



Coming to America

Everyone who comes to America gives up something in pursuing the American dream. Some people give up their traditional dress; others teach their children to speak only English. Everyone gains something as well: a new accent, a sense of individualism, a new beginning. The immigrant experience is one of profound losses and joyous gains.

Conversation Questions

1. Have you lost something you wish you had worked harder to keep? What have you gained that you are most proud of or happy with?
2. If you have children born in America, or if you are the child of an immigrant, how connected do you feel with your heritage?
3. What advice would you give to someone who is new to America?

Shorter Reads

“How to Get Your Green Card in America” by Sarah Mathews

<https://goo.gl/Yi45A5>

Mathews's parents gave up a lot when they left Oman, but in coming to America, Sarah gained a lot. The author explores everything she learned as a youth in America—including how getting your green card makes you feel like a pardoned Thanksgiving turkey, safe and overjoyed but also aware that others aren't so lucky.

“I Found the House My Grandparents Abandoned in 1947” by Ahmed Ali Akbar

<https://goo.gl/QT47AH>

The author's grandparents were born in the India that existed before Pakistan was created. Ahmed revisits the neighborhood that could have been his while unearthing his family's history and discovering what was lost when his grandparents immigrated.





“A Childhood Spent inside a Chinese Restaurant”

by Susan Cheng

<https://goo.gl/Mkcc1H>

Born to Chinese immigrants in America, the author grew up thinking in Mandarin first, English second. While she grew up with Eastern values firmly instilled into her upbringing, Susan gained a sense of individualism by being American: liberation from what her parents wanted and the freedom to be her own person.

“Making Great Pho Is Hard, but Making a Life from Scratch is Harder” by Nicole Nguyen

<https://goo.gl/b7hyyq>

When Nguyen's parents began their lives in America, they encountered barriers faced by countless immigrants. What they were not prepared for was the feeling that that they were giving up pieces of their identity as they worked to conform to American norms. The author explores how her family maintained their connection to their homeland by cooking and enjoying food together.

“How I Learned to Celebrate Eid Al Adha in America” by Zainab Shah

<https://goo.gl/TzbrYf>

Among the hustle and bustle of going to school, holding a job, making rent, and avoiding being labeled a terrorist, Shah lost connection to the traditions of Pakistan after immigrating to America with her husband. The author recounts how, after eating an Eid dinner in sweatpants, she works to make the next Eid a better one by delving a little deeper into her heritage.

Longer Reads

- *Americanah* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
- *The Fortunes* by Peter Ho Davies

