

Diversity

The Intensive English Program Newsletter

Kingwood College
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From the Editor:

Diversity: The Intensive English Program Newsletter, as its name suggests, is filled with stories of a diverse group of people with many things in common. Among these common traits are a passion for learning, a love for peace and harmony, and a great interest in other cultures. In their writings, these students invite us to their home countries, tell us about their struggles as immigrants and international students in the US, and give us a taste of their cultures and traditions. If you see them on campus, please let them know you have read their stories in the newsletter and welcome them to our college.

Far From Home, Studying English at Kingwood College

Challenges of Learning English as a Second Language

Mi Hee Lee, Korea, Level 5

I'm 39 years old. In addition, I have two kids who need a mother's help. In Korea I thought it was too late to study, especially language. The reason why I decided to come to America was for my children whom I wanted to give a chance to learn English as a second language as well as to have some freedom from limited time schedules. But my sister asked me to study English as a second language. In fact, many years had passed since I had studied English, so I was very afraid of that. At first, I hesitated to enrol in ESL class, but I remembered the saying that "the brave man only gets beauty," and I decided to do it although it seemed very difficult for me to learn English as a second language. Now I'm on the way to the challenge and I even enjoy it. Of course poor listening and speaking abilities give me a lot of stress, but the harder it is the more courage springs out of my mind. Now I'm in a happy mood and I enjoy my student status. If someone hesitates about a late education, I encourage him/her to start right now. And I would like to say, "When you think it's too late, start it without hesitation."

See You

Mei Chan, Hong Kong, Level 6

Do you feel sad when you are far from your family or friends? For me it is very sad, especially since I haven't been able to see them for a long time. Some people say that separation is the start of meeting again. Although I have left my country, family and friends, I will go back to see them again soon. Thus, I just miss them in this moment. However, I know that I may not see some people again when I leave some specific place. I may be going to my country soon, and I can't come here easily. Still life goes on. It will not be easy for me to keep in touch with everyone I know. No matter what will happen, I will never forget my friends I have known here. Separation makes me feel sad. Even so, I appreciate everyone's having given me an unforgettable memory here. I hope I can meet my friends again some day. Buddies, God bless you.

ESL Classes

Aaron Almanza, Level 3

I came to the United States about 13 years ago, and I have never felt more comfortable speaking English like I feel now. The reason I feel this way is because the ESL program at Kingwood College has made me feel secure about myself. I have noticed that I can communicate more efficiently with my boss at work. I can also express myself better and better everyday. I have tried many other methods of learning English without good results. The Kingwood College ESL program is helping me reach my goal which is to further my education and in the near future start a career.

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A NORTH HARRIS MONTGOMERY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Kingwood College ESL Classes

Vinai Hopitakkul, Thailand, Level 3

Somebody said, “Education is not a preparation for life; education is life itself.” I think this is right. We learn about something every day and I will be very happy if I will be able to understand and to remember all the things that I have learnt. I want to be able to speak to everyone I want to, but I feel frustrated because of the language barrier. That means that my life is blocked too. ESL Classes are helping me to improve my English skills and have given me new friends. Wonderful! Kingwood College has given me the opportunity in education. I feel comfortable and happy because I get my education here and I have my life here.

Reasons why I am Taking ESL Class

Ruben Garcia, Spain, Level 5

The first reason is because I need to improve my English level. I’m from Spain and I have only taken several English classes when I was young. There are a lot of reasons that I need to learn English. One of them is to understand the people in the market, on the street, in shops and other places. First, I began to attend free classes in different colleges, but the level was easy and the rhythm too slow. I wanted to practice a lot and have different kinds of classes focusing on various subjects like listening, speaking, grammar, writing, and others. My classes are far from my home, so I need to make an extra effort, but it’s the only way for me to learn. Who knows if in a not so far future, I will be able of watching TV and listening to the radio, and understanding most of the things.

Studying English

Agustin Padilla, Mexico, Level 1

My name is Agustin Padilla. I am from Tamaulipas, Mexico. I want to study English, and for this reason I entered Kingwood College in the summer class on June 2. For me it is very necessary to learn the English language because it will help me in my job, to communicate with my partners, my friends and with all the people who speak English. Also it will help me to have other jobs, a good job, showing my progress.

I like to be at Kingwood College. I feel I can stay here for a long time studying English and other careers.

My Experience Learning ESL

Dai Huynh, Vietnam, Level 3

I moved to Texas four years ago. On March 17, 2003, I started to study ESL at Kingwood College. From the beginning, I didn’t have any fear because I had studied English before in other schools. When I came to the United States I always wanted to study English, but I had to work for a living first. Now my life is a little bit better and my goal is to study, listen and speak English correctly to complete my dream. When I was in Vietnam, I studied English in schools three or four times a week. However, when I came to the U.S. I had a difficult time understanding English and I had trouble with other people understanding me because of my accent. So the best way to learn English for me is to return to school and continue studying English; then, I will feel comfortable with my new life in my new country—America.

Smiling...As a Second Language

Adriana Mateescu, Romania, Level 6

I didn’t realize until I was in the situation of living in a foreign country how difficult it is to communicate with people who are speaking other languages, especially when none of them speak another’s language or a common language. I have always thought that there should be a universal language that everyone on the face of the Earth could speak. I’ve read that during humankind’s history, people have tried hundreds of times to create an artificial language for international use, but unfortunately, these languages couldn’t survive. With this in mind, I have always wished that I had the power to create and spread a universal language all over the world because I have a very strong belief that people would communicate better and more effectively. It would be wonderful.

I realize at the same time that we do have a common language although we are not aware of it. It is the smile. When we are smiling, we don’t need words to express what is in our minds and hearts. We can “say” with a simple smile that we are supportive, understanding, sympathetic, or happy. It is so simple to smile. It is so simple to show that we care. Furthermore, anyone can do it. I can say this because I experimented with it so many times during my process of learning English in ESL classes. Even though I couldn’t find words to express my ideas, thoughts, or feelings, I could communicate better with a smile. It was so precious, and everybody could understand me. In addition, I could see my classmates’ understanding and supportive smiles. It was wonderful.

A Story about Living in the U.S.

Esther Vazquez, Mexico, Level 6

I have always been a person who likes new and different challenges in life. These challenges continuously happened in my native country in my hometown, or out but not far from my city. People never know or expect a complete change in their lives like a 360-degree turn. However, some people can have the opportunity to deal with these changes because life just appears in a new or different way that is inevitable. This happened to two excited, motivated and in-love foreigners, a German and a Mexican, when they arrived to the United States.

My story about living in the U.S. started after an unforgettable wedding in both Germany and Mexico. Two months later, our honeymoon continued in Houston, Texas. It was extremely difficult to start a new life in a new country while we were also beginning a life as a couple. Moreover, we were dealing with three different cultures involving one single life. Hence, the moments here have been the most incredible and adventurous, not only for the experiences, but also for the challenges that we have faced.

The language was at first the worst culture shock I had. I don’t know why, but Texans speak so fast! I will never forget my first time at the supermarket; I only wanted to buy a pound of salami. The lady was trying to ask me something, but I couldn’t understand a single word. My answer was, “What? What? What?” In the end I only answered a typical German answer, “Ja, ja,” but I secretly tell you that I understood nothing. It was really funny.

These are only a few moments that my husband and I have been living; not to mention that he already got a traffic ticket. After all, I thank God for the opportunity to experience and to live a life here in the U.S. We are sure that we will leave this country soon, for I think our lives belong to another place; meanwhile, we are enjoying to the utmost every moment that crosses our lives.

You, I and Everybody

Elvia Tristan, Mexico, Level 5

What! Do you want to be the only one? I work as a waitress in a Mexican restaurant. Everyday I enjoy joking as well as speaking some Spanish words with my customers. One of my unforgettable days was when I was trying to be funny. That day I asked my customers to tell me the number of their orders in Spanish. They answered me except for one apathetic lady. I felt very happy and I said, "I think it is fantastic to know another language." After I said that, the same apathetic lady said, "I am an American; I don't need to speak Spanish. We live in America; we have to speak English." Those words really hurt my integrity as a person; however, I asked myself, "Has she ever seen a geographical map or learned about the people living around her?"

The American continent is full of Americans; therefore, why do some people in the United States think they should be the only ones called Americans? On October 12, 1492, Columbus did the official discovery of the American continent. Later, Americo Vespuccio divided the American continent into three parts. These regions are North America, Central America, and South America, so if we look at the map, we would see that every person on both continents is an American. For this reason, some people in the United States have to know that they are not the only people to be called Americans.

I would like to change the expression, "America by the Americans" and say, "The United States by everyone who lives there." Diverse cultures have been arriving in the United States for a long time. A long time ago, for instance, in 1851 alone, more than 220,000 Irish men and women came to the United States; moreover, between 1820 and 1992, more than five million Italians moved to The United States. These are only two examples of the great variety of cultures living in this country. Not only do the natives of this region have the right to be called Americans and be part of this nation, but also everyone who lives in the United States.

In conclusion, if you are living on the American continent, you have to be considered an American, be called an American, and be respected as an American as well.

Far From Home

Nikolaeva Vlada, Russia, Level 3

Going through articles in the newspaper, I found out that the biggest problem of the people who arrived from different countries was to be away from their families. They can't describe their problems or express their feelings in the U.S. because they don't know enough English. I found a very good quote, "One of the hardest things I had to do was to leave everyone behind and look into the future. I began to think about things like what my major would be and when my next class was."

People from my ESL class are very proud that they are students at this college, and that they can have a chance to study and to live in such a beautiful country.

ESL Program

Yadira Morales, Mexico, Level 2

I like to be in this school because I want to learn many things, especially English. I want to learn English because I want to get a better job. I also want to teach my children or help them when they go to school. When they get homework, I will help them because I will know how to speak and read in English.

My experiences in Houston

Rubèn García, Spain, Level 5

Since I came to Houston I have realize that there are a lot of differences between Spain and Houston, and that is what I want to write about.

The cars here are bigger than in Spain and the highways have more lanes. Considering the traffic rules, there are so many differences; for example, you can turn right even when the traffic-light is red, obviously when no cars are approaching you. Another important difference is the price of oil, which in Spain is more or less double the price of oil here.

The times for the main meals are different too. In Houston, lunch time is about 12:00 p.m. and in Spain we go to lunch around 2:30 to 3:00 p.m. and sometimes even later. When we go to restaurants to have lunch, Texans are probably having their dinner.

In addition, the appearance of the two cities is quite different, too. In Houston, the big and new buildings are in the downtown area and the surroundings architecture consists of a group of several chalets and not big houses. However, in Madrid the oldest buildings are in downtown, surrounded by big buildings (flat as they say here). Of course the biggest buildings are in the financial centre, called Castellana Walkway, which is located not so far from the centre of Madrid.

Houston is more heterogeneous than Spain and you can meet people from everywhere.

If we consider the weather, the principal thing for me is the high humidity in Houston that makes you feel tired and it always seems wet. Every shop and place has an air-conditioning system, so you suffer a temperature shock when you go inside.

Finally, there are so many differences in the measurement system that you use when you go to the supermarket, the principals are:

	Spain	US
Weight	kilo	lbs
Length	cm	feet
Capacity	litre	gallon
Temperature	°C	°F

So you need to convert all the things to understand the quantity of the products that you are buying or the weight you enter in the gym-machine when it asks you for it.

All these things and so many others make me think that I am in "another world." Ah, another thing! Texans seem more patriotic than we are, so you can find many houses and cars with the American flag.



Teacher Profile



Julie Lund

My name is Julie Lund. I am from Ogden, Utah, a beautiful place surrounded by mountains, small farms and fruit orchards and filled with friendly people. I grew up there and attended Weber State University where I got my Bachelor of Arts degree. I majored in German, minored in English, and received a Secondary Education Certificate. I also met my husband there and have spent the last 35 years happily married to him. I have many fond memories of Utah.

I have always loved teaching, and I have to admit that it doesn't actually matter to me what

age group I am teaching; I still enjoy the experience. I started my teaching career as a 7th grade language arts teacher at Central Davis Middle School in Layton, Utah. From there, my husband, Jerry, and I moved to Benicia, California, where I taught early morning daily religion classes to high school age students. When we moved to Concord, California, I taught ELS to Japanese Students who had come to the United States to study English. Later, when my children started to come along I taught pre-school so that I could be at school with them or at home with them. A move to Flower Mound, TX, found me teaching reading, one on one, to children who struggled in that subject at the elementary school level. Later I trained the reading tutors who taught these children for Lewisville ISD. After another move, I am now teaching ESL here at Kingwood College. I have taught all levels of Grammar and Writing and Levels 3 and 4 Reading and Vocabulary. My teaching has led me from working with energetic 3 and 4 year olds to enthusiastic and motivated adults, and I have enjoyed every phase of my teaching career.

Of even more importance to me is my family. Jerry and I have five children, four of whom are adopted. We adopted two children in California,

had one, and later adopted two more children from Korea. Our two oldest sons are married. Jared and his wife, Heather, have given us 4 beautiful grandchildren, whom we spend time with whenever it is possible.

In addition to spending time with these wonderful people in my life, Jerry and I enjoy traveling. We have been to Greece, Germany, Switzerland, England, and Italy. We have traveled to Mexico, Brazil, Uruguay, and Paraguay. We have visited Hawaii and many other states in the United States. Everywhere we go, we meet people who are genuinely friendly and kind. Through my travels I have felt the frustration of being unable to speak with people whom I wanted to get to know. I have wanted to share information, opinions and feelings that were impossible for me to share because I lacked the structure and vocabulary of that language. I hope that in teaching ESL I can help smooth the way for those who find themselves in that situation. I love getting to know my students and a little about their cultures and values. I love their motivation, and their enthusiasm for learning. I love being able to share my knowledge of English with them. I feel privileged to be able to teach here at Kingwood College.

Poetry

Animal Poem

Maria Hernandez, Mexico, Level 1

I'm a great, big elephant.
I take big steps so slow.
I'd love to have you join me.
Ready now? Let's go!

I'm a little dog.
I love to run and run.
If you would do it with me,
We could have so much fun.

My Love, My Friend

Martha Diaz, Cuba, Level 1

The day you came into my life
I never thought I'd find
A love that is so special
A love that is divine
You are my love
You are my friend

Guide Me

Vania Villa, Bolivia, Level 1

Light of my road
That keeps me from falling
Into the darkness.

Guide of my life
That shows me the way
Tirelessly, until you make me feel
I can walk alone.

You are always there for me
To lean on, to hold me,
To show me the road's dangers
And to make me feel safe and
Secure when I am next to you.

Guide me always the way you do
Guide me far and never let
Me go.

Inner

Tristan Elvia, Mexico, Level 3

A field full of lies is growing in my mind.
Meanwhile, the air's evil thought is
Consuming the rest of peace of my
rotten heart.

The black butterflies in my head
have already died.
The air continues its way and devours
the pain of my tearful eyes.
Every day is the same; my soul

is getting old and dark, and I
cannot find the freedom of my
lost innocence.

International Student News & Information

The following information is for students who are on an international student (F-1) visa International Students...

- must take at least 12 credit hours in the spring and fall semesters and 6 hours in the summer;
- must contact the international student advisor, Denise Matos, if they plan to take a semester off or if they plan to leave the country;
- are allowed to work only on campus;
- should make sure their contact information (address, phone number, e-mail) is up-to-date.

If you have any questions, please contact Denise Matos at 281-312-1536.



Shrimp or Lobster Cebiche

Carlota Vargas, Ecuador, Level 3

25 small shrimp with shells 2 cloves of garlic
2 lemons 2 red onions
salt and pepper to taste 4 cups of water

Cook the shrimp in salt water together with one onion and garlic. Remove shells and devein. Serve the shrimp in an onion sauce. To make the sauce, cut a large onion in thin slices, add the lemon juice and salt, and cook for a few minutes until the onion becomes pink in color. Cool and place the shrimp in this mixture. Refrigerate and serve cold.

If you make this recipe with lobster, proceed in the same way, cutting the lobster into bite size pieces. In addition to preparing the onion sauce, you may also prepare a chile sauce with tomato ketchup, chile or other hot sauce, and oil to taste.

Perfect Pizza Crust

Leticia DeLeon, Mexico, Level 1

1 package dry yeast 1 teaspoon sugar
1 teaspoon salt 2 Tablespoons oil
2 1/2 cups of flour

Oven Temperature 425 degrees

1. Dissolve yeast in 1 cup of warm water in a large bowl.
2. Add sugar, salt, and oil. Mix well with a wooden spoon.
3. Add flour, beat for 20 strokes.
4. Roll dough onto a floured dry surface. Work until the dough is soft with floured hands. Knead the dough 2-3 minutes. Roll into a circle a little larger than the pan you are going to use.
5. Press dough into greased pan.
6. Build up edges by folding over the dough.
7. Allow dough to sit while preparing toppings.
8. Place pizza sauce on the crust and add the other ingredients. Top with cheese.
9. Allow to "stand" for 20 minutes to allow the crust to rise.
10. Place in preheated oven for 20-30 minutes.

My Spinach Omelet

Laura Delgado, Mexico, Level 3

After many tries, I learned to make the perfect omelet. My husband and I love it. First, cut the spinach, onion, red peppers, a little bit of garlic and mushrooms. You can add a little bit of jam if you want. Mix all of these ingredients and fry them with olive oil. In a bowl, crack two eggs and add a little bit of milk (so the eggs won't dry up). In another pan, add some olive oil and pour your eggs. Then carefully flip it over. Next, add the spinach mix to one side and fold it. You can add cheese if you prefer.

We eat it with hash browns and toast. It is very delicious. And don't forget the hot sauce!

Hungarian Layered Potatoes

Tamas Varga, Hungary, Level 4

13-14 boiled potatoes 5-6 hard-boiled eggs
16 oz. sour cream salt and pepper
8 oz. cheese 14 oz. sausage, spicy and smoked

1. Pre-heat oven to 400°F. Grease a 13 x 9 pan
2. Boil the potatoes and the eggs. Cut both into thin round slices.
3. Cut the sausage into thin round slices.
4. Place a layer of potato into the pan and sprinkle with a little salt and pepper. Then, place a layer of sausage and egg. Add a little sour cream on top. Repeat this step until the ingredients are gone (about 3 layers). Sprinkle the final top layer with cheese and sour cream.
5. Cover the pan with aluminum and place it in the oven for 30 minutes. Then take the aluminum off and cook until the top turns brownish.
6. Serve with extra cream for additional topping. Enjoy!

My Country

A Poem about Tampico

Agustin Padilla, Mexico, Level 1

Turn to see my beautiful city
A city of friends
More things to know
Picturesque in your places
In your wonderful land, I think
City, I am lovesick for the city
On your sea, I see one love

Times in the sun
Always very nice
My beautiful city
Appreciate your life
Under the sky
Light and color
Important to dream
Photograph your progress
As I think of you
Show how you are in me

More people I see
Excellent to live here
Xenon spoke to me yesterday
In this city
Captive I will be
On this wonderful land, I will surely die

Caracas

Esther Arrieta, Venezuela, Level 1

My excellent country is Venezuela. The capital is Caracas. Venezuela is a big country located in South America. It is home to more than 20 million people. It is a country that has everything.

Capital of my country
Abounding smiles
Really nice people
America is beautiful
Caracas is cool
A busy city
South America

Iran

Shahin Amini, Iran, Level 1

I'm from Persia (Iran). Persia is in Asia. My country has 60,000,000 people. I have a big family in Persia. They live in Esfahan city. I live in Kingwood with my father, mother, two brothers and one sister. One of my brothers and my sister are college students. I also have one little brother. We have only lived here for a little while. I play basketball and listen to music in my free time. My family is friendly. I like my family.

My Country

Burma: A Community of Friendly People

Nyunt Win, Burma, Level 3

I have resided in Burma since I was a child. Burma is located in Southeast Asia bordered by India, Bangladesh, China, Laos, and Thailand. It is a rural country surrounded by a horseshoe-shaped ring of mountains. The climate is tropical in some areas and temperate in other areas.

Our community produces food and beverages, cloth and garments, industrial raw materials, minerals, petroleum products, and wood. Burma is famous for its gems such as jade, rubies, sapphires, and pearls, which are sold to foreign merchants every year at the Gems Emporium.

There are many local crafts and artistic items which are interesting. The crafts are silk and cotton weaving, lacquer ware, gold and silverware, wood and ivory carvings, tapestry, stone carvings, umbrella-making, and items made from the earth.

Our community does not have much crime because we have community leaders who strictly control crime. We have a few car thefts and burglaries. People who commit serious offenses go to trial in court, and if they are guilty, they will be sentenced to prison or fined. These criminal cases are overseen by local judges. Some smuggling cases are decided by state judges. The laws are not very strict. Our community has a few alcohol and drug problems. There are no regulations and laws against under-aged drinking.

Our community is a very nice place. People are hard-working, very kind, and have good hearts. I am proud to live in our community. Another reason is our lovely smile. Our people's smiles are very sweet, and everybody loves our people and tries to make friends with them.

Hong Kong

Candy Chan, Hong Kong, Level 3

My hometown of Hong Kong is special to me for many reasons. It has a good location with convenient transportation system. It has an International Airport. Every five minutes there are landings and departures. Hong Kong airport has world-wide flight connections. Subways, trains and buses connect the city. Hong Kong has three rock tunnels and one harbor tunnel. A ferry crosses Victoria Harbor between Hong Kong side and Kowloon side. You can see various buildings by the coast. It has a harbor of refuge to protect the boats from hurricanes. It has eight terminals for cargo and container loading. Big cargo ships and cruise ships visit the Victoria Harbor. Also it has a good landscape.

Victoria Peak is a high mountain where people can see the Hong Kong panorama. At the night time, bright and colorful lights flash like Oriental Pearls. Many tourists like Ocean Park. There is a big tropical fish aquarium there. Big whales and dolphins and sea lions are trained in a special way in a big pool. Everyday, there are three shows for the travelers. Lamtau Island has a big Buddha. Mui wo Island has Discover Bay, where wind blows from the Pacific Ocean. Wong Tai Sin Temple is in the middle of the city. Chinese people pray there for health or happiness. These are famous places to visit.

People can choose the time to come to Hong Kong. Hong Kong has four seasons. Spring is warm and wet; summer is hot and humid; fall is not hot and not dry; winter is cold and dry. It has good educational, medical and retirement systems. Hong Kong has seven universities. Students can take different courses at the universities. The government supports the education and hospital system. Therefore, students and patients don't have to pay a lot of money. Hong Kong makes me feel excited and relaxed and is a good memory for everybody.

July 14th In Pamplona, Spain

Lulu Cole, Spain, Level 3

July 14th in Spain is a big holiday because it is when they have the bull run through the city of Pamplona. Pamplona is one city that is north of Spain. The holiday is very special and popular. The bulls go out and run through the downtown chasing people dressed in white t-shirts with red handkerchiefs tied around their necks. I am very nervous when I see them do this. It is dangerous, but exciting too. Also, on this day, they eat chicken and meat.

Mexico

Armida Valadez, Mexico, Level 3

Mexico consists of 32 states and one Federal District (the city). Mexico's weather stays constant. Throughout the year we have ten months with the sun and a stupendous climate. It never snows in Mexico. Sometimes it snows in the mountains or on the volcano "Popocatepetl." There are different kinds of climates in Mexico, but all of temperatures fluctuate from 1 to 50 degrees Celsius. The temperatures are not cold. You can imagine what kind of climate we have!

The main product that Mexico exports is oil. We have secondary products like cotton, corn, fruits, coffee, and peppers. Mexico is a country with a lot of history about its ancestors' cultures including the Incas, Mexicas, Olmecs and Toltecs. We still conserve the places where they lived and practice their rituals.

Viet Nam New Year

Dai Huynh, Vietnam, Level 3

Every year on the first of January we celebrate the New Year in Vietnam. The customs in our country are different than any other country. All the employees have three days off for this holiday. There are many houses that are freshly painted outside and very clean inside. The first three days of the year everybody goes to the Temples. There is a beautiful and very old Temple in Saigon City, which is the biggest city. You don't have to pay when you enter the Temple.

The families visit each other and they wish "Happy New Year". After that everybody have a party serving tea, Jams (sweet meat), candies, cookies, beer, wine, etc. At this holiday, kids wear new clothes and sometimes they get money from their kin as a gift for their visit. This is how we celebrate New Year in my country.

Women Of Colombia

Liliana Vallejo, Colombia, Level 3

The role of women is very important in Colombia for several reasons. One of them is their upbringing. It begins in childhood when their parents teach them to appreciate life and the people around them. In this phase, the girls learn the real importance of the family unit. The mother's role is always to set a good example. During high school, the educational institutions offer classes in psychology, astronomy, glamour, cooking, dancing, needlework, art, etc. It's indispensable that the women study and pursue a career of their preference. If the women decide to get married then they should have the unconditional support of their husbands. The Colombian women are polite as daughters, mothers, wives, and professionals. They also have knowledge in areas that will make them an integral part of the society. In this way, they can develop any activity. These are some of the reasons why women are important in Colombia.

Romania—The Culinary Art

Daniela Vancia, Romania, Level 3

Romanian traditional cuisine, a true culinary art, varies from one area to another, and from one season to another. Travelers from abroad can enjoy foods like "piftea" (meat jelly), "ciorba de potroace" (tripe soup), pickled fish with corn meal bread, "sarmale" —known as the Romanian traditional food (cabbage rolls with ground pork), the appetizing "mititei" (ground pork on the grill), juicy pies, pound cakes with nuts and syrup. All these good foods are to convince the guests of the excellence of Romanian cuisine.

During the festive period of Christmas, there is plenty of food on everybody's tables, such as crusty steaks and joints of pork, spicy pork sausage, and "sarmale". The Romanian hospitality and its cuisine make up a whole, whose essence was defined by the great Romanian historian Nicolae Iorga as: "a patrimony of traditions of history, which creates its originality".

Animals

Marcelo Carreon, Mexico, Level 1

Animals are the best friends. You can talk with them and they understand, because they are friends. When you feel sad, only think of them and you will feel great! I can promise this.

*Traditions of my country***Blanca Bardají, Spain, Level 3**

I am going to write about the traditions of my country, Spain. Most of the foreigners know us because of a variety of things. One of the things is the food, and we have great food: we are used to eating meat, fish, vegetables, verdure, and fruit all cooked by ourselves. One of the well-known dishes is the “paella” (Valencian dish) or the “potatoes omelette”. It is cooked with potatoes, olive oil and eggs.

Nowadays this cooking tradition is getting lost because of the fast foods like hamburgers, pizzas and the like, but we are trying to keep on eating the same way for the best of our health. Teenagers, as they like to go out to eat, usually eat in fast-food restaurants and there are a lot of studies about their weight and the way it is increasing. This represents a problem for the youngest generation.

A typical tradition of my country is the “Semana Santa” (Saint Week). This is a week in April, when lots of images of Jesus Christ and the Virgin Maria are carried through the streets to the cathedral (which is in the town centre), and the “nazarenos,” men and women who are dressed with tunics of different colours, depending on the church that they belong to, and with large pointed hats, accompany both of them. One of the most popular images is the “Macarena Virgin” which has nearly 2000 nazarenos that go with her from 3:00 a.m to 1:00 p.m. They have to walk maybe ten hours from the moment they leave until they arrive back to the same church. This is incredible also if you consider that there are thirty men that carry the image, which weighs 1800 kilograms, on their backs.

One typical dance of Spain is the “sevillanas”, which comes from one city in the south, Sevilla. This city is really marvellous: the cathedral, the Golden Tower, the parks, the friendly people, the food and so on.

The most well-known sport in Spain is bullfight (if you consider it a sport, but I do not like it). In addition, the most important sport in our country, and I think in the rest of Europe, is football (here called soccer). In Spain we have the best football team which is the “Real Madrid” and a big number of foreigners only know us, and our city, because of that team. A few days ago someone here in Texas asked me if we’d really sign up David Beckham, the husband of the posh Spice Girl, for our team and I was very surprised that he knew about this.

Well this is only a part of my city’s attractions, but if you are interested you can go there and have a nice experience.

*Birthdays in Mexico***Vicky Rojas, Mexico, Level 1**

I would like to speak about birthdays in my culture. In Mexico it is the tradition to have a piñata at a birthday celebration. I remember when I was a little girl my Mom gave a big party for me. She made a delicious mole, and had many bags of candy. I remember a big piñata. All the kids made a big line to hit the piñata, which was a big “star.” We had a good time breaking it and when we finished we shared the big cake. I was excited to open my presents. This is a wonderful memory. It makes me homesick. I had good moments with my family.

*Military Service In South Korea***Eun Tae Kim, South Korea, Level 3**

I am from South Korea. As you know, the Korean War divided our country. It has been more than fifty years now. We are still standing face to face at the thirty-eighth parallel. It is so tragic. Therefore, every Korean man must enlist in the military service when he is twenty years old. He doesn’t have a choice. He must be in the military for twenty-eight months. My military service taught me a lot about what I had not known yet. The basic training was difficult on everybody. For example, I ran a 3k every morning and couldn’t sleep more than five hours. I also realized how precious my family was. Most Korean men do not want to do military service. That is not wrong in my opinion. I know because I felt like that too. It is better to “just enjoy, if you can’t run away.” I also really hope that one day soon the Korean men will not have to do the military service, like the men in the United States.

*Venezuela —For All Your Pleasures***Diomi Burgin, Venezuela, Level 3**

Venezuela is a wonderful country that has different zones to satisfy all your pleasures. We have a large Caribbean coastline with beautiful beaches, white sands and crystal clear waters.

The archipelago of Los Roques is probably the best known of the many islands along Venezuela’s coastline. Noted for diving and snorkeling in the clear water and the abundance of fish, birds and other marine wildlife. The island of Margarita is a well known tourist destination that has beautiful beaches and many shops, restaurants and attractions to visit.

The Grand Sabana and Angel Falls (the highest waterfall in the world) is located in the southern part of the country. The landscape is dramatic and contrasting and is famous for its Tepui (table top mountains rising out of the flatlands) mountain range. Many rivers flow through the rain forests.

Los Medanos de Coro is a desert with 91,280 hectares (225,556 acres) of desert and costal habitat including salt marshes. Massive sand dunes, known as Medanos, can reach 40 meters (130 feet) in height and are constantly transformed by the unrelenting winds.

If your pleasure is cold weather you can visit the Andes mountain range where you will find the country’s highest peaks, Pico Bolivar at 5,007 meters (16,427 feet) and Pico Espejo at 4,765 meters (15,633 feet). Pico Espejo also has the longest and highest cable car in the world.

All within an area that is about the same size as Texas you can find everything from warm Caribbean waters, tall snow-capped mountains, deep winding valleys, flat plains, semi-arid regions, deserts and tropical rain forests.

This is just a quick review of my country Venezuela.

*Water Festival or Burmese New Year***Nyunt Win, Bhurma, Level 3**

The Water Festival, lasting four to five days, is celebrated in the second week of April to welcome the Burmese New Year. During this time, the Burmese throw water on each other, and some people put a few drops of perfume in the water. The Water Festival washes away the old year’s bad luck and sins, and it also serves to cool off everyone in the summer hot weather. During the festival, people participate either by throwing water at one of the pandals (special bamboo shelter) or by going from pandal to pandal in open jeeps, small trucks or even large trucks or buses, to have water thrown on them. This water-throwing is more fun for younger people. The elders go to monasteries or meditation centers for meditation. On the last day, New Year’s Eve, no more water is thrown. The Burmese welcome the New Year by doing free fish, birds and cattle. Special large meals and various donations are given to the monks in the monasteries.

*New Year’s Celebration in Russia***Nikolaeva Vlada, Russia, Level 3**

My favorite holiday is New Year’s Eve. In Russia the New Year’s Eve is a holiday as big and important as Christmas in United States. Usually, I celebrate this holiday with my family in my sister’s apartment. My sister loves to cook. At this event we have a table full of traditional foods like salads, baked meat, and delicious desserts.

In the Russian tradition, around eleven o’clock at night, people sit at the table and open a bottle of champagne, while sharing the good things that happened the passing year. At twelve o’clock we open another bottle of champagne and everybody makes a wish for the next year. We wish each other the best things to happen in the coming year. After that we enjoy the good food. We also play games and have a lot of fun. I am very proud to have a family like mine.

My Country, Ecuador

Carlota Vargas, Ecuador, Level 5

Have you heard about Ecuador? It is a little country situated in South America between Columbia and Peru. Although Ecuador is located in the tropic of Cancer with tropical weather, it has some regions with different kinds of climates.

One of these regions is the coast. Ecuador has a coast along the Pacific Ocean. For this reason, the weather is affected by the running of El Nino (hot and Humboldt (cold). For example, from December to May the temperature can reach 35 degrees C. (winter); this is the rainy season. From June to November the temperature can reach 22 degrees C. (summer); this is the dry season.

Although the coast has five provinces with beautiful beaches and three main islands in the gulf, the most famous place is Galapagos Islands-1,000 km from the mainland-with 13 main islands, 6 lesser islands and 42 islets. Galapagos is one of the most unique places in the world because these islands have unique species of flora and fauna. Furthermore, these islands have four climate zones: the coast; the low or dry land; the transition zone; and the wet zone. Therefore, tourists like to experiment with the diversity of climate in Galapagos.

Another region is called Oriental or Amazonia. In this region runs the lesser important branch from the Andes—the Eastern range. It has small mountains, which are gradually flow down into the Amazon. In this flat region the average temperature is 25 degrees C. with relative humidity of over 90%. Also it has huge forests with rainfall from March to September. There are two main navigable rivers. Most of the scientists say that this region is a virgin jungle because few tourists like this kind of climate. However, people who like nature can enjoy hiking, swimming and learning the habits of the original tribes such as Quichua, Sheear, Cofanes, etc without worrying about the hot climate.

In summary, Ecuador has a diverse climate and apart from the Galapagos Island, nothing is very far away in Ecuador. This small country offers an incredible range of vegetation, animal life, culture, and climate. Therefore, people can choose any place where they want to go according to their wishes—cold, hot, or temperate.

September 16 In Mexico

Guadalupe Trujillo, Mexico, Level 3

You never know what you have until you lose it. This is a common phrase you hear in Mexico. Suddenly, you realize that you are away from home, and you wish to be a part of an important holiday, such as September 16th.

September 16th is a commemorative day in Mexico. It is the day in which all Mexicans celebrate the “Independence of Mexico.” It is the biggest day in Mexico. It is the day in which we give honor to our libertarians. The president of Mexico gives honor to the heroes of Independence—Father Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, Mrs. Josefa Ortiz de Dominguez and others. The “Independence Call” takes place at midnight on the 16th where the president of Mexico gives a speech from the balcony of the Government Palace in the capital of Mexico while the audience is gathered standing in the local square.

In the morning, a parade is headed by the Armada Mexicana or Mexican Army and followed by music bands, nursing schools and universities. Lots of people stand along the streets with little flags or ribbons enjoying the parade. It is also broadcasted. In the rest of the states of Mexico, other similar parades are carried out as well.

I can still feel the emotion and the happiness of the people when they sing the anthem, or when they contemplate the famous parade. All of this encompasses Mexico’s liberty of expression, thought and act, and the remembrance of people who fought and died to give us what we have today—our “freedom”.

Now I realize I was being silly when I didn’t appreciate the best heritage I can have as a Mexican—My Culture.

Colombia for Visitors

Viviana Echavarria, Colombia, Level 3

If all you know about Colombia through the distressing news you hear on TV or read in the newspapers, you are missing the charming history and culture of this fascinating country.

An absolute must-see of the Colombia’s treasures, the Conquistadores, is in the Museo del Oro, which stores more than 33,000 items in gold all from pre-Hispanic times. The Bank of the Republic also houses the Colección del Banco de la Republica of Columbian art from colonial times forward. Make sure you browse through the Salas. You’ll need to schedule a lot of time for these two impressive collections!

Colombia is a land of varied geographical extremes. With coastlines on both the Pacific and Atlantic (or Caribbean Sea) oceans the desert of La Guajira in the northeastern portion of the country which extends into the Caribbean, three Andean mountain ranges dissecting the country, the Amazon savannah and rainforest plus assorted mountains and islands, Colombia offers an environment to suit many tastes.

There’s much to do and see in Colombia. The Natural Park Tours offer mountaineering, climbing, fishing, backpacking and trekking. For water lovers there is Scuba diving, sailing and other water sports along Colombia’s long coastlines. If you’ve overdone it a soak in the thermal hot springs at Ecotermals San Vicente should be just the thing.

No matter where you go in Colombia you’ll hear proud references to Gabo or Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Colombia’s gift to poetry. Macondo is a tribute to him. You’ll also enjoy Colombian Cuisine while you listen to Colombian music. Whatever you do, enjoy Colombia!

Mexico City

Armida Valadez, Mexico, Level 3

I lived in Mexico City for about seventeen years. With a population of about 20 million people, Mexico City is the second most populated city in the world. It is also the most polluted. For example, from Monday to Friday, the government has implemented a car circulation system. If your vehicle’s license plate numbers end with a digit of one or two, it’s illegal to drive on Monday. If your car’s license plate numbers end with a digit of three or four, then it’s illegal to drive on Tuesday. There are many reasons why Mexico City is such a big city. First, it has all the services that people need like big super markets, malls, zoos, museums, theaters. It also has the largest medical center in all the states of Mexico. Many people of different states like to work in Mexico City because it supposedly offers many opportunities. However, now it is difficult to get a good job because so many live there.

A Good Father

Jorge Pena, Mexico, Level 1

This is the story of a good father. There are only a few good fathers. It is not hard to be a father, but it is difficult to be a good one. A soft heart and clear head are not enough to be a good father. A good father says yes when the answer should be yes, and no when the answer should be no. Good fathers know when to say yes.

A good father lives in the presence of God. He has the imagination of a child. He can make an airplane out of two pieces of old wood. A good father understands the opinion of his son.

A good father teaches his son responsibility and the value of hard work. When he gets old, he is respected for his efforts. He is loved.

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