

## **Advanced - Reading & Comprehension Check**

### **Meeting New People / Social Skills**

#### **“First Impressions”**

##### **Reading**

Andre had only been living in Iowa City for three weeks, but he knew the bus schedule by heart. It had become an important part of his daily routine, and he had memorized the layout of the downtown. What he hadn't figured out yet is how to start a conversation with Americans out in public.

Back home in Guadalajara, greetings were warm and often led to a hug or a handshake. People easily chatted in line at the grocery store or while waiting for the bus. In Iowa, Andre noticed that people smiled politely in silences but rarely initiated small talk.

One afternoon Andre attended a welcome mixer for international students. The room buzzed with quiet conversations and the clinking of coffee cups. He spotted a group of students standing near the snack table and decided to introduce himself.

“Hi, I’m Andre,” he said, offering a firm handshake. “I’m from Mexico. Nice to meet you.”

A woman named Claire smiled. “Nice to meet you too! What program are you in?”

“Public health,” he replied, “And you?”

“Linguistics,” she said. “Iowa winters are brutal, but the people are friendly, once you get past the small talk barrier!”

Andre laughed. “Yes! I have noticed that. In Mexico, we talk to strangers all the time. Here, people seem more reserved.”



Claire nodded. "It's true. We value personal space a lot, but once someone invites you to coffee or a potluck, that is a sign they want to get to know you better." Andre thanked Claire for her kindness and insight.

Later that week, Andre was invited to a cook-out by one of his classmates. He brought homemade tamales and explained the tradition behind them. The group was curious and asked questions about his family, holidays, and food customs. All of their questions came from a place of kindness and curiosity, but I did feel a little awkward being the center of attention.

By the end of the cook-out, Andre felt more at ease. He realized that while social norms were different, the desire to connect was universal. It just took a little patience and a few tamales!



**Potluck:** an informal event between friends, families, and sometimes co-workers. Every guest brings a small dish that can be shared. Sometimes they are themed. For example, "Christmas Potluck" or "Around the World."

**Cook-out:** This is similar to a Barbeque (BBQ). The host will typically grill meat (hamburgers, hotdogs, chicken, etc.) and provide side dishes. Guests are welcome to bring drinks, snacks, desserts, or items like napkins or forks. Ask the host what you should bring!

## **Questions**

**True or False? If False, correct the statement.**

1. Andre is from Guatemala. True / False
2. Andre feels awkward trying to start small talk in the U.S. True / False
3. Andre feels comfortable navigating his new city. True / False
4. He meets a nice woman at a potluck. True / False
5. Claire is not a student at the university, but she works in the area.  
True / False
6. Potlucks are a common way for Americans to make friendships.  
True / False
7. Andre now feels more confident in his abilities to start conversations.  
True / False
8. Andre brought a classic American dish to the cook-out. True / False
9. Andre did not make a good first impression. True / False

### **Free Response Questions**

1. Give as much detail as you can. Who is Andre? What is he like? Are you similar?
2. What is the American norm that makes Andre uncomfortable or lonely? How would or does Andre describe Americans?
3. Who does Andre meet in the story? Who is she? What does she tell Andre?
4. Does Andre make a good first impression at the student party and at the cook-out? Why or why not?
5. What advice would you give Andre?

**Share a story**

1. Have you ever been to a potluck or a cook-out? Did you bring anything? What was it like? In your culture, do you typically bring food or drinks to a party or for the host?
2. If you hosted a potluck or cook-out, what would it look like? What food would you make? Who would you invite? Would you show a movie or play games? Would it be outside during summer time or inside during winter?