

Teil I

1.1 Leseverstehen: *A year abroad*

The following article from 2005 deals with Johanna who after year 10 at her German school went abroad to go to an American high school for one year.

- First read the whole text once.
- Then read the questions.

- Johanna wanted to go to America from the time she was 12. So when she got to 10th grade¹, she was sure she wanted to spend a year at an American high school. She started applying for a place the autumn before she went, and had to do a language test as part of her application². The cost of her stay was €5,700 including flights, plus spending money³ and about €550 for medical insurance⁴.
- 10 The high school Johanna went to was in New Jersey, on the coast, not far from Atlantic City. Before she went, Johanna got to know her host family by email. When she got there, she liked them at first, but after a while she had problems with the father. “He was just a difficult person, even his own grown-up daughters didn't really get on with him”, says Johanna.
- 15 Fortunately, Johanna had made a very good friend at the high school, and she was able to arrange to stay with her family instead. The organisation helped her to change families, and her second American home was a big success. Today, she says they felt like a real family.
- 20 Going to school in the US was a very interesting experience for Johanna. “They were much stricter”, she says. “You even had to get a card signed⁵ if you wanted to go to the toilet during lessons, so they could make sure you weren't hanging around in the corridor.”
- 30 Some of the lessons were harder, others easier. “I thought maths was hard”, says Johanna, “but maths isn't my best subject anyway.” One thing she noticed was that teachers were generally younger than in Germany, and often friendlier to the students.
- 35 The school day is longer, from 7.45 to 14.20 at Johanna's school, with one 40-minute period for lunch – usually burgers, French fries and cakes, but with a choice of salads for the health-conscious.
- 40 Most kids stay on in the afternoons after lessons to take part in clubs or sports. There was a wide variety of activities – drama club, newspaper club, poetry, a jazz group, French and German for fun. Sports – an important part of high school life – were also on offer in the afternoons.
- 45 Johanna says her stay helped her English a lot, particularly her spoken English. “I find it really easy to talk in English lessons now”, she says. Writing is a different matter, sometimes she puts slang words she learnt in the US into written work.
- 50 After a year, Johanna says the US started feeling like home. The Americans she met were open, friendly and interested. She liked the informal way neighbours got together for barbecues, the way they just dropped in for a chat. She has kept in touch with the second family she stayed with, and even visited them at Christmas.
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Read on Oct. 2005, p. 5–6 (www.readon.de)

¹ grade – year, form
² application – to apply for sth
³ spending money – pocket money
⁴ medical insurance – “Krankenversicherung”
⁵ to sign – write your name (signature) on sth