



# Bonuses: English Story Translations

Companion Guide for Our Top-Rated Book on Amazon:  
Short Stories in Spanish for Beginner Learners

*Full English translations for every story in the book*

*By MindSmith Books*

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# Introduction

**Welcome to your *Spanish Short Stories - Complete English Translations* guide!**

You've been enjoying our Spanish short stories book – thanks for making us a small part of your Spanish language-learning. These complete English translations are designed to be a companion for the original book, helping you unlock every detail, cultural reference, and linguistic nuance from the 15 engaging stories you've been reading.

We know that sometimes you might translations to fully digest some parts of the book, confirm your understanding, or just to satisfy your curiosity about a particular phrase. That's exactly why we created this comprehensive translation guide – **so you can learn with confidence and never feel stuck.**

Each section contains the complete English translations of the stories, plus all the comprehension questions translated as well, maintaining the same formatting and structure as your Spanish book, to make it easy to refer back.

## How to Use This Translation Guide

- **Read the Spanish first** – always attempt to understand the story in Spanish before checking the translation (in the original book!). Look up specific sentences or paragraphs rather than reading the entire English version.
- **Check your comprehension** – after reading in Spanish, you can then double-check your understanding in English
- **Learn cultural context** – use the translations to understand Spanish cultural references and expressions that might not be obvious
- **Review the vocabulary** – compare how Spanish expressions translate into natural English

**Important Note:** These translations are meant to support, not replace, your Spanish reading practice. The magic happens when you read in Spanish first, then use these translations to confirm, clarify, and deepen your understanding.

This guide pairs perfectly with your main Spanish stories book – keep them together and use this translation guide whenever you need an extra boost.

Gracias!

– *The MindSmith Books Team*

# 1. A Family Recipe

Lucía is fifteen years old and lives in the city of Quetzaltenango, Guatemala. Today is a special day because she's going to visit her **grandmother** in a small **village** near the city. Lucía's grandmother, Doña Elena, is seventy years old and is very good at **cooking** traditional Guatemalan food.

Lucía **arrives** at her grandmother's house at nine in the morning. The house is small but very beautiful, with red and yellow **flowers** in the **garden**. There are many family photos on the walls.

"Hello, my dear!" says Doña Elena with a big **smile**. "How wonderful that you're here! Today we're going to prepare pepián for tomorrow's celebration."

"Hello, grandmother!" responds Lucía, giving her a strong **hug**. "I'm very **excited** to learn to cook with you."

Pepián is a traditional **dish** from Guatemala. It's a very important food for family **celebrations**. Lucía's family is going to celebrate her grandfather's **birthday** tomorrow, and everyone is going to eat together.

"First, we need to go to the **market** to buy the ingredients," says Doña Elena.

Lucía and her grandmother **walk together** to the village market. The market is full of people, colors, and delicious **smells**. There are many **stalls** with fruits, vegetables, meats, and spices.

"Good morning, Doña Elena," **greet**s a lady who sells **vegetables**. "What do you need today?"

"Good morning, María. We need **tomatoes, chili peppers**, and cilantro to make pepián," responds the grandmother.

Lucía observes attentively **while** her grandmother **buys** all the ingredients: chicken, tomatoes, chilies, **pumpkin seeds, sesame seeds**, cinnamon, and more spices.

After buying everything, Lucía and Doña Elena **return** to the house. In the **kitchen**, Doña Elena puts all the ingredients on the table.

"This recipe is very **old**," explains the grandmother. "My mother taught me to make it, and her mother taught her. It's a tradition in our family for many generations."

Lucía **listens** with interest while her grandmother talks about family history. Doña Elena gives Lucía a **red apron**.

"First, we're going to **prepare** the pumpkin seeds and sesame seeds," says Doña Elena. "We need to toast them in this **frying pan**."

Lucía puts the seeds in the pan and moves them with a **wooden spoon**. The smell of the toasted seeds is very pleasant.

"Now, we need to **grind** these seeds and spices to make the sauce," explains the grandmother.

Lucía learns to grind the ingredients in a traditional stone mill called a "**grinding stone**". It's difficult at first, but with her grandmother's help, she learns quickly.

"Very good, Lucía!" says Doña Elena with pride. "You're learning very fast."

While they cook, Lucía and her grandmother talk about many things: school, friends, family, and **stories** from when Doña Elena was young.

"When I was your age, my grandmother also taught me to make pepián," says Doña Elena. "It's important to **remember** our traditions."

After several hours of work, the pepián is ready. The sauce is **thick** and has a **dark** red color. It smells delicious and Lucía is very proud of helping to prepare it.

"Can I **taste** a little?" asks Lucía.

"Of course!" responds her grandmother, serving some on a small plate.

Lucía tastes the pepián. "It's **delicious**, grandmother! It's the best pepián I've tasted."

"It's because **we made it** with love," says Doña Elena, smiling. "Food always **tastes better** when you prepare it with love and for the people you love."

At the end of the day, they put the pepián in large **containers** for tomorrow's celebration. Lucía is happy because she **learned something** very important about her culture and her family.

"Thank you for **teaching me**, grandmother," says Lucía, hugging Doña Elena.

"Thank you for wanting to learn, my dear," responds the grandmother. "Someday, you'll teach this recipe to your children and grandchildren, and our family tradition will continue."

That night, Lucía stays to sleep at her grandmother's house. While she looks at the **stars** from the window, she thinks about all the generations of women in her family who have prepared the same dish.

*She feels connected with her past, her present, and her future, she thinks. This recipe is not just food; it's an important part of my identity and my cultural **heritage**.*

### Comprehension Check

1. How old is Lucía? a) 10 years old b) 15 years old c) 18 years old d) 70 years old
2. What traditional dish do Lucía and her grandmother prepare? a) Tacos b) Paella c) Pepián d) Empanadas
3. Why are they preparing this special food? a) For a birthday party b) To sell at the market c) For a cooking contest d) Because Lucía is hungry
4. Where do Lucía and her grandmother buy the ingredients? a) At a big supermarket b) On the internet c) At the village market d) In the grandmother's kitchen
5. How does Lucía feel at the end of the story? a) She's bored with cooking b) She's afraid to cook alone c) She feels connected to her cultural heritage d) She wants to become a professional chef

Answers: 1-b, 2-c, 3-a, 4-c, 5-c

## 2. The Jungle Excursion

Valeria is thirty years old and is a **nurse** from Costa Rica. Now she's on vacation for two weeks and wants to visit a new place. She never travels alone, but today is different. Valeria is in Iquitos, a city in Peru near the **Amazon jungle**.

"Welcome to our excursion on the Amazon River," says Ernesto, the tour **guide**. "My name is Ernesto and I'm from an indigenous community **near** here."

Valeria looks at the other people in the group. There are ten tourists from different **countries**: Mexico, Argentina, United States, and Canada. Everyone speaks a little Spanish or English.

"Hello, my name is Valeria," she says to a **young** woman beside her. "I'm from Costa Rica."

"Nice to meet you, Valeria. I'm Isabel from Argentina," responds the woman with a **smile**. "Is this your first time in the Amazon jungle?"

"Yes, I always **want** to visit the jungle, but I never have time. I work a lot as a nurse," explains Valeria.

The group gets on a large **boat** to begin the trip down the river.

The boat moves **slowly** over the **brown** water of the Amazon. It's very hot and there's a lot of **humidity** in the air.

"Look to the **right**," says Ernesto pointing toward the **trees**. "Those are **capuchin monkeys**. They're very common in this region."

All the tourists take photos of the small monkeys that **jump** from tree to tree. Valeria observes attentively. *I've never seen animals like this **in the wild***, she thinks.

"During our trip, we're going to see many animals," continues Ernesto. "**Birds**, monkeys, reptiles, and maybe **pink dolphins**. We're also going to **learn** about the medicinal plants we use in our communities."

After an hour navigating the river, the boat **arrives** at a small village **on the shore** of the Amazon. The houses are made of wood and are **built** on **stilts** to protect them from floods during the **rainy** season.

"Now we're going to visit a local family," explains Ernesto. "They're going to **show** us how they live here and some of their traditions."

An **elderly woman greets** the group with a wave. "Good morning, visitors. Welcome to our house."

The woman invites the group to **sit** in a circle and begins to **explain** how they use jungle plants for natural medicine. She shows different **leaves** and **roots**.

"This plant is called **cat's claw**," she says, showing a plant with curved **spikes**. "It's good for **pain** and to **strengthen** the immune system."

Valeria is very interested because as a nurse, she **knows a lot about** modern medicines, but doesn't know much about natural remedies.

At midday, the group eats a typical lunch: **fresh fish** from the river with yuca and plantains. The **food** is simple but delicious.

After lunch, they continue the **trip** by boat. The heat and mosquitoes are difficult for Valeria. She's **hot** and **tired**, but also **excited** to see more of the jungle.

"How do you **feel**?" asks Isabel, noticing that Valeria is a little **uncomfortable**.

"I'm hot and the mosquitoes **bother** me a little," responds Valeria. "But I'm fine. The jungle is incredible and I want to see more."

In the afternoon, the group walks along a **trail** in the jungle. Ernesto **shows** plants and explains how deforestation affects the local communities.

"Many trees are **cut down** to make **farmland** or to sell the wood," he explains. "This is a big problem for us and for the animals that live here."

**At sunset**, they return to the boat. The sky turns **orange** and red over the river. It's very **beautiful** and everyone takes photos.

"Tonight we're going to do something special," announces Ernesto. "After dinner, we're going to navigate the river to see **nocturnal** animals and the stars."

After a simple dinner at a small local restaurant, the group returns to the boat. Now it's dark and the guide has a **flashlight** to look for animals.

"Look there," **whispers** Ernesto, **pointing** the light toward the water. "A **caiman**."

Everyone observes with **amazement** the bright eyes of the caiman in the dark water. Valeria feels a little fear but also much **excitement**.

After seeing some nocturnal animals, Ernesto **turns off** the flashlight. The boat moves slowly in the darkness. **Above**, thousands of stars **shine** in the black sky.

"Wow!" sighs Valeria. *I've never seen so many stars. In the city there are **too many lights** to see the night sky well*, she thinks.

In that moment, sitting in the boat under the stars, listening to the sounds of the jungle and feeling the gentle **breeze** from the river, Valeria feels at peace. She thinks about her **stressful** work as a nurse and how this trip is so different.

"What are you thinking about?" asks Isabel.

"I think I'm happy to come here alone," responds Valeria. "Sometimes we need to **leave** our **comfort zone** to **find** new experiences."

Isabel **nods**. "Yes, traveling alone can **be scary at first**, but it helps you meet new people and yourself."

That night, when Valeria returns to her room at the small hotel in Iquitos, she writes in her diary about **everything** she has seen and learned: the animals, the medicinal plants, life in the jungle, and the stars over the Amazon River.

She's tired but happy, and **already plans** her next trip to another place in Latin America. *This time, I'm not afraid to travel alone*, she **thinks** with a smile.

## Comprehension Check

1. Where is Valeria from? a) Peru b) Argentina c) Costa Rica d) Mexico
2. What job does Valeria have? a) She's a tour guide b) She's a nurse c) She's a teacher d) She's a cook
3. What nocturnal animal do they see during the boat ride? a) A pink dolphin b) A capuchin monkey c) A caiman d) A jaguar
4. What do they learn from the local village? a) How to fish in the river b) How to build boats c) How to use medicinal plants d) How to cook typical dishes
5. How does Valeria feel at the end of the story? a) She's afraid to travel alone b) She wants to return to work c) She's planning another solo trip d) She's sad because she has to leave

Answers: 1-c, 2-b, 3-c, 4-c, 5-c

### 3. No-Car Day

Diego is twenty-five years old and lives in a small apartment in Mexico City. He works as a programmer at an office in the city center. Normally, Diego **drives** his car every day to go to work because he lives **far away** and the traffic is terrible.

Diego **wakes up** early. He looks out the window and sees a blue sky, without the typical **gray cloud** of **pollution**. *What a beautiful day!*, he thinks. He decides to go out and walk around the city without using his car.

After breakfast, Diego leaves his apartment. On the **corner** of his street there's a public bicycle station. Many people use these bicycles today.

"Good morning!" says a man who rents bicycles. "Do you want to rent a bicycle for No-Car Day?"

"No, thank you," responds Diego. "I prefer to walk today. I want to explore my **neighborhood** on foot."

Diego walks through streets that are normally full of cars. Today they're full of people: families with children, couples **walking dogs**, friends on bicycles. Everyone seems happy to have the streets for themselves, without the **noise** and smoke from cars.

On a big street, Diego sees many people exercising. There are yoga classes, zumba, and **dance** in the middle of the street. The music is loud and cheerful. Diego **stops** to watch.

"Do you want to participate?" asks a woman with a yellow "No-Car Day" program shirt.

"No, thank you," says Diego with a **smile**. "I'm just watching. It's my first No-Car Day."

"Enjoy it!" responds the woman. "If you walk **northward**, there's a very beautiful park ten minutes from here."

Diego follows the woman's **advice** and walks north. After ten minutes, he **finds** a small park that he has never seen before, even though he has lived in this neighborhood for two years. *How strange!*, thinks Diego. *I pass near this park every day in my car, but I never **notice** it.*

The park has big trees, colorful flowers, and a small lake with ducks. **There are many** people sitting on the grass, reading books or talking with friends. Diego sits on a **bench** and observes the park for a few minutes.

After resting, Diego continues walking. He's a little **hungry** and looks for a place to eat something. On the next street, he sees a taco stand. The delicious **smell** of meat and tortillas reaches him.

"Two al pastor tacos, please," Diego asks the vendor, an older man with a white apron.

"Sure, young man. With everything?" asks the vendor.

"Yes, with everything, and a **hibiscus** water, please," responds Diego.

While he waits for his tacos, Diego observes the street. Without cars, he can hear people's conversations, the music from the stores, and the birds in the trees. It's a very different experience from the city he knows.

The vendor gives him his tacos and his **drink**. Diego pays and sits on a small **stool** next to the stand. The tacos are **delicious** and Diego thinks he has never eaten such good tacos, **even though** there are many taco stands near his house and office.

After eating, Diego continues his **walk** through the city. In a small plaza, he sees several people **selling** art: paintings, sculptures, handmade jewelry. Diego approaches a woman who is painting on an **easel**.

"Hello, good morning," says Diego. "I really like your **paintings**."

"Thank you," responds the woman. "My name is Ana and I'm an artist. Are you interested in art?"

"Yes, I like it a lot," says Diego. "I never have time to enjoy art or **visit** museums, but today I have the whole day free."

Diego and Ana **talk** for half an hour about art, the city, and No-Car Day. Diego buys a small painting of Mexico's Cathedral for his apartment.

"It's interesting," says Ana. "Many people who live in the city don't really know the city. They're always in their cars, **looking at** traffic, not the beautiful **buildings** or interesting people."

Diego thinks Ana is right. He has lived in Mexico City for five years, but today he's discovering new places just a few streets from his apartment.

In the afternoon, Diego **returns** home walking. He's tired but happy. He has walked many **kilometers**, discovered a new park, eaten delicious tacos, and met Ana, the artist.

In his apartment, Diego hangs the new painting on the wall and looks at his car keys on the table. He thinks that maybe he doesn't need to use his car every day.

He can walk more, use public bicycles, or take the metro. This way he can discover more of his city and help the environment.

*"Next Sunday," **decides** Diego, I'm going to leave my car at home again, even if it's not the official No-Car Day.*

### Comprehension Check

1. What job does Diego have? a) He's a taco vendor b) He's a programmer c) He's an artist d) He's a teacher
2. Why is there a "No-Car Day" in Mexico City? a) To repair all the streets b) To celebrate the mayor's birthday c) To reduce pollution d) To save gasoline
3. What does Diego discover near his house? a) An expensive restaurant b) A computer store c) A park d) An art museum
4. What does Diego buy from the artist? a) A sculpture b) A painting of Mexico's Cathedral c) Jewelry d) A portrait of himself
5. What does Diego decide at the end of the story? a) To buy a new car b) To move to another city c) To use his car less and walk more d) To become an artist

Answers: 1-b, 2-c, 3-c, 4-b, 5-c

## 4. Salsa Class

Elena is twenty-eight years old and **works** at a **bank** in Cali, Colombia. Every day, she **gets up** at six in the morning, goes to work, returns home, eats, and watches television. Her life is a little **boring** and she wants to do something different.

One day, Elena sees a **sign** on the street near her office. The sign says: "Learn to dance salsa! Classes for **beginners** every Wednesday at seven at night."

Cali is famous for salsa. Many people call Cali "the **worldwide** capital of salsa." But Elena has never **taken** dance classes.

*Maybe it's a good idea,* thinks Elena. *I need a new **hobby** and to meet new people.*

Wednesday after work, Elena goes to the dance **academy**. She's a little nervous because she doesn't know how to dance well. When she enters the **hall**, she sees about fifteen people. Some people are alone like her, and others are with friends.

"Welcome to the beginner salsa class!" says the teacher. "My name is Carlos and I'm a professional **dancer**. Don't worry if you've never danced salsa before. We're going to learn **step by step**."

Carlos **plays music** and begins to show the basic salsa movements.

"First, we're going to learn the basic step," says Carlos. "One, two, three... one, two, three..."

Elena tries to follow the steps but it's difficult. She looks at her **feet** and tries to move them **like** Carlos, but she gets confused. Other people also have problems. A girl beside her laughs when she makes a **mistake**.

"My name is Daniela," says the girl. "This is also my first salsa class."

"Hello, I'm Elena," she responds, happy to meet someone in the same situation. "It's harder than I thought."

"Now we're going to practice in **pairs!**" announces Carlos. "Don't be afraid, it's normal to feel a little **clumsy** at first."

Carlos **groups** the students into pairs. Elena partners with Daniela. They practice the basic steps together, **counting** "one, two, three" while they move their feet.

After twenty minutes, Carlos changes the pairs. Now Elena dances with a young man named Miguel.

"Hello, I'm Miguel," he says with a **smile**. "Is this your first time in a salsa class?"

"Yes," responds Elena. "I've lived in Cali for five years, but I've never taken salsa classes before. And you?"

"This is my second class," says Miguel. "Last week was my first time. It's difficult but very **fun**."

Elena and Miguel practice the steps together. Miguel already knows a little more and helps Elena with the **rhythm**. **Little by little**, Elena feels more comfortable with the movements.

Carlos walks around the hall, **correcting** the students and giving advice.

"Elena, relax your **shoulders**," says Carlos. "And don't look at your feet so much. Feel the music."

Elena tries to follow Carlos's advice. She stops looking at her feet and tries to feel the music. Surprisingly, it's easier this way. Her **hips** begin to move naturally with the rhythm.

The salsa music is **cheerful** and energetic. Elena begins to enjoy the class, although she still **makes mistakes**. She no longer feels as nervous as at the beginning.

At the end of the class, all the students are **sweating** but smiling. Elena feels good. She's tired but happy to have come to the class.

"Very good, everyone!" says Carlos. "For the first class, you did very well. Next week we continue with more steps."

While Elena picks up her **bag** to leave, Daniela approaches her.

"Some of us are going to go to a bar near here," says Daniela. "There's live salsa music on Wednesdays. Do you want to **come** with us?"

Elena hesitates for a moment. Normally she goes directly home after work, but today she feels more social and **adventurous**.

"Yes, I'd like to go," responds Elena with a smile.

The group walks together a few **blocks** until they reach a bar called "Sabor Caleño." The bar isn't very big but it's full of people. On a small **stage**, a band plays live salsa music. Many couples **dance** in the center of the bar.

"This place is very popular among locals," explains Miguel while they find a table. "It's not a tourist place, it's authentic."

Elena, Daniela, Miguel, and other students from the class **order** drinks and begin to talk. Elena **learns** that Miguel is an **engineer** and Daniela is a language teacher. Other students have different jobs: there's a cook, a doctor, a university student.

The band plays famous salsa songs. Some people from the group begin to dance. Miguel **invites** Elena to dance.

"I don't know if I can dance in public yet," says Elena, a little **embarrassed**.

"Don't worry," responds Miguel. "Here **nobody judges**. In Cali, dancing salsa is part of our **culture**. What's important is to enjoy."

With a little **courage**, Elena accepts and goes to the dance floor with Miguel. They try to use the steps they learned in class. They don't dance perfectly, but they have a lot of fun. The music, lights, and **energy** of the place are incredible.

Later that night, when Elena returns home, she thinks about how different this Wednesday has been. Normally at this hour she's in pajamas watching television, but today she has learned to dance salsa, met new people, and discovered a bar with live music.

Elena goes to bed with a **smile** on her face. *I'm sure I'm going to **continue** with the salsa classes, she thinks. Not just for the dancing, but also for the people and the new experience.* While she falls asleep, she thinks about the salsa steps: one, two, three... one, two, three...

## Comprehension Check

1. Where does Elena work? a) At a dance academy b) At a restaurant c) At a bank  
d) At a hospital
2. Why does Elena decide to take salsa classes? a) Because she's a salsa professional b) Because her life is a little boring and she wants to do something different c) Because she needs exercise d) Because her friend Daniela invites her
3. Who helps Elena with the rhythm during class? a) Carlos, the teacher b) Daniela, another student c) Miguel, another student d) The music band
4. What do Elena and her new friends do after class? a) They go directly home b) They go to an expensive restaurant c) They go to a bar with live salsa music d) They go to another dance class
5. How does Elena feel at the end of the story? a) She's sad because she doesn't dance well b) She's happy and decides to continue with salsa classes c) She's angry with Miguel d) She's tired and doesn't want to dance anymore

Answers: 1-c, 2-b, 3-c, 4-c, 5-b

## 5. Change of Plans

Daniel is twenty-six years old and works as an engineer in San José, the capital of Costa Rica. Today is Friday and Daniel is very **happy** because he has plans for the weekend. He's going to travel to Manuel Antonio beach with three friends.

Daniel finishes work at four in the afternoon. He leaves his office with a small **backpack** for the trip. Normally, he takes the bus at five in the afternoon, arrives at the beach at night, and spends all Saturday and Sunday there.

While he walks toward the bus **station**, it begins to rain. At first it's **light rain**, but in a few minutes it becomes a strong **storm**. The streets fill with water quickly.

**What bad luck!**, thinks Daniel. *I hope the bus leaves on time.*

When he arrives at the station, he sees many people waiting. An employee speaks over the **speaker**.

"Attention, passengers. Due to the heavy rains, there are **floods** on the highway to Quepos and Manuel Antonio. All buses to that area are canceled until tomorrow afternoon."

Daniel takes out his phone and calls his friend Miguel.

"Mae, I have bad news," says Daniel using the **typical Costa Rican expression** "mae."  
"The buses to Manuel Antonio are canceled because of the rain."

"Yes, I **just heard**," responds Miguel. "It's a shame, but we can't do anything with this **weather**. Do you want us to try to go tomorrow?"

"I don't know if it's **worth it** to go for just one day," says Daniel. "Better we wait until next weekend."

"You're right. We'll talk later to plan again," says Miguel.

Daniel ends the call and looks out the station window. It's still raining hard. He has the whole weekend free and now he doesn't know what to do. *I'm always **busy** with work and I never have time to really get to know my own city*, he thinks.

**Suddenly**, Daniel has an idea. *Why not **take advantage** of this time to explore San José? I've lived here for three years but I only know the way from my house to work.*

He leaves the station with his umbrella and walks in the rain. The streets of downtown San José are very lively **despite** the bad weather. There are many stores, restaurants, and **coffee shops** open.

Daniel sees a sign that says "National Museum of Costa Rica." He always passes in front of this museum when he goes to work, but he has never entered.

"Good afternoon," he greets the guard at the **entrance**. "How much does admission cost?"

"Good afternoon, it's 1500 **colones** for nationals and 5500 for foreigners," responds the guard.

"I'm a national," says Daniel, showing his ID.

Daniel buys his ticket and enters the museum. It's a historic building that used to be a military **barracks**. Inside there are exhibitions about Costa Rica's history, nature, and indigenous cultures.

In one room, Daniel observes pre-Columbian gold objects with interest. In another, he learns about Costa Rica's different **ecosystems**: tropical forests, beaches, mountains, and volcanoes.

*It's incredible that I've never visited this place before,* thinks Daniel while he looks at photographs of the national parks.

After an hour in the museum, the rain has **decreased** a little. Daniel decides to continue walking through downtown. He passes by the Plaza de la Cultura, where there are musicians playing under a **small roof**, protected from the rain.

Daniel stops in front of a small bookstore. He has never entered but the place seems interesting. He decides to enter to see the books and **get some shelter** from the rain.

"Good afternoon," greets an older lady behind the **counter**. "**Are you looking for something** in particular?"

"Good afternoon. I'm just looking, thank you," responds Daniel.

The bookstore is small but **cozy**, with wooden **shelves** full of used books. While Daniel looks at the titles, the lady **gets closer**.

"Do you like to read?" she asks.

"Yes, but **lately** I don't have much time," admits Daniel. "I work a lot."

"We all need time to read and **think**," says the lady with a smile. "Books are **windows** to other worlds."

Daniel talks with the lady, whose name is doña Carmen, for almost half an hour. She recommends several books by Costa Rican authors. Daniel buys two books: a novel and a poetry book.

"Thank you for your **visit**," says doña Carmen when Daniel says goodbye.

"Thank you, I'll be back soon," responds Daniel, smiling.

By this time, Daniel is a little **hungry**. It's **almost** seven at night. Near the bookstore, he sees a small café called "Flavors of My Land." The place is simple but seems authentic and there are several people eating inside.

Daniel enters and sits at a table by the window. A waitress approaches with the menu.

"Good evening, what would you like to order?" asks the waitress.

Daniel looks at the menu and sees typical Costa Rican dishes. "**What do you recommend?**" he asks.

"Our **gallo pinto** with egg, **ripe plantains**, and cheese is very good," she responds. "It's the traditional breakfast, but we serve it all day."

"Sounds perfect. And a coffee with milk, please," says Daniel.

While he waits for his food, Daniel opens one of his new books and begins to read. The **rain** gently hits the window, creating a calm and cozy atmosphere.

When his plate arrives, the aroma of gallo pinto fills the air. Daniel takes a photo of his food and sends it to his friends with the message: "My plan B **is not too bad**."

The gallo pinto is delicious. The ripe plantains are sweet and the fresh cheese **pairs perfectly** with the rest of the flavors. The coffee with milk is strong and aromatic, just how he likes it.

After dinner, Daniel pays the bill. The rain has completely stopped. The streets are wet but the sky is **clearing up**. He can see some stars appearing between the clouds.

Daniel **walks** slowly toward his apartment, which is about twenty minutes from downtown. While he walks, he thinks about his day. This morning he was excited to go to the beach, and he felt very **disappointed** when they canceled the buses. But now, he feels happy about how he spent the day.

*Sometimes changes of plans lead us to discover new things, he thinks. I live in this city but I never **take the time** to really **get to know it**.*

When he arrives at his apartment, Daniel puts the new books on his nightstand. Before sleeping, he sends a message to his friends:

"What do you think if tomorrow, instead of trying to go to the beach, we meet to explore San José? There's an interesting museum, a great bookstore, and a café with the best gallo pinto I've tasted."

His friends respond quickly, **all in agreement** with the idea. Daniel goes to bed with a smile. His weekend will be different from what he planned, but equally special. Sometimes, the best moments come from unexpected changes.

## Comprehension Check

1. Why can't Daniel go to the beach? a) Because he's sick b) Because his friends canceled the trip c) Because there are floods and the buses are canceled d) Because he has to work on the weekend
2. What typical Costa Rican expression does Daniel use when talking with his friend? a) Che b) Mae c) Wey d) Pana
3. What is the first place Daniel visits in San José? a) A coffee shop b) A bookstore c) The National Museum d) A park
4. What typical Costa Rican food does Daniel eat? a) Tacos b) Gallo pinto c) Paella d) Ceviche
5. What does Daniel decide to do the next day? a) Try to go to the beach again b) Stay home reading c) Explore San José with his friends d) Visit another museum alone

Answers: 1-c, 2-b, 3-c, 4-b, 5-c

## 6. An Important Phone Call

Ana is thirty years old and lives in Chicago, United States. She is **Colombian**, but moved to the United States five years ago for work. Ana is a software engineer and works for an important tech company.

Although she lives far from her family, Ana **keeps in touch** with them. Every Sunday at ten in the morning (Chicago time), Ana **calls** her parents in Medellín, Colombia. It's a tradition she never breaks.

Today is Sunday, and Ana is **excited** because she has important news for her parents. She sits on her sofa with a cup of coffee and her phone. Outside it's **snowing**, but inside her apartment it's warm.

Ana **dials her parents' number** and waits. After three **rings**, she hears her mother's voice.

"Hello! Ana, is that you?" **asks** her mother with a cheerful voice.

"Yes, mom, it's me," responds Ana. "How are you and dad?"

"We're very well, my love. Your dad is here beside me. I'm putting you on **speaker** so you can talk to both of us."

"Hello, daughter!" **greet**s her father. "How are you? How's the weather in Chicago?"

"I'm fine, dad. Here it's snowing a lot. The temperature is minus five degrees," says Ana. "How's the weather in Medellín?"

"**It's sunny** and warm, as always," responds her father. "About 25 degrees. You know, Medellín's eternal **spring**."

Ana smiles. She **misses** the climate of her **hometown**. In Chicago the winter is very cold, very different from warm Medellín.

"How's your work going, daughter?" asks her mother.

"Fine, mom. I'm working on a new project. It's interesting but there's a lot of work," explains Ana. "But today I don't want to talk about work. I have very important **news** for you."

"What news?" ask her parents **at the same time**, with curiosity.

"I'm going to travel to Colombia next month!" **announces** Ana enthusiastically. "My brother Andrés **is getting married**, right?"

"Yes!" exclaims her mother. "But how do you know? Andrés wanted to **give you** the news himself."

Ana laughs. "Andrés called me yesterday. He was so excited that he **couldn't wait** until today. He asked me to be his 'witness' at the wedding."

"How wonderful!" says her father. "I can't believe you're both going to be here. How long are you going to **stay** in Medellín?"

"Three weeks," responds Ana. "I already asked for vacation at my job. I want to **spend time** with you, help with the wedding **preparations**, and also visit my friends."

Ana's mother is so excited that she begins to plan everything.

"We're going to prepare your room. Do you remember your neighbor María? Her daughter also **got married** last month. And your aunt Carmen is coming from Bogotá for the wedding. Oh, and you need to try the food for the reception..."

Ana smiles while her mother talks rapidly, mentioning relatives and friends. It's typical of her mother to **get excited** and make many plans.

"Mom, breathe," says Ana laughing. "**There's still a month to go**. We have time to organize everything."

"Your mother is very excited," says her father. "It's been two years since we've seen you. We **miss you** a lot, daughter."

"I miss you too," responds Ana with a more serious tone. "Chicago is interesting, but it's not the same without family."

After talking about the wedding for a few minutes, the conversation changes to other topics. Her parents tell her the **latest news** about family and neighbors. Ana listens attentively, asking questions from time to time.

Suddenly, her father **laughs**.

"You know what, daughter? Your Spanish is still good, but now you speak with a bit of an American **accent**. And sometimes you mix in English words."

Ana **blushes** a little. It's true. After five years speaking English every day, sometimes she **forgets** some words in Spanish.

"I'm sorry, dad. Sometimes it's difficult to **switch** between the two languages," Ana apologizes.

"Don't **worry**, my love," says her mother. "We're proud of you. It's not easy to live in another country with another language."

Ana **appreciates** her mother's words. Despite the distance, her parents always **support her**.

"**By the way**," comments her father, "have you seen the soccer matches? Colombia beat Brazil last week."

"Yes!" responds Ana enthusiastically. "I watched it with my Colombian friends here. We had a small **party** in my apartment. It was very fun."

Ana and her father begin to talk about soccer, while her mother listens patiently. Although her mother isn't very interested in soccer, she knows it's a passion that father and daughter **share**.

After a few minutes, Ana's mother interrupts:

"Ana, I almost forgot to **tell you**. Do you remember Sofía, your friend from university? I saw her at the mall yesterday. She's **expecting a baby**."

"What good news!" exclaims Ana. "I didn't know. I have to call her to **congratulate her**."

Ana makes a mental note to contact her friend later. Although she has many friends in Chicago, her **friendships** from Medellín are special. They're friendships that have **lasted** many years.

While they continue talking, Ana uses the word "deadline" instead of "fecha límite" without realizing it. Her father **corrects** her kindly.

"Deadline? What's that? A dead line?" **jokes** her father.

Ana laughs. "Sorry, dad. I meant to say 'fecha límite' for a project. It seems I'm speaking **Spanglish**."

"Spanglish," repeats her mother, laughing too. "When you **come** to Colombia next month, we're going to refresh your Spanish."

"I'll be careful with my Spanglish when I'm there," promises Ana. "I don't want the **taxi drivers** to think I'm a tourist and **charge** me extra."

Everyone laughs at the comment. Ana looks out the window. The snow continues falling softly. *Soon I'll be in Medellín with my family*, she thinks. The idea makes her feel happy.

The call continues for almost an hour. Ana and her parents talk about everything: family **memories**, news from Colombia, life in the United States, and more details about Andrés's **wedding**. Despite the thousands of kilometers that **separate** them, they feel very close in this moment.

Finally, it's time to **say goodbye**.

"Well, mom and dad, I have to go," says Ana. "I'm going to meet some friends for lunch."

"Okay, daughter," responds her mother. "Take care of yourself. We **love you**."

"I love you too," says Ana. "Next week we'll talk again, and in a month I'll be there with you."

"We're **counting** the days," says her father. "Until next Sunday."

"Until Sunday. Goodbye," Ana says goodbye.

After **hanging up**, Ana stays seated on the sofa for a moment, smiling. These Sunday calls always give her energy for the whole week. And now, with the upcoming trip to Colombia, she feels even more connected to her family and her **roots**.

Ana takes her phone again and looks at the calendar. She marks the date of her trip to Medellín and puts a small heart next to the date.

Although her life is in Chicago now, a part of her heart will always be in Colombia, with her family.

## Comprehension Check

1. Where does Ana currently live? a) Medellín, Colombia b) Chicago, United States c) Bogotá, Colombia d) Miami, United States
2. What is the important news Ana has for her parents? a) She's getting married b) She's pregnant c) She's going to travel to Colombia for her brother's wedding d) She got a new job
3. What does Ana's father notice during the conversation? a) That Ana speaks very fast b) That Ana has an American accent and mixes English words c) That Ana has completely forgotten Spanish d) That Ana seems sad
4. How long does Ana plan to stay in Colombia? a) One week b) Two weeks c) Three weeks d) One month
5. What does Ana do after hanging up the phone? a) She cries because she misses her family b) She marks her trip date on the calendar with a heart c) She immediately calls her brother d) She packs her bags for the trip

Answers: 1-b, 2-c, 3-b, 4-c, 5-b

## 7. The Usual Café

Marta is seventy-two years old and lives in Buenos Aires, Argentina. She is a **retired** literature teacher. After teaching for forty years, now she enjoys her free time and the tranquility of her daily routine.

Every morning, Marta wakes up at seven, **takes a shower, gets dressed**, and leaves her small apartment in the San Telmo neighborhood. She walks three blocks until she reaches her favorite destination: the café "La Esquina."

"La Esquina" is a traditional **Buenos Aires** café with wooden tables, antique chairs, and large windows that face the street. The walls are decorated with black and white photos of Buenos Aires from fifty years ago.

Marta enters the café and greets the waiter.

"Good morning, Julio," says Marta with a smile.

"Good morning, Marta!" responds Julio **in a loud voice**. Julio always speaks very loudly. "**The usual?**"

"Yes, please," says Marta, sitting at her favorite table, next to the window.

"The usual" for Marta is coffee with milk and two **medialunas**. Argentine medialunas are similar to French croissants, but sweeter and smaller. They're the typical **breakfast** in Argentina.

While she waits for her breakfast, Marta looks around. The café is full of regular **customers**. **In the corner** table are Mr. Rodríguez and his wife. They're almost eighty years old and have been coming every day for more than twenty years. They always share a coffee and read the newspaper together.

At another table there's a young man with a computer. He's a university student and comes every morning to study before his classes. He works concentrated while he drinks coffee after coffee.

*It's interesting how we all have our routines, thinks Marta. This café is like a **second home** for many of us.*

Julio arrives with Marta's breakfast.

"**Here you are** with the coffee with milk and hot medialunas," he says, using the typical Argentine "**voseo**."

"Thank you, Julio," responds Marta. "They look delicious."

Marta takes a **sip** of her coffee with milk. It's perfect: not too hot, with the exact amount of sugar. Then she **takes a bite** of a medialuna. It's **crispy** on the outside and soft on the inside, with a light flavor of butter and sugar.

Through the window, Marta observes the street. Buenos Aires is already awake and active. People walk quickly, some go to work, others take their children to school. The **buses** pass full of passengers, and taxi drivers honk their **horns** impatiently with the traffic.

Buenos Aires has **changed** a lot since Marta was young. There are more tall buildings, more tourists, more technology. But some things **remain the same**: traditional cafés like "La Esquina," where people still **gather** to talk, read, or simply watch life pass by.

While she enjoys her breakfast, Marta takes a small book out of her purse. She likes to read a little each morning. Today she's reading a book by Jorge Luis Borges, one of her favorite Argentine authors.

Suddenly, the café door opens and a young man enters with a **backpack** and a camera. By his appearance and the way he looks at everything with curiosity, Marta supposes he's a tourist. The man talks to Julio, but seems to have difficulties communicating.

"I don't understand... um... do you speak English?" asks the tourist with a foreign accent.

Julio shakes his head. "No, only Spanish," he responds, making an **apologetic gesture**.

The tourist seems confused and a little frustrated. Marta, who had taught English in addition to literature, decides to help. She leaves her book on the table and approaches.

"Excuse me, can I help you?" asks Marta to the tourist. "I speak English."

The tourist's face **lights up** with a **smile of relief**.

"Oh, thank you!" he says. "I'm trying to find my way to San Telmo Market."

"The San Telmo Market is not far from here," responds Marta in English. "It's about five blocks in that direction," she adds, pointing south.

Then, she returns to Spanish to practice with him.

"El Mercado de San Telmo está a cinco cuadras en esa dirección," she repeats, speaking slowly and pointing again.

The tourist nods, understanding the word "cuadras" and the direction.

"¿Cinco cuadras?" he repeats, pronouncing carefully.

"Sí, exactamente," confirms Marta, smiling. "Cinco cuadras hacia el sur, y luego verá muchas personas y **stalls** de artesanía."

The tourist **tries** to repeat in Spanish. "Gracias por su ayuda. Mi español es... muy malo."

"No, está bien," says Marta kindly. "Está aprendiendo. ¿De dónde es usted?"

"Soy de Canadá," responds the tourist. "Mi nombre es David."

"Mucho gusto, David. Yo soy Marta."

David smiles and points to a medialuna on the counter. "¿Cómo se llama eso? Se ve delicioso."

"Se llama medialuna," explains Marta. "Es como un croissant, pero más dulce. Es muy típico de Argentina. **You should try one.**"

"Me-dia-lu-na," repeats David slowly. "I'll try one."

David orders a medialuna and coffee from Julio, who now smiles, seeing that the tourist is more comfortable.

"¿Puedo sentarme con usted?" asks David to Marta in basic Spanish. "Quiero practicar español."

"Por supuesto," **responds** Marta, indicating the chair in front of her. "Soy profesora jubilada. Me gusta ayudar."

During the next half hour, Marta and David converse. She speaks slowly in Spanish, and when he doesn't understand something, she explains it in English. She **tells** him about Buenos Aires, the places he should visit, the food he should try. David listens attentively and tries to respond in Spanish, making mistakes but **making an effort** to communicate.

It's a bilingual conversation, full of laughter when David mispronounces a word or when he uses "tú" instead of the Argentine "vos."

"En Argentina no decimos 'tú estás', decimos 'vos estás'," explains Marta. "Es nuestro español **particular**."

"Vos estás en Buenos Aires," tries David.

"¡Muy bien!" **congratulates** Marta, **clapping** softly.

When he finishes his coffee, David **thanks** Marta for her help and patience.

"Ha sido un **placer** conocerla," he says, getting up. "Ahora voy al Mercado de San Telmo. Cinco cuadras al sur."

"Exacto," confirms Marta. "Que **disfrutes** tu visita a Buenos Aires."

David says goodbye to Marta and Julio, and leaves the café with a smile. Marta returns to her table and her book, but **can't help but** smile too. In her years as a teacher, she always enjoyed helping students learn. Although she's retired, that part of her hasn't changed.

The rest of the morning **goes by** as always. Marta finishes her coffee, reads a few more pages of her book, and observes life in the café and on the street. At eleven, she **pays her bill**, says goodbye to Julio, and goes out to walk through the streets of San Telmo.

While she walks, she thinks about David and the thousands of tourists who visit Buenos Aires each year. All bringing something new, all taking a little piece of the city with them.

*The city **changes** constantly, reflects Marta, but places like "La Esquina" keep its essence alive.*

Tomorrow, as always, she'll return to the café for her **morning ritual**. Maybe she'll find new stories, new conversations, new **faces**. But there will always be the coffee with milk, the medialunas, and the warm familiarity of the everyday.

### Comprehension Check

1. What does Marta have for breakfast every day? a) Toast with butter b) Coffee with milk and medialunas c) Tea and cookies d) Orange juice and cereal
2. In which Buenos Aires neighborhood does Marta live? a) Palermo b) Recoleta c) San Telmo d) La Boca
3. Where is the tourist that Marta helps from? a) United States b) England c) Australia d) Canada
4. What characteristic of Argentine Spanish does Marta teach David? a) The pronunciation of "ll" b) The use of "vos" instead of "tú" c) Buenos Aires slang d) The Spanish accent
5. Where did David want to go? a) The Obelisk b) The Pink House c) San Telmo Market d) La Boca

Answers: 1-b, 2-c, 3-d, 4-b, 5-c

## 8. Return to the Village

Jorge walks through the streets of his village in Chiapas after five years in Mexico City. The bus drops him off at the **main square**, where everything seems smaller than in his **memories**. The houses have the same bright colors: blue, green, yellow.

*How can it be that everything looks so different?*, thinks Jorge while he **carries** his backpack.

His father, don Roberto, waits for him at the door of the **family** house. The two men **hug each other**.

Don Roberto has more **wrinkles** now, but his eyes still shine with **joy**.

"**My son!**" says don Roberto. "How was the trip?"

"Very **long**, dad. But I'm here now," responds Jorge. "The house looks good."

Jorge observes the house where he **grew up**. The structure is solid, but it definitely needs work.

In Mexico City, Jorge works in an office and uses computers all day. Here, the work is different: more physical, more direct.

"Tomorrow we start," says Jorge. "I have two weeks of vacation."

That night, Jorge **eats dinner** with his father. Doña Carmen, the neighbor, brings them chicken tamales and fresh **pozol**. The **flavor** transports Jorge to his childhood.

"How's life in the capital?" asks doña Carmen.

"It's very fast," responds Jorge. "There's always noise, traffic, crowds. Here everything is calmer."

"Yes, but also more **boring**," says doña Carmen with a smile.

Jorge laughs. Maybe boring isn't the right word, he thinks. Here there's a peace that doesn't exist in the city.

The next day, Jorge wakes up early. Outside, he hears the sounds of the village: **roosters** crowing, dogs **barking**, children playing. In the city, Jorge always wakes up to alarms and **car horns**.

After breakfast, Jorge and his father begin the **repairs**. First, they climb onto the **roof** to fix the **leaks**. Jorge **isn't used to** physical work, but he **has fun** using his hands to build something useful.

"Do you remember when you were ten years old?" asks don Roberto. "You helped me with everything."

"Yes, dad. But then I was smaller and more **agile**," says Jorge, **wiping** sweat from his forehead.

While they work, friends from Jorge's youth arrive. Carlos, his best friend from school, now manages a **grocery** store. María, his high school classmate, is a teacher at the elementary school.

"Jorge!" shouts Carlos. "How's the **city slicker**?"

"Very good, but tired," responds Jorge. "This **tool** weighs more than my computer."

Everyone laughs. María brings fresh water and tortillas for lunch. The conversation is natural, as if Jorge **had never left**. They talk about families, jobs, plans for the future.

"When do you return to Mexico?" asks María.

"In two weeks," says Jorge. "I have responsibilities at the office."

"But do you like living there?" asks Carlos.

Jorge pauses before responding. Do I like it?, he thinks. The city has opportunities, but also stress. Here I have community, family, tranquility.

"It's complicated," he finally says. "The city has **advantages**, but I also miss this."

That afternoon, Jorge walks alone through the village. He visits the church where he made his first communion, the school where he learned to read, the river where he swam with his friends. Each place has stories, memories that connect his past with his present.

At Carlos's store, Jorge buys ingredients for dinner. He plans to cook something special for his father.

"Do you know how to cook?" asks Carlos with curiosity.

"A little. In the city, I cook fast food. Here I want to try something traditional."

Jorge prepares **mole** with help from doña Carmen's instructions. The process is slow, but **relaxing**. While he cooks, he thinks about his situation. His job in the city is **steady** and **well paid**, but it doesn't give him the satisfaction he feels here.

During dinner, don Roberto enjoys the mole.

"It's delicious, my son. Like the one your mother used to make."

Jorge smiles. His mother died when he was fifteen years old. Cooking her recipe is a way to **remember her** and **honor her**.

"Dad, what do you think if I stay a little longer?" asks Jorge.

"More time? And your job?"

"I can **work remotely** for a few weeks. I have internet on my phone."

Don Roberto smiles. "This is your home, my son. You can always stay."

Jorge looks out the window. The stars shine brighter here than in the city. Maybe, he thinks, it's time to **balance** my life. The city for work, the village for the **soul**.

## Comprehension Check

1. How many years was Jorge in Mexico City? a) Three years b) Five years c) Ten years d) Two years
2. What problems does the family house have? a) It has no electricity b) The roof has leaks and the kitchen needs paint c) It's very small d) It's very dirty
3. What traditional food does Jorge prepare for his father? a) Tamales b) Pozol c) Mole d) Tortillas
4. What job does Carlos, Jorge's friend, have? a) He's a teacher b) He works in an office c) He manages a grocery store d) He's a farmer
5. What does Jorge decide at the end of the story? a) Return immediately to Mexico b) Stay permanently in the village c) Work remotely for a few more weeks d) Sell the family house

Answers: 1-b, 2-b, 3-c, 4-c, 5-c

## 9. On the Other Side of the Border

Luz wakes up early in her apartment in Tijuana. Today is a special day: she's going to cross the **border** to visit her sister Rosa in San Diego. She hasn't seen Rosa in three years, since Rosa moved to California to study **nursing**.

**I hope everything goes well**, thinks Luz while she checks her documents for the third time: passport, visa, identification. She keeps them in her **bag** very carefully.

In the kitchen, Luz prepares coffee and toast for breakfast. She's nervous but also excited. Rosa promised to take her to her favorite taco restaurant after work.

"Ready for the adventure?" asks Luz **aloud**.

Luz walks toward the bus stop. On the street, she sees many people who are also going toward the border: workers who cross every day, tourists with cameras, families carrying gifts and food.

The bus is full, but Luz finds a seat near the window. Next to her sits an older lady carrying a **basket** with sweet bread.

"Are you going to visit your family?" asks the lady.

"Yes, my sister," responds Luz. "And you?"

"I'm going to see my grandchildren. They live in Chula Vista," says the lady with a smile. "Is this your first time **crossing**?"

"No, but it's been a long time since I've gone," explains Luz. "I'm a little nervous."

"Don't worry, dear. Just stay calm and answer the questions honestly," **suggests** the lady.

Luz practices English in her mind: My name is Luz. I am visiting my sister. I work in a **clothing store**... No, I work in a clothing store.

The bus arrives at the border **checkpoint**. Luz sees the **long lines** of people waiting their turn. Well, she thinks, here we go.

Luz **gets off** the bus and walks toward the pedestrian line. The sun is strong and many people use **hats** and carry **bottles** of water. The wait is long, but Luz observes everything with curiosity.

In front of her, a young man talks on the phone in English with a Mexican accent. **Like** Rosa, thinks Luz. She also **mixes** the two languages when she speaks.

"Next!" **shouts** the immigration officer.

Luz walks toward the **window**. The officer is a tall man in a blue uniform. Stay calm, Luz tells herself.

"Good morning," says the officer. "Documents, please."

Luz hands him her documents. The officer examines the passport and visa attentively.

"Purpose of your visit?" asks the officer.

"I am visiting my sister," responds Luz slowly and clearly.

"How long will you stay?"

"Two days," says Luz.

"What is your occupation?"

"I work in a clothing store," responds Luz, proud of her English.

The officer **stamps** the passport and **returns** it to her.

"Welcome to the United States. Have a nice day."

"Thank you," says Luz with a big smile.

**I did it!**, thinks Luz while she walks toward the exit. Outside, she sees taxis, buses, and cars with California **plates**. Everything looks different but familiar at the same time.

Luz takes a taxi toward the hospital where Rosa works. During the trip, the **driver** speaks Spanish with her.

"First time in San Diego?" asks the driver.

"Yes, well, it's been many years since I've come," responds Luz.

"It's a very beautiful city. It has beautiful beaches and good weather," says the driver.

"My sister says she really likes living here," comments Luz.

"Yes, there are many job opportunities, especially in hospitals and restaurants," explains the driver.

The taxi stops in front of the hospital. Luz pays and gets out with her small **suitcase**. Now to look for Rosa, she thinks.

At the hospital reception, Luz asks for her sister.

"Excuse me, I am looking for Rosa González. She works in the emergency room."

"One moment, please," says the receptionist while she looks at the computer. "Rosa is in room 204. Take the elevator to the second floor."

"Thank you very much," responds Luz.

In the elevator, Luz feels **butterflies** in her stomach. How will Rosa be? **Will she have changed a lot?**

Luz finds room 204 and knocks on the door. A familiar voice says "Come in!"

Luz opens the door and sees Rosa organizing **medicines**. Rosa looks up and screams with joy.

"Luz! Sister!" Rosa runs toward Luz and the two **hug tightly**.

"Rosa! **I missed you** so much," says Luz with tears in her eyes.

"I missed you too. How was the **crossing**?"

"Easier than I thought. The officer was very kind," responds Luz.

"Are you hungry? I know a perfect place for lunch," says Rosa.

"Yes! I want to try those famous tacos you always tell me about."

The sisters leave the hospital **arm in arm**. Rosa points to different places while they walk.

"That's my favorite supermarket, there's my apartment, and here is where we buy the best fish tacos," says Rosa.

They arrive at a taco stand painted green and red. The smell of fried fish and fresh tortillas fills the air.

"Don Miguel!" shouts Rosa. "I want to introduce you to my sister Luz."

"Nice to meet you, Luz!" says don Miguel. "Rosa talks about you all the time."

"Likewise," responds Luz. "Rosa says you make the best fish tacos."

"Well, let's see if she's right," says don Miguel with a smile.

While they wait for the tacos, the sisters **chat** about everything: Rosa's work, Luz's plans, family in Mexico. *It's as if time hadn't passed*, thinks Luz.

"You know what?" says Rosa. "Tomorrow is my day off. We can go to La Jolla beach."

"Perfect!" responds Luz. "**I haven't seen the ocean in years.**"

Don Miguel brings the steaming tacos. Luz tries the first bite and closes her eyes.

"Delicious!" says Luz. "It's worth crossing the border just for these tacos."

The sisters laugh and continue eating while they plan their day at the beach. How wonderful it is to be together again, thinks Luz.

## Comprehension Check

1. How long has it been since Luz has seen her sister Rosa? a) One year b) Two years c) Three years d) Five years
2. What is Rosa studying in California? a) Medicine b) Nursing c) English d) Administration
3. What advice does the older lady give Luz on the bus? a) To bring more money b) To speak only in English c) To stay calm and answer honestly d) Not to travel alone
4. Where does Rosa work in San Diego? a) At a restaurant b) At a store c) At a hospital d) At a school
5. What do the sisters plan to do the next day? a) Go shopping b) Visit a museum c) Go to La Jolla beach d) Return to Mexico

Answers: 1-c, 2-b, 3-c, 4-c, 5-c

## 10. A Difficult Customer

Diego arrives at his family's **cevichería** at five in the afternoon. The restaurant is called "El Pescador" and is located in **Miraflores**, Lima, Peru. His dad, don Carlos, is already preparing the ingredients for dinner.

"Diego!" says don Carlos. "Ready for another night of work?"

"Yes, dad. How was lunch?" asks Diego while he **puts on** his **apron**.

"Very busy. Many tourists came," responds don Carlos. "Tonight we expect more customers."

Diego checks the tables and organizes the menus. The restaurant is small but cozy, with marine decorations and photos of local fishermen. In the kitchen, his mom, doña Elena, **chops** onions and cilantro for the ceviche.

"Good afternoon!" says doña Elena. "Diego, can you help me with the **causas**?"

"Of course, mom," responds Diego.

Diego **peels** yellow potatoes and cooks them with salt. Causas are his favorite specialty: mashed potato with tuna, **avocado**, and mayonnaise. *I hope tonight is calm*, thinks Diego.

At six, the first customers arrive: a young couple who orders mixed ceviche and **purple corn drink**. Diego serves them with a smile.

"Is this your first time here?" asks Diego.

"Yes, they recommended this place to us," responds the woman. "They say you have the best ceviche in Miraflores."

"Perfect! You're going to try something delicious," says Diego.

The restaurant fills up quickly. Diego **takes orders**, serves drinks, and converses with customers. Everything goes well until a tall man in elegant clothes arrives.

"Do you have a table for one?" asks the man in English with an American accent.

"Sure, follow me please," responds Diego in English.

The man sits down and reads the menu attentively. Diego waits patiently.

"Excuse me," says the man. "I have many food allergies. No seafood, no dairy, no nuts."

*Oh no!*, thinks Diego. What is he going to eat at a cevichería?

"I understand," says Diego. "Let me check with the chef."

Diego walks toward the kitchen, worried. His dad **fries** fish and his mom prepares more ceviche.

"Dad, we have a problem," says Diego. "There's a customer who can't eat **seafood, dairy, or nuts.**"

"Seriously?" asks don Carlos. "What do you suggest?"

"I don't know. Almost our entire menu has fish or seafood," says Diego.

Doña Elena stops chopping onion and thinks.

"How about we make **chicken causa**?" she suggests. "We use **boiled** chicken, yellow potato, and vegetables. Without mayonnaise."

"Good idea," says don Carlos. "We can also make **chicken with rice** without cream."

Diego returns to the customer's table.

"Sir, we can prepare special dishes for you. Chicken causa without dairy, and rice with chicken," explains Diego.

"Hmm," says the man. "What exactly is causa?"

"It's mashed yellow potatoes with chicken and vegetables. A traditional Peruvian dish," responds Diego.

"Sounds interesting. But I also don't eat **onions or garlic,**" says the man.

***My goodness!***, thinks Diego. How are we going to cook without onion or garlic?

"One moment, please," says Diego, maintaining his smile.

Diego returns to the kitchen. His dad throws up his hands.

"Without onion or garlic? Impossible!" says don Carlos. "How do we cook Peruvian food without those **seasonings**?"

"Calm down, Carlos," says doña Elena. "We can improvise. Diego, what other flavors can we use?"

"Hmm," thinks Diego. "Lemon, cilantro, **yellow chili pepper**?"

"Exactly," says doña Elena. "We're going to make special causa with lemon and cilantro. And chicken rice using **fresh herbs**."

Diego helps his mom with the preparation. They boil the chicken with **bay leaf** and salt. They **mash** the potatoes with lemon and a little olive oil. They add fresh cilantro and **grated carrot**.

"How does it smell?" asks doña Elena.

"Different, but good," responds Diego.

For the rice, don Carlos uses **annatto** for color and **cumin** for flavor. Without onion or garlic, the recipe is a challenge, but the result looks promising.

"Ready," says doña Elena. "Let's take this to the customer."

Diego brings the plates to the table. The man tries the causa with curiosity.

"Mmm," he says after chewing. "This is very good. Different from what I expected."

"I'm glad you like it," responds Diego, relieved.

The man continues eating and tries the chicken rice.

"Excellent," he says. "You know, I travel a lot for work, and most restaurants can't accommodate my allergies. This is wonderful."

"Thank you very much," says Diego. "My family worked hard to make something special for you."

"I can tell," responds the man. "Could I get the recipe?"

Diego translates the conversation to his parents. Doña Elena smiles with pride.

"Tell him he can come whenever he wants," says doña Elena. "We can always cook something special."

Diego translates the message. The man pays his bill and leaves a generous **tip**.

"Thank you for your patience and creativity," he says before leaving.

After the man leaves, the family cleans the kitchen together.

"We learned something new today," says don Carlos. "We can adapt our traditional recipes."

"Yes," says Diego. "And maybe we can add special options to the menu."

"Good idea," says doña Elena. "We never know what type of customers are going to arrive."

Diego smiles. At first I thought it was going to be a terrible night, but it ended up being educational.

"Tomorrow we can experiment with more adapted recipes," says Diego.

"Perfect," respond his parents at the same time.

The family closes the restaurant happy with their new culinary **discovery**.

## Comprehension Check

1. What is the name of Diego's family restaurant? a) El Marino b) El Pescador c) El Ceviche d) El Miraflores
2. What is Diego's favorite specialty? a) Mixed ceviche b) Chicken with rice c) Causas d) Purple corn drink
3. What allergies does the American customer have? a) Only seafood b) Seafood, dairy, and nuts c) Seafood, dairy, nuts, onion, and garlic d) Only dairy
4. What ingredients do they use to replace onion and garlic? a) Salt and pepper b) Lemon and cilantro c) Tuna and avocado d) Annatto and cumin
5. How does the story end? a) The customer leaves angry b) Diego quits his job c) The family learns something new and the customer is satisfied d) They close the restaurant

Answers: 1-b, 2-c, 3-c, 4-b, 5-c

## 11. Sunday on a Bicycle

Natalia wakes up early this Sunday in her apartment in Bogotá. The **weather** is perfect for **Ciclovía**: sun, white **clouds**, and a gentle **breeze**. *Today is going to be a special day*, she thinks while she **looks through** the window.

Her cousin Andrea **lent** her blue bicycle to go to Ciclovía, the Sunday event where they close the main streets to car traffic. Thousands of Bogotá residents **go out** to walk, run, **skate**, and ride bicycles throughout the city.

"Natalia!" shouts Andrea from the kitchen. "Are you **ready**?"

"Almost," responds Natalia while she puts on her **helmet** and **checks** her **backpack**.

"Do you have water?"

"Yes, and also money to **buy** natural juices," says Andrea. "There are **street vendors** at all the parks."

Natalia **goes downstairs** carrying the bicycle. Outside, many people wait at the TransMilenio station with bicycles, skates, and athletic shoes.

"Where are we going?" asks Natalia.

"First downtown, then north on Carrera Séptima," explains Andrea. "We can stop at Simón Bolívar Park to listen to music."

Natalia gets on the bicycle **carefully**. It's been years since she's ridden a bicycle, but she soon remembers how to maintain **balance**.

*What a pleasant sensation!*, she thinks while she **pedals** slowly at first.

The streets are full of happy people. Complete families walk together, groups of friends talk while they jog, and children learn to ride bicycles with help from their parents.

"**Watch out for that dog!**" shouts a cyclist who passes quickly.

Natalia **brakes** and sees a small dog crossing the street running after a ball. Its **owner** runs behind shouting "Rex, come here!"

"How fun!" says Andrea **laughing**. "Ciclovía always has adventures."

They continue pedaling toward downtown. At Plaza de Bolívar, there are many tourists taking photos of the cathedral and the Capitol. Some use yellow bicycles from the public system.

"Look," says Natalia **pointing** to a group of tourists. "They're **lost**."

"Do you want to help them?" asks Andrea.

Natalia **approaches** an older couple looking at a map with confusion.

"Excuse me," says Natalia. "Do you need help?"

"Yes, please!" responds the lady with a Spanish accent. "We're looking for the Gold Museum."

"You're close," explains Natalia. "**Go straight** down this street to the corner, then **turn** left. Walk two **blocks** and you'll see the museum."

"Thank you very much," says the man. "Does Ciclovía happen every Sunday?"

"Yes, Sundays and holidays from seven in the morning to two in the afternoon," responds Natalia.

"How wonderful!" says the lady. "They should do this in Madrid."

Natalia returns to Andrea and they continue their route. They pass through the **pink zone**, where many restaurants serve special breakfasts for cyclists.

"**I'm thirsty**," says Natalia. "Shall we stop for a juice?"

"Perfect," responds Andrea. "There's a vendor near the park."

In the park, they find an older man who sells fresh tropical fruit juices. His colorful cart has mangoes, papayas, pineapples, and **passion fruits**.

"Good morning," says the vendor. "**What would you like to have?**"

"Two mango juices with water, please," orders Andrea.

"Perfect for **hydrating** after exercise," says the vendor while he prepares the juices.

"**Do you come often** to Ciclovía?"

"I do," responds Andrea. "But my cousin lives in Medellín. She's visiting this week."

"How nice!" says the vendor. "Medellín also has ciclovías, right?"

"Yes, but not as big as this one," says Natalia. "Bogotá has many kilometers of ciclovías."

They drink their juices while they observe people passing by. There are complete families on special bicycles with seats for babies. Groups of elderly people walk slowly while they **chat**. Young people use skates doing tricks.

"I love this diversity," says Natalia. "People of all ages enjoying public space."

"Yes," says Andrea. "It's a beautiful tradition of our city."

They finish their juices and continue north. At Simón Bolívar Park, they hear live music. A local band plays **vallenatos** on a small stage.

"How cheerful!" says Natalia moving her head to the rhythm of the music.

"Shall we dance a little?" asks Andrea.

The cousins leave their bicycles in a safe place and dance along with other people. The music creates a **festive** and relaxed atmosphere.

After dancing, they sit on the **grass** to rest. Natalia observes everything happening around: children playing, couples walking, dogs running free.

*When was the last time I felt so relaxed?*, thinks Natalia. *In Medellín I'm always busy with work.*

"What are you thinking about?" asks Andrea.

"About how different this is from day to day," responds Natalia. "Normally I spend Sundays at home watching television."

"Ciclovía connects us with the city and with other people," says Andrea. "It's exercise for the body and therapy for the **soul**."

"You're right," says Natalia. "When I return to Medellín, I'm going to look for similar activities."

"Perfect!" says Andrea. "And you can come every month to do Ciclovía with me."

Natalia smiles. What a good idea! This Sunday started as exercise, but ended up being much more.

The cousins take their bicycles and return slowly home. The sun is stronger now, but there's a lot of **shade** under the trees.

"Thank you for lending me the bicycle," says Natalia. "It has been an incredible experience."

"You're welcome," responds Andrea. "Next time we go all the way to the south of the city."

Natalia nods enthusiastically. *I'm already planning my next visit to Bogotá*, she thinks.

### Comprehension Check

1. What is Ciclovía? a) A bicycle store b) A Sunday event where they close streets to car traffic c) A park for exercising d) A cycling competition
2. Who lent the bicycle to Natalia? a) Her sister b) Her cousin Andrea c) A friend d) A vendor
3. Who does Natalia help during her route? a) Some lost children b) Some Spanish tourists looking for the Gold Museum c) A juice vendor d) Some cyclists
4. What type of music do they listen to at Simón Bolívar Park? a) Salsa b) Rock c) Vallenatos d) Reggaeton
5. What does Natalia decide to do after this experience? a) Move to Bogotá b) Buy a new bicycle c) Look for similar activities in Medellín and return monthly d) Stop exercising

Answers: 1-b, 2-b, 3-b, 4-c, 5-c

## 12. Voice Messages

It's seven in the morning in Montevideo. Martín is in his bed and **hears** the sound of his phone. He has a new WhatsApp message. It's from Sofía, his **girlfriend**, who lives in Buenos Aires.

*"Good morning, love," says Sofía's voice in the audio. "How did you sleep? I slept well, but I miss you a lot. Here it's raining and it's cold. **What's the weather like there?**"*

Martín smiles and gets out of bed. He walks toward the window and looks outside.

The **sky** is **clear** and it's sunny. He touches his phone's microphone and **records** his response.

*"Hello, my love!" says Martín. "I slept well, thank you. Here it's sunny and **beautiful**. I'm going to have breakfast and then work. **Have you eaten yet?**"*

After sending the message, Martín goes to the kitchen. He prepares **mate** and has some cookies with dulce de leche. His phone sounds again.

*"Yes, I already had breakfast," responds Sofía. "I had coffee with **medialunas**. Today I have an important **meeting** at work. I'm a little nervous. What plans do you have?"*

Martín thinks about his day. He has to go to the office, but first he wants to **walk** a little along the **promenade**. He likes to walk by the river before working.

*"Don't worry about the meeting," says Martín in his message. "You're very intelligent and you'll be fine. I'm going to walk along the promenade and then work. I **send** you a kiss."*

Martín **leaves** his apartment and walks toward the promenade. Montevideo is **calm** in the morning. There are few people on the street. Some **seagulls** fly over the river. Martín takes out his phone and records a message while he walks.

*"Look, love," says Martín. "I'm at the promenade. It's very windy, but it's **beautiful**. The seagulls are singing. **I wish you were here with me.**"*

Sofía responds quickly:

*"How **nice!**" she says. "I'm **on the subway on the way to work**. There are many people and **noise**. I prefer your quiet promenade. I love you."*

During the day, Martín and Sofía **exchange** several messages. Sofía **tells** that her meeting went well. Martín **shares** that he had lunch with **grilled steak** and french fries at a restaurant near his office.

*"How was work for you?"* asks Sofía in the afternoon.

*"Good, but long,"* responds Martín. *"Now I'm at home. I'm going to cook something simple for dinner. What are you going to eat?"*

*"I'm going to **order food for delivery**,"* says Sofía. *"I'm very **tired** to cook. Maybe a pizza or empanadas."*

At night, they both **go to bed** and send their last messages of the day.

*"Good night, love,"* says Sofía. *"Thank you for all the messages today. They make me happy even though we're **far apart**. I love you very much."*

*"I love you too,"* responds Martín. *"May you **rest** well. We'll talk again tomorrow. **Sweet dreams**."*

Martín **turns off** his phone and **closes** his eyes. Although Sofía is kilometers away, their voices keep them connected. Each message is like a virtual hug.

The next day, everything **begins** again. At seven in the morning, Martín hears the familiar sound of WhatsApp. It's Sofía, who **greet**s him from Buenos Aires.

*"Good morning, my love,"* she says. *"How did you sleep?"*

And so, day after day, their voices **travel** between the two cities, creating a **bridge** of love that knows no **borders**.

## Comprehension Check

1. Where does Martín live? a) Buenos Aires b) Montevideo c) Santiago d) Lima
2. How do Martín and Sofía communicate? a) By phone b) By email c) Through voice messages on WhatsApp d) By letter
3. What does Martín drink for breakfast? a) Coffee b) Tea c) Mate d) Juice
4. Where does Martín walk before going to work? a) Through the park b) Along the promenade c) Through downtown d) Along the beach
5. How does Sofía feel when she receives Martín's messages? a) She feels sad b) She feels angry c) She feels happy d) She feels tired

Answers: 1-b, 2-c, 3-c, 4-b, 5-c

## 13. Doctor's Visit

Clara wakes up in her house in San Pedro Sula and feels **dizzy**. She's **worried** because yesterday she also felt bad. Her head hurts a little and she has nausea. *Maybe I need to go to the doctor*, she thinks.

She **gets up** slowly from bed and walks toward the bathroom. She looks in the **mirror** and sees that she's **pale**. Her mom is in the kitchen preparing breakfast.

"Good morning, **my daughter**," says her mom. "How do you **feel**?"

"Not very well, mom," responds Clara. "I feel dizzy and **I have a headache**. I think I'm going to go to the clinic."

"Good idea," says her mom. "Dr. Martínez is very good. She works at the **neighborhood** clinic."

Clara has little breakfast. She only drinks tea and eats one piece of **toast**. Her **stomach** doesn't feel well.

After breakfast, she **gets dressed** and walks toward the clinic.

The clinic is five **blocks** from her house. It's a small but clean **building**. There are many people in the **waiting room**. Clara goes to the reception and talks to the receptionist.

"Good morning," says Clara. "I need to see a doctor. I feel bad."

"Do you have an **appointment**?" asks the receptionist.

"No, I don't have an appointment," responds Clara. "But I feel very dizzy."

"It's okay," says the receptionist. "You can wait here. Dr. Martínez will see you in an hour."

Clara sits on a chair in the waiting room. She reads a **magazine** about **health** while she waits. There are children playing and adults talking. The clinic is **noisy**, but at least the chairs are comfortable.

After an hour, a **nurse** comes out of a **doctor's office**.

"Clara López?" says the nurse.

"Yes, that's me," responds Clara and gets up.

"Come with me, please," says the nurse. "We're going to **take your blood pressure.**"

In the office, the nurse is very kind. Her name is Carmen and she has worked at the clinic for ten years.

"What are your symptoms?" asks Carmen.

"I feel dizzy, my head hurts, and I have nausea," responds Clara. "I also feel tired."

"Since when do you feel this way?" asks the nurse.

"Since yesterday," says Clara. "At the **beginning** I thought it was because I didn't **eat** well, but today I feel the same."

Carmen **writes down** everything on a **sheet** of paper. Then she **measures** Clara's blood pressure. Everything is normal.

"Dr. Martínez is going to **examine you** now," says the nurse. "She's very **experienced** and she's going to help you."

Dr. Martínez enters the office. She's a **middle-aged** woman with **glasses** and a kind smile.

"Good morning, Clara," says the doctor. "How do you feel?"

Clara explains all her symptoms again. The doctor listens attentively and asks important questions.

"Do you eat fruits and **vegetables**?" asks the doctor.

"Yes, but not much," responds Clara.

"Do you drink enough water during the day?"

"I think not," says Clara. "I drink more **soda** than water."

"Do you do **exercise**?" asks the doctor.

"Very little," responds Clara. "I work in an office and spend a lot of time sitting."

The doctor examines Clara's **eyes** with a small **flashlight**. She also checks her **throat** and listens to her heart with a **stethoscope**.

"Your **body** is fine," says the doctor. "I think the problem is that you don't eat or drink water **enough**. You also need to exercise more."

"Is it **serious**?" asks Clara, nervous.

"No, it's not serious," responds the doctor with a smile. "But you need to change some habits. I'm going to give you some recommendations."

The doctor **writes** on a paper all the recommendations: drink eight glasses of water a day, eat more fruits and vegetables, exercise thirty minutes a day, and sleep eight hours each night.

"If you feel the same next week, **return** to the clinic," says the doctor. "But I think you're going to feel better if you follow these recommendations."

Clara feels **relieved**. She pays for the **consultation** at reception and **leaves** the clinic. She walks toward her house and thinks about the doctor's words.

*I'm going to start today, thinks Clara. I'm going to eat better and exercise.*

At home, Clara **tells** her mom everything the doctor said. Her mom is **happy** because it's nothing serious.

"I'm going to prepare a salad with lots of vegetables for lunch," says her mom.

Clara smiles and drinks a glass of water. She feels better just knowing she's going to **take care** of her body more.

## Comprehension Check

1. What symptoms does Clara have? a) Fever and cough b) Headache and nausea c) Only stomach pain d) Dizziness and headache
2. What is the nurse's name? a) Dr. Martínez b) Carmen c) Mrs. López d) Clara
3. What problem does the doctor find? a) Clara has a serious illness b) Clara needs medicines c) Clara has bad habits d) Clara needs surgery
4. How many glasses of water should Clara drink per day? a) Five glasses b) Six glasses c) Seven glasses d) Eight glasses
5. How does Clara feel at the end of the visit? a) More worried b) Relieved c) Angry d) Confused

Answers: 1-d, 2-b, 3-c, 4-d, 5-b

## 14. The Pottery Workshop

Julia is visiting Chiapas, Mexico, for the first time. She's fascinated by the local culture and wants to **learn** something new. At her hotel she sees an **advertisement** about a pottery **workshop** in San Juan de Chamula.

"*Sounds interesting,*" thinks Julia. "*I'm going to **sign up**.*"

Saturday morning, Julia takes a bus to San Juan de Chamula.

The town is small but very beautiful. There are **colorful** houses and green mountains in the **background**.

The workshop is in a traditional house. Julia arrives and sees other people waiting outside. There are tourists and locals of different **ages**.

"Good morning," says an **elderly** woman who comes out of the house. "I'm **Doña** María, the workshop teacher. Welcome to my house."

Julia greets Doña María and enters with the other students. The house has a large patio with **tables** and **chairs**.

In the center there's a big table with gray **clay**.

"Today we're going to make **bowls**," says Doña María. "But first, I'm going to explain the history of our pottery."

Doña María **tells** that in Chiapas, **indigenous** families have been making pottery for **centuries**. The **designs** and colors have special **meanings**. Red represents fire, blue represents water, and green represents **nature**.

"Each **shape** also has meaning," explains Doña María. "**Round** bowls represent the cycle of life."

Julia listens attentively. She's fascinated by the connection between art and tradition.

"Now we're going to work with clay," says Doña María. "First, take a **piece** of clay and feel the texture."

Julia takes a piece of gray clay. It's cold and wet. At the **beginning**, she doesn't understand how to form a bowl.

"Don't worry if it doesn't come out perfect," says Doña María. "The process is more important than the result."

Julia **tries** to shape the clay, but it's difficult. Her **hands** are **dirty** and the clay **breaks**. *This is harder than I thought*, she thinks.

"Do you need help?" asks Doña María, **approaching** Julia.

"Yes, please," responds Julia. "I don't understand how to make the **walls** of the bowl."

Doña María **shows** Julia how to **press** the clay **gently** with her fingers. Little by little, Julia learns the technique.

"Very good," says Doña María. "Now **turn** the clay slowly while you press."

Julia **follows** the instructions and finally manages to make a small bowl. It's not perfect, but it **looks good**.

"Excellent!" says Doña María. "Now we're going to decorate the bowl with traditional **patterns**."

Doña María teaches the students different patterns. There are zigzag lines that represent mountains, circles that represent the sun, and **waves** that represent rivers.

Julia decides to decorate her bowl with mountains and sun. She uses a **pointed** tool to **draw** the lines. It's complicated, but she likes the manual work.

"The colors come later," explains Doña María. "First **dry** the clay, then **bake**, and finally **paint**."

During the afternoon, Julia practices more. She makes another bigger bowl and it turns out better. She feels **proud** of her progress.

"**How long does it take** to make a complete piece?" asks Julia.

"It depends on the complexity," responds Doña María. "A simple bowl can **take** a week. First modeling, then dry three days, bake one day, and paint two days."

Julia observes Doña María's **finished** works. There are **plates, vases**, and animal figures. All have bright colors and **intricate** patterns.

"Where did you **learn** to make pottery?" asks Julia.

"My **grandmother taught** me when I was a girl," responds Doña María. "She learned from her grandmother. It's a family tradition."

At the end of the workshop, Julia has two bowls. One small with mountains and sun, and another bigger with waves. Doña María promises to **send** the finished bowls to her hotel after baking and painting them.

"Thank you for **sharing** your **knowledge**," says Julia. "I've learned a lot about Chiapas culture." "You're welcome," responds Doña María. "Art **unites** people from different cultures."

Julia returns to her hotel **satisfied**. She has dirty hands and clay on her clothes, but she feels happy. She **has lived** an authentic experience with Mexican culture.

Three days later, Julia receives her finished bowls. They're painted with red, blue, and green colors, and they **shine** under the **light**. They're beautiful and special.

*I'm going to keep these bowls forever, thinks Julia. They're going to remind me of this incredible adventure in Chiapas.*

## Comprehension Check

1. Where is the pottery workshop? a) In Mexico City b) In San Juan de Chamula c) In Oaxaca d) In Guadalajara
2. What does the color red represent in traditional pottery? a) Water b) Nature c) Fire d) Mountains
3. What does Julia do at first with the clay? a) She manages to make a perfect bowl b) She finds it very easy c) She has difficulties and it breaks d) She doesn't want to work with it
4. Who taught Doña María pottery? a) Her mother b) Her grandmother c) A school d) A book
5. How long does it take to make a complete piece? a) One day b) Three days c) One week d) One month

Answers: 1-b, 2-c, 3-c, 4-b, 5-c

## 15. A Night without Electricity

Martín is visiting his family in a small village in Nicaragua. He **has come** from Managua to spend the weekend with his grandparents, **uncles and aunts**, and **cousins**. His grandparents' house is **simple** but **cozy**.

It's Saturday night and the whole family is having dinner. Outside you can hear the strong wind and see **black clouds** in the **sky**. His grandmother María is serving **rice** with **beans** and fried chicken.

"It looks like a **storm** is coming," says his grandfather José, looking out the window.

"Yes, the weather is changing rapidly," responds aunt Carmen. "I hope **the power doesn't go out**."

Martín observes his family while they eat and talk. In Managua, he's always busy with work and **rarely** has time to **relax** like this.

Suddenly, a very loud **thunder** is heard and all the lights **go out**. The house becomes completely **dark**.

"Oh no!" says aunt Carmen. "The electricity went out."

"Don't worry," says grandfather José **calmly**. "This happens **often** around here. Martín, can you help me **look for the candles**?"

Martín walks **carefully** in the **darkness** to the kitchen. Grandfather José uses his phone as a **flashlight** and **finds** the candles in a **drawer**.

He also **looks for matches** and a kerosene **lamp**.

"Here they are," says grandfather, lighting the first candle.

Little by little, the family **lights** more candles throughout the house. The yellow and **soft** light creates a different and calm atmosphere.

"How long does it usually **last**?" asks Martín.

"It could be an hour or all night," responds his cousin Carlos. "It depends on how serious the **damage** is."

The rain begins to **fall heavily** on the **roof**. The sound is rhythmic and relaxing. Martín **realizes** that without television, radio, or **internet**, the family is talking more.

"Do you remember when we were children and we **used to play** telling **stories**?" says aunt Carmen.

"Yes!" responds grandmother María. "Let's do that again."

The family sits in a circle in the living room. The candles illuminate their faces with a **golden** light.

Martín feels connected with his **relatives** in a special way.

"I'll **start**," says grandfather José. "When I was **young**, I worked in the **countryside** and once I **got lost** in the forest during a storm..."

Grandfather tells a fascinating story about how he **survived** a night in the forest. Martín listens attentively, imagining all his grandfather's adventures.

"Now Carlos," says grandmother María.

Carlos tells a **funny** story about when he was a student and **fell asleep** during an exam. Everyone laughs and shares similar memories.

"And you, Martín?" asks aunt Carmen. "Tell us something about your life in the capital."

Martín thinks for a moment and tells about his **first day** at his new **job**. He explains how he was nervous and **made funny mistakes**. His family listens with interest and asks questions.

While they continue **sharing** stories, grandmother María prepares coffee on the gas **stove**. The aroma fills the house and makes everything more cozy.

"The coffee is ready," says grandmother, serving steaming **cups**.

"Thank you, grandmother," says Martín. "I didn't know coffee could taste so **delicious** without electricity."

"Simple things are the best," responds grandmother with a smile.

Martín **looks around** and observes the happy expressions of his family. Without technological distractions, they're really present with each other.

"You know what?" says Martín. "This is very special. In the city, we're always looking at **screens** and **running** from one **place** to another."

"It's **true**," says Carlos. "When there's no electricity, we realize how important it is to be **together**."

The conversation continues for hours. They talk about memories from **childhood**, plans for the future, and personal dreams. Martín learns new things about his relatives that he had never known.

"Do you remember the **songs** that great-grandfather Pedro **used to sing**?" asks aunt Carmen.

"Yes!" says grandmother María and begins to **sing** a traditional Nicaraguan song. Soon, the whole family is singing together.

Around midnight, the rain **stops** and there's **less** wind. But the electricity still doesn't return.

"I think it's time to sleep," says grandfather José. "Tomorrow will be another day."

"Yes, but this night has been wonderful," says Martín. "I **feel** more **close** to you than in a long time."

The family says goodbye with hugs and kisses. Each person takes a candle to walk to their bedrooms.

Martín **lies down** on his bed and reflects on the night. *Without electricity, we have connected our hearts*, he thinks.

Outside, nature is calm after the storm. Martín closes his eyes and falls asleep **feeling grateful** for this **unexpected** but beautiful experience.

## Comprehension Check

1. Where does Martín come from to visit his family? a) León b) Granada c) Managua d) Masaya
2. What causes the electricity to go out? a) A technical problem b) A storm with thunder c) A scheduled blackout d) A problem in the house
3. What does grandfather José use to look for the candles? a) A flashlight b) His phone c) Matches d) A lamp
4. What activity does the family decide to do without electricity? a) Sleep early b) Tell stories c) Cook more food d) Leave the house
5. How does Martín feel at the end of the night? a) Frustrated by the lack of electricity b) Bored without technology c) Grateful and connected with his family d) Worried about work

Answers: 1-c, 2-b, 3-b, 4-b, 5-c

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