

**ROTARY INTERNATIONAL  
DISTRICT 5190  
ROTARY YOUTH EXCHANGE COMMITTEE**

**Homework Assignment 3**

The orientation process for young people who are selected to be Rotary Youth Exchange students is designed to prepare them for a successful year abroad in another culture. The work it takes for you to be a successful exchange student involves learning a new language, learning much about yourself and learning about your new country. In many ways this period of preparation is similar to taking a college course. It involves study, extensive preparation and a research paper, before you graduate and move on to your year abroad.

The role of an exchange student is broad and complex. For 10 to 11 months you will experience the way of life, customs, and culture of another country, while sharing information about your homeland. The purpose of the Rotary Youth Exchange program is to promote international understanding and goodwill through personal connections. While abroad you will stay in the homes of host families and have the opportunity to meet many adults and students your own age from the host country as well as from other countries around the world. These roles include being an ambassador of our culture, our country, your family and Rotary International. These roles also involve being a family member, perhaps a brother or sister, being a friend, being a good student, a tourist, as well as a resident of your new country. It is important that you learn as much as possible about the country to which you are being assigned before you arrive there.

To help you prepare for your year away we are expecting you to do in-depth research on the part of the world where you will be living next year and to begin (or continue), in earnest, your language study. Both of these activities will enhance and enrich your experience in your host country and ease your transition into a new culture, community and family.

This research project is meant to be a family affair. It may be the only time in your life where it is OK for your parents to be co-authors of a homework assignment! For parents, having in-depth knowledge of the country and the culture where their child will spend the next year will help them to support their student better and help them feel more connected to that part of the world while their student is away. A once unfamiliar place will begin to feel not so distant and strange.

Attached is the outline for the research that you need to do. You are expected and encouraged to use multiple resources: libraries, the Internet and interviews/conversations with people from or very familiar with your host country. Please list your resources at the end of the paper and note the resources that you found to be the most helpful. Future students may find these resources to be helpful!

The first step is to look at the outline and ask: "Which of these questions do I not know the answer to about my **own** country and culture?" That is your starting point. As an ambassador you should be knowledgeable about all of the issues on the outline. You will be asked these questions over and over while on exchange. This will not be part of your paper but you are expected to be able to converse intelligently about all of these issues. If you have gaps in your knowledge about your own country's geography, history, economy, political system, current events etc, now is the time to get up to speed. You will be asked

frequently about your own government's policies on trade, climate change and the war on terrorism – to name just a few topics. You will be expected to share your knowledge and your opinion in a respectful and diplomatic way. You can practice these conversations around the dinner table or in the car.

This paper should be **no less than 8 pages** (excluding your list of resources). Please use standard margins (1 inch on all four sides of your writing) and Times New Roman font size 12, and please use a word processing software program that we will be able to open and read (preferably WORD). You do not need to do formal footnotes, but this is a research paper. You are not to plagiarize – that is, you cannot just cut and paste paragraphs into your paper. You have to use your own words to express the ideas you obtain from your reading. If you find a particular quote you want to use, then put it in italics and name the source. Do not just list the questions followed by your answers. It is a paper; not an essay test. When you have completed your paper, use the spell checker and grammar checker.

For some countries it will be difficult to find the answers to some questions. Find answers to as many as you can. Understanding your country is more important than the length of your paper. You may find that for some of these topics you would use the same resource to learn about your own country. For example, as you are looking up the demographic data on your host country, that same source may have the demographic information for your home country that you will be asked about on your exchange. Doing parallel research may be a wise use of your time and energy.

Your paper is due by **May 16, 2017**. It is to be submitted by email to [g.lease44@gmail.com](mailto:g.lease44@gmail.com). Many of you will not have information about your host city/town or school until late spring or early summer. If necessary, you can submit an addendum to your paper three weeks after you find out **exactly** where you are going. If you have questions about the assignment, send to Dr. Lease at the email address above. Your language study should be serious and continuous right up to the day of departure.

This is not an easy or quick assignment. Besides being important to the success of your exchange, it is an exercise in time management. Do not leave it until the last minute. I sincerely suggest you begin working on the paper now. Take one or two of the areas to research every week. Really try to learn something about your new country. What will happen if you don't turn this paper in? Your commitment to the privilege and responsibility of being an ambassador will be seriously questioned. What will happen if you do a halfhearted job? The only person you will cheat will be yourself. You probably have never had such a good reason to do research before in your life, not to mention opportunities for real life application!

Much of the fun and learning that you get from travel is from anticipation and preparation. The more you know before you go, the richer your experience will be. We will ask you to review your responses upon your return to help you understand how much you have changed and grown during your exchange year.

Let the adventure begin!

Guy Lease, Chair  
District 5190 RYE Committee

Bob Conner, Outbound Coordinator  
District 5190 RYE Committee

## District 5190

### Rotary Youth Exchange Destination Research Paper

#### 1. Geography:

- Where is your host country?
- What are some of its defining geographical features? How does the natural landscape limit access between different population groups or centers? How does this impact people's daily lives (medical care, education, labor and industry, migration in and out of rural and urban areas)?
- What is the capital city and why is it located where it is?
- What countries border your host country?
- What were your host country's original boundaries? How have they changed over time? For what reasons?
- Is it typical for families to travel between states/regions of the country?
- Do locations popular with tourists impede community development or improve it?

#### 2. Climate and Environment:

- What is the climate like in your host country?
- What are the regional differences in the climate?
- Are there problems with pollution? Are there pollution controls laws? Are there concerns about de-forestation and habitat?
- Are there protected public lands like National Parks and National Wildlife reserves?
- Is your host country a signatory to the Kyoto Accord? Is the United States a signatory to this accord? If not, why not?

#### 3. History:

- What is the early history of your host country?
- Make a time line from the earliest history of your host country to the present. Mark the most important events. During those dates/periods, was anything related happening in the United States?
- What have been the patterns of immigration into your host country in the last 75 years? What influences remain today?
- Have there been any civil wars in your country? Are there lingering effects?
- What was your host country's involvement in any other major world conflicts?
- What new holidays will you celebrate? Who or what is being commemorated?

#### 4. Religion:

- What are the major religions in your host country? Is there an official religion?
- To what extent are the major religions practiced?
- What are the major religious holidays and what are some of the customs associated with these holidays?

**5. Economy:**

- What is the economy based on? What are some of their biggest/most important imports and exports?
- What products are traded between your host country and the United States?
- What products/services is your host region famous for?
- What is the per capita income? The gross national product (GNP)? What is the unemployment rate? When and how do people retire?
- What is the currency and the exchange rate (with U.S. dollar) in your host country?
- Are there distinct economic/social classes in your host country? How easy is it to move from one class to another? Are the different classes made up of different ethnic groups?

**6. Educational System:**

- How is the educational system organized?
- What do you see as the biggest differences between your home and host educational systems- especially as relates to high school and college?
- What are the relationships like between teachers/students/students families? Can you be friends or friendly with your teachers or is it a more formal connection?
- What happens with students who do not go to a university? What are the options for students whose families cannot afford tuition?

**7. Food:**

- What are some of the foods that your host country is famous for?
- What are some dishes that are indigenous? What are some foods that reflect the influence of colonizers (if your country had been colonized)?
- What are some regional differences in food in your host country?
- What does a liter of milk cost? A pound of butter? A dozen eggs? A loaf of bread? How does that compare with the cost of those items in your home city?
- What new fruits and vegetables will you get the opportunity to taste?
- What spices are used in cooking?
- Can you drink the water? If the drinking water supply is not generally safe (as it is in N. America) how will you know when and where the water is safe to drink?

**8. Health:**

- What data can you find about: life expectancy, infant mortality, birth rates, leading causes of death, incidence of smoking, HIV, TB? How does that compare with the data from your home country?
- What do people do when they get sick? What are some common home remedies for things like a cold or sore muscles?
- What immunizations will you need to get prior to departure?
- How do people exercise or keep fit?

## 9. Current Events

- What are the hot button issues right now in your host country?
- What is the name of the main English language newspaper that you can read on-line?
- What are the names of two influential newspapers or magazines in your host country?
- What is the relationship between the United States and that of your host country?
- What are the trade or political issues that have been a source of disagreement between your host country and the United States in the last five years?
- In what settings is it appropriate to talk about politics and religion? When? Where? With whom?
- Do people openly discuss attitudes and beliefs that may contradict the government or do these discussions happen privately?
- What is the crime rate? What kinds of things do people visiting your host country have to be mindful of? Pickpockets? Purse thieves? What new behaviors might you have to adopt to keep yourself and your belongings safe?

## 10. Government

- How legitimate is the government? Was the last election free and fair?
- Who is your host country's top political leader? When was he/she most recently elected?
- What do people who support him/her like about him/her?
- What do people who don't like him/or her have to say?
- How close is the military to the seat of power? When in the last 50 years have there been coups, juntas and /or dictators?
- What kinds of social services are available (or not available) for the poor?
- What is the voting age? Is voting required?
- Who is the ambassador from the United States to your host country? Who is the ambassador from your host country to the United States? Where are the embassies located in each country? Are there other consular offices in each country?
- How big is the drug trade in your country? What is the relationship between the government and the drug trade?

## 11. Adolescence in your host country:

- What is the age of majority in your host country? (The age you become a legal adult)
- When can you get a driver's license?
- What is the drinking age in your host country? What are the penalties for using illegal drugs or underage drinking?
- What are family-role expectations of teenagers (school work, family obligations, family functions)?
- What are the expectations for teenage family members when visitors stop by? Should you stay and listen? Stay and join in the conversation? Can you or should you leave the room?
- How do teens greet each other? How do they greet adults?
- What are common teenage household/family responsibilities? Part time work? Help with the dishes? Yard or laundry? Run errands?

- Curfews vary by family and by gender, but what might you expect in your host culture regarding a curfew?
- What are popular leisure activities for teenagers?
- How do teenagers dress in your host country?

### 12. Language:

- What is your plan to become basically proficient in your host country's language *prior* to departure?
- What percentage of the population speaks a second or third language? What percentage of the population speaks English?
- What are some idiomatic expressions or slang (not vulgar) that are unique to your country. (Example: "G-day, Mate!" in Australia.)
- What is your language study plan while you are on exchange? How will you remember and integrate all the new vocabulary that you will encounter every day? How will you become proficient in grammar and writing?

### 13. Sports:

- What are the major sports in your host country?
- What is the history of soccer in your host country?
- What are the big rivalries?
- Do teenagers play sports as a part of school? If not, how do they get involved in sports?
- What are the opportunities to play sports for girls and women?

### A few other resources to get you started:

#### Books:

*Xenophobes Guides:* These are wonderful, humorous and irreverent looks at many cultures written by people not originally from that culture but who know it well as an outsider who has lived there. Even if there is no Xenophobes Guide to the country that you are going to, be sure that you look at the *Guide to Americans*. It will give you some insights as to how we are seen by other cultures. To order you can go to [www.xenophobes.com](http://www.xenophobes.com)

#### Internet Sites:

**U.S. Department of State:** [www.state.gov/misc/list/index.htm](http://www.state.gov/misc/list/index.htm) This website offers the opportunity to select and read a County Profile on any country in the world.

**CIA:** <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-world-factbook/index.html> This website offers The World Fact Book for lots of information on your host country

**Omniplot :** [www.omniplot.com](http://www.omniplot.com) This website has great information on language and resources for learning languages.

**Culture Grams:** "Concise reliable and up-to-date country reports on 190 cultures of the world." Check to see if your school or local library subscribes to this wonderful resource. If not, you can order individual reports of your host country for about \$5. [www.culturegrams.com](http://www.culturegrams.com)