

AMERICAN TEENS TALK!



American Teens Talk!

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Introduction

In the summer of 2009, I had a wonderful opportunity to spend three weeks with a group of Tajik English teachers. One of the teachers said that her students would like to have a book of stories about American teenagers. When I returned home, I couldn't find a book like that, so I began to interview ordinary young people about their everyday lives and send the interviews to some English teachers and learners. When I asked teenagers for an interview, they almost always said, "But I don't do anything special." I told them, "That's exactly what I want: ordinary life and ordinary English."

When the U.S. State Department's Office of English Language Programs decided to publish this little book, they asked for sound recordings and pictures of the teens. Sometimes I could get a picture and a sound recording from the young person I interviewed in the past. Sometimes I couldn't. I needed a parent's permission to use a photo or record a voice, and sometimes parents asked me not to use the student's real name. Some of the boys were older now and their voices had changed. As a result, sometimes the interview, photo, and voice are all from the same person, and sometimes they are from two, three, or four different people. However, in every case, these are real interviews with real kids about their real lives. No professional models, actors, or readers helped with this project. This is ordinary English from ordinary kids talking about their ordinary lives.

There are several people who deserve special thanks. First, the young people who helped with the project. Second, Robert Kirk, of Treehouse Mobile Studio in North Carolina (treehousemobile.com), who recorded all the interviews. Third, Scott Bennett, a teacher who encouraged some of his speech students to read for the recordings. Fourth, my wonderful husband Will, who helped in every way he could.

I hope that this will be an interesting way for you to practice reading and speaking English and that you will enjoy learning a little bit more about America and American life. In one of the interviews, a young man says, "We're probably not that different from you." I think he's probably right.

Wishing you success in your studies and a very bright future,

Nancy Ackles

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