas
_Miriam Mendoza, Honduras, Grammar Writing III_

Between 1987 and 1988, I traveled from Honduras to El Salvador. At that time in El Salvador, there was a civil war. However, I went to El Salvador. When I was returning to Honduras a guerrilla group stopped our bus in a small town called Corinto. They asked everybody to get out of the bus. When we were out, they placed us in separate lines youngest on one line and oldest in another line. It was a very scary moment for everyone because when we were standing in line a boy about 10 to 11 years old came to us pointing an automatic rifle. Soon the leader started to ask for our names. He was searching for a brother related to a government soldier. When he found the person, the leader told us to get on the bus and we left as soon we could. We thought they were going to kill us because they mentioned they were going to do it, but, thank God, we escaped. That was the scariest moment in my life.

A Tradition in Pakistan
_Saira Neely, Pakistan, Grammar & Writing III_

Like other countries, Pakistan has some special traditions. Let me tell you about one of them, the tradition of arranged marriage. This custom has been misunderstood by many people in the western culture and by its media. Arranged marriages are where the parents of young men and women find suitable partners for their children to marry.

Contrary to western belief, both the bride and groom have the option of whether or not to accept a proposal, and are allowed to meet and get to know their fiancé before deciding upon marriage. Following an acceptance, the actual wedding ceremony is also completely different from a western wedding. A traditional Pakistani wedding consists of four parts, and the whole family takes part in it. The first part is called the mehndi, which is when the bride’s hands are decorated by a special kind of dye, known as henna. Next comes the nikah, which is the actual wedding ceremony performed by a religious figure. Then comes the baraat, or reception. This reception is given by the bride’s parents in honor of the groom and his family. Finally, the valima is held on the following day and given by the groom’s family. All of these ceremonies are very exciting and colorful, and everyone in the family enjoys them and becomes a part of the marriage. That is why arranged marriage is such an important aspect of Pakistani tradition.

The 20th of November
_Daniel Garcia, Mexico, Grammar & Writing III_

The 20th of November is the day of the Mexican Revolution. On this day, cities across Mexico celebrate by having parades. In smaller towns, parades go from one end of town to another, usually all along the main boulevard up to the main town plaza. The parades usually include soldiers and folkloric dancers of the era of the revolution. After the parade has ended, people stay in the plaza to enjoy a variety of Mexican foods and other activities.

Gaitas at Christmas
_Elidoug Gonzalez, Venezuela, Grammar & Writing III_

In Venezuela, we don’t know a Christmas without Gaitas. The Gaitas are a kind of folklore music. With them, Venezuelan people express their feelings. During November and December groups of Gaitas play the cuatro, a musical instrument, with maracas and tambour singing what they want to express. For example, sometimes the Gaita could be a protest, a thanks to God, about family, love, etc. There are different types of groups of Gaitas, from groups who play in parks, or on the street and in plazas to those who become more specialized when they play in exotic clubs, where you must pay a high fee to see them. An example of this could be Gram Coquivacoa, Guacos. Also, in each house you can hear the people’s favorite Gaita and the people singing and dancing. For Christmas, Venezuelan families meet to share their happiness, sadness and to prepare delicious traditional food and to listen to Gaitas. Here for Christmas, we meet with other Venezuelan families to listen to Gaitas and to share because the Gaitas give us a Christmas feeling, sabor a Navidad.

Holy Week in Colombia
_Claudia Losada, Colombia, Grammar & Writing III_

The majority of the Colombian population is Catholic and after Christmas, the most important festivity in Colombia is seven days before Easter, or “Holy Week.” During this week, families get together to evoke the passion and death of Jesus Christ.

This festivity starts with “Palm Sunday” when Catholics remember the entrance of Jesus to Jerusalem. The rest of the week, the families get prepared for “Holy Thursday.” This is the day we honor the ceremony of “The Last Supper.” People cook a special dinner for their families with typical foods and desserts for this occasion. On Thursday night, they visit “monuments” built on the altars of every church. Good Friday is a quiet day; people listen to classical music, watch religious or historic TV programs related to the festivity and don’t eat red meat. We usually eat fish on this day. In every town, in the afternoon before 3:00 p.m., people walk in mass to the church in the company of the town priest and the statues of Jesus, Mary, and other saints.
feigning “The Jesus Way to Calvary” and “Penitents,” people that made penitence for the pardon of their sins or for a favor they asked God. This ceremony ends with the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and the liturgical act, “Sermon of the Seven Words” that recollect the last words of Jesus before his passing. In the past, people used to inflict punishments on themselves to get pardon for the sins of humanity, but as time passed, some of these practices are now prohibited because people were harming themselves.

During Good Friday night, the churches open for the followers to visit the “Holy Sepulcher,” Jesus Christ’s coffin. Groups of women pray throughout the night in the church. This festivity ends with the blessing of the water and fire on Easter Sunday.

Holy Week is a Colombian tradition that passes through generations and in some Colombian cities like Pasto and Popayan, they continue commemorating it with such great splendor that tourists from every part of the world travel there to experience it and to capture in the lenses of their cameras the beauty and solemnity of Holy Week.

The Importance of Being Ourselves
Isela Garcia, Mexico, Reading & Vocabulary III

The key to enjoying our life is to “Be yourself”. Most of the times we try to keep our relationships by keeping false feelings just because we don’t want to be alone. To be you is not that easy. We always depend on the public opinion. Just like teenagers do. We always want to be accepted by people who don’t know what they want and don’t know who they are. When we identify what we want and what we enjoy, we start to become ourselves. For example, sometimes we do not want to do something, but we do it because we want to be accepted by someone. In the end, we do not feel comfortable. We feel empty, like something is missing. We learn to say no in a polite way. We look really nice and don’t want to hurt anybody. People start respecting you because they know that when you say yes, you answer with all your heart. This process looks easy, but believe me, it’s not, especially when you come from a culture where you are supposed to follow directions without thinking. With these tips, I hope you can become yourself and enjoy your life.

Marriage
Jacky Guzman, Colombia, Listening & Speaking III

Woman very sweet,
Man very intelligent,
A good marriage. Perfect.

My Butterfly
Narges Dinbali, Iran, Listening & Speaking IV

It was on a rainy day you told me, “My Butterfly, there is somebody in Houston who is crazy for you!”

That was the first time I felt ready to fall in love with somebody.
I could see clearly what you were feeling inside.
Now it is a lovely rainy day again, and this is our anniversary...
And there is somebody in Houston, in your home, who is crazy for you,
Waiting to see you and give you beautiful roses,
Telling you your love story again and again.
Yes. This is your story, my butterfly.

Summer
Glenys Martinez, Honduras, Listening & Speaking III

It’s finished. The summer.
A little hummingbird is flying
Finding a red sweet drink.

A Poem
Margarita Flores, Puerto Rico, Grammar & Writing II

When you forgive someone,
You are cleansing yourself inside
You are wiping away the dark murk of resentment and bitterness that you had stored within yourself.
You are making yourself whole.

Take the world as it is
Enrique Medrano, Mexico, Grammar & Writing II

I think that Valentine’s Day is not just a day for couples. It can be a day for singles too. I like the idea that you can give a friend something special without her being your girlfriend. I think that it is a very nice day and you do not need a partner just as long as you have friends.

Answers to Riddles

1. The street.
2. A ring.
3. A glove.
4. A bed.
5. Tomorrow.

Answer to “Who Am I?”
Renmani Dobson
Love

What Is Love?

Maria Fontanez, Spain, Reading & Vocabulary IV

What is love?
Love is in the air.
Love is when you are born and you see your mother for the first time.
Love is an immense emotion without limits or restrictions.
I can feel love when I get up in the morning and open my eyes.
Love is floating around me like a cloud.
It envelopes me and covers my spirit, helping me to live.

What is love?
Love is in the air.
My sons give me love, a magic feeling of happiness.
I see my husband and love floats in the air.
Love is what you feel before all the bad stuff gets in the way.
My enemies taught me how to love.
Love is the engine of my life.

What is love?
Love is in the air.
I can always feel it.
My sons give me love, a magic feeling of happiness.
I see my husband and love floats in the air.
Love is what you feel before all the bad stuff gets in the way.
My enemies taught me how to love.
Love is the engine of my life.

What is love?
Love is in the air.
Love is hugging.
Love is kissing.
Love is happiness.
Love is God.

Juan Ventura, Venezuela, Reading & Vocabulary IV

Love is a feeling that every person should experience at least once in their lives. Love can change your life in a second, from bad to good and vice versa. Love can hurt and cause depression and addiction. Love involves risk, like buying a lottery ticket. Love can make you stupid, even blind, to where you don’t see any defects. Right now, I’m in love and love is pretty good to me. Are you in love?

Vivian Eyobio, Nigeria, Reading & Vocabulary IV

What is love?
Love is hugging.
Love is kissing.
Love is happiness.
Love is God.

Li Xiang Hong, China Reading & Vocabulary IV

Love is a sense of well-being. When you’re in trouble, love will support you. When you’re depressed, love will encourage you. When you’re successful, love will congratulate you. Love is the energy that makes you comfortable and happy.

As a child, love was the protection of my family. When I got hurt, they took care of me and made me feel better. Everybody pays attention to you as a small child, no matter what you do – I felt so happy! Now, as a teenager, my favorite thing to do is get together with good friends, especially my girlfriend. We were attracted to each other from the first meeting. From then on, we were always in touch, even by phone. We fell in love and I can feel that special love when we are walking slowly, side by side on the beach, sitting on the soft sand and leaning close to each other, telling each other secrets in a low voice. That love, that happiness, that moment makes us feel that the world belongs to us.

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