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ABSTRACT

Seven German-American cross-cultural social situations are presented in English, each followed by a multiple-choice question concerning the etiquette or cultural implications of the actions. An answer key provides comments to stimulate class discussion. These everyday situations occur in Germany or the United States, and include eating at a restaurant, shopping in an open-air market, greeting friends, choosing clothes to wear, getting a German driver's license, changing clothes at a beach in Germany, and singing the national anthem at a football game in St. Louis, Missouri. (MSE)

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AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF GERMAN  
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**VISITORS ABROAD**

- Eating At A Restaurant*
- At The Open-Air Market*
- Greeting Friends*
- Clothes*
- A German Driver's License*
- On A Beach In Germany*
- At A Football Game In St. Louis*

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### **EATING AT A RESTAURANT**

Paul Banning has just arrived in Germany and is eating his first meal in a restaurant. His knife and fork are lying on his plate while he talks to the German people at the table. He hasn't finished with his meal when the waiter comes and removes his plate. He is very confused, still hungry and wonders what he did wrong.

Why did the waiter take his plate?

- A. *The restaurant was very crowded and the waiter was in a hurry to clear the table.*
- B. *The waiter was ready to serve dessert.*
- C. *The knife and fork lying on the plate indicated that Paul was finished eating.*
- D. *The waiter felt that Paul was too fat and didn't want him to overeat.*

## CLOTHES

Betty Jones is planning to go out to eat with her German host family. Because Betty had been in town in the afternoon and was wearing jeans, she was planning to change into a nice dress before they went out at 7. Betty assumed she would change when Mr. and Mrs. Koch changed. Mr. Koch came home from the office and at quarter till seven he said: "Well, are we ready to go?" Mrs. Koch said: "I guess so," and Betty ended up going to the cafe in her jeans.

Why didn't the Kochs change:

- A. *They forgot.*
- B. *Germans are not as concerned about how they appear in public as Americans are.*
- C. *Since they weren't going to bathe, the Kochs didn't want to put clean clothes on their dirty bodies.*
- D. *They never intended to change clothes. They were already wearing the clothes they had planned to wear.*

## AT THE OPEN AIR MARKET

Bob and Ray were American students studying in Germany. One day after class they were walking by an open air market in the village square and saw some beautiful peaches in one of the stalls.

They looked so good that Bob walked over and started to squeeze the peaches. Immediately the Marktfrau came running over to him.

Why did the women come running?

- A. *German service is so good the customer never has to wait more than a few moments.*
- B. *The Marktfrau thought that Bob was a shoplifter.*
- C. *It is not customary to touch produce before buying it.*
- D. *She thought that Bob was a rich American and she thought he was cute.*

## GREETING FRIENDS

Ben, a visiting American student, has just learned the custom of shaking hands with everyone. He is very conscious of making mistakes in social situations. He is in a Gaststätte drinking beer with friends. Another friend walks in. Ben waits for him to shake hands. Instead the friend knocks on the table. Ben is very confused when everyone else knocks afterwards.

Why did they knock on the table?

- A. *The friends were angry because he came late.*
- B. *Knocking on the table is an accepted way of greeting friends.*
- C. *They were knocking on wood for good luck.*
- D. *They are irritated because of the slow service in this Gaststätte.*

### A GERMAN DRIVER'S LICENSE

Joe, a high school senior, was living with a German family as an exchange student for one year. Used to having a car, he misses it very much and mentions at the dinner table that next semester he plans to enroll in driver's training in the local Gymnasium so he can get a German driver's license. When he says this, everyone starts to laugh.

Why did everyone laugh?

- A. *Foreigners can't get a German driver's license.*
- B. *Joe was not aware that German schools do not offer driver's training.*
- C. *German cars are too expensive for most teenagers.*
- D. *They thought that he would have difficulty learning the German way of driving on the left side of the road.*

### ON A BEACH IN GERMANY

Susan is visiting a family in Germany. They decide to visit a beach. Susan assumes that their swim suits are in their beach bags. When they arrive on the beach she looks around for a bathhouse, but can't find one. When she returns she finds the family is already in swim suits. Susan ends up sitting on the beach in her clothes all day as she's too embarrassed to change without a bathhouse.

Why did the German family have no problem with their swimsuits?

- A. *The German family had changed into their suits at home.*
- B. *Susan had overlooked the bathhouse that the German family had used.*
- C. *It's common practice on a German beach to change one's clothes under a towel.*
- D. *Germans have exhibitionist tendencies.*

### AT A FOOTBALL GAME IN ST. LOUIS

Inge is visiting friends in St. Louis and they decide to take her to a football game. Before the game begins, the band comes on the field and plays the national anthem. Everyone else stands up during the song, but Inge doesn't and looks very confused.

Why doesn't Inge Stand?

- A. *She thinks everyone thinks the band is so good they are standing in appreciation, but she doesn't think they are that good.*
- B. *Inge wasn't aware that it is traditional to play the national anthem before football games and that people rise while it is being played.*
- C. *Inge felt that since she wasn't American, she didn't need to stand for the American anthem.*
- D. *The car was parked a long way from the football stadium and Inge was too tired to stand.*

## ANSWER KEY

### EATING AT A RESTAURANT

Your answer was A:

This answer is incorrect. As in America, the waiter waits until you are finished eating. Go back and choose another answer.

Your Answer was B:

This answer is incorrect. Paul didn't order dessert. Go back and choose another answer.

Your answer was C:

**This answer is correct.** Germans lay their knife and fork parallel to each other on the plate to indicate that they are finished, no matter how much food is left. To show that they have not yet finished with their meal, Germans lay the knife and fork at right angles to each other on the plate.

Your answer was D:

This answer is incorrect. German waiters do not make judgements about their customers.

### CLOTHES

Your answer was A:

Wrong. They did not forget. Try again.

Your answer was B:

Incorrect. Germans do like to dress well and are conscious of how they appear in public.

Your Answer was C:

Wrong again: it is not customary for Germans to bathe as often as Americans, but this does not mean that they are careless about their appearance.

Your answer was D:

**Right.** Germans have fewer clothes than Americans, but these are usually of better quality and are worn more often. Many clothes are more expensive there than in the United States.

## AT THE OPEN AIR MARKET

Your answer was A:

This is incorrect. One often has to wait in Germany for service.  
Go back and choose another answer.

Your answer was B:

Bob may have been a little shady looking. But he had not actually done anything to indicate he was going to steal the peaches. Go back and choose another answer.

Your answer was C:

The individual behind the counter is always the one who selects the fruit or vegetables. The attitude is that you take what you are offered or go somewhere else to shop.

Your answer was D:

Boy, you are dumm, dumm, dumm!  
Don't go back and reread the article. You'll never understand it. Ask your teacher for special help. You need it!

## GREETING FRIENDS

Your answer was A:

This answer is incorrect because this was a casual gathering with no set time.  
Go back and choose another answer.

Your answer was B:

**This answer is correct;** friends do knock on the table to greet each other when there is a large group in a Gaststätte instead of shaking hands. This is a custom primarily among students.

Your answer was C:

This answer is incorrect because knocking on wood for good luck is an American custom, not a German one, in this situation.  
Go back and choose another answer.

Your answer was D:

This answer is incorrect. Although the service in a Gaststätte may be slow due to the apprentice method of training waiters, they are not knocking on the table because they are irritated.

Go back and choose another answer.

## A GERMAN DRIVER'S LICENSE

Your answer was A:

This is incorrect because many foreigners including the "Gastarbeiter" drive a car and have a German driver's license.

Go back and try again.

Your answer was B:

**This is the correct answer.** German schools don't offer driver's education and the German "Gymnasium" offers only college prep courses. Furthermore, it is very difficult and expensive to get a German driver's license (over \$600). It's just about as hard to get a German driver's license as an American pilot's license. Therefore, they laughed because Joe thought it was such a simple matter to get a driver's license.

Your answer was C:

This is partly right. German regulations do not allow older, poorly maintained cars on the road. Badly rusted cars are not allowed. Therefore, even used cars are beyond the means of most teenagers.

The fact that Joe would not be able to afford a German car would not be a laughing matter. Let's try again.

Your answer was D:

This is incorrect. You're thinking of England. Germans drive on the right side just like Americans.

Go back and try again.

## ON A BEACH IN GERMANY

Answer A:

This answer is incorrect as Susan was right and the German family had their swimsuits in their beach bags. Go back to the story, read it again and choose another answer.

Answer B:

No, there were no bathhouses on the beach. Go back and choose another answer.

Answer C:

**This is the correct answer.** This is not considered improper conduct in Germany.

Answer D:

No, are you sure you know what exhibitionist tendencies are?



## AT A FOOTBALL GAME IN ST. LOUIS

Your answer was A:

This is an incorrect answer. Although people do stand to show appreciation in Germany, it is not done at sports events.

Choose another answer.

Your answer was B:

**Right.** The national anthem is not played before sporting events in Germany

Your answer was C:

Wrong. Germans are usually polite and if Inge had understood she would have stood up.

Your answer was D:

Although the car was parked a long way away, Inge was not tired. Try again.