

総合英語 英文読解演習

The understanding people have of other countries is often very superficial. Tourists, for example, frequently have little opportunity and sometimes not even the desire to see how the people of the country they are visiting really live. It may only be possible for them to stay at tourist hotels and see typical tourist attractions. Perhaps the only persons they will be able to talk with are people connected with the tourist industry, such as tour guides, hotel clerks, and so on. Of course, there are those travelers who sincerely attempt to meet and talk with people who are native to the country they are visiting. But many others return home with very little real understanding of the country they have been to.

Certainly to really understand a foreign culture does require a special effort. Many discussions of “cultural differences” tend to concentrate on things, such as differences in food and clothing, rather than on ideas. Sometimes it is falsely assumed that everyone in the world pretty much thinks, feels and acts the same and that it is only outward appearance which make people different from one another. However, it is not the food one eats or the clothes one wears which determines a person's cultural identity; rather it is how that person thinks, feels and behaves. If we want to find out how people from different countries really are, we must study their thoughts and ideas.

It is important to remember that ideas are not themselves facts. Two people may agree entirely on what the facts are, but they may still disagree on what these facts mean. It is not enough simply to know a few facts and statistics about another country. One must also know how these facts fit together into a meaningful whole and how they are looked at and interpreted by people living in that country.

