# Cultural Misunderstandings – Amare’s Story

Amare was ten years old when he and his family left his home country six years ago. For 5 years prior to coming to America, his family had lived in a refugee camp. During that time Amare did not go to school. When the family first arrived in America, 15-year-old Amare was placed in a Grade 9 class. He could read and write, but only in his first language and he was only able to speak a few broken words in English.

On his first day at school, Amare and his mother walked down the school’s hallway. He scanned the hallway for someone familiar, but what he saw was just an ocean of unfamiliar faces. He felt their judgemental looks and heard whispering about him and his mother. When two girls uttered words, he didn’t understand while pointing at him, he knew that they were making fun of him. But being the kind soul that he is, he ignored it thinking, “I hope my classmates are not as judgemental as those two.”

When they finally arrived at the classroom, he gestured his mother to leave. After a quick hug, she slowly walked away. After entering the class, the teacher smiled at him and spoke a few words to the class. He only understood his name, so he knew it was about him.

The teacher turned to him and spoke slowly and somewhat louder than he had anticipated. He gestured for Amare to sit in an empty seat in the first row. As he was walking to his seat, he was looking for a friendly face. But he still just saw unfamiliar faces looking at him like he was different.

As the day went by, more and more of his classmates began to annoy him, throwing little balls of paper at him and yelling words he could not understand.

After school, he walked home sad and alone. When he arrived at home his mother asked him about school, he simply said, “I don’t feel welcome at all. I don’t want to be here anymore.”