

FUMC ESL 11-14-2016 Advanced Lesson

Read these excerpts from Funny in Farsi by Firoozeh Dumas, then answer the questions.

With my family's financial upheaval in the background, I had entered adolescence. At an age when most of my classmates were discovering the Nordstrom shoe department, I had watched my parents cut up their credit cards. Being unfashionable didn't bother me, but I was afraid I couldn't afford to go to college. I needed some funds.

1. What is a financial upheaval?
2. What age is adolescence?
3. What were most of her adolescent friends discovering?
4. What does she mean when she says her parents were cutting up their credit cards? Why do you think they were doing this?
5. What are funds? Why did she need them?

After having baby-sat for every frugal family in town, and making \$1.00 per hour, I decided baby sitting was getting me nowhere. But then I hit the mother lode. My French teacher told me of a newly transplanted Parisian family that was looking for a French speaking baby-sitter. Though my French at the time was limited, I volunteered. The family had only one child, an eight year old daughter, and they lived in a gated community full of rich people. I arrived full of high hopes and a French dictionary.

1. What was "getting her nowhere"?
2. What is a "mother lode"?
3. What is a "transplanted family"?
4. Is she fluent in French?
5. What is a gated community?
6. What are "high hopes"?

After giving me a tour of their large house, including the twenty foot Buddha in the living room, the father asked me whether five dollars an hour would be sufficient. These people had clearly not researched the going rate for baby-sitters, and if the twenty foot Buddha had not enlightened them, I was not about to start.

1. What does she mean when she says that if the Buddha hadn't enlightened them, she wasn't going to start?
2. Do you think she should have told them that was too much money?

No diapers, no cooking, just an eight-year-old who would probably go to bed easily. This was too good to be true, but if anyone deserved a break, it was I. As soon as the parents left, the daughter plunked herself next to me on the posh leather sofa and immediately started hugging me and stroking my hair. I didn't want to get on her bad side early on in this lucrative job, so I smiled as I tried to untangle her arms. The more I tried to extricate myself, the harder she clung. I had no idea the French were so

affectionate. No matter what I did, I could not get the kid off me. She refused to go to bed. She refused to eat dinner. She refused to budge. I was suddenly enlightened as to why these parents were so generous with the baby-sitter. She finally fell asleep on the sofa. I didn't move her to a bed, for fear she would wake up. The parents came home and handed me a twenty dollar bill. They asked whether I was available the next night. I didn't know how to say in French, "Not for all the tea in China" would I baby-sit for them again, so I just told them I had to study. That incident convinced me to retire from baby-sitting.

1. What does "plunked herself down" mean?
2. What is a "posh sofa"?
3. What does "extricate" mean?
4. What does "the harder she clung" mean?
5. What does "budge" mean?
6. What does "Not for all the tea in China" mean?
7. What does "lucrative" mean?

Discuss with class:

1. Do you have any amusing baby-sitting stories?
2. Did your parents expect you to baby-sit your siblings?
3. How did you get funds as an adolescent?
4. Did your parents expect you to pay for your own college?
5. Is college expensive in your country?
6. Was your family frugal, or were they spendthrifts?
7. Do you think the French are more affectionate? What country do you think is most affectionate?
8. Does it make you feel uncomfortable when people you don't know well want to hug you?
9. Who needs affection most in your family?
10. If you moved back in with your parents after college, would you help with the rent?
11. Is it common for young adults to live with their parents in your country?
12. Where is the best place to grow up?