

Unit Two

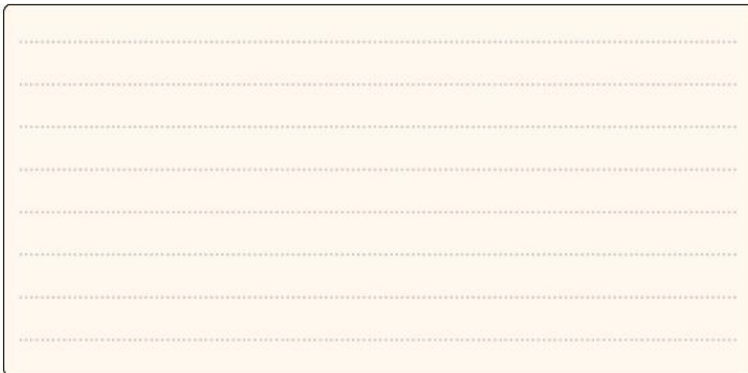
MIKA'S HOMESTAY IN LONDON

By Mika Tanaka

Mika Tanaka, a college student from Japan, had a wonderful homestay in London. She lived with a British family and studied English for a month.

"What do you want for your 19th birthday?" my parents asked me. "A ring," I replied. However, instead of a ring, my parents gave me a one-month homestay in London.

On February 11th, I left Japan. On the plane, I worried about being all alone there _ a stranger to

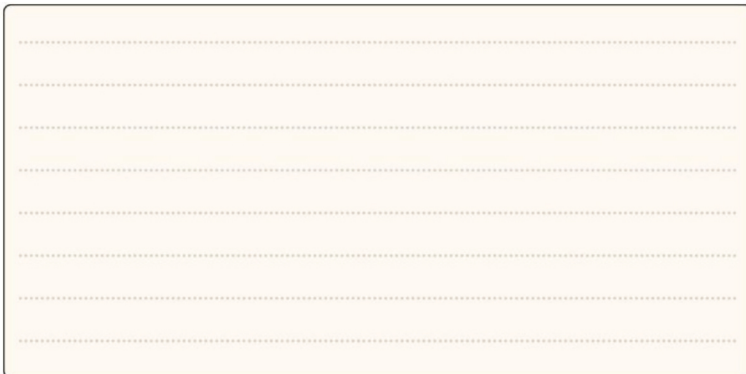


London. But when I met the Flannery family (my host family), their warm welcome made me feel at ease. Both my host father and mother were very kind and treated me like their own daughter.

Getting Ready to Go

Before going to London, I did some research on English schools in London and chose Oxford House College, mainly because it had reasonable fees. Also, there weren't many Japanese students at Oxford House.

I took my parents' advice and requested that my homestay family have both a mother and a father, be native-born, non-smoking, middle-class British people, and live near a subway station. I later found that this was very good advice, since some of my friends at the English school were

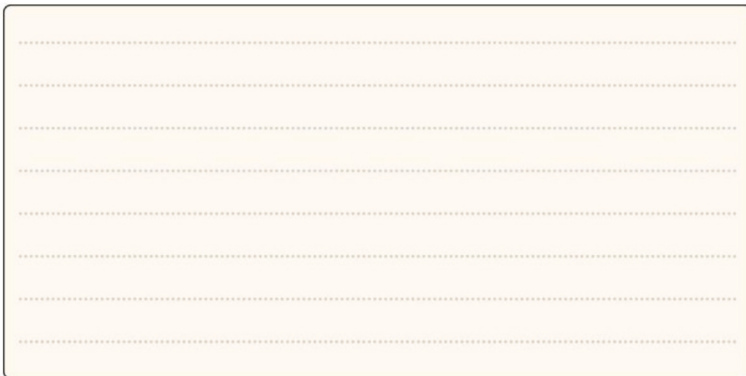


having problems with their host families.

Living in London

Potatoes! It took me a little time to get used to the many kinds of potato dishes served: fried potatoes, steamed potatoes, sliced potatoes, and different-colored potatoes. My host mother was a good cook. She made delicious pasta and chicken dishes and even cooked rice for me.

Nadiege, a French girl, was another homestay student living with us, and we went around London together. On Saturdays, my host family would have a party at home with friends or family. When we returned from touring London, Nadiege and I would join the party. On Saturday evenings, Mr. and Mrs. Flannery would go to their favorite pub to spend time together.



Although I selected a school with few Japanese students, there were still at least two in each class. In class, I tried to speak a lot, but many Japanese students didn't use their English very much (even if they had large vocabularies), and spoke only Japanese with their friends.

Sometimes, I asked other people their impressions of Japan. "Japanese people work too hard," said my French friend. My teacher thought that Japanese people were very rich. I did not agree with these points, but I was interested in knowing what foreign people thought. One month in London made me realize that speaking English was very important, because it is the language that people from many countries use the most. I would like to be more open-minded about people from different countries, like my host family is.

