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## Listening link

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## Reading-1

### THE LEGACY OF VIKINGS

1. From around A.D. 800 to the 11th century, a vast number of Scandinavians left their homelands to seek their fortunes elsewhere. These seafaring warriors, who were known collectively as Vikings or Norsemen (“Northmen”), began by attacking coastal sites, especially undefended monasteries, in the British Isles. Over the next three centuries, they would leave their mark as pirates, attackers, traders and settlers on much of Britain and the European continent, as well as parts of modern-day Iceland, Greenland and Newfoundland.
2. Contrary to some popular conceptions of the Vikings, they were not a “race” linked by ties of common ancestry or patriotism, and could not be defined by any particular sense of “Viking-ness.” Most of the Vikings, whose activities are best known, come from the areas now known as Denmark, Norway and Sweden, though there are mentions in historical records of Finnish, Estonian and Saami Vikings as well. Their common ground, and what made them different from the European peoples they confronted was that they came from a foreign land, they were not “civilized”, and most importantly, they were not Christian.
3. The exact reasons for Vikings leaving their homeland are uncertain. Some have suggested it was due to overpopulation of their homeland, but the earliest Vikings were looking for riches, not land. In the eighth century A.D., Europe was growing richer, with trading centers such as Dorestad and Quentovic on **the Continent**, together with London and York in England, where Scandinavian furs were highly prized. Moreover, from their trade with the Europeans, Scandinavians had learned about new sailing technology as well as about the growing wealth and accompanying inner conflicts among European kingdoms. The Viking pirates, who preyed on merchant ships in the Baltic Sea, would use this knowledge to expand their fortune-seeking activities into the North Sea and beyond.
4. In A.D. 793, an attack on the Lindisfarne monastery off the coast of northeastern England marked the beginning of the Viking Age. The Norwegian pirates who sailed directly across the North Sea did not destroy the monastery completely, but the attack shook the European religious world to its core. *Unlike other groups, these strange new invaders had no respect for religious institutions such as the monasteries.* These monasteries, especially the ones which were often left unguarded and open to attacks near the shore were open targets for the Viking sailors. Two years later, Viking attacks struck other undefended island monasteries off the northeast coast of Ireland.

5. The first recorded attack in continental Europe came in 799, which destroyed two ancient and well-known Christian monasteries of the time.
6. For several decades, the Vikings confined themselves to hit-and-run attacks against coastal targets in the British Isles; particularly Ireland, and Europe. They then took advantage of internal conflicts in Europe to extend their activity further inland. After the death of Louis the Pious, the emperor of Frankia, his son actually invited the support of a Viking fleet in a power struggle with his brothers. Before long, other Vikings realized that Frankish kings were willing to pay them rich sums to prevent them from attacking their subjects, making Frankia an irresistible target for further Viking activity.
7. By the mid-ninth century, Ireland, Scotland and England had become major targets for Viking settlement as well as attacks. Vikings gained control of the Northern Isles of Scotland and much of mainland Scotland. They founded Ireland's first trading towns: Dublin, Waterford, Wexford, Wicklow and Limerick, and used their base on the Irish coast to launch attacks within Ireland and across the Irish Sea to England. When King Charles began defending West Frankia more energetically in 862, effectively protecting its towns, rivers and coastal areas, Viking forces began to concentrate more on England than Frankia.
8. In the wave of Viking attacks in England, only one kingdom, which was called Wessex, succeeded in resisting. In 871 King Alfred of Wessex became the only king to decisively defeat a Viking army in England. Leaving Wessex, the Vikings set off to the north, and settled in an area which is today known as Denmark, where many of them became farmers and traders. In the first half of the 10th century, English armies began reconquering Scandinavian areas of England; until the last Scandinavian king, Erik Bloodaxe, was expelled and killed around 952, permanently uniting the English into one kingdom.
9. Meanwhile, Viking armies remained active on the European continent until the tenth century, **brutally** attacking towns as far inland as Paris, Orleans, and Tours. In 844, Vikings stormed Seville, Spain, seizing power of the city and destroying everything that came into their path. It was **then** controlled by the Arabs and the attack left the rest of Europe desperately vulnerable to future Viking attacks in the forthcoming decades. In 911, the Frankish king, having no other choice, granted the city of Rouen and the surrounding territory to the Vikings in exchange for their word not to cross the River Seine and to stay away from other parts of the country. This region of northern France is now known as Normandy, or "land of the Northmen."
10. Vikings were not satisfied with the lands they had invaded in England or Europe and were aiming at even farther regions. In the ninth century, Scandinavians began to colonize Iceland, an island in the North Atlantic where no one had yet settled in large numbers. By the late 10th century, some Vikings moved even further westward, to Greenland. *According to later Icelandic histories, some of the early Viking settlers in Greenland may have become the first Europeans to discover North America.* Calling their landing place Vinland, which translates into Wine-land, they built a temporary settlement in modern-day Newfoundland. Beyond that, there is little evidence of Viking presence in the New World, and they did not form permanent settlements in the American continent.

11. After long years of reign in parts of Europe and England, King William of England was finally able to defeat an invasion led by the last great Viking King Harald Hardrada of Norway in 1066 and mark the end of the Viking Age in Europe. By that time, all of the Scandinavian kingdoms in Europe were Christian, and what remained of Viking **legacy** was absorbed into the culture of Christian Europe. Today, signs of the Viking culture can be found mostly in the Scandinavian origins of some vocabulary and place-names in the areas in which they settled, including northern England, Scotland, Ireland and France. In Iceland, the Vikings left an extensive body of literature, the most notable of them being the Icelandic sagas, in which they celebrated the greatest victories of their glorious past.

**Circle the best alternative according to the text above. (1 point each)**

1. In paragraph 1 it can be inferred that Vikings\_\_\_\_\_.

A have a relatively recent history

B were engaged in marine affairs

C were deeply religious

D settled in Scandinavia

2. According to paragraph 2, which one of the following is **TRUE** about Vikings?

A They can be defined as a separate nation known for their patriotism and strong ties of ancestry.

B They are originally from Northern Europe although some may have roots in other regions.

C They were similar to the Europeans to a great extent especially in terms of origins and religion.

D They founded a civilization which was both admired and terrified by the European peoples.

3. Vikings left their homeland for many different reasons **EXCEPT**\_\_\_\_\_.

A more cultivated soils with a warmer climate which would allow agricultural facilities

B newly developed markets where they could easily find buyers for their precious furs

C political hostilities across Europe, which would facilitate their finding new settlements

D the desire to look for possible fortunes and wealth in lands other than their own

4. “*the Continent*” in paragraph 3 refers to\_\_\_\_\_.

A their

homeland

B Dorestad

C Quentovic

D Europe

5. In paragraph 4 what does the writer mean by “*Unlike other groups, these strange new invaders had no respect for religious institutions such as the monasteries*”?

A Vikings differed from other pirate groups in that they avoided attacking religious places.

B Religious places were ideal targets for the Vikings since they were the sources of hidden treasures.

C What distinguished Vikings from other crowds was that they did not care about holy places.

D Because there were no other groups around to interfere, Vikings targeted monasteries especially.

6. According to paragraph 5, Frankia was a perfect destination for Viking activity because\_\_\_\_\_.

A the rulers voluntarily paid the Vikings in return for keeping safe.

B it was a coastal region which enabled them to continue their hit-and-run attacks

C the King of the country had died which left the country defenceless against attacks

D the King was in need of a fleet support which could be provided by nobody but Vikings

7. In paragraph 7, all of the following can be inferred **EXCEPT** \_\_\_\_\_.

A the King of Wessex achieved a glorious victory against Vikings unlike other neighboring kingdoms  
B following the military defeat, Vikings were forced to leave the island and look for new settlement

C the Vikings continued attacking kingdoms in the North, which led to the foundation of a new country called Denmark

D having faced an unexpected defeat, the Vikings decided to engage in activities other than fighting in their new homeland

8. The word **brutally** in paragraph 8 is closest in meaning to \_\_\_\_\_.

A commonly

B wisely

C cruelly

D expertly

9. “**then**” in paragraph 8 refers to \_\_\_\_\_.

A until the tenth

century

B in 844

C in 911

D in the forthcoming decades

10. The King of Frankia granted Rouen and the surrounding region to the Vikings so that \_\_\_\_\_.

A they would shift their focus to other inland cities of Europe and stop attacking Frankia

B the Arabs, who controlled Seville, would provide Frankia with military assistance against Vikings

C Europe would be left defenseless against Viking attacks and would depend on Frankia for survival

D they would put an end to their permanent attacks targeting other regions of the country

11. Although they were in search of new destinations beyond England and Europe, the Vikings\_\_\_.

- A returned to Scandinavia since they were not satisfied elsewhere
- B became a colony of Iceland which was inhabited by other Viking groups
- C did not dare to expand into remote places due to previous defeats
- D did not show much existence in the American continent

12. What does the writer mean by saying “*According to later Icelandic histories, some of the early Vikingsettlers in Greenland may have become the First Europeans to discover North America*” in paragraph 9?

- A Some of the early Vikings, who settled in Greenland, wanted to be the first people to set foot on North America.
- B It is certain that North America was first explored by Vikings, some of whom settled in Greenland before other Europeans.
- C The early Vikings, who settled in Greenland, are assumed to have reached North America before any other European country.
- D North America had already been discovered and explored by different European colonies in Greenland before the Vikings arrived.

13. The word **legacy** in paragraph 10 is closest in meaning to\_\_\_\_\_.

- A heritage
- B stories
- C wars
- D settlement



14. Which of the following is **TRUE** about the Viking existence in Europe?

- A It was the Viking king Harald Hardrada who ended King William's reign in England.
- B The Vikings converted the Christian culture of Europe into their own.
- C There are still some signs of the Vikings in European languages.
- D The remains of the Viking culture in Europe are limited to celebrated sagas.

## Reading 2

### AN EXTRAORDINARY ARTIST

1. Frida Kahlo de Rivera is one of the most well-known figures shaping not only Mexican but also the surrealist form of art. Perhaps best known for her self-portraits, Kahlo's work is remembered for its "pain and passion", and its intense, vibrant colours. Her work has been celebrated in Mexico as a symbol of national and local tradition, and by feminists for its uncompromising depiction of the female experience and form. Her paintings were strikingly naive, and filled with the vivid colours and forms reflecting Mexican way of life. These paintings, most of which are self-portraits, are easily distinguished as Kahlo's with their colourful and lively depictions of the Mexican culture.
2. Kahlo suffered lifelong health problems, many of which stemmed from a serious traffic accident she had in her teenage years. These issues are often shockingly reflected in her works. (16) Kahlo suggested, "I paint myself because I am so often alone and because I am the subject I know best." It was these extraordinary self-portraits that gained her the international fame going far beyond the borders of Mexico.
3. Frida was one of the four daughters born to a Hungarian-Jewish father and a mother of Spanish and Mexican Indian descent. She did not originally plan to become an artist. She had been studying at a medical school in Mexico City until, at the age of 18, when she was seriously injured in a terrible bus accident. (17) \_\_\_\_\_ She had to endure more than 30 operations in her lifetime and during her recovery period she began to paint, as it was the only thing she could do being confined to bed.
4. Her private life was no different than her painting; fluctuating, inconsistent and full of pain. (18) \_\_\_\_\_ Their stormy and passionate relationship survived infidelities, the pressures of careers, divorce, remarriage, Frida's affairs, her poor health and her inability to have children. Despite all these emotional swings, neither was able to give up on the other. Frida once said: "I suffered two fatal accidents in my life... One in which a bus knocked me down and the other was Diego." The bus accident left her crippled physically and Diego crippled her emotionally.
5. In 1953, when Frida Kahlo had her first solo exhibition in Mexico, which was the only one held in her native country during her lifetime, a local critic wrote: "It is impossible to separate the life and work of this extraordinary person. Her paintings are her biography." This observation serves to explain why her work is so different from that of her contemporaries. At the time of her exhibition opening, Frida's health was so bad that her doctor told her she was not to leave her bed under any condition. She, however, insisted that she was going to attend her opening, and, in Frida style, she did. She came to the gallery in her bed tied to the back of a truck. Four men carried her in to the waiting guests, while she was holding a glass of wine in her hand. (19) \_\_\_\_\_

6. Upon her wish, her body was burned after her death and her ashes are still on display in the "Blue House" that she shared with Rivera in Mexico. All of her personal effects are displayed throughout the house and everything seems to be just as she left it. One gets the feeling that she still lives there but has just briefly stepped out to allow you to tour her private sanctuary, where her legacy still goes on.

**For questions 16-19 match the missing sentence with the correct paragraph and transfer your answers to the optical form. There is ONE EXTRA. (4x1 pt. each = 4 pts.)**

- A.** This was just one of the examples of how she challenged the norms of the society and the constraints of her crippled body.
- B.** For example, in one of her paintings *Without Hope*, she boldly depicted her body suffering from various forms of pain, including unpleasant scenes full of blood and fractures.
- C.** Soon after the event, her fragile body not being able to tolerate her carefree lifestyle, Frida passed away at the age of 47.
- D.** She spent over a year in bed recovering from fractures to her spine, ribs, shoulders, a shattered pelvis, and foot injuries.
- E.** At the age of 22 she married the famous Mexican artist Diego Rivera, 20 years her senior, despite her family's strong objections.

### **Reading-3**

- A. Can you feel your anxiety and stress levels increasing every time you get caught in a traffic jam? Do you find it difficult to control your tongue when your boss points out your mistakes yet again? Do you find it difficult to find the suitable clothes to work every morning and spend hours in front of your wardrobe thinking? Is it frustrating for you to work in an office full of people shouting and running around? If your answer to these questions is a big “Yes” then it could be time to make a career and life change that may not even require you to quit your job. Just suggest to your boss that you wish to become one of the new breed of executives whose office is based at home.
- B. Working from home is a relatively new phenomenon, but it is becoming an increasingly popular option with both businesses and employees. The technology available to us now means that we no longer need to be in the same office building as our colleagues to communicate effectively with each other. E-mail, video conferencing, mobile telephones and more mean that we can do business just as efficiently, regardless of our location. Advancements in communication have enabled employees to carry out most of the tasks without physically being present in their offices. Money transfers, contracts, documentation, signing documents can all be done online. Why spend so many resources while we can do all of these online.
- C. Companies may choose to employ a proportion of their staff as home-based employees, as, of course, a workforce set up in such a way requires far less office space and fewer parking facilities. The fixed cost of a business can be dramatically reduced. Employees can enjoy the added benefits of the freedom to schedule the day as they choose and the freedom to spend more time at home with their families. Working from home can be a particularly valid option for young mothers who wish to pursue their careers, but find it impossible to be out of the house for nine or ten hours per day.
- D. We can even go so far as to say that the phenomenon of working from home could be one of the answers to the pollution problems which the modern world has inflicted upon itself. Fewer people travelling to work everyday equals fewer cars. Fewer cars, of course, equates to lower CO<sub>2</sub> levels in the atmosphere. Governments have been trying for years to persuade us to forsake our private car journey to work each day for the hideous experience of a crowded bus or train. Most of us have been resistant, even when parking fees in city areas have been on the rise and unpredictable traffic patterns mean we have to leave our house at least 30 minutes earlier.
- E. Despite all these benefits, working from home has certain drawbacks as well. For many of us, work is a means of escaping our nearest and dearest and making our own mark on the world. It does not matter whether the relationships we have with our colleagues are good or bad, they are a significant part of our life. After all, full time employees spend a third of their day in their workplace. After work, pursuits of game of squash or a drink in the pub become part of our daily routine. We establish sound friendships at work and an astounding percentage of us meet our life partner at our place of work. The people there have similar ambitions and business interests. After all, we are social animals and the majority of us become depressed and withdrawn if we do not have enough interaction with others.
- F. As with most aspects of life, a balance is probably the best solution for the majority of employees- a job based at home which requires regular contact with colleagues at regular meetings. Management surveys show that successful business is easier if we operate as a team: brainstorming and sharing ideas and offering support and motivation to each other. All in all, we are only human, and we need each other to complain to if we have a bad day at work!

**For Questions 20 – 25, please choose the main idea for the relevant paragraph and transfer your answers to the optical form. There is ONE EXTRA. (6x1 pt. each = 6 pts.)**

20. MAIN IDEA OF PARAGRAPH A: \_\_

21. MAIN IDEA OF PARAGRAPH B: \_\_

22. MAIN IDEA OF PARAGRAPH C: \_\_

- A. Companies might cut down on their rental expenses by encouraging home office, what's more, another advantage lies in employees' opportunity to have more spare time for themselves.
- B. Current improvements in technology have revolutionized business, because people can now communicate regardless of where they are.
- C. Many workers refuse work from home since they think that it is harmful for their social interactions with colleagues and work partners.
- D. A lot of people suffer from the psychological effects of a hectic working environment, so a career shift related to their working atmosphere can be a practical solution for them.

23. MAIN IDEA OF PARAGRAPH D: \_\_

24. MAIN IDEA OF PARAGRAPH E: \_\_

25. MAIN IDEA OF PARAGRAPH F: \_\_

- A. Work place makes up a huge part of our social life and affects our relationship to such an extent that people are likely to marry someone from their offices.
- B. One of the possible benefits of home offices can be observed in an unexpected area, since people commute less and use personal vehicles less often than they do while working
- C. People need social contact and also time on their own what's more, so neither full isolation nor a crowded office would do good for an employee.
- D. Recently, a lot of companies have been trying increase the number of home offices by employing freelance workers all over the world.

**Part 2. ACADEMIC LISTENING**

**Total time: 30 min**

**Listening 1**

For questions 1-10, you are going to listen to a radio program. You are going to listen to it **ONCE** only. As you listen, choose the best answer. You now have **1 minute** to look at the questions. (10x1 =10 points).

1. One reason for Italy's bad image during the 2001 economic crisis is\_\_\_\_\_.

- A lack of a cooperative leader
- B the inability to see the upcoming crisis
- C radical political changes
- D unwise economic reforms

2. Which one of the following is **TRUE** about the history of modern Italy?

- A It is full of failures.
- B It put an end to the Roman Empire.
- C It is a relatively young country.
- D It was superior to the Greeks.

3. The interviewee thinks that Southerners\_\_\_\_\_.

- A divided the country
- B consider themselves inferior
- C suffer from the hot climate
- D are more hardworking

4. The *Ministry of Simplification* was established in order to\_\_\_\_\_.
- A assist the Prime Minister
  - B ease the procedures
  - C help tourists with the  
signposts
  - D solve the problem of traffic  
jam
5. The interviewee believes that bargaining is\_\_\_\_\_.
- A unique to Italy and Italian culture
  - B done to reduce the prices
  - C a way of communication
  - D a practice among strangers
6. Italians are proud of the Roman Catholic Church because\_\_\_\_\_.
- A Pope Francis is a popular figure
  - B most Italians are religious
  - C it is internationally recognized
  - D it challenges Islam



7. Which one of the following is **TRUE** about immigration in Italy?

- A Currently, there are few immigrants in Italy.
- B Immigrants are the least welcomed.
- C There are more newcomers in the south.
- D It has been a common phenomenon in Italy.

8. All of the following about Italian families of today are true **EXCEPT** they\_\_\_\_\_.

- A have strong ties
- B tend to have fewer children
- C have stay-at-home mothers
- D take care of the elder parents

9. The interviewee states that Italian cuisine\_\_\_\_\_.

- A consists of spaghetti and pizza
- B is not well-known abroad
- C has the best coffee in the world
- D is an essential part of its culture

10. The interviewee appreciates the fact that Italians\_\_\_\_\_.

- A like eating and fashion
- B are brave and adorable
- C take things easy
- D help those in need

Name - Surname: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Number: \_\_\_\_\_

**ACADEMIC WRITING SECTION**

**Total allocated time: 60 min**

**Instructions: Read the following prompt and write an essay between 250-300 words.**

*“Preserving their cultural heritage from the past to present benefits countries in many different aspects including economy, tourism, education, and art.”*

To what extent do you agree with this quote? Explain by giving your reasons.

**SPEAKING EXAM**

**CARD 1**

*“[THE NAME and SURNAME OF THE STUDENT], Now, I am going to ask you a question. You have 1 minute to prepare for it and then you are expected to speak in minimum 2 and maximum 3 minutes. You may take notes as you prepare. Is it clear?”*

**Question 1. In your opinion, what are some negative effects of studying abroad?**

*(After 1 minute) “Now please begin.”*

**Question 2. If you could study abroad, where would you go and why?**

*“This is the end of the speaking exam. You may leave. Thank you.”*

## ANSWER KEY

### PART-1 READING

- |       |       |
|-------|-------|
| 1- B  | 16- B |
| 2- B  | 17- D |
| 3- A  | 18- E |
| 4- D  | 19- A |
| 5- C  | 20- D |
| 6- A  | 21- B |
| 7- D  | 22- A |
| 8- C  | 23- B |
| 9- C  | 24- A |
| 10- B | 25- C |
| 11- D |       |
| 12- D |       |
| 13- C |       |
| 14- A |       |
| 15- C |       |

### PART-2 LISTENING

#### LISTENING

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1- A | 6- C  |
| 2- C | 7- D  |
| 3- B | 8- C  |
| 4- B | 9- D  |
| 5- C | 10- C |

## 7. AUDIOSCRIPTS

### THE CHANGING FACE OF ITALY

Hi everybody. I am Troy McClain, it's 10 am now and you are listening to the WHD Community Radio. In a few seconds we'll be joined by Jean Hooper, a Guardian correspondent who published her new book *The Italians*. She is currently on her book tour but has taken time out to talk to us. Say the word Italy, and we think of sun-kissed piazzas, stars over the Mediterranean, historic museums, and mouth-watering food. As Jean Hooper explains in her new book, it's a complex country where the past is always present.

Interviewer: Mrs. Hooper, welcome to our program. It is great to finally have you on WHD Community Radio this morning.

Hooper: Thank you. Hello everybody. It is great to be back in my hometown, too. It's been a while.

Interviewer: OK. Mrs Hooper. If you are ready, I'd like to start off with a couple of questions. You call Italy "the Beautiful Country." Yet, in recent years it's been associated with political corruption. Does Italy have an image problem?

Hooper: It had. I think in two ways. Berlusconi, who was well-known for his competence and skills in politics, did a lot of damage, more damage than most Italians realize, by making the country look irresponsible at a time when the economic crisis in Europe in 2001 needed all the countries to be responsible. While all the other countries of Europe were working together and taking collaborative measures to lessen the negative effects of the crisis, he deliberately ignored it and did not work with them. Secondly, people realized that the country had not changed a lot for a long time, and that is the root of most of the economic problems it had. Italy seriously needed a political revision and Berlusconi made it crystal clear. He and his government did not make any structural reforms that would improve the then existing political and economic system in the country. Today, however, the situation is much better thanks to the wiser implementations of the new government. So, I don't think Italy has an image problem any more.

Interviewer: I see what you mean. OK, one of the things that I find interesting about Italy is how young a country modern Italy is. Yet it's also an ancient civilization. What would you say about this contradiction?

Hooper: I think both modern and ancient Italy have a strong connection. On one hand, there is this consciousness of a long and glorious past. They know that their ancestors changed Western civilization for good by creating the Roman Empire and the Renaissance. People look back on the glories of the past and think they're maybe a bit better than other people. That's the superiority complex, something Italians have in common with the Greeks.

On the other hand, there is the inferiority complex that comes from being ruled by foreigners for a very long time and not being able to found the independent Italy until the 19th century. England has been England since the 11th century. France has been France for even longer. But Italy has only been Italy for less than 150 years. So I think there's always a feeling of fragility.

Interviewer: So you say, Italians bear both inferiority and a superiority complex regarding their past. What about geography? How has geography shaped the Italian character?

Hooper: Not as much as history. There has been a division between the north and the south, but that's a division due to history. For hundreds of years the south was under foreign rule, so southerners were very much cut off from northerners. So, I guess southerners suffer more from inferiority complex (laughs). Other than that, I can say that southerners are much more relaxed and easy-going due to the climate, whereas northerners could be described as more hardworking.

Interviewer: OK. Let's turn our attention to politics. You know Italy is famous for its complicated bureaucracy. That's why they've recently established a new ministry; the Ministry of Simplification. This is something really interesting and weird. Could you tell us about it?

Hooper: You have a point. At first it may really seem ridiculous but in practice it really serves its purpose. The current Prime Minister once told me that one of his aims was to make Italy a simpler place. All kinds of things are unnecessarily complicated, whether it be laws or judicial or administrative procedures. If you're driving in Italy, you come up against these signposts that no human being could probably read while driving above five miles per hour. There can be 18 different things pointing in different directions. How are people expected to read them all, God alone knows!

Interviewer: I think here in America we need a ministry like this. OK. Another characteristic that the Italians are famous for is the culture of bargaining. And in your book, you have this really funny chapter about how common bargaining is in the marketplace and in shops. What can you say about it? Is bargaining an indispensable part of Italian way of life?

Hooper: It is. Actually, bargaining is not only a part of Italian culture, but a common characteristic in nearly all Mediterranean countries. Take Greece for instance, or Turkey; people of these countries are also very fond of bargaining and they don't like shopping without trying to reduce the prices of goods. I guess it's something about the need to communicate with one another rather than buying things at a cheaper price. Mediterranean people like to be in contact with each other, even if they are total strangers as it is in the case of customer and seller. They regard bargaining as a part of daily communication.

Interviewer: OK. Mrs Hooper let's talk about religious issues a bit. Italy has been the center of Catholic religion for centuries. What is the role of the Roman Catholic Church today? Is Pope Francis really as popular as the media suggests?

Hooper: Certainly Pope Francis is popular. But, there's much more to it. I think there is a relationship between Italians and the Roman Catholic Church that goes beyond the effect of any pope. Even people who aren't religious in Italy take pride in the fact that the Roman Catholic Church is so closely associated with their country. The Roman Catholic Church puts forward a moral code, which you agree or disagree with. But no other moral code in the world has been given this much thought throughout history. It's a global entity. That's what Italians are proud of. However, the religious map of Italy has been changing for a while. For most of Italy's history, Protestantism or other religions have been non-existent. That's changing now. All of a sudden, the Roman Catholic Church's spiritual dominance is being challenged, particularly by Islam, as more and more people come from abroad. Large numbers of immigrants also come from Eastern Europe. They're Christians, but not Roman Catholics, they're Orthodox. All of that is creating a much more diverse picture than has ever existed in Italy.

Interviewer: Speaking of immigrants, one of the most famous Italian faces of recent years is that of the soccer star Mario Balotelli, who is an immigrant himself. How is immigration changing Italy?

Hooper: Hugely. And it's been very rapid. The country I arrived in, in 1994, was largely homogeneous. Italians weren't used to living with people of other ethnicities. Today, the number of foreigners living in Italy is comparable to that in most other European countries. Still, I can say that Italians are welcoming and hospitable towards the immigrants. In fact, the polls show that the degree of tolerance towards migrants increases as you go south. This sense of integration is largely due to the fact that not so long ago Italians were emigrants themselves, heading off to northern Europe or America for work. There's almost no family in Italy who doesn't have a member somewhere abroad. So, because they were immigrants themselves, they can easily sympathize with the newcomers.

Interviewer: I think at this very point we need to talk about family and family bonds in Italy because Italy is also famous for its strong and traditional family bonds. In your book, you say the family is the bedrock of Italian society. Is that still true?

Hooper: It is indeed, but it's a different kind of family. Family bonds have remained astonishingly strong. Italians have disputes within families like everybody else, but there's a loyalty to the institution that goes beyond anything I've encountered. Family bonds are even stronger than they are in Spain, which is another Latin society with very similar characteristics. But the traditional idea of the family, with Mama in the kitchen, has disappeared. Today's family is very likely to have one child, maybe two, very exceptionally three, because women have found it impossible to combine the roles of mother and wife and caregiver and professional. In Italian or Latin societies, women are expected to do a job, to keep up the family income, to look after the older members of the family, to be wives, which usually involves doing the cooking and having children and bringing them up. And it's too much!

Interviewer: OK Mrs Hooper, it would be a shame not to talk about Italian cuisine. We can't talk about Italy without talking about food. Is it as central to the Italian way of life as ever?

Hooper: I would say it's even more essential to its identity than it was a few years ago. Until recently, Italian food was not taken very seriously in the rest of the world. When you went to an Italian Restaurant abroad, you wouldn't expect anything other than spaghetti or pizza. However, Italian cuisine is full of delicious flavors. Luckily, in recent years Italian cuisine has conquered the world and people are now well aware of these tastes. When I go to London or New York, I don't have to explain to people what a *caffè macchiato* is. Twenty years ago people would have stared at me blankly. Food also has a very important function in Italian society. It's what brings the family together in the evening, or on Sundays. It's also often the necessary glue for a business deal. Many Italians will tell you that they only really trust somebody in a deal when they've sat down and had a meal with them and shared a bottle of wine. And the foundation of Italian food is still the family. The idea of how to make a particular dish is carried on from one generation to the next and becomes part of the identity of the family.

Interviewer: Mrs. Hooper, now one last question. You might find it a bit too personal and you may not want to answer. It is no problem. As an American you've lived in Italy for many years. What do you love and dislike most about Italy?

Hooper: It is no problem in fact. The thing I love most is an aspect of the idea of joy. For Italians, the way you feel is far more important than the way life treats you. I remember once being in a restaurant, and a young woman in a white dress was going up a flight of stairs. She tripped and spilled an entire plate of spaghetti and tomato sauce all over her beautiful white dress. Her reaction was to stand there and laugh. That shows the belief that no matter how bad things get, you've got to put a brave face and not take it too seriously. I find that a very adorable characteristic of the Italians. The thing I like least about them is another aspect of the idea of joy, which is a tendency to turn away from whatever is ugly. They don't like to talk about illnesses, accidents or disability. So, two aspects of the same thing: the joy of life, both seen and unseen.

Interviewer: Thank you very much Mrs. Hooper. It has been really a great pleasure to have you here on WHDCommunity Radio

Hooper: Thank You. Grazie.