



Bonuses: English Story Translations

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

Full English translations for every story in the book

By MindSmith Books

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
1. Lunch with the In-Laws	4
2. The Newsstand on the Corner	7
3. The Truffle Festival	12
4. The Noisy Neighbor	17
5. A Day Trip to the Lake	22
6. The Fancy Pastry Shop	27
7. The Art-House Cinema	31
8. The Farmer and the Tourist	36
9. Two Tickets for the Theatre, Please	41
10. The House in the Countryside	46
11. The Cooking Class	51
12. The Wrong Gift	56
13. The Dog Walk	60
14. The Neighborhood Barber	66
15. Ice Cream in Winter	72
Thank You & What's Next?	77

Introduction

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

You've been enjoying our Italian short stories book – thanks for making us a small part of your Italian 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 Italian book, to make it easy to refer back.

How to Use This Translation Guide

- **Read the Italian first** – always attempt to understand the story in Italian 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 Italian, you can then double-check your understanding in English
- **Learn cultural context** – use the translations to understand Italian cultural references and expressions that might not be obvious
- **Review the vocabulary** – compare how Italian expressions translate into natural English

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

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

Buona lettura e buon apprendimento!

– *The MindSmith Books Team*

1. Lunch with the In-Laws

Valerio looks at his **watch** for the fifth time in ten minutes. It's Sunday morning and in an hour he'll meet his **girlfriend** Giulia's parents. It's the first time he's seeing them and they've come **especially** from Rome to Perugia to meet him. Giulia has organized a **lunch** at her house.

"Valerio, stay calm," says Giulia while **arranging** the flowers on the table. "My parents are very **nice**."

"I know, but I want to make a good **impression**," Valerio responds. "I also bought a **bottle** of red wine for your father."

Valerio is nervous because he knows that Giulia's parents are very polite and formal people. He comes from a more **simple** family and fears he won't know how to **behave** during a formal Italian lunch.

At 12:30 the **doorbell rings**. Valerio adjusts his tie and breathes deeply.

"Hi mom, hi dad!" exclaims Giulia, opening the door.

Giulia's parents enter the apartment. The mother, an elegant woman with gray hair, immediately **hugs** her daughter. The father, a tall man with **glasses**, carries a **package** of sweets.

"Good morning, my name is Valerio, it's a pleasure to meet you," says Valerio, offering his hand.

"The pleasure is ours," responds Giulia's father with a **kind smile**. "I'm Roberto and this is my **wife**, Francesca."

Francesca **observes** Valerio carefully and then smiles.

"Giulia has told us a lot about you. I'm happy to finally meet you."

Valerio offers the wine to Roberto, who **appreciates** it very much. This first contact **seems** to go well.

Giulia invites everyone to **sit down** at the table. She has prepared a complete traditional Italian lunch: appetizer, first course, second course with side dish, fruit and dessert.

"Let's start with the **appetizers**," says Giulia, **bringing** a plate of cold cuts and cheeses.

The conversation begins with simple questions. Roberto asks Valerio about his work and Valerio responds carefully, trying to use correct Italian.

"I work as an architect in a studio downtown. I mainly **deal with renovations**."

Francesca seems interested and asks many questions. Valerio relaxes a bit while they talk about his work.

After the appetizers, Giulia brings the first course: homemade pasta with porcini **mushrooms**.

"It's a **recipe** from my grandmother," explains Giulia.

"Delicious," comments Francesca, **tasting** the pasta. "Giulia has always had talent in the kitchen."

Valerio eats with gusto, being careful not to make mistakes with the **cutlery** or to speak with his mouth full. Everything proceeds well until Giulia announces the second course.

"For the second course I've prepared a **surprise**."

Giulia returns from the kitchen with a plate of **roasted rabbit**. Valerio becomes **pale**.

Oh no, it's rabbit. I haven't eaten rabbit since I had a rabbit as a pet when I was a child.

Valerio doesn't know what to do. He doesn't want to be **rude**, but he just can't eat rabbit.

Roberto notices his **discomfort**.

"Is there some problem, Valerio?"

Valerio hesitates, then decides to be honest.

"I'm very sorry, but I don't eat rabbit. It's personal, I had a rabbit as a pet and..."

There's a moment of silence. Valerio fears he has **ruined** everything. But then, unexpectedly, Roberto **bursts out laughing**.

"I understand perfectly! I also don't eat horse for the same reason. As a child I had a pony."

The tension **melts** immediately. Francesca also smiles understandingly.

"Don't **worry**," says Giulia. "I also prepared some fish, imagining that not everyone loves rabbit."

The lunch continues in a much more **relaxed** atmosphere. Valerio discovers that Giulia's parents aren't as formal as he imagined. They talk about food, about travels and about Perugia. Francesca tells **funny** stories about when Giulia was little.

At the end of lunch, when it's time for coffee, Roberto puts a hand on Valerio's shoulder.

"You're a good boy, Valerio. You can see that you **care** a lot about our daughter."

Valerio smiles, finally feeling **at ease**.

"Thank you, Mr. Roberto. It's true, I love Giulia very much."

When Giulia's parents leave in the late afternoon, Francesca **says goodbye** to Valerio with an affectionate hug.

"You must come **visit us** in Rome soon."

After they've left, Giulia hugs Valerio.

"See? I told you everything would go well."

Valerio **nods**, relaxed and happy. The fear of the first lunch with the in-laws has disappeared, replaced by a new and pleasant feeling of **belonging**.

Comprehension Check

1. Where does the lunch take place?
 - a) In Rome
 - b) At Valerio's house
 - c) At Giulia's house in Perugia
 - d) In a restaurant

2. What does Valerio bring as a gift for Giulia's father?
 - a) A book
 - b) A bottle of red wine
 - c) A package of sweets
 - d) Some flowers

3. What is the second course that causes a problem for Valerio?
 - a) Fish
 - b) Horse meat
 - c) Pasta with mushrooms
 - d) Roasted rabbit

4. Why doesn't Valerio eat rabbit?
 - a) He's vegetarian
 - b) He's allergic
 - c) He had a rabbit as a pet
 - d) He doesn't like the taste

5. How does Giulia's father react when Valerio confesses his problem?
 - a) He gets very angry
 - b) He tells about having the same problem with horse meat
 - c) He asks Giulia to prepare another dish
 - d) He remains embarrassedly silent

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

2. The Newsstand on the Corner

Every morning, at 7:30 sharp, Mirella leaves her apartment in the center of Turin. She always wears a blue **coat** in winter or a light **jacket** in spring. Her first **stop** of the day is always the same: the newsstand on the corner.

The newsstand is a small dark green **kiosk**, full of newspapers, magazines and postcards. Mr. Bianchi, the **owner**, is an elderly man with white hair and thick glasses.

He has **managed** the newsstand for more than forty years and knows all the **residents** of the neighborhood.

"Good morning, Mr. Bianchi," says Mirella **approaching** the newsstand.

"Good morning, Miss Mirella!" responds Mr. Bianchi with a big smile. "**Punctual** as always!"

This is their daily **routine**. Mirella buys the newspaper, and they **exchange** a few words about the weather, the news or neighborhood life.

"Today it's colder than yesterday," observes Mr. Bianchi while **handing over** the newspaper to Mirella.

"Yes, I had to put on my **scarf**," she responds.

Mr. Bianchi loves making **jokes** and using Turin expressions that Mirella, originally from Naples but moved to Turin for work two months ago, doesn't always understand. Often she smiles and **nods**, pretending to understand.

"You know, miss, today the newspaper costs like a coffee, but coffee lasts five minutes, while the newspaper **nourishes** the mind for the whole day!" says Mr. Bianchi with a characteristic **grin**.

Mirella smiles. It's one of the phrases he repeats often. She has learned that Mr. Bianchi has an opinion about everything, especially about politics and soccer, two **topics** that never fail in their **morning conversations**.

"Juventus lost again last night, what a **disappointment!**" exclaims Mr. Bianchi while arranging some magazines.

"I don't follow soccer much," confesses Mirella.

"Ah, but here in Turin it's almost a religion! You must choose: Juventus or Torino?"

Mirella laughs and takes the newspaper, paying with **exact** money as always.

One Thursday morning, after almost three months of this routine, Mr. Bianchi makes one of his usual jokes in Turin dialect:

"Fa freid come 'nt la ghignera d'un creditor!"

Normally Mirella smiles without understanding, but this time, surprisingly, she bursts out laughing genuinely. Finally she understood! In these weeks she has learned enough of the local dialect and knows that Mr. Bianchi has said "*It's cold like the smile of a creditor!*"

Mr. Bianchi looks at her surprised and then smiles satisfied.

"Finally you understand our way of speaking! You're **becoming** a real Turin woman!"

Mirella feels **proud**. It's a small achievement, but significant.

From that day, their morning conversations become more **lively**. Mr. Bianchi teaches her new Turin expressions, and Mirella tells him some phrases in Neapolitan dialect.

One Monday morning, Mirella arrives at the newsstand and finds a sign: "Closed due to **illness**". She worries about Mr. Bianchi. The next day, the newsstand is still closed.

On Wednesday, finally, Mr. Bianchi has returned, but he seems a bit **pale** and **tired**.

"Good morning, Mr. Bianchi. How are you? I was worried."

"Ah, Miss Mirella, nothing serious. Just a small seasonal **ailment**. You know, at my age even a cold becomes **an adventure!**"

Mirella has an idea. She goes to the nearby pastry shop and returns with a bag.

"I brought you something," she says, offering the bag to Mr. Bianchi.

The man opens the bag and finds some **freshly baked pastries**.

"Sweets always help heal faster," says Mirella with a smile. "It's something my grandmother always said."

Mr. Bianchi is visibly **moved**.

"You know, miss, in forty years behind this counter, I've seen entire generations pass by. I've seen children become adults and then bring their children to buy **comic books**. But it's rare to find people who truly **care** about others, especially about an old **grumbler** like me."

"You're not a grumbler," says Mirella. "You're the first person who greets me every morning, and your jokes always make me smile, even when I don't understand them."

That morning, Mirella stays longer than usual talking with Mr. Bianchi. She discovers that he lives alone, that he has a daughter in Canada and that before managing the newsstand he worked at the FIAT factory.

Before going to work, Mirella says:

"Tomorrow I'll tell you a Neapolitan joke. Get ready to laugh!"

Mr. Bianchi smiles widely.

"I can't wait, Miss Mirella. It will be my best medicine."

While walking to the office, Mirella thinks that the newsstand on the corner isn't just a place to buy the newspaper. It has become a small reference point in her new life in Turin, a place where she feels a little more at home every day.

Comprehension Check

1. Where does Mirella originally come from?
 - a) Turin
 - b) Milan
 - c) Rome
 - d) Naples

2. What does Mirella buy every morning at the newsstand?
 - a) A magazine
 - b) A newspaper
 - c) Comic books
 - d) Lottery tickets

3. What didn't Mirella initially understand in conversations with Mr. Bianchi?
 - a) The Italian language
 - b) The newspaper news
 - c) The Turin dialect
 - d) Information about soccer

4. What does Mirella bring to Mr. Bianchi when he's sick?
 - a) Medicine
 - b) A book
 - c) Pastries
 - d) A scarf

5. Where did Mr. Bianchi work before managing the newsstand?
 - a) In a restaurant
 - b) At FIAT
 - c) In a post office
 - d) In a school

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

3. The Truffle Festival

Emma walks through a small town in Umbria. She's American and is visiting Italy for the first time. Today is a beautiful October day with the sun shining in a blue sky. Emma notices many people walking all in the same direction. Curious, she decides to follow them.

After a few minutes, she arrives in a large town square. There's a lot of **crowd** and a festive atmosphere. There are **stalls**, music and a delicious scent in the air. Emma sees a large colorful **banner**: "Truffle Festival".

What could this festival be? And what is a truffle? thinks Emma.

She approaches a stall where a man with a large hat is selling something.

"Excuse me," says Emma with her still **uncertain** Italian. "What is a truffle?"

The man smiles kindly, noticing Emma's foreign **accent**.

"A truffle is a precious **mushroom** that grows underground, near the roots of trees," responds the man. "Here in Umbria we have the best truffles in Italy!"

Emma looks at the truffles on the counter. They look like small irregular **black stones**, not very **appetizing** at first sight.

"Would you like to **taste** something?" asks the man, pointing to a plate with small pieces of bread.

"Yes, thank you," responds Emma.

The man takes a piece of bread and puts a **grating** of black truffle on top. Emma tastes it and is surprised: it has an intense and particular **flavor** that she **has never tried before**.

"It's... interesting," says Emma, not sure what to think.

"Truffle is a flavor you need to learn to appreciate," explains the man. "Try eating a complete dish, maybe the **tagliatelle** with truffle."

Emma thanks him and continues to explore the festival. There are many stalls selling different products: truffle oil, truffle cheese, truffle salami. There's also an area with tables where people are eating.

She sits at a table and a **waitress** approaches.

"Good morning, what would you like?"

"I'd like to try the tagliatelle with truffle, please," says Emma.

While waiting, Emma observes the people around her. Everyone seems happy and relaxed, eating and talking **animatedly**. Many families are sitting together and there's an atmosphere of **conviviality**.

The waitress returns with a plate of pasta. The **aroma** is very strong.

"Enjoy your meal!" says the waitress.

Emma starts eating and, to her great surprise, finds the flavor delicious. The pasta is perfect and the truffle gives a special flavor that she now likes very much.

While eating, she notices a group of people preparing near a stage. Some have dogs on **leashes**, others carry small tools similar to **hoes**.

A woman sits at the table next to Emma. She's elderly, with gray hair and a kind smile.

"The truffle hunting **competition** is about to begin," says the woman, noticing Emma's interest. "The **truffle hunters** and their dogs **will compete** in the **search** for truffles."

"Dogs search for truffles?" asks Emma, surprised.

"Yes, dogs have an excellent **sense of smell** and are trained to find truffles underground. It's an ancient tradition here in Umbria."

Emma is fascinated. She finishes her plate of pasta and decides to go see the competition up close.

Near the **stage**, a man with a **microphone** is explaining the rules of the competition. Emma doesn't understand everything but manages to grasp that the participants must find the greatest number of truffles in an hour.

Suddenly, Emma feels someone touching her arm.

"Excuse me," says a young man. "Are you the last **participant**?"

"No, no," responds Emma quickly. "I'm just a tourist, I'm watching."

The young man seems confused.

"But you have number **seventeen** on your **back**..."

Emma turns around and sees a paper with the number 17 attached to her backpack. She doesn't know how it ended up there. Maybe someone put it there by mistake or as a **joke**.

Before she can explain, the man with the microphone announces:

"And now, participant number seventeen, Emma from the United States!"

Everyone applauds and looks toward her. Emma is **embarrassed** but smiles.

"There's a mistake, I don't..."

But a woman puts a small hoe in her hand and a man introduces her to a dog, a beautiful white and brown Lagotto Romagnolo.

"This is Pippo, the best truffle dog in the region," says the man with **pride**. "He'll help you find many truffles!"

Emma tries to explain that there's a **misunderstanding**, but everyone seems so enthusiastic that she doesn't have the heart to say no. She decides to participate in the competition, even though she has no idea what to do.

"Okay," she finally says. "I'll participate."

The competition begins and all the truffle hunters **disperse** into the nearby woods with their dogs. Emma follows Pippo, who seems to know exactly what to do. The dog runs ahead, sniffs the ground carefully and then starts **digging** at a precise spot.

Emma approaches and sees that Pippo has found something. Following the example of the other truffle hunters, she uses the small hoe to dig delicately and finds a truffle! It's small but seems perfect.

"Good boy, Pippo!" exclaims Emma, surprised and happy.

During the next hour, Emma and Pippo find three more truffles. Emma has so much fun and **completely forgets** that she didn't want to participate in the competition.

When the hour ends, all the participants return to the starting point. The judges weigh the truffles found by each one. To Emma's great surprise, she and Pippo place third!

The man with the microphone gives her a small **trophy** and everyone applauds.

"Congratulations to our American friend!" says the man. "It's the first time a tourist wins a prize at our festival!"

Emma is overjoyed. She never would have imagined that her walk would turn into such a fun adventure.

That evening, before returning to her hotel, Emma buys a small **package** of fresh tagliatelle and a jar of truffle sauce to take home as a souvenir. She already knows that when she tells this story, none of her friends in America will believe her.

Comprehension Check

1. In which region of Italy is Emma located?
 - a) Tuscany
 - b) Umbria
 - c) Sicily
 - d) Piedmont

2. What are truffles?
 - a) A type of pasta
 - b) A local cheese
 - c) Mushrooms that grow underground
 - d) Typical regional sweets

3. How does Emma end up participating in the competition?
 - a) She voluntarily signs up
 - b) She's invited by the organizers
 - c) Due to a misunderstanding, someone puts a number on her back
 - d) She substitutes a participant who got sick

4. Who helps Emma during the competition?
 - a) An expert truffle hunter
 - b) The elderly woman who explains the tradition
 - c) A dog called Pippo
 - d) The restaurant waitress

5. What place does Emma get in the competition?
 - a) First place
 - b) Second place
 - c) Third place
 - d) She doesn't place

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

4. The Noisy Neighbor

Davide wakes up at three in the morning for the **fourth** consecutive night. The reason is always the same: opera music at full volume from the apartment **above** his. He puts the **pillow** over his head trying to cover his ears, but it's **useless**. The powerful tenor notes easily penetrate the ceiling of his apartment in Genoa.

It's not possible to continue like this, thinks Davide. Tomorrow he has an important work **meeting** and needs to sleep.

The next morning, Davide is tired and in a bad **mood**. He prepares a strong coffee and looks at the **ceiling** with **annoyance**. He knows he has to do something, but doesn't want to create problems. He's always been a quiet person who avoids **conflicts**.

During lunch break, he decides to write a polite **note** for his neighbor. After several **drafts**, he writes:

"Dear neighbor of the third floor, My name is Davide and I live in the apartment below yours. I'm writing with great **respect** to politely ask you to **lower** the volume of the music during the night. **Unfortunately** the sound is very loud and prevents me from sleeping. Thank you for your understanding. Kind regards, Davide (apartment 2B)"

That evening, returning from work, Davide **slips** the note under the door of the apartment above his, 3B, and returns home hoping that his message will be received positively.

The night passes in silence. Davide finally sleeps well and wakes up rested. *Maybe the note worked,* he thinks with relief.

But his **joy** doesn't last long. The following evening, around ten o'clock, the music starts again, as loud as before. This time it's "La Traviata" by Verdi, one of the most **dramatic** operas in the Italian repertoire.

Davide is **disappointed** and frustrated. His polite note had no effect. He wonders what to do now. He could go directly to talk to the neighbor, but the idea makes him **uneasy**. He could call the building's **administrator**, but doesn't want to seem like a person who **complains** all the time.

He decides to wait a few more days. Maybe the neighbor needs time to change his **habits**.

Three days later, returning from the supermarket, Davide finds an **envelope** in his mailbox. He opens it and finds a handwritten note:

"Dear Mr. Davide, I sincerely apologize for the **disturbance** caused. I didn't realize the volume was so high. I'm a retired **singing teacher** and music has always been my passion. I'd like to invite you for coffee tomorrow afternoon, if you have time, to apologize in person. With best regards, Antonio Ferretti (apartment 3B)"

Davide is surprised and **relieved**. He didn't expect such a kind response. The next day, at four in the afternoon, he **rings** the doorbell of apartment 3B with some **nervousness**.

The door opens and an elderly man appears, with white hair and a **welcoming** smile. He wears an elegant sweater and glasses.

"Good afternoon, you must be Davide! Pleased to meet you, my name is Antonio. Please come in," says the man with a deep and melodious voice.

Davide enters the apartment and is **amazed**. The walls are covered with posters of famous operas, there are **shelves** full of CDs and vinyl records, and in a corner there's an antique piano. The apartment is **tidy** and bright, with a view of the port of Genoa.

"**Please make yourself comfortable**," says Antonio, indicating a sofa. "I'll prepare the coffee."

While Antonio goes to the kitchen, Davide observes the room. On a table he sees many black and white photos of a young man singing on different **stages**. He recognizes La Scala in Milan in one of the photos.

Antonio returns with two cups of coffee and some cookies.

"Was that you in the photos?" asks Davide curiously.

"Yes," responds Antonio with a **nostalgic** smile. "I sang as a tenor for forty years in Italy and abroad. Nothing as famous as Pavarotti, naturally, but I had a good **career**."

Davide is impressed. He never would have imagined that his noisy neighbor was a former professional opera singer.

"I'm really sorry about the volume of the music," continues Antonio. "Sometimes I don't **realize** how loud it is. When I listen to operas, I relive the moments on stage and **forget** about the outside world."

"I understand," says Davide. "It must have been an exciting life."

"It was," confirms Antonio. "But now I'm just an old man living on memories."

Davide notices a certain **sadness** in Antonio's eyes. He suddenly feels **sorry** for him.

"And don't you sing anymore?" he asks.

"Only for myself, occasionally. The voice isn't what it used to be," responds Antonio with a sigh.

They talk for over an hour. Antonio tells fascinating stories of his touring years, of the great theaters where he sang, of the famous conductors he worked with.

Before leaving, Davide has an idea.

"You know, I work in a cultural center here in Genoa. We're organizing a series of **meetings** on the history of Italian music. Would you be interested in participating as a **guest**? You could talk about your experience in the opera world."

Antonio's eyes light up with joy.

"Really? That would be wonderful! I'd love to **share** my passion with others."

"Perfect!" says Davide. "I'll send you the details."

While returning to his apartment, Davide feels happy about the conversation. He has transformed a problem into an interesting opportunity for the cultural center.

That evening, he listens to the music coming from Antonio's apartment. The volume is **noticeably lower**, but he can still hear the beautiful opera arias. This time, instead of being irritated, Davide smiles and listens with new **appreciation**.

Two weeks later, at the conference at the cultural center, Antonio enchants the audience with his stories and even sings an aria, with a voice that, **although** no longer as powerful as before, is still full of **emotion** and technique.

The **event** is a great success and becomes the first in a series of monthly meetings. Davide and Antonio become friends, and Davide discovers a new **passion** for Italian opera.

Sometimes, on summer evenings, he goes to Antonio's apartment to listen to old recordings together. And when the music travels through the floor, he now smiles remembering how a noisy neighbor became a precious friend.

Comprehension Check

1. In which Italian city does Davide live?
 - a) Rome
 - b) Milan
 - c) Genoa
 - d) Naples

2. What does Davide do to initially solve the music problem?
 - a) He calls the police
 - b) He talks directly to the neighbor
 - c) He writes a polite note
 - d) He contacts the building administrator

3. What was Antonio's profession before retirement?
 - a) Music teacher
 - b) Orchestra conductor
 - c) Opera tenor
 - d) Pianist

4. What does Davide propose to Antonio at the end of their conversation?
 - a) To move to another apartment
 - b) To participate as a guest in a series of meetings about music
 - c) To take singing lessons
 - d) To listen to recordings together

5. How does Davide's attitude toward opera music change after meeting Antonio?
 - a) He continues to hate it
 - b) He becomes indifferent
 - c) He develops a new appreciation
 - d) He decides to study opera singing

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

5. A Day Trip to the Lake

It's Sunday morning and Chiara is very **excited**. Today she's going with her friends, Marco and Sofia, to Lake Como. It's the **first Sunday** of June and the weather is perfect: blue sky, sun and a light **breeze**. Chiara looks at the clock – it's 8:30. She has to **hurry** because their train leaves at 9:15 from Milan's central station.

Chiara quickly prepares her **backpack**: a **towel**, sunscreen, a book, a water bottle and a sandwich for lunch. She wears a light dress, comfortable sandals and sunglasses. Before leaving, she checks that she has the train **ticket** on her phone.

At the station, Marco and Sofia are waiting for her near the **departures** board.

"Hi Chiara! Are you ready for our **adventure**?" asks Sofia enthusiastically.

"Yes, I can't wait to get to the lake!" responds Chiara.

The three friends find their **platform** and board the direct train to Como. During the journey, which lasts about an hour, they talk about their plans for the day.

"First we can walk along the **lakefront**, then have a **picnic**, and in the afternoon maybe **rent a pedal boat**," suggests Marco.

"Great idea! I've wanted to try a pedal boat for so long," says Chiara. "I've never done it before."

Sofia consults a map on her phone.

"There's also a nice **beach** near the station. It's not big, but it seems quiet."

The train crosses the Lombard countryside. From the window, Chiara observes the green landscapes and small **towns** that pass quickly. She feels happy and relaxed, away from the **stress** of the city and work.

Finally they arrive at Como station. When they exit, they can already see the lake in the **distance**, blue and **sparkling** under the sun.

"It's **stunning**!" exclaims Chiara.

The three friends walk toward the city center and then follow the signs to the lakefront. The walk is very pleasant. There are many tourists, but it's not too

crowded. They see boats sailing on the lake and the green mountains surrounding the water.

After walking for about half an hour, they decide to stop at a small public beach. It's not a sand beach, but made of small **pebbles**. There are some families and couples sunbathing or swimming.

They spread out their towels and sit near the water.

"Who wants to take the first **dive**?" asks Marco.

"Me!" responds Sofia, running toward the water.

Chiara follows her, but enters more slowly. The water is a bit **cold** at first, but after a few minutes it's pleasant.

The three friends swim and play in the water for an hour. Then they return to the beach for their picnic. They eat the sandwiches they brought and Sofia has also prepared a fresh fruit salad.

"This is the perfect Sunday," says Chiara, looking at the panorama. "We should do this more often."

After lunch, Marco sees a small kiosk that **rents** pedal boats.

"Shall we go **ask** how much it costs?" he proposes.

They approach the kiosk where an elderly man is reading a newspaper.

"Good morning," says Marco. "We'd like to rent a pedal boat for three people. How much does it cost?"

"Good morning," responds the man. "It's fifteen euros per hour."

Marco looks at Chiara and Sofia.

"Is that okay with you?"

The girls nod. Marco gives fifteen euros to the man, who then explains how the pedal boat works and the **safety** rules.

"Don't go too far from the **shore**," he recommends. "And return within an hour."

The three friends get on the yellow pedal boat. There are two seats for **pedaling** in front and one behind for steering.

"I'll steer!" says Sofia, sitting in the steering position.

Marco and Chiara start pedaling and the pedal boat moves **slowly** on the water.

"It's more **tiring** than I thought," **admits** Chiara after a few minutes.

"But it's worth it," responds Marco, pointing to the view. "From here we can see the entire **coast** and the historic villas."

Indeed, from the lake they can admire the famous villas that overlook the water, with their colorful gardens and elegant architecture. Sofia uses her phone to take many photos.

While pedaling, they also see other boats and pedal boats. A group of tourists on a larger boat greets them by waving their hands, and they return the **greeting**.

After about forty minutes of **exploration**, they decide to return toward the shore. The wind has increased a bit and there are more **waves**.

"We need to pedal harder to get back," says Sofia.

Marco and Chiara increase the rhythm, but it's difficult because they're already tired. Finally, they manage to reach the shore and **return** the pedal boat, a bit exhausted but happy with the experience.

"Next time we bring more water," suggests Chiara, drying herself with the towel.

They spend the rest of the afternoon relaxing on the beach, reading and sunbathing. When the sun starts to **set**, they decide it's time to return to Milan.

On the way to the station, they stop at an ice cream shop for artisanal gelato. Chiara chooses **strawberry** flavor, Marco **chocolate** and Sofia pistachio.

"The perfect ending to a perfect day," comments Sofia, savoring her ice cream.

They arrive at the station in time for the 6:30 PM train. On the return train they're all a bit tired but very happy with their **trip**. Chiara looks at the photos they took during the day.

"We need to organize more trips like this," she says. "Maybe next time we can go to Lake Maggiore or Lake Garda."

"Or **maybe** go hiking in the mountains," suggests Marco.

As the train approaches Milan, the sun sets on the **horizon**, painting the sky orange and pink. Chiara leans against the window, observing the passing landscape. She feels **relaxed** and happy, with sun-warmed skin and hair that **smells like the lake**.

The Sunday at Lake Como has been simple but perfect: friends, sun, water and rest. Exactly what she needed.

Comprehension Check

1. From which city do the three friends depart?
 - a) Como
 - b) Turin
 - c) Milan
 - d) Rome

2. What activity do the protagonists do after the picnic?
 - a) They visit a historic villa
 - b) They rent a pedal boat
 - c) They go shopping downtown
 - d) They sunbathe on the beach

3. What do the three friends eat for lunch?
 - a) Pasta at a restaurant
 - b) Pizza
 - c) Sandwiches and fruit
 - d) Lake fish

4. What is the walkway along the lake called?
 - a) Lungomare
 - b) Lungotevere
 - c) Lakefront
 - d) Lungofiume

5. What do the three friends do before returning to the station?
 - a) They visit a museum
 - b) They eat ice cream
 - c) They go shopping
 - d) They call their parents

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

6. The Fancy Pastry Shop

Enzo walks nervously through the streets of downtown Milan. Today is his sister Lucia's **birthday** and he wants to buy her a special sweet. He has heard about a very **elegant pastry shop** on via Montenapoleone, one of the most exclusive streets in the city. Enzo isn't used to frequenting luxury shops, but for his sister he wants to make a special **effort**.

Finally he finds the pastry shop. The **shop window** is wonderful: cakes decorated with fresh fruit, chocolates **arranged like jewels**, and colorful pastries that look like small **works of art**. The shop's name, "Dolce Vita," is written in golden letters above the door.

Enzo takes a deep breath and enters. The interior is even more impressive than the window display. The floor is white marble, there are **mirrors** on the walls and crystal chandeliers. The sweets are displayed in illuminated glass **display cases**, like in a museum.

There's a delicious scent of vanilla and chocolate in the air.

Behind the counter there's an elegant lady with gray hair gathered in a **chignon**.

"Good morning, may I help you?" asks the lady with a **polite** but formal smile.

Enzo feels a bit out of place with his jeans and casual jacket.

"Good morning," he responds. "I'd like to buy a cake for my sister's birthday."

"Certainly. What type of cake would you like? We have various **specialties**."

Enzo looks at the displayed cakes. They're all beautiful, but he doesn't recognize many of the sweets. And he doesn't see **price tags**.

"Um, I don't know exactly. My sister really likes fruit."

The lady nods.

"Then I could suggest our berry cake with **chantilly** cream and **shortcrust pastry** base. Or we have a delicious lemon cake with Italian **meringue**."

Enzo is a bit **confused** by these terms.

"Can you **show me** these cakes, please?"

The lady points to two cakes in the refrigerated display case.

"This is the berry cake," she says, indicating a round cake with **raspberries**, **blueberries** and **blackberries** on top. "And this is the lemon cake, with this white and fluffy decoration on top, which is the meringue."

Both look delicious.

"How much do they cost?" asks Enzo, mentally preparing for a high price.

"The berry cake is 48 euros, and the lemon cake is 42 euros," responds the lady.

Enzo tries not to show **surprise** at the price. It's more than he had planned to spend, but he doesn't want to seem like a second-class customer.

While he's about to decide, he notices on the side of the counter a golden **package** with the name "Artisanal Panettone."

"What's that?" he asks, pointing to the package.

The lady smiles, this time more **warmly**.

"Ah, that's our artisanal panettone. It's a Milanese specialty, a traditional sweet that's usually eaten at Christmas, but we produce it year-round because it's in high demand. It's made with **raisins**, **candied** fruit and has an extraordinary scent of butter and vanilla."

"It sounds interesting," says Enzo. "How much does it cost?"

"The small panettone, 500 grams, costs 22 euros."

Enzo thinks it's still expensive for a sweet, but it's more **affordable** than the cakes. And the idea of a traditional Milanese sweet appeals to him.

"I'll take it," he says. "It's for my sister's birthday, who's from Naples but has been living here in Milan for a year. I think she'll like trying this Milanese specialty."

The lady seems to approve of his choice.

"It's an excellent idea. Our panettone is different from the industrial ones you find in supermarkets. It's **handmade** according to the traditional recipe, with natural **leavening** and top-quality ingredients."

While the lady prepares the package, an elderly man comes out of the workshop in the back. He has a white **apron dirty** with flour and a kind face with large white **mustaches**.

"Good morning," says the man with a strong Milanese accent. "Are you buying our panettone?"

"Yes," responds Enzo. "It's for my sister."

"Ah, good! It's a family recipe, you know? My grandfather started making panettone in 1920, and I continue the tradition. **Each** panettone is a bit different, it's like a person, it has its own **character**."

Enzo smiles, struck by the man's **passion** for his work.

"Mr. Ricci, please, don't **dirty** the shop with flour," says the lady with an affectionately **stern** tone.

"Sorry, sorry, Marina. I'll go back to work right away," responds the man with a smile, and then turns to Enzo. "I hope your sister appreciates the panettone. Have a good day!"

And with that, Mr. Ricci returns to the workshop.

The lady Marina puts the panettone in a beautiful box and ties it with a blue ribbon.

"Here you are. That's 22 euros."

Enzo pays with his card, trying to do it naturally as if he **regularly** shops in such elegant stores.

"Thank you very much," he says, taking the package.

"Thank you. I hope your sister has a good birthday. The panettone keeps well for a week. I **recommend** it with a glass of sweet wine, like moscato."

Enzo leaves the pastry shop feeling **satisfied**. Even though he spent more than he had planned, he found a gift that has a story, a tradition. And he also learned something about Milanese culture.

That evening, when Lucia opens the gift, her eyes light up.

"An artisanal panettone! Do you know that my colleagues always talk about this shop? It's one of the best in Milan. But how did you choose it? You're not an **expert** on sweets."

Enzo smiles, happy with his **choice**.

"I had a little help," he says. "And then I'll tell you an interesting story about the panettone and Mr. Ricci with the white mustaches..."

While Lucia cuts the panettone and smells its delicious scent, Enzo tells her about his adventure in the elegant pastry shop. In the end, **both** agree that this panettone is much more than a simple sweet: it's a cultural experience, a **piece** of Milan to taste together.

Comprehension Check

1. In which city is the pastry shop located?
 - a) Rome
 - b) Naples
 - c) Milan
 - d) Turin

2. Why does Enzo want to buy a sweet?
 - a) For his birthday
 - b) For his sister's birthday
 - c) For a party with friends
 - d) For a Christmas gift

3. Which sweet does Enzo buy in the end?
 - a) A berry cake
 - b) A lemon cake
 - c) An artisanal panettone
 - d) Some chocolates

4. Who does Enzo meet in the pastry shop besides the saleswoman?
 - a) His sister
 - b) The elderly pastry chef
 - c) A friend
 - d) The shop owner

5. Where does Enzo's sister originally come from?
 - a) Milan
 - b) Rome
 - c) Turin
 - d) Naples

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

7. The Art-House Cinema

Lucia walks through the streets of Bologna on a **quiet** autumn afternoon. The sky is gray, but it's not raining. The yellow and orange **leaves** fall from the trees and form a colorful **carpet** on the **sidewalks**. Lucia is a language student at the university and has been living in Bologna for only two months. Every weekend she tries to discover something new about the city.

While walking along via Mascarella, she notices a small cinema with a **vintage** facade. It's not one of the big modern cinemas that show Hollywood films. This one seems older and has an **intimate** atmosphere. On the billboard it says "Cinema Aurora - Art-house Cinema." Below the cinema's name, there's the title of a black and white Italian film from the '60s.

Art-house cinema? What does "essai" mean? thinks Lucia.

She approaches to get a better look at the film **posters**. There's a photo of a man and woman looking at each other intensely. The title is "Leclisse" by Michelangelo Antonioni.

Lucia has never heard of this film, but she's **curious**. She decides to enter to ask for information.

Inside, the cinema is small but **welcoming**. The walls are decorated with old posters of classic films. There's a small **ticket office** with an elderly man reading a book.

"Good morning," says Lucia.

The man **looks up** from his book and smiles.

"Good morning, miss. Can I help you?"

"Excuse me," asks Lucia, "what does 'art-house cinema' mean?"

"Ah, it's an expression that comes from French," responds the man. "It means 'experimental cinema' or 'research cinema.' Here we show auteur films, classics, films that aren't commercial but have artistic and cultural value."

"I understand," says Lucia. "And this film, 'L'eclisse,' what is it **about**?"

"It's a **masterpiece** of Italian cinema," explains the man with **enthusiasm**. "It tells the story of a young woman who ends a love **relationship** and begins a new story with a young **stockbroker**. But it's much more than a love story. It's a film about **communication**, or rather, about the difficulty of communicating, about **alienation** in modern society."

Lucia is even more interested after this description.

"What time does the film start?"

"We have a **screening** in half an hour, at 5:00 PM, and another tonight at 9:00 PM."

Lucia looks at her watch. She has time to see the 5:00 PM film.

"How much does a ticket cost?"

"For students it's 5 euros. Do you have a university **card**?"

Lucia shows her university card and the man gives her a ticket.

"Theater 1, open seating. You can sit wherever you **prefer**, there aren't many people on Saturday afternoon."

"Thank you," says Lucia.

Before entering the theater, Lucia sees a small bar in the cinema's **lobby**.

"Is there an **intermission** during the film?" she asks.

"Yes, halfway through the film there's a ten-minute break. Many spectators **take advantage** of it to have coffee or tea."

Lucia enters the theater. It's small, with only about 50 seats, but very **comfortable**. She sits in a red armchair toward the center. There are only seven or eight other people in the theater, mainly older people.

The lights **dim** and the film begins. It's in Italian, obviously, but Lucia is happy to be able to practice the language. The dialogues aren't many, and when the characters speak, they do so slowly and clearly. Even though she doesn't understand all the words, Lucia manages to follow the story.

The film is in black and white, with beautiful images of Rome in the '60s. The characters always seem **distant** from each other, both physically and emotionally. There's a sense of **emptiness** and silence that Lucia finds **fascinating**.

Halfway through the film, **as promised**, there's an intermission. The lights come back on and the spectators get up slowly. Lucia goes to the small bar in the lobby and orders an espresso.

"Do you like the film?" asks the bartender while preparing the coffee.

"Yes, very much," responds Lucia. "It's different from the films I usually see, but it's **interesting**."

"Antonioni is a **director** who divides the audience," says the bartender. "Some find him boring, others think he's a genius. His films are full of **symbols** and require attention."

"I noticed there are many moments of silence," observes Lucia.

"Exactly! For Antonioni, what isn't said is as important as the words."

Lucia takes her coffee and returns to the theater for the second part of the film. Now, with the bartender's words in mind, she pays even more attention to the silences, to the **looks** between the characters, to the moments when they seem **incapable** of expressing their feelings.

When the film ends, Lucia remains seated for a few moments, **immersed** in her thoughts. She didn't understand everything, but she felt the film's **atmosphere**, its visual beauty, its emotional **depth**.

Leaving the cinema, the man at the ticket office greets her.

"Did you like the film?"

"Very much," responds Lucia. "Even though I didn't understand everything."

"Don't **worry**," smiles the man. "Antonioni's films aren't meant to be completely understood the first time. They're like poetry, you have to **let yourself** be carried away by the images, by the emotions."

"Do you have other films like this?"

"Certainly! We have a different **program** every week. I can give you this," he says, offering her a small **brochure**.

Lucia takes the brochure and sees that it contains the cinema's programming for the next month. There are Italian, French, Japanese films, all classics of world cinema.

"We also have a card for ten **admissions** at a reduced price, if you're interested," adds the man.

Lucia smiles.

"Yes, I think I'll come back. This place is a beautiful **discovery**."

Walking home, Lucia thinks about the film, about the black and white images of Rome, about the **characters** who seem lost in the big city. She also thinks about how, despite the difficulties with the language, she managed to enter the world of the film, to feel the emotions of the characters.

Maybe this is exactly the power of cinema, she thinks. It allows us to live other lives, to see the world through other eyes.

Lucia puts the cinema brochure in her **bag**, already sure that Cinema Aurora will become one of her favorite **places** in Bologna, a place where she can not only **improve** her Italian, but also discover new worlds through great cinema.

Comprehension Check

1. In which city is Lucia located?
 - a) Rome
 - b) Milan
 - c) Bologna
 - d) Florence

2. What type of cinema is "Cinema Aurora"?
 - a) A modern multiplex
 - b) An art-house cinema
 - c) An outdoor cinema
 - d) A children's cinema

3. Which film does Lucia see at the cinema?
 - a) A modern American film
 - b) An Italian documentary
 - c) "L'eclisse" by Michelangelo Antonioni
 - d) A romantic comedy

4. What happens halfway through the film?
 - a) Lucia leaves the cinema
 - b) There's an intermission and Lucia has coffee
 - c) The film suddenly changes story
 - d) There's a technical problem

5. What does Lucia decide at the end of the story?
 - a) Never to return to the cinema
 - b) To study cinema at the university
 - c) To move to Rome
 - d) To return to Cinema Aurora in the future

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

8. The Farmer and the Tourist

Aaron drives his small **rental** car on a country road in Puglia. He's American, 28 years old and is visiting Italy for the first time. After seeing Rome, Florence and Venice, he decided to explore southern Italy, less **touristy** but **equally** fascinating.

Today he's trying to **reach** a small village that his **guidebook** describes as "a medieval jewel **hidden** among the olive trees." But there's a problem: Aaron is **lost**. His phone's GPS doesn't work well in this rural area and the **connection** is weak.

Aaron decides to stop and ask for **directions** from someone. He looks around and sees, in the distance, an elderly man working in an olive **field**.

Aaron parks the car and walks toward the field. The air is warm and fragrant with wild **herbs**. As he approaches, he sees that the man is pruning an **olive tree** with slow but sure movements.

"Good morning," says Aaron with his limited Italian and a strong American accent.

The man turns around, surprised to see a **foreigner** in this remote area. He's elderly, maybe around 70, with **wrinkled** skin darkened by the sun. He wears a **straw** hat and work pants dirty with earth.

"Good morning," responds the man with a strong Pugliese accent.

Aaron tries to remember the Italian phrases he learned from his tourist **guide**.

"I'm lost. I'm looking for... um... Castel... Castel del Monte?"

The man smiles, showing some missing **teeth**, and shakes his head.

"Castel del Monte?" he asks with a laugh. "It's far, very far!"

Aaron understands that he's completely wrong.

"Where are we?" he asks, making a circular gesture with his hands.

"We're at **farmhouse** Caputo. This is my land. I'm Giuseppe."

Aaron doesn't understand the word "masseria," but he senses it must be the name of the area.

"I'm Aaron," he says, pointing to himself. "I'm American."

"Ah, American!" exclaims Giuseppe with a broader smile. "My **grandson** is in America! New York!"

Aaron smiles. He has found a point of connection.

"New York is beautiful," he says. "I'm from Boston."

Giuseppe nods and, with **expressive** gestures, begins to explain the route to Aaron, pointing the direction and making movements with his hands. Aaron understands only some words: "right," "left," "kilometers."

Aaron takes out his phone and opens the map application.

"Can you... um... show me?" he asks, offering the phone to Giuseppe.

The elderly **farmer** looks at the phone with **suspicion** and shakes his head.

"Don't understand," he says. "Don't use these modern things."

Aaron realizes that Giuseppe isn't familiar with smartphones. He has an idea. He takes out a **notebook** and a pen from his pocket.

"Can we draw?" he asks, miming the act of drawing.

Giuseppe smiles and nods. Aaron draws a very simple **map** with a road and a point representing where they are now. Then he draws a castle with a **question mark**.

Giuseppe observes the drawing, then takes the pen and makes a mark on the road, much further ahead. He also draws some curves.

"You have to go this way," he says, tracing the road with his finger. "Then right, then straight ahead again. Very far."

Aaron doesn't understand all the words, but the drawing is clear.

"Thank you," says Aaron with gratitude.

Giuseppe makes a gesture with his hand, then heads toward a small stone **shed** near the field. He **signals** Aaron to follow him.

Inside the shed, which is cool despite the external heat, Giuseppe takes a glass bottle and two small glasses. He pours an **amber-colored** liquid into both.

"**Limoncello**," says Giuseppe with pride. "Made by me."

Aaron knows what limoncello is. He takes the glass and says:

"Thank you. **Cheers!**"

"Cheers!" responds Giuseppe, and they drink together.

The limoncello is sweet and strong, with an intense lemon flavor. Aaron feels the warmth of the liqueur **going down** through his throat.

"Good!" he exclaims sincerely.

Giuseppe smiles, evidently **satisfied** with the compliment.

Then, with gestures and few words, Giuseppe points to the olive trees around and explains that his family has been cultivating these trees for four **generations**. He takes another bottle, this time of **olive oil**, and pours some on a piece of bread. He offers it to Aaron.

Aaron tastes the bread with oil. It's delicious, with an **intense** and slightly spicy flavor.

"Fantastic!" he says.

Giuseppe seems to understand and smiles with **pride**.

With more gestures than words, Giuseppe tells Aaron about his life in the **countryside**, about his family, about his children who now live in the city. Aaron understands only part of what he says, but he perceives the **passion** and love that Giuseppe has for his land.

After about half an hour of this **unique** conversation, made of few words and many gestures, Aaron decides it's time to resume his journey.

"I have to go now," he says, pointing to the car. "Thank you very much for... everything."

Giuseppe nods understandingly. Then, with a sudden gesture, he takes the bottle of olive oil and offers it to Aaron.

"For you," he says. "**Gift**. Memory of Puglia."

Aaron is surprised and moved by this gesture of **generosity**.

"Thank you, thank you very much," he says, accepting the gift. "You're very kind."

Giuseppe accompanies him to the car and repeats the directions, always with a mix of words and gestures. Before Aaron leaves, he shakes his hand firmly.

"Have a good trip, American," he says. "And come back to Puglia!"

Aaron smiles and nods.

"I'll come back," he promises. "Thank you again."

While driving following Giuseppe's directions, Aaron reflects on the encounter that just happened. **Despite** the language **barrier**, he managed to communicate with this elderly Pugliese farmer. There was a human connection that overcame the differences of age, culture and language.

Aaron looks at the bottle of olive oil on the passenger seat. This isn't just a souvenir, he thinks, but the symbol of authentic **hospitality** and an experience he'll remember for a long time.

In the end, he reaches a larger road, with signs indicating the direction to Castel del Monte. Giuseppe's directions were **accurate**, despite the simplicity of the drawing.

That day, Aaron doesn't just visit a medieval castle, but also discovers the **genuine** soul of Puglia, embodied in an elderly farmer who offered him homemade limoncello and a precious gift.

Comprehension Check

1. What nationality is Aaron?
 - a) Italian
 - b) English
 - c) American
 - d) German
2. What is Aaron looking for when he gets lost?
 - a) A beach

- b) Castel del Monte
 - c) A typical restaurant
 - d) A friend's house
3. How do Aaron and Giuseppe mainly communicate?
- a) Speaking fluently in Italian
 - b) Using a translation app
 - c) With gestures, drawings and few words
 - d) Through an interpreter
4. What does Giuseppe offer Aaron in the shed?
- a) Red wine and cheese
 - b) Water and bread
 - c) Espresso coffee
 - d) Limoncello and bread with olive oil
5. What gift does Giuseppe give Aaron at the end?
- a) A bottle of limoncello
 - b) A bottle of olive oil
 - c) A map of the area
 - d) A basket of fruit

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

9. Two Tickets for the Theatre, Please

Martina walks quickly through the streets of Verona. It's Friday afternoon and she has just finished working. The city center is **crowded** with tourists admiring the beautiful historic buildings. Martina, however, has a **mission**: to buy two tickets for the **show** "Romeo and Juliet" at the Roman Theatre.

Sunday is Paolo's birthday, her boyfriend, and she wants to give him a **surprise**. Paolo loves theater and seeing Romeo and Juliet in Verona, the city where Shakespeare **set** the famous **tragedy**, would be a perfect gift.

Martina tried to buy the tickets online, but the website was only in Italian and she, being from Madrid and living in Italy for six months, found some **difficulties** with the technical terms. She prefers to go **in person** to the **ticket office**.

The Roman Theatre is located on the banks of the Adige river, in a panoramic position with a view of the city. It's an ancient Roman theater **built** in the 1st century BC, now used for **summer shows**.

Martina crosses the Pietra Bridge and climbs the **hill** toward the theater. It's a beautiful June day, warm but not too much, with a blue sky without clouds.

Arriving at the theater entrance, Martina sees a small **kiosk** with the sign "Ticket Office." There's a short line of people waiting.

While in line, Martina mentally rehearses what to say in Italian. She knows she has to ask for two tickets for Sunday evening, but she's a bit **nervous**. She wants to be sure to **make herself understood** correctly.

Finally it's her turn. Behind the **counter** there's a middle-aged woman with glasses and blonde hair.

"Good morning," says Martina with a slight Spanish accent.

"Good morning, how can I help you?" responds the woman with a courteous smile.

"I'd like to buy two tickets for Romeo and Juliet, please. For Sunday evening."

"Certainly. Do you prefer seats in the stalls or in the **gallery**?"

Martina isn't sure of the difference between "stalls" and "gallery."

"Excuse me, can you explain the difference?" she asks.

"The stalls are the **main** area, closer to the **stage**," explains the woman patiently.

"The gallery is higher up, **on the sides**."

"Ah, I understand! In the stalls, please," says Martina.

"Good. We have seats in row E, numbers 24 and 25, or row H, numbers 10 and 11.

Which do you prefer?"

"Row E, please."

"Excellent choice, they're central seats," says the woman. "The price is 28 euros per ticket, so 56 euros total."

"That's fine," responds Martina, taking her **wallet** from her bag.

While counting the money, the woman asks:

"**I need** your name and a phone number, please."

"Martina Gómez, and my number is 333-456-7890."

The woman notes down the information and then asks:

"Are you paying **in cash** or by card?"

"By card, please," responds Martina.

After completing the **payment**, the woman prints the tickets and hands them to Martina.

"Here are your tickets. The show starts at 9:00 PM, but I recommend arriving half an hour early. The **entrance** is through that door there," she says, pointing to an entrance on the side of the theater.

"Thank you very much!" says Martina, checking the tickets. She notices something that makes her **hesitate**. There's a note that says "In case of **bad weather**, the show will be held at Teatro Nuovo."

"Excuse me," asks Martina. "What does 'bad weather' mean?"

"'Bad weather' means 'bad weather' in English," explains the woman. "If it rains, the show will be moved to the covered theater in the city center."

"Ah, I understand. And how will I know if the show changes **location**?"

"You can check our website after 6:00 PM on Sunday. Or you can call this number," says the woman, pointing to a number on the ticket.

"Perfect, thank you for the **explanation**."

"You're welcome. I wish you a good **evening** at the theater. Romeo and Juliet is a very exciting show, especially here in Verona."

"I'm sure it will be," responds Martina with a smile. "It's a birthday gift for my boyfriend."

"What a beautiful gift! Happy birthday to him, then."

Martina thanks again and walks away from the ticket office, holding the tickets **carefully** in her bag. She's happy she decided to come in person. The conversation was easier than she feared.

While walking home, Martina stops at a **pastry shop** to also buy a small cake for Paolo's birthday.

She chooses a chocolate **dessert** and asks the clerk to write "Happy Birthday Paolo" with white **icing**.

Sunday evening arrives quickly. **Fortunately**, it's a perfect evening, without rain, so the show will be held as planned at the Roman Theatre. Martina has kept the surprise until the last moment.

"Where are we going?" asks Paolo while they walk through the center of Verona.

"It's a surprise," responds Martina with a **mysterious** smile. "Trust me."

When they arrive near the theater, Martina takes out the tickets from her bag.

"Surprise! Happy birthday!" she says, showing them to Paolo.

Paolo's face lights up with **joy**.

"Romeo and Juliet at the Roman Theatre? I can't believe it! It's wonderful, Martina, thank you!"

Paolo hugs Martina, visibly moved.

"It's the perfect gift. You know how much I love Shakespeare, and seeing Romeo and Juliet here in Verona..."

"I know," responds Martina, happy that her surprise was **successful**. "That's why I chose this show."

They enter the theater and easily find their seats, which are excellent, right in the center of the stalls. The theater is already almost full and there's an **atmosphere of anticipation** in the air.

While waiting for the show to begin, Paolo squeezes Martina's hand.

"Thank you for this gift. It's not just the show, but the fact that you thought of something I would like so much..."

Martina smiles, remembering her **efforts** to buy the tickets in Italian. It was definitely worth it to see Paolo so happy.

The lights dim and the actors enter the stage. The famous **prologue** of the tragedy resonates in the ancient theater: "Two households, both alike in dignity, in fair Verona..."

Comprehension Check

1. What nationality is Martina?
 - a) Italian
 - b) French
 - c) Spanish
 - d) English

2. What gift does Martina buy for Paolo?
 - a) A Shakespeare book
 - b) Tickets for Romeo and Juliet
 - c) A dinner at a romantic restaurant
 - d) A trip to Verona

3. Why does Martina go to the ticket office in person?
 - a) Because the online tickets were sold out
 - b) Because she doesn't have a credit card
 - c) Because she had difficulties with the Italian website
 - d) Because she wants to choose the best seats

4. What happens in case of bad weather?
 - a) The show is cancelled
 - b) The show is postponed
 - c) The show is held in another theater
 - d) Spectators receive a refund

5. How does Paolo react to the surprise?
 - a) He's disappointed because he preferred another gift
 - b) He's happy and moved
 - c) He's surprised but worried about the ticket price
 - d) He's indifferent because he doesn't love theater

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

10. The House in the Countryside

Luca drives his small Fiat along a **countryside** road in central Tuscany. It's a warm July day and the sunflower fields create a yellow sea that extends to the hills. He has lowered all the windows because the air conditioning doesn't work well, and the warm but **fragrant** air of wild herbs enters the car.

He's thirty-two years old, lives in Florence and works as an architect. Two weeks ago he received a letter from a **notary** informing him that his uncle Antonio had died and left him a small country house as an **inheritance**.

Luca hadn't seen his uncle for many years. Antonio had always been a **loner**, a man who preferred the quiet life in the countryside.

Luca looks at the GPS on his phone. He should be almost there. He **slows down** and looks for the house number on the road. Finally he sees it: a small **rusty** metal **sign** with the number 37. There's a dirt driveway that goes into the olive trees.

After a curve, he sees the house. It's a typical Tuscan farmhouse, built in stone with a red **tile** roof. It's smaller than he imagined, but it has a certain **charm**. Around the house there's a garden with tall grass and some fruit trees. There's also an old stone **well**.

Luca parks and **gets out**. The silence is almost total, interrupted only by birdsong and the sound of **cicadas**. It's a strange sensation for him, used to the constant noise of the city.

He approaches the front door and takes **the keys** that the notary gave him. The lock is a bit rusty, but after a few attempts, the key turns and the door opens.

The interior of the house is in **semi-darkness** because the **shutters** are closed. There's a musty and dusty smell. Luca opens a shutter and sunlight enters, revealing a simple but welcoming room. There's an old but well-maintained sofa, a wooden table with four chairs, and an antique **dresser**.

Luca moves slowly through the house, exploring every room. There's a small **kitchen** with dated **appliances**, a simple bathroom, and a bedroom with a large wooden bed. Everything is covered with dust, but it seems his uncle kept the house in order.

In the kitchen, he finds an old **coffee pot** on the stove. It reminds him of Sundays when he was a child and went to visit his grandparents. He decides to **take a look** at the upper floor.

He climbs the wooden **stairs**, which **creak** under his feet. Upstairs there's a small study with a desk near the window and many books on the **shelves**. There's also a small bedroom, probably for **guests**.

On the desk, Luca notices a diary. He opens it with **curiosity** and sees that it's handwritten by uncle Antonio.

The pages are full of observations about nature, about life in the countryside, about the changes of the **seasons**. Luca is surprised: he didn't know that his uncle was such an attentive observer.

Who was uncle Antonio really? wonders Luca. Why did he choose to leave me this house?

He returns to the **ground floor** and opens all the shutters. The light now **fills** the house, showing its details: the wooden beams of the ceiling, the typical Tuscan **terracotta** floor, the thick walls that keep the house cool.

Luca sits on the sofa and looks around. The house needs cleaning and some work, but it's solid and has a **special** atmosphere. He can understand why uncle Antonio loved living here.

He decides to go out and explore the **land** around the house. Behind there's a small **vegetable garden**, now full of weeds, and some fruit trees: a cherry tree, a pear tree, a fig tree. There's also a centenary olive tree, **majestic** and **gnarled**.

While walking under the hot sun, Luca begins to feel a sense of peace he hadn't felt for a long time. Life in Florence is hectic, full of work **deadlines**, traffic, noise. Here everything seems to slow down.

He returns toward the house and notices an old bicycle leaning against the wall. It still seems in good condition. Luca smiles thinking how nice it would be to explore the country roads by bicycle.

He goes back into the house and goes to the kitchen. He opens the **refrigerator** but it's empty and **turned off**. He'll have to go to the supermarket in the nearby village if he wants to eat something.

Before leaving, he decides to take one last look at the house. He stops in front of the **photographs** on the living room wall. There's one that shows uncle Antonio as a young man, with a woman Luca doesn't recognize. They look happy.

Suddenly, he realizes that this house is full of stories and **memories** he doesn't know. He feels almost like an **intruder**, but at the same time he's curious to discover more.

As he's about to leave, Luca notices a letter on the table, with his name written by hand. He opens it with curiosity.

"Dear Luca, If you're reading this letter, it means I'm no longer here and you have inherited my house. Maybe you're wondering why I chose you. The answer is simple: when you were a child and came to visit me, I saw in your eyes the same love for nature that I've always had. I hope this house can be a **refuge** for you from the hectic life of the city. With affection, Uncle Antonio"

Luca is moved. He remembers the visits to his uncle when he was little, the walks in the fields. **Memories** he had almost **forgotten** but that now return to his mind.

He leaves the house and looks at the panorama around him: the green hills, the sunflower fields, the blue sky. Suddenly, he understands why uncle Antonio loved this place so much. It's not just a house in the countryside; it's a way of living, a different rhythm.

Luca decides to go to the nearby village to buy what he needs to spend a few days in the house. While driving, he thinks about how he could **renovate** the house without altering its original character. As an architect, he has many ideas.

In the small village supermarket, he buys food and **cleaning** products. The saleswoman, an elderly lady, smiles at him.

"You're Antonio's nephew, aren't you?" she asks. "You can see the **resemblance**."

Luca is surprised.

"Yes, I'm Luca. Did you know my uncle?"

"Of course, everyone here knew Antonio. He was a **kind** man and very respected. I'm sorry for your loss."

"Thank you," responds Luca, touched by the fact that his uncle was so appreciated.

Luca returns to the house with his supplies. He spends the rest of the day cleaning and discovering small details: an engraving on the **ceiling beam** with the date 1887; a collection of shells on a shelf; an old **gramophone** that still works.

At sunset, he sits on the small **terrace** in front of the house with a glass of local wine. The sky is tinged with orange and pink, and the air fills with the scent of **rosemary** and lavender growing in the garden.

For the first time in months, Luca feels truly **relaxed** and at peace. He thinks about his work in Florence, about his hectic life. Then he looks at the house, simple but authentic, and wonders if there isn't something important he's missing by always living in a rush.

That evening, while preparing for bed, Luca makes a decision: he won't sell the house. He'll keep it as a personal **refuge**, a place to return to when he needs peace. Maybe he'll **rent it out** occasionally, but mainly it will be his personal space.

He **falls asleep** to the sound of wind through the olive trees and, for the first time in a long time, he doesn't dream of architectural **projects** or work **deadlines**, but of green fields, blue skies and a feeling of freedom he had forgotten.

Comprehension Check

1. What job does Luca do?
 - a) Doctor
 - b) Teacher
 - c) Architect
 - d) Lawyer
2. Where is the house Luca inherited located?
 - a) In Sicily
 - b) In Tuscany
 - c) In Puglia
 - d) In Lombardy
3. What does Luca find on the study desk?
 - a) A letter
 - b) A diary
 - c) A map

d) A will

4. What does Luca decide to do with the house at the end of the story?
- a) Sell it
 - b) Rent it out permanently
 - c) Keep it as a personal refuge
 - d) Turn it into a hotel
5. What feeling does Luca experience while spending time in the house?
- a) Nostalgia
 - b) Anxiety
 - c) Boredom
 - d) Peace and relaxation

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

11. The Cooking Class

Claire walks through the streets of Siena with a map in her hand. It's a beautiful spring day and the sun illuminates the ancient **squares** of the Tuscan city. Claire is American, 25 years old and has been studying Italian for six months. She's in Italy for a semester abroad and has decided to **enroll** in a cooking class to improve her Italian and learn to prepare traditional dishes.

The class is held in a small cooking school near Piazza del Campo. Claire looks at the **address** on her phone and checks that she's on the right street. Finally she finds the building and climbs the stairs to the second floor. In front of a door with a sign that says "La Cucina Toscana - Classes and Tastings" she stops, takes a deep breath and **knocks**.

"Come in!" says a voice from inside.

Claire enters a large modern kitchen with six work stations. There are already some people **chatting among themselves**. A man with a white apron and a big smile approaches her.

"Good morning! You must be Claire, right? I'm Marco, the chef **instructor** of the class."

"Good morning, yes, I'm Claire. Nice to meet you," responds Claire, a bit nervous but happy to be able to practice her Italian.

"Welcome! Today we learn to make fresh pasta. Have you ever made pasta before?" asks Marco.

"No, never. It's the first time," responds Claire.

"Perfect! I'll **teach you** everything you need to know. Come, I'll introduce you to the others."

Marco accompanies Claire toward the group. There are eight people in total: a Japanese couple, a German man, three Italian women and a Spanish boy. Marco makes the introductions and then invites everyone to put on an apron and wash their hands.

"Today we'll prepare **tagliatelle** with Tuscan ragù and ravioli **filled** with ricotta and spinach," announces Marco. "First of all, let's talk about the **ingredients**."

Marco shows the group the different ingredients on the table: **flour**, eggs, salt, ricotta, spinach, ground meat, **tomatoes**, onions, carrots, **celery**, garlic, olive oil and various aromatic herbs.

"To make the pasta **dough**, we need flour and eggs," explains Marco. "The proportion is simple: 100 grams of flour for each egg. Today we'll use 200 grams of flour and two eggs per person."

Claire listens carefully and **takes notes** in her small **notebook**. She wants to remember everything to be able to make these dishes again when she returns to America.

Marco continues the explanation, showing how to **mix** the flour and eggs until obtaining a smooth and elastic dough. Then he demonstrates how to **knead** correctly.

"The dough must rest for 30 minutes," says Marco. "In the meantime, we prepare the ragù."

The group divides into pairs to work together. Claire pairs with Ana, one of the Italian women.

"Don't worry, I'll help you," says Ana to Claire with a kind smile. "I've made pasta with my grandmother many times."

Claire is grateful for the help. Ana shows her how to **cut** the vegetables into small pieces.

"This is called '**soffritto**,'" explains Ana while putting chopped onion, carrot and celery in a **pan** with olive oil. "It's the base of many Italian dishes."

The aroma of the vegetables **cooking** fills the kitchen and Claire feels more and more enthusiastic. While the soffritto cooks, Marco shows everyone how to **roll out** the dough with a rolling pin to make a **thin sheet**.

"Not too thin!" he warns. "It should be about a millimeter thick."

Rolling out the dough is more difficult than Claire thought. Her sheet isn't perfectly round like Marco's, but he **reassures** her saying that with practice she'll improve.

Once everyone has rolled out the dough, Marco shows how to **cut** the sheet to make tagliatelle and how to prepare the ravioli with **filling**.

"For the ravioli, put a bit of ricotta and spinach **filling** in the center, then close the edges well," he explains.

Claire follows the instructions carefully, but some of her ravioli don't close perfectly and the filling comes out a bit.

"It doesn't matter," says Ana with a smile. "Even my first ravioli were like that. The important thing is that they taste good!"

When everyone has finished preparing the pasta, Marco shows how to cook the tagliatelle (only 2-3 minutes in boiling water) and how to complete the ragù by **adding** the ground meat, tomatoes and herbs to the soffritto.

Finally, after three hours of work, it's time to **taste** the prepared dishes. The group sits at a large table set up in a room adjacent to the kitchen. Marco serves Tuscan wine and everyone makes a toast.

"**Enjoy your meal!**" exclaims Marco.

Claire tastes her tagliatelle with ragù and can't believe she made them herself. They're delicious!

During dinner, everyone chats and exchanges stories. Claire tells about her trip to Italy and her love for Italian cuisine. Ana asks her if she often eats Italian food in America.

"Yes, but it's not like here," responds Claire. "In America, pizza and pasta are different. Now I understand why Italians are so **proud** of their cuisine!"

Marco smiles hearing these words.

"Cuisine is part of our culture," he says. "Every region has its specialties and traditions. Here in Tuscany, for example, we use a lot of unsalted **bread**, which is perfect for our **bruschetta** and **ribollita**."

At the end of the evening, Marco gives all participants a course certificate and a small **recipe book** with the day's recipes.

"I hope you'll continue cooking Italian," he says. "Cuisine is a wonderful way to learn a language and a culture."

Claire leaves the cooking school with her certificate, the recipe book and a new love for Italian cuisine. She can't wait to try making pasta at home. While walking to her apartment through the illuminated streets of Siena, she thinks about all the new Italian words she learned today and how she'll share this experience with her family in America.

Maybe, she thinks, learning to cook Italian is also a way to take a piece of Italy with me when I return home.

Comprehension Check

1. In which city does the cooking class take place?
 - a) Rome
 - b) Florence
 - c) Siena
 - d) Milan

2. What does Claire learn to prepare during the class?
 - a) Pizza and focaccia
 - b) Tagliatelle and ravioli
 - c) Risotto and polenta
 - d) Lasagna and cannelloni

3. Who helps Claire during the preparation of the dishes?
 - a) Marco, the chef
 - b) Ana, an Italian participant
 - c) The Japanese couple
 - d) The Spanish boy

4. What ingredient is the base of "soffritto"?
 - a) Garlic and chili pepper
 - b) Onion, carrot and celery
 - c) Tomato and basil
 - d) Flour and eggs

5. What does Claire receive at the end of the class?
- a) A set of Italian pots
 - b) An apron with her name
 - c) A certificate and a recipe book
 - d) A bottle of Tuscan wine

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

12. The Wrong Gift

Tommaso walks through the streets of Venice, looking at the **shop** windows. He comes from the United States and is now in Italy to visit his aunt Lucia, who has been living here for thirty years. Tomorrow is aunt Lucia's birthday and Tommaso wants to buy her a small **gift** to bring to the **family dinner**.

His aunt loves sweets, **especially** chocolate. Tommaso remembers that the last time he came to visit her, she told him about a famous **chocolate shop** near Piazza San Marco that makes artisanal chocolates with typical Venetian flavors.

What was that place called? thinks Tommaso, trying to remember the name.
Something with "flavors"... "Antichi Sapori di Venezia," maybe?

He continues walking through the small Venetian **alleys**, looking at the map on his phone. Venice is a labyrinth of small streets and canals, and it's easy to **get lost**. Tommaso stops to ask for **directions** from a gondolier.

"Excuse me, do you know where a shop called 'Antichi Sapori di Venezia' is located? It's a chocolate shop, I think."

The gondolier shakes his head.

"No, I'm sorry. I don't know this shop. But there are many souvenir shops in that direction," he says, pointing to a street on his right.

"Thank you," responds Tommaso and heads in the indicated direction.

After wandering for a few minutes, Tommaso sees a shop with a colorful **sign**: "Sapori e Profumi di Venezia." It's not exactly the name he remembered, but it seems similar. He enters the shop, hoping to find chocolates for his aunt.

Inside, the shop is full of **souvenirs** of all kinds: Venetian masks, miniature gondolas, **t-shirts**, refrigerator magnets. But he doesn't see chocolates.

A lady with blonde hair approaches him with a smile.

"Good morning, can I help you?" she asks kindly.

"Good morning," responds Tommaso. "I'm looking for chocolates for my aunt. They told me about a shop called 'Antichi Sapori di Venezia,' but maybe I **got the name wrong**..."

The lady smiles with understanding.

"Ah, I think you're looking for 'Antichi Saperi di Venezia.' It's a famous chocolate shop, but it's located on the other side of the city, **near** the Rialto bridge."

Tommaso sighs. It's already late and he has an **appointment** with some friends in an hour. He doesn't have time to **cross** all of Venice.

"I understand. Well, maybe I can find something else here for my aunt," he says, looking around.

"Of course! We have many typical Venetian souvenirs. Is your aunt from Venice?"

"No, she's Sicilian like me, but she's been living here for many years. She really likes chocolate."

"Hmm, we don't sell chocolates, but we have these artisanal chocolate soaps. They're very special, made with natural ingredients," says the lady, showing an elegant **package** of soaps.

Tommaso looks at the soaps. They're **packaged** in a beautiful box with a golden **ribbon**, similar to a chocolate box. On the lid it says "Artisanal Soaps - Chocolate and Vanilla."

*Soaps... flavors... they're similar words in Italian, thinks Tommaso. Maybe I confused the two shops. But these soaps seem like a nice gift **anyway**.*

"Okay, I'll take this package," says Tommaso.

"Excellent choice! Would you like a greeting **card** to attach to the gift?" asks the saleswoman.

"Yes, thank you."

Tommaso chooses a card with a beautiful **view** of Venice and writes: "Many wishes, aunt Lucia! I know how much you love the sweet flavors of Venice. With love, Tommaso."

He pays for the gift and leaves the shop, happy to have found something nice for his aunt despite the **confusion** with the shop names.

The next day, Tommaso arrives at aunt Lucia's house with his gift wrapped in beautiful colored paper. His aunt's house is a cozy apartment overlooking a small **canal**. The whole family is already there: **uncles**, cousins and some longtime friends of aunt Lucia.

"Tommaso, finally!" exclaims aunt Lucia, hugging him warmly. "Come, we were about to start eating the **appetizer**."

After greetings and hugs, the family sits at the table for a typical Venetian dinner. There are fish **dishes**, black squid ink risotto and, naturally, lots of wine.

During dinner, Tommaso enjoys the conversations and **laughter**. His family has always been very close, despite the geographical **distances**.

After dinner, it's time for cake and gifts. Aunt Lucia opens the packages one by one, thanking everyone with hugs and smiles.

Finally, it's Tommaso's gift's turn.

"Here, aunt. Many wishes!" says Tommaso, offering her his package.

Aunt Lucia opens the gift with curiosity and takes out the box of soaps. She reads the **label** and then looks at Tommaso with a **confused** expression.

"Chocolate soaps?" she says, trying to hide her **surprise**.

Only then does Tommaso realize his mistake. He bought soaps, not chocolates! He confused "saponi" (soaps) with "sapori" (flavors)!

"Oh no!" exclaims Tommaso, suddenly feeling **embarrassed**. "I'm sorry, aunt! I thought they were chocolates. I confused 'saponi' with 'sapori'!"

For a moment, there's silence. Then aunt Lucia bursts out laughing, followed by the rest of the family.

"Tommaso, this is the most **funny** gift I've ever received!" says aunt Lucia through her laughter. "Don't worry, it's an understandable mistake. Although I must say I prefer eating chocolates rather than washing myself with them!"

Everyone laughs heartily and the **situation** becomes a hilarious moment. Tommaso joins in the laughter, relieved by his aunt's reaction.

"I promise I'll buy you real chocolates tomorrow," says Tommaso.

"Don't worry," responds aunt Lucia, hugging him. "These soaps are beautiful and will always remind me of this **special** evening. And besides, my bathroom will smell like chocolate!"

The party continues with more laughter and stories. At the end of the evening, Tommaso's mistake has become the family's favorite **anecdote**, a story they'll surely tell for years.

While Tommaso returns to his hotel, he thinks that **sometimes** linguistic mistakes can create the most beautiful memories. And next time he buys a gift, he'll pay close attention to the difference between "saponi" and "sapori"!

Comprehension Check

1. What did Tommaso originally want to buy for his aunt?
 - a) A Venetian mask
 - b) Artisanal chocolates
 - c) Scented soaps
 - d) A book about Venice
2. Why did Tommaso buy soaps instead of chocolates?
 - a) They were cheaper
 - b) He confused the words "saponi" and "sapori"
 - c) The chocolate shop was closed
 - d) His aunt is allergic to chocolate
3. What was the name of the shop where Tommaso bought the gift?
 - a) Antichi Saperi di Venezia
 - b) Saponi e Cioccolato
 - c) Sapori e Profumi di Venezia
 - d) Antichi Sapori di Venezia
4. What was aunt Lucia's reaction when she opened the gift?
 - a) She got angry
 - b) She was disappointed but didn't show it
 - c) She laughed and appreciated the gift anyway

d) She asked to exchange it

5. What did Tommaso's mistake become at the end of the story?

a) A reason for embarrassment that ruined the party

b) A funny anecdote for the whole family

c) An Italian lesson for everyone present

d) A reason to return to the shop the next day

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

13. The Dog Walk

Every morning, at seven-thirty, Nora leaves her apartment in Trieste with her dog, a small jack russell terrier named Max. Their daily **walk** is a special moment of the day. Max is always very **excited** when he sees Nora take the **leash** from the shelf near the door.

"Calm, Max, calm!" says Nora with a smile, trying to put the leash on the dog's collar. "Let's go for our walk."

Nora is thirty-five years old and has been living in Trieste for two years. She came from Germany for work and chose to live in this quiet **neighborhood** near the sea. She likes her life here, even though at the beginning it was difficult because she didn't speak Italian well.

Nora and Max leave the building and begin their daily **routine**. First they go toward the small park two **blocks** away. Max **sniffs** every corner, every tree, every **bush**.

In the park, Max can run without a leash for a few minutes in an area dedicated to dogs. He **enjoys** chasing the leaves moved by the wind. Nora sits on a **bench** and watches her dog play, enjoying the morning sun.

After fifteen minutes at the park, Nora and Max continue their walk toward the seafront. It's their favorite **route**. The air is fresh and clean, with the scent of the sea. There are few people at this hour: some joggers, some elderly people, and some **fishermen** on the small **beach**.

There's an elderly man that Nora and Max see almost every morning. He's always sitting on the same bench, with a bag full of bread **crumbs**. The man feeds the pigeons that gather around him. He has white hair, thick glasses and always wears a dark blue **hat**.

Every morning, Nora and this gentleman exchange a simple **greeting**.

"Good morning," says Nora, passing near the bench.

"Good morning, miss. Good morning, little friend," responds the man, referring to Max.

This brief interaction has been their routine for months. Nora doesn't know anything about this man, **not even** his name, but there's a comforting familiarity in this daily exchange.

One Monday morning, Nora and Max take their **usual walk**. When they arrive at the elderly man's bench, they notice that today he seems **different**. He's paler than usual and has a sad expression.

"Good morning," says Nora as always.

"Good morning, miss," responds the man, but his voice is lower.

Nora feels that **something's wrong**. Usually she would continue her walk, but today she decides to stop.

"Is everything alright, sir?" she asks gently.

The man looks up, surprised that she stopped to talk.

"Ah, miss... not very well, to be honest. My old friend, my cat Milo, died yesterday. He was with me for fifteen years."

Nora feels a **pang** of sadness for this man.

"I'm very sorry," she says, sitting on the bench next to him. "It's difficult to lose an **animal** that's been part of the family for so long."

"Yes, exactly. He was my family. I live **alone**, you know? Milo was my company."

Max, as if he understands the situation, approaches the man and rests his head on his leg. The man smiles weakly and **pets** Max's head.

"What's his name?" he asks, referring to the dog.

"His name is Max," responds Nora. "And I'm Nora."

"Pleased to finally meet you, Nora. I'm Giorgio."

So, after months of simple "good mornings," Nora and Giorgio begin a real conversation. Giorgio tells her that he's **retired**, that he worked as a **history** teacher for forty years, and that he's lived in the neighborhood his whole life. Nora tells him about her work as a **translator** and her decision to move to Trieste.

"Your Italian is very good," comments Giorgio.

"Thank you, but I'm still learning. Sometimes it's difficult."

"Practice is important. Coming here every morning and talking with an old man like me can help," says Giorgio with a kind **smile**.

"I'd like that very much," responds Nora sincerely.

From that day, Nora and Max's morning routine changes slightly. Now they always stop for a few minutes to talk with Giorgio. Sometimes they talk about the **weather**, other times Giorgio tells stories about old Trieste. Nora learns many new **vocabulary** words and improves her Italian.

Max also seems happy with this new friendship. Every morning, when they approach the bench, he **pulls** the leash with enthusiasm. Giorgio always brings some dog **cookies** in his pocket.

"You shouldn't **spoil him** so much," says Nora one day.

"Ah, an old man like me likes to spoil his friends," responds Giorgio with a laugh. "And besides, look what sweet **eyes** he has!"

As the weeks pass, Nora discovers more and more things about Giorgio. She knows that his wife died ten years ago, that he has a **daughter** who lives in Milan, and that he loves classical music.

One day, Nora notices that Giorgio seems particularly **cheerful**.

"Did something nice happen?" she asks.

"Yes, very nice!" responds Giorgio enthusiastically. "Yesterday I went to the municipal **animal shelter** and adopted a cat. He's old like me, nobody wanted him. His name is Leo."

"Oh, how wonderful!" exclaims Nora. "How's it going?"

"Very well. He's shy, he still **hides** under the bed sometimes, but last night he came to sleep on my feet. I think we'll become good friends."

"I'm very happy for you, Giorgio," says Nora sincerely.

"And I'm **grateful** to you two," adds Giorgio, petting Max. "If it weren't for this little friend and our conversations, maybe I wouldn't have found the courage to adopt another animal after Milo."

In the following days, Giorgio brings **photographs** of Leo to show Nora. The cat is striped, orange and white, with green eyes.

"He's beautiful," comments Nora.

One Saturday morning, instead of the usual walk, Nora has a different idea.

"Giorgio, would you like to come have breakfast at the **café** with me and Max? There's a place nearby with a nice **outdoor area** where they accept dogs."

Giorgio is surprised but happy about the invitation.

"I'd like that very much," he responds with a smile.

So, instead of sitting on the usual bench, they go together to Caffè Adriatico, a small bar with outdoor tables overlooking the sea. They order **cappuccinos** and **croissants** and chat for more than an hour.

This becomes another **habit**: every Saturday morning, Nora, Max and Giorgio have breakfast together. Sometimes they talk about books, other times about memories. Giorgio is always interested in hearing about life in Germany and Nora loves listening to his stories about Trieste.

One day, while getting ready to leave for the morning walk, Nora realizes how much her life in Trieste has changed since she started talking with Giorgio. Before she knew few people. Now, thanks to this friendship born **by chance**, she feels more part of the community.

While walking toward the seafront with Max, Nora thinks about how sometimes the most meaningful friendships are born in the most **unexpected** ways. A simple walk with the dog, a daily greeting, and then a real conversation in a moment of sadness.

When they arrive at the bench, Giorgio is already there, feeding the pigeons. Max barks happily running toward him, and Giorgio raises his hand in greeting.

"Good morning, Nora! Good morning, Max! I have some **news** to tell you today..."

And so begins another day, another conversation, another chapter of their friendship.

Comprehension Check

1. In which city does Nora live?
 - a) Milan
 - b) Rome
 - c) Trieste
 - d) Florence

2. What job does Nora do?
 - a) Teacher
 - b) Translator
 - c) Veterinarian
 - d) Waitress

3. Why does Nora stop to talk with Giorgio for the first time?
 - a) Because Max is sick
 - b) Because Giorgio seems sad
 - c) Because she wants to improve her Italian
 - d) Because she's late for work

4. What does Giorgio do after losing his cat Milo?
 - a) He moves to another city
 - b) He stops going to the park
 - c) He adopts a new cat from the shelter
 - d) He buys a dog like Max

5. What new habit do Nora and Giorgio start?
- a) Having breakfast together at the café every Saturday
 - b) Visiting the animal shelter together
 - c) Going to classical music concerts
 - d) Taking long walks in the mountains

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

14. The Neighborhood Barber

Matteo looks at himself in the mirror in his small apartment in the center of Naples. His hair is too long and messy. Tonight he has an important **appointment** with Giulia, a girl he met at university two weeks ago. He wants to make a good impression, so he decides to go **get his hair cut**.

Even though he's been living in this neighborhood for six months, Matteo has never been to the local barber. Usually he goes to a modern salon near the university, but today he doesn't have **enough** time. His **roommate**, Carlo, recommended the neighborhood **barber**, saying that Salvatore, the owner, is an institution in the neighborhood.

Matteo leaves home and walks through the **crowded** streets of the historic center. It's a Saturday morning and there are many people. After a few minutes, he sees the sign "Barbiere Salvatore" on a small **shop** with a window decorated with old photographs and the **unmistakable** striped **pole** in white, red and blue.

He enters the shop and is welcomed by the sound of a Neapolitan **song** on the radio and the **scent** of shaving lotion. The barbershop is small but tidy, with two red leather barber chairs, large mirrors on the walls and photographs of Napoli soccer players **everywhere**. There's only one customer who's finishing getting shaved and an elderly man with a **razor** in his hand.

The man, who must be Salvatore, sees Matteo and smiles at him.

"Good morning, young man! Just a moment and I'll be with you," he says with a strong Neapolitan accent.

While waiting, Matteo looks around. There are sports **magazines** on the small table, all focused on soccer. An old TV in the corner is broadcasting a sports program.

After a few minutes, the customer gets up, pays and greets Salvatore with a warm **handshake**.

"Please, have a seat!" says Salvatore to Matteo.

Matteo sits in the chair and Salvatore puts a white **cape** around his neck.

"So, what **cut** do you want?" asks Salvatore, looking at Matteo's hair in the mirror.

"I'd like a short cut on the sides and a bit longer on top," responds Matteo. "I have an appointment tonight and I'd like to look good."

Salvatore's eyes light up.

"Ah, an appointment with a beautiful girl! **Leave it to me**, I'll give you a cut that will make her **fall in love** immediately!"

Salvatore begins cutting the hair with **expert** and precise movements. While working, he starts asking questions.

"Are you new to the neighborhood? I've never seen you before."

"Yes, I moved here six months ago for university. I study **engineering**."

"Engineering!" exclaims Salvatore. "My eldest son is an engineer. He works in Milan now. And where are you from?"

"From Bari."

"Ah, from Puglia! I have a cousin in Bari. Beautiful city. But Naples is more beautiful, don't you think?" he asks with a proud **smile**.

"Naples is fantastic," admits Matteo. "Very lively."

"And this girl from the appointment, is she Neapolitan?"

"No, she's from Rome, but she studies here."

Salvatore makes a sound with his tongue, as if he were slightly **disappointed**.

"Roman... okay, okay. The important thing is that she's a good girl."

While Salvatore continues cutting the hair, the door opens and two middle-aged men enter. They greet Salvatore as old friends.

"Hi Peppi, hi Luigi!" says Salvatore. "Do you need the usual?"

"Yes, but no **hurry**," responds one of the two. "We have time."

The two men begin discussing animatedly about the soccer match from the previous evening. Napoli lost against Juventus and they're not happy.

"It's not possible to lose like that!" exclaims Peppino. "The **referee** was clearly against us!"

"Always the same story with Juventus," adds Luigi.

Salvatore joins the conversation while continuing to cut.

"You're right! That **penalty** was scandalous! But the real problem is the defense. Too many **mistakes!**"

The discussion continues with the three men analyzing every moment of the match. For Matteo, who isn't a big soccer **fan**, it's difficult to follow, but he finds the situation amusing.

"What do you think?" Salvatore suddenly asks Matteo.

"I... actually didn't see the match," admits Matteo. "And I don't follow soccer much."

There's a moment of incredulous silence, then Salvatore bursts out laughing.

"You don't follow soccer? In Naples? We need to remedy this situation!"

Peppino and Luigi nod gravely, as if Matteo had a serious illness.

"You have to come watch the next match at Luigi's bar," says Salvatore. "It's an **experience** every young person should have in Naples."

Salvatore finishes the haircut and shows Matteo the result using a smaller mirror.

"There you go! What do you think?"

Matteo is sincerely **impressed**. It's one of the best **cuts** he's ever had. His hair looks thicker and the cut highlights his features.

"It's perfect, thank you!" he says enthusiastically.

Salvatore smiles with **pride** and applies some gel. Then he takes a **brush** and uses it to remove the cut hair from Matteo's neck.

"Wait, we're not finished," he says. "I'll also give you a nice **beard** trim."

Before Matteo can protest, Salvatore reclines the chair and puts a warm towel on Matteo's face.

"Relax, young man. A well-done beard is fundamental for an important appointment."

Salvatore applies shaving foam and then begins shaving Matteo with a traditional razor. His movements are confident and delicate.

"A good barber must have a light hand and an **attentive** eye," says Salvatore. "My father taught me this trade when I was twelve years old. This shop has existed for sixty years, you know?"

While Salvatore continues talking about the history of his barbershop, Matteo feels more and more relaxed. There's something almost meditative about this experience.

When Salvatore finishes, he cleans Matteo's face with another warm towel and then applies an aftershave lotion that has a fresh **citrus** scent.

"There you go, young man. Now you're ready to conquer your Roman girl!" says Salvatore, **removing** the cape.

Matteo looks at himself in the mirror and is **amazed**. Not only is the haircut perfect, but the beard is also impeccable. He feels more confident and attractive.

"How much do I owe you?" he asks, taking out his **wallet**.

"Fifteen euros for everything," responds Salvatore.

Matteo is surprised by such an **affordable** price. In the modern salon where he usually goes, he pays at least double just for the cut.

While Matteo pays, Peppino looks at him and nods with approval.

"Salvatore is an artist," he says. "I've been coming here for thirty years and he's never disappointed me."

"My father also came here," adds Luigi. "It's a family tradition."

Salvatore seems **pleased** with the compliments but makes a modest gesture with his hand.

"I just do my job," he says. "But if you want some advice, young man... take your girl to eat pizza at Michele's. It's the best in Naples and not too expensive. Perfect for a first date."

"Thanks for the advice," says Matteo. "I'll keep it in mind."

Before Matteo leaves, Salvatore gives him a business **card** for the shop.

"Come back in three weeks for a touch-up. And next time tell me how the date went!"

Matteo smiles and promises to return. While walking home, he realizes it wasn't just a haircut. It was an immersion in Neapolitan culture, an experience that made him feel more part of the neighborhood.

That evening, the date with Giulia goes very well. She immediately notices his new look.

"Did you get your hair cut? It looks very good on you!" she says with a smile that makes Matteo's **heart** race.

Following Salvatore's advice, he takes her to Michele's pizzeria, where they eat a perfect margherita pizza and chat for hours.

The following week, Matteo passes by the barbershop and sees Salvatore chatting with a customer. He enters to greet him.

"Ah, our engineer!" exclaims Salvatore when he sees him. "How did the date go?"

Matteo smiles. "Very well. You were right about the pizzeria."

"I told you so!" says Salvatore with a **satisfied** expression. "And when are you seeing her again?"

"Tonight," responds Matteo.

"Good boy! You listened to the advice of an old Neapolitan barber," says Salvatore, giving him a pat on the shoulder.

Matteo leaves the barbershop with the feeling of having found not only a barber, but a new friend in the neighborhood. And even though he's not very interested in soccer, maybe one day he'll go to Luigi's bar to watch a Napoli match, just for the **atmosphere** and to feel even more part of this lively and welcoming city.

Comprehension Check

1. Why does Matteo decide to go to the barber?
 - a) Because he has a job interview
 - b) Because he has a date with a girl

- c) Because his hair has turned gray
 - d) Because he wants to completely change his look
2. Who recommends Salvatore to Matteo?
- a) A university professor
 - b) A friend from Bari
 - c) His roommate Carlo
 - d) Giulia, his Roman friend
3. What do the customers in the barbershop mainly discuss?
- a) Italian politics
 - b) The weather in Naples
 - c) A soccer match
 - d) Haircut prices
4. What does Salvatore offer Matteo besides the haircut?
- a) An espresso coffee
 - b) A beard trim
 - c) A head massage
 - d) A ticket to the Napoli match
5. What advice does Salvatore give Matteo for his date?
- a) To take Giulia to the theater
 - b) To give her flowers
 - c) To take her to eat pizza at Michele's
 - d) To invite her to watch a Napoli match

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

15. Ice Cream in Winter

It's a cold January day in Florence. The sky is gray and the thermometer shows three degrees. The streets of the historic center are less **crowded** than usual; there are few tourists in this **season** and most Florentines prefer to stay warm.

Beatrice, or Bea as her friends call her, walks along via dei Neri, well covered with a heavy coat, a wool scarf and gloves. She's twenty-seven years old, from Florence and works as a tour guide. Today is her day off and, despite the **cold**, she decided to take a walk downtown.

While walking, she feels her phone **vibrate** in her pocket. It's a message from Marco, a friend of hers: "Hi Bea! Want a hot coffee? I'm in Piazza della Signoria."

Bea smiles and responds: "Thanks, but I have something else in mind. How about ice cream?"

Marco's response arrives **almost** immediately: "Ice cream?? In this cold?? You're **crazy!**"

Bea laughs. It's not the first time her friends **tease her** for this habit of eating ice cream even in winter. For her, ice cream isn't just a summer food, it's a **passion** that lasts all year.

"Ice cream is good in every season!" she responds to Marco's message.

She continues walking until she arrives in front of a small artisanal **ice cream shop**. On the **shop window** it says "Artisanal Ice Cream Shop 'Il Paradiso del Gelato'." It's a place Bea knows well; she comes here often even though it's not close to her house. According to her, they make the best ice cream in Florence.

Entering the ice cream shop, Bea immediately feels the pleasant **contrast** between the external cold and the welcoming warmth of the place. The interior is small but **comfortable**, with some photos of Florence on the walls. Behind the counter there's Roberto, the owner, a man in his fifties with gray hair and a perpetual **smile**.

"Good morning, Roberto!" greets Bea.

"Good morning, Bea!" he responds, recognizing her immediately. "I didn't expect customers today, in this cold! You're the only **brave** one so far."

"You know that for me there's no 'ice cream season,'" says Bea with a smile.

Roberto shakes his head, amused.

"You're incorrigible!" he says. "So, what shall I **prepare** for you today?"

Bea looks at the containers in the refrigerated **counter**. There are many different **flavors**: classics like chocolate, **strawberry**, **pistachio** and hazelnut, but also more original ones like ricotta and figs, saffron and pine nuts.

"Mmm, difficult to choose," says Bea. "Today I feel **adventurous**. What do you recommend?"

"We have a new flavor," says Roberto, pointing to a **container**. "**Raspberry and ginger**. I created it yesterday. It's a bit particular, fresh but with a **spicy** touch."

"It sounds interesting!" exclaims Bea. "I'll gladly try it."

"In a cone or in a **small cup**?" asks Roberto.

"Small cup, please. In this cold the cone might **melt** too quickly!"

Roberto laughs at the joke and prepares a cup with raspberry and ginger ice cream.

"And tell me, why do you like ice cream so much in winter?" asks Roberto.

Bea thinks for a moment before responding.

"I don't know exactly," she says. "Maybe because in winter ice cream has a more **intense** flavor. And then, when it's cold outside, eating something fresh is a unique **pleasure**."

"I never thought about it that way," admits Roberto, handing her the cup. "You have an interesting philosophy about ice cream!"

Bea takes the first **small spoon** and tastes it. The flavor is a pleasant surprise: sweet and fresh like raspberry, but with that spicy touch of ginger.

"It's really **delicious**!" she says enthusiastically. "The ginger is perfect."

"I'm glad you like it," says Roberto with pride. "I'm thinking of adding it to the permanent **menu**."

While Bea continues enjoying her ice cream, the ice cream shop door opens and a young couple enters. The man and woman look around with **curiosity**, but seem uncertain.

"Good morning," greets Roberto. "Can I help you?"

"Um, we're looking for a place for hot coffee," says the man. "It's so cold outside..."

"I'm sorry, we don't make coffee," explains Roberto. "We're an ice cream shop."

The couple looks at each other as if to say "Who comes to an ice cream shop in this weather?"

Bea smiles and intervenes in the conversation.

"Excuse me if I **interrupt**," she says, raising her cup. "I'm a **regular** customer of this ice cream shop, and I can tell you that Roberto's ice cream is extraordinary, even in winter. Actually, **especially** in winter!"

The woman looks at Bea with **skepticism**.

"Ice cream? At three degrees?"

"Trust me," says Bea with conviction. "It's a unique experience. Ice cream has a completely different flavor when it's cold. It's creamier, richer."

Roberto smiles, appreciating Bea's help in convincing the **potential** customers.

"Beatrice is right," he adds. "And if you want, I can prepare 'warmer' flavors for you, like dark chocolate with cinnamon, or hazelnut and honey."

The couple looks at each other again, this time with more interest.

"Okay, let's try," the woman finally says. "But just one **scoop** each."

"Perfect!" says Roberto, starting to prepare the ice creams.

While Roberto serves the new customers, Bea continues enjoying her raspberry and ginger. She's happy to have contributed to helping other people **discover** the pleasure of winter ice cream.

After a few minutes, the couple tastes their ice creams and their expressions change completely.

"I can't believe it," says the woman. "It's really delicious! You're right, the flavor is more intense."

"And I also feel **warmer**," adds the man, surprised.

Bea and Roberto exchange a **complicit** smile.

"I told you!" says Bea. "Winter ice cream is one of life's little joys that many people never discover."

The couple thanks Bea for the advice and Roberto for the excellent ice cream. Before leaving, the woman says:

"We'll definitely come back, even in winter!"

When they're alone, Roberto turns to Bea:

"Thanks for convincing those customers. It's not easy to sell ice cream when it's so cold."

"It was a pleasure," responds Bea, finishing her cup. "It always makes me happy to share my **passions** with other people."

"You know," says Roberto, "I've always thought you were a bit strange for this winter ice cream habit. But today you made me think. Maybe I have too limited a vision."

"Ice cream has no **seasons**," says Bea philosophically. "Like love or art, it's always the right time to appreciate it."

Roberto nods, struck by the simplicity of these words.

"You're right. And you know what? From today I'll keep the ice cream shop open even on the coldest winter days. Who knows, maybe there are other winter ice cream **lovers** like you."

Bea smiles, happy to have inspired Roberto.

"I'm sure you'll find many!" she says.

Before leaving, Bea pays for her ice cream and greets Roberto.

"See you soon," she says. "And congratulations again on the raspberry and ginger. It's perfect!"

"Thanks to you for everything," responds Roberto. "You were excellent **advertising** for the ice cream shop!"

Bea leaves the ice cream shop and returns to the cold street. But now she feels warm inside, not only from the pleasure of the ice cream, but also for having shared a special moment with Roberto and for having helped that couple discover something new.

While walking home, she thinks that sometimes the most beautiful traditions are born precisely from the **courage** to do things that others consider strange. And winter ice cream is one of those personal traditions that makes her happy.

Her phone vibrates again. It's Marco: "So, did you **survive** the ice cream at 3 degrees?"

Bea responds: "Not only! I just converted two people to the cause of winter ice cream. The **revolution** starts here!"

Comprehension Check

1. What job does Beatrice do?
 - a) Ice cream maker
 - b) Tour guide
 - c) Teacher
 - d) Waitress
2. What new flavor does Roberto propose to her?
 - a) Chocolate and cinnamon
 - b) Hazelnut and honey
 - c) Raspberry and ginger
 - d) Ricotta and figs
3. What was the couple looking for when they entered the ice cream shop?
 - a) A particular ice cream
 - b) A place for hot coffee
 - c) Street directions
 - d) A gift for a friend

4. How does the couple react after tasting the ice cream?
 - a) They don't like it at all
 - b) They find it too cold
 - c) They're pleasantly surprised
 - d) They want a refund

5. What decision does Roberto make after this experience?
 - a) To close the ice cream shop in winter
 - b) To change the shop's name
 - c) To stay open even on the coldest days
 - d) To stop making experimental ice creams

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

Thank You & What's Next?

Thanks for reading - we're happy you chose to download and use these translations as part of your language-learning mission.

If you enjoyed it, you might like our other language learning books, available on Amazon.

If you'd like to give us any suggestions, need help with something, or to find our full set of helpful books, visit us at **MindSmithBooks.com** or via the QR code below.



Thanks again,

The MindSmith Team.