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Conversations in Robin Hood Country

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Field Notes From Abroad: Conversations in Robin Hood Country

From the quaint cobblestone streets to the voluminous cathedrals, I have completely fallen in love with England. Every part of this country has managed to spark my interest and I have developed a fondness for The University of Nottingham which I now call home. The university creates a unique and profound emphasis on the issues and activities that are important to the student body, and the city of Nottingham itself is picturesque and beautiful with its charming Market Square. However, it is ultimately the people and the conversations that I have had with them which have made this study abroad experience come alive for me. The students at this university are enthusiastic and passionate about what they are doing. They have such a positive outlook on life, and once I got to know them, they were the friendliest group of people I have ever encountered. They are so friendly, in fact, that such a large number of students wanted to take part in my interview that I didn't interview one or even two students, but instead I interviewed around ten or twelve who asked if they could contribute to this assignment.

Word spread quickly that I needed to interview a student for an assignment from my home university and I had multiple students ask if perhaps they could be the person to be interviewed. Needless to say, I had too many people who wanted to be interviewed and received far too much content from these conversations to be included. Thus I have decided only to mention the larger differences that have been noticed as well as to include the cultural aspects about this country of which I am particularly fond.

Much of the information I received from my interviews revealed that student life and culture here is similar in many ways to student life in the United States. They also attend class, worry about homework, seek friendships and relationships, and have a love for fun and

excitement. However there are still many differences. Many of the students pointed out that I have a slightly different vocabulary. They even have a difficult time understanding some of my words and phrases (and vice-versa). One of the students I interviewed reminded me of an example of this: In my first week I had the embarrassment of using the word ‘pants’ instead of their word ‘trousers.’ I was sitting with a group of friends when I mentioned that I needed to change my pants because they were dirty (due to falling down earlier that day), however I received a few giggles and disturbed looks. Much to my horror, I later found out that the word ‘pants’ means ‘underwear’ in England, which means that I had essentially told my new friends that I had dirtied my underwear and needed to change them. You can imagine my embarrassment.

This study abroad experience has also opened my eyes to the great culinary potential of the potato. They have more variation in ways of serving a potato than I would ever have imagined existed. I believe they have added an additional level to the bottom of the food pyramid consisting only of various types of this starchy food and indeed, I am so tired of eating them that I will probably refrain from consuming potatoes for quite a while upon my return to the United States. And yet, when questioned about their food, the British students seemed quite fond of their local fare like Yorkshire pudding as well as ‘bangers and mash.’ The culture surrounding food and drink is quite different in England as there isn’t nearly as much of an emphasis on food in general (especially tasty food I have come to find out).

The past few months have made an incredibly huge difference in my life and my choice to come abroad is the best decision I have ever made. I will never regret studying in England and will look back on this experience fondly for the rest of my life. The friends that I have encountered and the memories I have made will remain with me forever. If you haven’t been

able to tell by now, I am having quite a wonderful time. Cheers!

I interviewed Tom Burton, Jess Sadler, and a number of other hall-mates who reside with me in 'A' Block of Lincoln Hall. These interviews took place in November, 2011