



Gained in Translation

Have you ever heard of hygge? Hygge is a Danish word that doesn't have a direct English translation. It describes the feeling of being cozy or enjoying a warm, snuggly evening at home.

Hygge is not the only word for a feeling that is untranslatable in English. There are many other words that don't quite have an American equivalent. Learning these words helps us understand how other cultures express their emotions. We can also learn about which feelings they value most.

In Turkish, merak describes the feeling of doing something important to you with passion and creativity. A similar English phrase is "labor of love." Greek has a nearly identical word, meraki.

Ailyak, a Bulgarian word, is the feeling of doing something calmly. It expresses the desire to relax and enjoy life without rushing. We could all use that word in our lives!

Some words have very specific meanings. For example, the Japanese word tsundoku describes the feeling of buying a book and not reading it. Another Japanese word, wabi-sabi, is about finding beauty in imperfect things.

More specific-situation words include the Italian word *abbiocco*. This word describes the feeling of being sleepy after eating a big meal. It would be a useful word to have after Thanksgiving dinner!

Another useful word is *iktsuarpok*. This is an Inuit word for the emotion you feel when you are waiting for someone to arrive, such as picking you up from sports practice or school. Next time you're looking out the window for your friend to come, you can think about *iktsuarpok*.

Learning more of these words can give us insight into human feelings that are experienced all over the world. It can help us describe our own emotions with more specificity. And it can give us an appreciation of our similarities as well as our differences. Or, as you might say in Irish, it can give us *meas*.



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NAME: _____ DATE: _____

1. What does tsundoku mean?
 - a. Finding beauty in imperfect things
 - b. Buying a book and not reading it
 - c. Doing something calmly
 - d. Feeling sleepy after eating

2. What word might you use if you're waiting for your parents to pick you up from school?
 - a. Meas
 - b. Hygge
 - c. Iktsuarpok
 - d. Wabi-sabi

3. What does meas likely mean?
 - a. Wisdom
 - b. Appreciation
 - c. Measure
 - d. Differences

4. Why is it helpful to learn words for feelings from other languages?
 - a. To learn how other cultures express their emotions
 - b. To learn new ways to express our own emotions
 - c. To learn which emotions other cultures value
 - d. All of the above

Instructions for teachers:

These questions can be used to assess understanding of the reading passage.

The item in bold is the correct answer for each question.

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