

# **Thematic Unit**

## **Learners' Lives as Curriculum©**

### **Living in Pittsburgh**

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## 1. Satoko's story



When I first came to Pittsburgh, I held my bag and my kids near me because I was nervous about security and my English. I understood that people were very kind. On the other hand, it was difficult to say my thoughts in English.

I didn't know about American customs and sayings at restaurants, the bank and shopping. I also didn't know how to mail letters, write checks, and pay utilities.

-Satoko H.  
-Japan

**How did you feel when you came to Pittsburgh? What was difficult for you?**

## 2. Playing with Story Language

What is the past tense of

is \_\_\_\_\_

hold \_\_\_\_\_

don't \_\_\_\_\_

come \_\_\_\_\_

am \_\_\_\_\_

understand \_\_\_\_\_

are \_\_\_\_\_

Use the words in the past tense from the list above and put them in the story.

When I first \_\_\_\_\_ to Pittsburgh, I \_\_\_\_\_ my bag and my kids near me because I \_\_\_\_\_ nervous about security and my English. I \_\_\_\_\_ that people \_\_\_\_\_ very kind. On the other hand, it \_\_\_\_\_ difficult to say my thoughts in English.

I \_\_\_\_\_ know about American customs and sayings at restaurants, the bank and shopping. I also \_\_\_\_\_ know how to mail letters, write checks, and pay utilities.

# 3. Picture Dictionary

## Places around town

**pay** utility bills



**eat out** at a restaurant



**deposit** checks at a bank



**buy** produce at a supermarket



**use** coupons



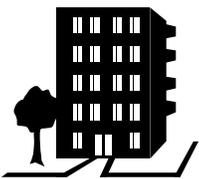
**get** medicine at a drug store



**borrow** books at a library



**rent** an apartment (sign a lease)



**own** a house (get a mortgage)



## 4. Playing with language



Do you know these words in the past? Work with a partner to put these words in the past tense.

Regular verbs add –ed in the past:

own - owned

deposit - \_\_\_\_\_

rent - \_\_\_\_\_

borrow - \_\_\_\_\_

learn - \_\_\_\_\_

sign - \_\_\_\_\_

use - \_\_\_\_\_

Irregular verbs change in the past:

pay – paid      ride - \_\_\_\_\_

eat - \_\_\_\_\_      go- \_\_\_\_\_

buy- \_\_\_\_\_      have - \_\_\_\_\_

get - \_\_\_\_\_

Choose two verbs and tell you partner about what you did last week:

**Last week I went to the mall and bought new shoes.**



## 5. More places around town...

With your teacher and class, think about living in a new city.

| Place           | People          | Things          | Verbs                 |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| drug store      | pharmacist      | medicine        | fill<br>prescriptions |
| Add more words: | Add more words: | Add more words: | Add more verbs:       |
|                 |                 |                 |                       |

## 6. Learning about each other

Walk around the room. Ask your classmates a question...then ask a second question.

**Ask a question in the present tense.**

Model: Student 1: In Pittsburgh, do you shop at Giant Eagle?  
Student 2: Yes I do. / No I don't.  
Student 1: Do you think it's expensive?

**and**

**Ask a question in the past tense.**

Model: Student 1: In your country did you shop at an outdoor market?  
Student 2: Yes I did. /No I didn't.  
Student 1: What did you buy?



### Find Someone Who

|                                     | Name  | In Pittsburgh, <b>do</b> you... | In your country <b>did</b> you... |
|-------------------------------------|-------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| own a house?                        | _____ |                                 |                                   |
| rent an apartment?                  | _____ |                                 |                                   |
| borrow books/videos at the library? | _____ |                                 |                                   |
| ride the bus?                       | _____ |                                 |                                   |
| go to a university?                 | _____ |                                 |                                   |
| have a car?                         | _____ |                                 |                                   |
| deposit checks in the ATM?          | _____ |                                 |                                   |
| buy medicine at a drug store?       | _____ |                                 |                                   |
| eat out at restaurants?             | _____ |                                 |                                   |
| have problems shopping?             | _____ |                                 |                                   |
| shop at a supermarket?              | _____ |                                 |                                   |
| shop at an outdoor market?          | _____ |                                 |                                   |

**Share with the class and your teacher what you learned about your classmates.**



## 7. Ask the teacher...?

Where...? What...? How...? When...? Do you...?

Where do you like to eat out?

Where do you like to shop for clothes?

Do you own a house?

\_\_\_\_\_?

\_\_\_\_\_?

\_\_\_\_\_?

\_\_\_\_\_?

\_\_\_\_\_?

\_\_\_\_\_?

\_\_\_\_\_?

\_\_\_\_\_?

\_\_\_\_\_?

\_\_\_\_\_?

## 8. Working together

When I arrived in Pittsburgh, speaking on the phone was very difficult for me, so it was not easy to get electric and gas service for my apartment.



-Yusuf Y., Turkey

Talk about what was difficult for you with a partner. How did you solve your problem?

Talk about what was easy for you with a partner. Why were these things easy?

| When I first came to Pittsburgh | it was difficult for me | it was not difficult for me |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| to take the bus                 |                         |                             |
| to get a library card           |                         |                             |
| to find a good food store       |                         |                             |
| to talk to my child's teacher   |                         |                             |
| to find an apartment            |                         |                             |
| to understand my lease          |                         |                             |
| to get a library card           |                         |                             |
| to use the library              |                         |                             |
| to go to a restaurant           |                         |                             |
| to go shopping for clothes      |                         |                             |
| to use coupons                  |                         |                             |
| to buy a car                    |                         |                             |
| to use the bank                 |                         |                             |
| to go to the doctor             |                         |                             |
| to...                           |                         |                             |

## 9. Playing with language

Work with a partner. Where can you see or hear these phrases?  
You can use your picture dictionary.

**Example:**

- The tip is included.

I can see this at a restaurant.

-Save \$20.00 with this coupon.

-Do you want paper or plastic?

-Your book is overdue.

-I have a month to month lease.

-The Parent Teacher Conference is on Thursday.

-Exact change, please.

# 10. More stories from students

When I came to Pittsburgh, I bought a printer for my computer. It was very expensive. After I bought it, I read on the internet that it was on sale with a coupon. But I didn't know about coupons.

The next Sunday, I went to Giant Eagle and bought a newspaper. The Sunday paper is much bigger than the weekly paper, and it's filled with coupons. Now I can save when I want to buy something.

~ Suk from Korea



**Did you know about coupons?  
Do you use coupons in your country?**

**How?  
Where?**

One night, my husband and I went to dinner with some friends. When the check came, we paid the bill and gave a 20% tip to the waitress. We didn't know that the tip was included in the bill, so we paid the tip twice. Now, we ask the server first before we sign the check.

~ Ji from Korea



**Did you know that sometimes the tip is included in the check? How?  
Do you leave a tip in your country? Who do you tip? How much? Tell your partner.**

When I first came to Pittsburgh, I rode the bus. I paid every time I got on or off. I didn't know that I could ask for a transfer or buy a bus pass. One day, I asked my friend from Brazil to lend me money for the bus. She told me that it's easy to get a bus pass. Now I don't worry about money when I want to go somewhere.

~ Raquel from Brazil



**Did you know about bus passes and transfers?  
Do you use bus transfers in your country?**

**How?**

## 11. Bringing the outside in

Show us something new you learned in Pittsburgh

Bring to school.....

a utility bill

a menu

a receipt

a sign

a newspaper or magazine

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And teach the class what you learned!

## 12. Ideas for actions:

**I'm moving to Pittsburgh.**



**What can you tell me?**

Talk with a partner. What can you tell someone new to Pittsburgh about the city?

Create a list of important things to know.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

6. \_\_\_\_\_

7. \_\_\_\_\_

8. \_\_\_\_\_

9. \_\_\_\_\_

10. \_\_\_\_\_

# 13. More Stories!

## Finding an apartment

I lived in Italy for two months in 1986. At that time my school found an apartment for me. The next year I went back to Italy. I needed to find an apartment. I stayed with friends but I could only stay with them for a week. They were very busy and couldn't help me. I had to find an apartment by myself. I had to make many phone calls. People didn't understand me. They were not patient with me. I was worried. One day I saw my old landlord. I asked for his help. He called some friends and then he called his wife. She had a friend with a room for rent. I learned that in a small town in Italy it is important to know people and ask them for help.



-Allegra E. (author story)

When I first arrived in Pittsburgh, I was a wanderer in the desert. Every day I walked and walked all day to look for an apartment under the blazing sun without a car. After I signed the lease for our apartment, I waited for two weeks. So, there was nothing easy for me in Pittsburgh.



-Jessica L.

I moved to Pittsburgh after college and I didn't have much money. I also didn't have a bed, a couch, or chairs for my apartment. One day, the mail came with a Pennysaver. It's a small, free newspaper for people who want to buy or sell something used, for cheap! I called a few people and got all the furniture I needed for my apartment. And it was beautiful.



- Danielle E. (author story)

## 14. Journal writing



**What did you need to know when you came to Pittsburgh?**

**What did you learn about the city?**

# 15. Helping each other

**Write an information book to help new people coming to Pittsburgh learn about the city!**

**Get together with some classmates. Talk about what you learned in Pittsburgh.**

Here are some things to think about...

How can you help someone new to Pittsburgh?

Where do you get information about Pittsburgh?

How did you find your apartment?

How did you find English classes?

Who helped you when you first arrived?

How did you find the best store for food?

How did you find the best store for clothes?

How did you study for the drivers' exam?

Where do you go for fun?

How did you make friends?



## 16. Checklist for Learning

### A. Vocabulary

In this unit, I learned the following words about living in a new city:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Choose three (3) of these words and write a sentence for each.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

### B. What Can You Do in English?

Check (✓) what you can do in English. Add more ideas if you want.

I can

- talk about my experiences in a new city.
- help someone new to Pittsburgh.
- use coupons at a store.
- use the simple past tense.
- ask my classmates questions.
- \_\_\_\_\_

## 17. Looking Back

**Think about this unit and what you learned. Finish the sentences. Talk with classmates about your ideas.**

1. In this unit, I learned\_\_\_\_\_.

2. I want to learn more about\_\_\_\_\_.

3. I liked\_\_\_\_\_.

4. I didn't like\_\_\_\_\_.