Staff Spotlight: Gabriella Jimenez

Hi everyone! My name is Gabriella Jimenez. I would describe myself as really open minded. I like learning new things about people, and that definitely plays a role here at the ELI because there are different cultures everywhere. I can be very shy and quiet at first, but as soon as I get comfortable I'm really outgoing. I love to laugh so I really enjoy people's humor and company.

My major right now is International Business. I mainly chose this major because I believe once I graduate I'll be presented with many opportunities in the business world. The business world is fast paced and cutthroat, so I think it would be very entertaining. I think that if you're going to do something for the rest of your life you as might as well enjoy it.

What I'm looking forward to at FIU is meeting all kinds of new people. I'm really excited for all the events that FIU will have, and for the college experience. This is a new chapter in my life and it's going to be a lot of fun.

My time here at the ELI has definitely been great. It's really cool to see the different kinds of people who come in to study. I think that everyday there's something new to learn, whether it's in the office or with a student. It's also been a great help working here on campus since I'll be a student here in the fall for the first time. It's really convenient working here because now I'm very familiar with the campus.

As far as advice for our students I think that the most important thing when coming to a new place is to have an open mind. You can't enjoy new experiences and people if you have a closed mind and are already judging a situation before it happens. I think that it helps to be friendly and to know the right people to hang out with. Hang out with people that are going to make unforgettable memories with you and share those moments that you'll carry with you for the rest of your life.

Eight Interesting Facts About English

Source: https://www.englishclub.com/interesting-facts/

1. The most common letter in English is "e."
2. The most common vowel in English is "e," followed by "a."
3. The most common consonant in English is "r," followed by "t."
4. Every syllable in English must have a vowel (sound). Not all syllables have consonants.
5. Only two English words in current use end in "-gry." They are "angry" and "hungry."
6. A sentence that contains all 26 letters of the alphabet is called a "pangram."
7. If we place a comma before the word "and" at the end of a list, this is known as an "Oxford comma" or a "serial comma." For example: "I drink coffee, tea, and wine."
8. The longest English word without a true vowel (a, e, i, o or u) is "rhythm."
Selected Reading: Life of Pi by Yann Martel

Although on the surface Martel’s vivid tale about loss and the struggle to survive seems like a tragedy, the true nature of this romance is revealed through its depiction of a raw and real human condition: desperation while searching for means to survive. Balanced with logic and mastery through the religious and practical knowledge gained in his childhood, the title character, Pi, finds himself able to navigate the Pacific Ocean and use it to his advantage. This is made possible through the very madness he describes early on when he says, “All living things contain a measure of madness that moves them in strange, sometimes inexplicable ways. This madness can be saving; it is part and parcel of the ability to adapt. Without it, no species would survive.” Does it take severity in trauma to provoke such madness, or for this level of human experience to be tapped? With the heavy foreshadowing throughout the novel it is possible to conclude that Pi’s early life prepared him for the tragedy he experiences. Likewise, we are given the vicarious opportunity to learn with Pi how to survive, and, possibly, be convinced of supernatural authority or power. At the very least you will find a way to see a dark world through rosier spectacles.

In the author’s note we learn that the narrative author feels this story can “make you believe in god.” While I feel the reader may have to decide for themselves on that extreme, I can say that without faith Pi wouldn’t have survived all the hardships he faced. Early on in the novel we explore Pi’s developing interest in various religions, but all under one main goal: to learn about and love God. Due to this fundamental and straightforward desire, Pi does not discriminate amongst religious practices. While this seems to be a problem to his religious teachers he wisely counter argues that if all their faiths are designed to promote the love of God and all His creation, where is the conflict in learning from more than one religion? After all, Pi just wants to know every aspect, every story there is to learn about God.

This novel acknowledges the strong power behind stories, and that there is an undeniable balance between nature and nurture. Pi acknowledges that religion is not innate. We are not born knowing of a possible god or that there is a place set apart to teach us about him. Those lessons come with nurture, and they play a dynamic role in shaping us into the people we become. The natural side of things, however, dictates that we are born with curiosity, wondering and trying to find answers. We look aimlessly for a guide as if in limbo hoping that there is something else, some other dimension we haven’t tapped into. Either someone guides us to faith and we enter a new, fresh, sense-filled wonder-world of religion and life is never the same, or we stay in a sort of limbo waiting to be awakened to the greatness of this world. You can’t go back to bland living after tasting the spices of life.

Pi was first introduced to this flavor by his aunt when he was a baby. She “planted the seed” that would later grow and branch out to study Christian, Muslim, and Hindu teachings. What draws Pi to these religions most is their stories. Under all these faiths the stories about miracles and awesome feats attract Pi, and it is the belief in such possibilities that he takes with him, allowing him to believe survival is possible even under the harshest circumstances: the abandonment and trials of being the lone survivor of an unbelievable shipwreck in the Pacific Ocean.

There is, without a doubt, a theological dimension to storytelling. Religion begins with stories: explaining our origin, providing lessons, revealing the wonderful works of god, and etcetera. It is intrinsic in people to tell stories, so it is logical that we created religious stories for comfort and in an attempt to understand the world and people around us. Likewise, it is possible that Pi created this fantastic tale to find peace—the same way people turn to religion. When toward the end of the novel he tells the two Japanese investigators his story they doubt its authenticity because it is so majestic, much like people doubt religion because it is “too hard to believe.” For Pi, life without faith, and without these stories, is bland. Faith begins with imagination. The faithless man, the one who feels there is no right answer, the agnostic, is worse off than any atheist who at least believes in something. As Pi ponders the possibilities of a dying man’s thoughts he thinks, “…the agnostic, if he stays true to his reasonable self, if he stays beholden to dry, yeastless factuality, might try to explain the warm light bathing him by saying, “Possibly a f-f-failing oxygenation of the b-b-brain,” and to the very end, lack imagination and miss the better story.” The better story, in the novel’s case, is the tale Pi is telling us. It is full of wonder, fear, and exultation of nature—yet, it is balanced with a healthy fear and distaste for anything evil in the natural world. For example, just before finding land in Mexico toward the end of his tall tale Pi describes a carnivorous island that he could have easily lived out the rest of his days. He could not, however, bear the thought of living off of a system as destructive as that. It is not survival if you are living an evil life, or living off of an evil system. This is symbolic of society’s evil nature and how some people can’t tolerate the idea of living in a place that is so cruel. Again, this is a major reason so many people have turned to religion and beautiful storytelling. Like Pi, they need to believe in
Staff Spotlight: Elaine Cordova

Hi everyone! My name is Elaine Cordova. I would describe myself as an outgoing person who tries in everything I do. I put a lot of effort and passion into my work, and I honestly care about the results. Happiness is one of the most important factors in life that I try to achieve for myself and for others if I have the possibility. My Major is Public Relations with a minor in Social Media and Marketing Analytics. I chose this major mainly because I am attracted to the organization skills one has to master in order to thrive in that field. I love the communication aspect and the overall presentation of the career as a professional representing and speaking on behalf of important people and corporations.

During my time at FIU I look forward to the knowledge I’ll gain when embarking on a new task, activity, or class. This includes the people I’ll meet and the experiences I’ll have. You can never get this time back.

Working at the English Language Institute has really opened my eyes to the diversity of Florida International University. I love the energy and humility of the institution and I am very happy to be a part of it. The best advice I can give to our students is to be involved; it makes your experience ten times better. Also, keep a good balance and remember why you’re here in the first place: studying is always a priority.

Event Recap: Welcome Breakfast

The ELI enjoyed some tasty treats and refreshing fruits and beverages from the Corner Bakery Cafe on Thursday, July 31st. During this time students were encouraged to interact with other students from different countries. Many new friendships were made as students shared stories, explained cultural differences, and conveyed their shared excitement for the upcoming term. Event Coordinator Elaine Cordova said, “The students, faculty, and staff joined together for a small breakfast feast in the terrace in which they celebrated the beginning of their ELI journey.” Based on this event it’s safe to say that Elaine’s plans for ELI students are nothing short of fun. She has some other awesome ideas up her sleeve for students to enjoy throughout the semester.

Literary Corner (continued)

something better than the perversion and selfishness that surrounds us; our own real and wicked Pacific Ocean of society.

A certain level of madness, indeed, was required by Pi to survive the trauma he endured, but to lose his home and then his family so abruptly and be able to endure the ferocity of nature so elegantly required something more. It is this added element that proved to readers the workings of something greater than understandable reality. It is this added element that transformed this would-be tragedy into a great romance about faith; but faith in what? It is faith in the divine principle of believing in something greater than you; the necessary trait in survivors. Perhaps this story will not make you believe in god as the fictitious author suggests, but it will make you believe in this: faith in something greater than you (love, god, the universe) will surely give you the best means to survive any hardship, any Pacific Ocean you face, and the best version of your story to endure.
The ELI newsletter is a bi-weekly publication of the English Language Institute that updates students on upcoming events and important dates. It invites students to participate in its publication process. It also includes news, trivia, quotes and reading suggestions. You may email any suggestions to Alyssa Alayeto at: alyalayeto@gmail.com.

**Welcome Breakfast**

Attention ELI students! Do you love dancing? Have you ever been interested in improving your skills, or learning a new dance form? Our Event Coordinator has something special in store for you! Next Thursday, **August 8th**, you will have the opportunity to take part in an introductory lesson on how to **dance salsa** casino, taught by the Hotspot Dance Studios owner herself, Mari, and her assistant Carlos.

If you’re not much of a dancer, or you’d like another day of fun-filled memories, then clear up your schedule for the following Thursday, **August 15th**, for an evening of **bowling**! Students and staff will join together for a night of sushi and bowling at Splitsville in Sunset place.

For more information about locations, times, and costs for these events check out our Facebook page at https://www.facebook.com/FIUELI or contact Elaine Cordova in LC 204.