

Saratoga Library English Conversation Club

Is the World Cup More Than a Tournament?

July 9, 2026

The main purpose of the World Cup is to promote football (soccer) and to have countries from around the world compete to be the world champion. However, an important side effect of the games is that they bring people from all over the world together and we learn from each other.

Today we will continue to read about the World Cup and how fans all over the world are reacting to the games and the United States. Before we read about these experiences, review the following vocabulary then practice the dialog.

Vocabulary

1. abundance (uh-BUHN-duhns)	a) extremely large, massive, or huge
2. Americana (uh-MEHR-ih-KAH-nah)	b) small local shops that are open for long hours selling snacks, drinks, and everyday items; sometimes they are part of a chain
3. bulk (bulk)	c) completely shocked or surprised
4. colossal (kuh-LAH-suhl)	d) a large quantity of something, or buying things in large amounts to get a better price
5. convenience stores (kuhn-VEEN-yuhns stor)	e) things uniquely associated with the culture, history, and folklore of the United States
6. flabbergasted (FLAB-er-gas-tid)	f) massive, highly successful, and powerful companies that sell goods directly to consumers like Target, Costco or Walmart
7. free samples (free SAM-puhlz)	g) to consider something normal and not special or to expect something to always be there without appreciating its true value
8. ranch dressing (ranch DRES-ing)	h) small amount of a product—like food or perfume—given to a customer free of charge so they can try it before buying
9. retail giants (REE-tayl JY-uhnts)	i) an image, video, or story that spreads incredibly fast on the internet and is viewed by millions of people
10. to take for granted (tayk for GRAN-tid)	j) a thick, creamy salad dressing or dip made with buttermilk, garlic, and herbs
11. viral (VY-ruhl)	k) extremely plentiful, more than enough, bountiful

ANSWERS: 1 - k; 2 - e; 3 - d; 4 - a; 5 - b; 6 - c; 7 - h; 8 - j; 9 - f; 10 - g; 11 - i

Dialog Practice with Vocabulary Words

Leah: I just watched a **viral** video about a guy who tried to live in one of those **retail giants** for a week.

Maya: Wait, really? I am completely **flabbergasted** that he didn't get caught immediately by security.

Sam: Right? We always **take for granted** how closely guarded those **colossal** stores are.

Leah: He survived on **free samples** and hid in the furniture section at night. It looked like a museum of vintage **Americana**.

Maya: That sounds risky. I'd rather just run to one of our local **convenience stores** for a quick snack.

Sam: Agreed. Speaking of snacks how would you like some chicken wings drenched in **ranch dressing**. I bought a **bulk** supply of the dressing last week.

Warm-Up Questions

1. 7-11 is a famous convenience store chain. What are some others in your home country?
2. Do you buy food in bulk? Why or why not?

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What are Soccer Fans Learning about America and What are We Learning from Them?

At the World Cup, millions of fans from many different backgrounds gather in the host country to celebrate football (soccer) and support their countries and athletes. As a result, the World Cup acts as a unifying cultural event. It is one of the most popular sporting events in the world drawing billions of television viewers and millions of visitors to the host country.



This year Americans learned many things about other countries and, in turn, the soccer fans who came to the US learned a lot about this country. The fans were **flabbergasted** by the everyday types of shopping and eating experiences many Americans **take for granted**. Their reactions in turn helped Americans reflect on how they live and how fortunate they are.

For instance, World Cup visitors' impressions are going **viral** in their sheer amazement at the kindness of strangers, the diversity of food, shopping, and the beauty of America's National Parks. Fans are stunned by the **abundance** of what Americans have available to them in rural areas as well as the big host cities.

As reported by the BBC, some travellers were so struck by **retail** giants Costco and Walmart that they declared, "I'm in love with America." The international fans are stunned by the **colossal** volume of goods available and the concept of buying items in massive **bulk** quantities.

Some European tourists have described the experience of walking into warehouse clubs and massive supermarkets as feeling like they stepped right into a movie set. One young Brit named **Ben Reid** has documented his shopping and eating adventures during his stay in the U.S. He was amazed by the unlimited **free samples** at Costco.

When he found out that there were **free sample** stations all over the store, Ben could hardly believe it. He said, "Bro, you can eat breakfast, lunch and dinner here...and dessert!" He happily went all over the giant store to try all the **free samples** and exclaimed, "I found my favorite place."

With each wide-eyed video of travellers documenting their first encounters with everything from **roadside convenience stores** to **ranch dressing** to free refills of soda, fans are highlighting the everyday America – one that's rarely shown in films and TV, has nothing to do with politics and that many visitors often miss.



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The "Disneyland" of Shopping

Visitors view these large-scale retail stores as unique American cultural experiences. The **abundance** of choices, vast aisles, and sheer physical scale of American stores have left such a strong impression. Some international content creators have compared shopping in the United States to the excitement of visiting a theme park like Disneyland.



Goes Both Ways

While soccer fans have embraced American culture, Americans have returned the warmth. Bostonians lined up to cheer on the Scottish fans playing bagpipes and wearing kilts, mass transit workers in Houston handed out free cold drinks to fans, and across the nation, [police officers](#) have been celebrating soccer with visitors.

These experiences, places, and everyday culture in the United States is what Americans call **Americana**.

Discussion Questions:

1. For those of you who live in the U.S. or who have visited before, what were some of the first impressions you had of the country?
 - a) What surprised you the most? Was it what you imagined it would be?
 - b) What kinds of foods were new to you?
 - c) Do you think the portion sizes of foods were large? Were you surprised by free refills?
 - d) What was your impression of people you met?

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2. How important is it to have cross cultural exchanges among people of different countries?
3. If you were the leader of a country, how would you promote cross cultural exchanges and understanding?
4. How important is the mainstream media in educating people about different cultures?
5. Have you been to a Costco or Walmart? What do you think of these colossal stores?
6. Are there any Costco stores in your home country?
7. Do you like the idea of free samples?
8. In what ways do you think the World Cup is more than just a football tournament?

References

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