

culture

Do the right thing

1 Reading

Read the text about a Korean girl, Kim Su-Jung, who went to live in the USA. Which is more familiar to you: American or Korean culture? Have you ever experienced culture shock?

I moved from Korea to the USA when I was 14 years old. The first few weeks were great – everything was exciting and different. Going to the supermarkets was an adventure: the foods were all new to me and everything was so big!

The biggest culture shock for me was going to high school. First of all, I looked different. All the other girls looked so much older than me. They wore make-up and coloured their hair. And I never went to a school with boys before.

So the first thing I did to try to fit in was have a perm. I also started wearing make-up, but I wasn't very good at putting it on. My eye-liner

always seemed to smudge and my lipstick was always the wrong colour. I loved nail polish though. I used to wear different colours on each finger. I also got my ears pierced.

I found Americans a lot more open than Koreans. When I ate my dinner in the cafeteria, I always tried to ignore the boys and girls kissing each other over the table. People don't do that in Korea. I found it hard to eat my dinner! The other thing I found hard was holding hands (or not holding hands). In Korea girls hold hands with girls, but in America people think that's really weird. Instead girls hold hands with their boyfriends. I thought that was really weird!

I wasn't cool either. In Korea it's good to be clever and do well at school, but in America I was a nerd for liking study (and I wore glasses, which made it worse).

I found making friends really hard. My English wasn't great, which made me shy of speaking, but also I didn't understand the rules of conversation. When people made me compliments like 'that's a nice sweater', I said 'thanks', but I didn't know what to say next. I didn't understand that they were just trying to start a conversation with me. So, I didn't have many friends at school. ■

2 Comprehension

Answer these questions about Su-Jung.

- 1 What did Su-Jung like about the USA?
- 2 What did she do to change her appearance when she first moved to the USA?
- 3 Why was it difficult for her to eat lunch?
- 4 What were the differences between how boys and girls behaved with each other in Korea and the USA?
- 5 Why did Su-Jung find it hard to make friends?
- 6 Do you think Su-Jung enjoyed her time at high school?

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3 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with these words.

culture shock pay someone a compliment
perm nerd cafeteria weird

- 1 If you have a ..., it makes your hair go curly.
- 2 You experience ... when you go to a new country.
- 3 If something is ..., it is strange or unusual.
- 4 A ... is like a restaurant, but there are no waitresses and you have to serve yourself.
- 5 A ... is someone who likes to study hard. They are not cool.
- 6 If you ..., it means you say something nice to them.

4 Writing

Have you ever been to a foreign country and found it strange in any way? Have you ever lived in a foreign country? Write about the differences between your country and the country you visited or lived in.

If you haven't been to a foreign country, write about what life is like in your school. Do you think Su-Jung would find it difficult in your school too?