

Study Guide for
“Excuse Me,” “Very Close,” and Liar
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Pre-reading discussion questions:

1. What does the phrase “excuse me” mean? What are some other ways to say the same thing?
2. How often do you say “excuse me” here in the U.S.? How often do you hear other people say it?
3. How do you feel when people say “excuse me” to you?

Vocabulary

Cling	Inform	Discouragement	Reluctantly
Liar	Intention	Embarrassed	Expression

Post-reading discussion questions:

1. According to the writer, what is the most frequently used expression in America?
 - a. “I feel like a million dollars!”
 - b. “Excuse me.”
 - c. “Different strokes for different folks.”
 - d. “It never rains, but it pours.”

2. What are some of the ways Americans use the expressions listed in question 1? Can you think of any other examples of American expressions?

3. What do most Americans do when they have trouble understanding the writer? How does this make the writer feel? Why?

4. What do people do when they have trouble understanding you? What would be more helpful?

5. Where did the writer go shopping? What did she want to buy? Have you ever gone shopping there?

6. Why do you think the writer was reluctant to ask for help from a salesperson?

7. How did the salesperson respond differently from the way the writer expected? If this had happened to you, would you be grateful or even more embarrassed? Explain.

8. What do you think the salesperson meant when she said to the writer, “Very close”?

9. At the end of the story, the writer describes the salesperson as a “good liar.” Do you think she was angry at the salesperson? Explain.

What is the main idea of this story?

- a. A good salesperson says “excuse me” when the customer speaks in a way that is difficult to understand.
- b. A good salesperson is a good liar.
- c. A good salesperson is someone who is flexible, respectful and patient, and tries more than one way to communicate well with the customer.

Write your experience:

Title: _____

I have had many experiences where people had difficulty understanding me or I have had difficulty understanding them.

One example of when people could not understand me was

An example of when I was not able to understand other people was

The way we solved this problem was

In conclusion, my advice for people when they have difficulty understanding each other is
