

Select Readings, Second Edition **Intermediate, Chapter 10 Test**

Read the passage and answer the questions that follow.

Cultural Faux Pas¹

by C. M. Hanzie

When traveling outside of the comforts of your own culture, it is always rewarding to put yourself deep within your host culture to develop a better appreciation of your new surroundings. However, things that might be considered ‘normal’ in your home country could be perceived as rude or offensive in someone else’s, and vice versa.

Before entering a foreign environment, it is best to find out what to expect. Read as much as you can before traveling to a new country to become an expert in their social rules and cultural differences. Travel guides will usually provide a very specific list of “do’s” and “don’ts.” Make sure to make use of Internet sites or forums, and of course do not hesitate to ask the locals. It is better to ask what might seem like a ridiculous question to one person, than to make a fool of yourself in front of a larger group.

When I first moved to Japan, I was surprised that people ‘slurped’ when they ate noodles—even picking up the bowl to drink the soup. Making noise while eating and drinking straight from the bowl is definitely frowned upon in the U.S. But in Japan, it is not only *not* rude, it is actually expected.

Over the years, I have traveled to many places. Each country, and sometimes even the various subcultures² within a country, may have its own set of cultural taboos³ and acceptable behavior. Here is a short list of some of the more interesting yet strange local customs that I have come across:

- Discussing sports in Germany is considered an uneducated thing to do.
- In Russia, where drinking vodka is a normal part of everyday life, not drinking is considered impolite.
- Do not blow your nose in public in Korea, China, Saudi Arabia, or France.
- In Brazil, the sign that is used in North America to mean “OK” means something completely different—don’t use it!
- When in Thailand, never pat a small child on the head. It is considered bad luck.
- In many Asian countries, such as China, pointing with the forefinger in public is considered quite rude.
- Albania can be a confusing place for many foreigners—the locals shake their head to indicate “yes” and nod to indicate “no.”

¹ **faux pas** (from French) mistake

² **subcultures** smaller cultures within a larger culture

³ **taboos** unacceptable behavior

In conclusion, if you happen to commit a cultural faux pas, don't worry too much about it. Mistakes happen whether we like it or not. Sometimes that's the only way to learn.

1. The reading is primarily about _____.
 - A. what to do if you make a mistake in another culture
 - B. how to communicate in other cultures
 - C. the most offensive cultural mistakes in the world
 - D. tips for avoiding cultural mistakes
2. How is the information in this reading generally organized?
 - A. Organized by time
 - B. Organized by order of importance
 - C. Organized by similarities or differences
 - D. Organized alphabetically
3. Which of the following is not mentioned as a way to find out about cultural differences?
 - A. Make up a list of "do's" and "don'ts"
 - B. Look at travel guides
 - C. Visit Internet forums
 - D. Ask local people
4. In Japan, the writer found all of the following unusual about eating noodles except _____.
 - A. it's OK to drink directly from the bowl
 - B. it's OK to hold the bowl directly to your mouth
 - C. it's considered rude to make noise
 - D. it's expected that people make noise
5. Not agreeing to drink together is seen as rude in _____.
 - A. Germany
 - B. Russia
 - C. Brazil
 - D. Thailand
6. What country is not mentioned as a bad place to blow your nose in public?
 - A. Korea
 - B. China
 - C. Japan
 - D. Saudi Arabia
7. What custom in Albania is considered confusing to many foreigners, according to the reading?
 - A. They use the opposite head movements for 'yes' and 'no' compared to other cultures.
 - B. They nod their head for 'yes.'
 - C. They shake their head for 'no.'
 - D. None of the above
8. What can you infer about making the American hand gesture for "OK" in Brazil?
 - A. People in Brazil would think it's very funny.
 - B. People in Brazil would think it's extremely rude.
 - C. People in Brazil would think it's childish.
 - D. People in Brazil would think you want money.
9. If you make a cultural mistake, the author says you _____.
 - A. should worry—an apology is a good idea

- B. shouldn't worry—nobody cares if you do
- C. should worry—it's easy to be misunderstood
- D. shouldn't worry—sometimes it's the best way to learn

10. The author's purpose in writing this article was not to _____.
- A. instruct
 - B. entertain
 - C. inform
 - D. criticize