

Name: Class: Date: / /

Let's Speak English



It was the first day of class. Two of her new ESL⁽¹⁾ classmates wanted to know where Tara was from. They were both from Iraq. Because Tara looked Iraqi, one of the women asked Tara, in English, if she was from Iraq. Tara replied, "No, I'm not." Then the women took turns asking Tara if she was from Iran, or Syria, or Jordan. To each question, Tara responded with a simple no. Laughing, one woman said to the other, "She's not from anywhere!" The two went to their desks, talking to each other in Arabic.



The next day, the teacher divided the students into groups of four. The students in each group asked introductory questions of each other. A student in Tara's group asked her, "Where are you from?" Tara answered that she was from Iraq. The two women who had questioned Tara the day before were sitting only a few feet away. Both of them heard Tara's response. "Aha!" they both exclaimed. "You ARE from Iraq!" Tara smiled and said yes.



Then she apologized to both of them for lying the day before. She explained that she had not wanted to get into an Arabic conversation with them. It had been her experience that many ESL students continued to speak their native language in ESL class, and Tara had not come to ESL class to practice her Arabic. In her opinion, ESL students should try to speak English only.



"I agree," said Rose. "You're 100 percent right," agreed Jennifer. "Rose and I must stop speaking Arabic to each other. Right, Rose?" Rose nodded, and then said something in Arabic. All three women laughed. Over the next four months, Tara became friendly with both women, although she never spoke a word of Arabic to them during class or break.

(1) ESL: English as a Second Language

Answer: Use your imagination!

1. In which country are the girls studying?

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2. How old are they?

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3. Why are they studying English?

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4. What does Tara's father do?

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5. What does Tara's mother do?

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6. What is Tara's favourite food?

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Write

How often do you speak English?

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Why are you studying English?

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What can you do to improve your English?

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