

§ 1. Having decided in later life that it might actually be quite nice to master another language, rather than dusting off my schoolgirl French, I opted for Spanish. Three years of half-finished evening classes later, thanks to the enthusiastic teacher's efforts I could order in a restaurant and ask directions, but my conversational skills were limited to asking everybody how many brothers and sisters they had. The only true way to master a language is to live and breathe it for a period of time. I'd thought of taking a language 'immersion' course (курс языкового погружения) abroad, but two little words always stopped me: home stay. Then I saw that tour operator Journey Latin America had started offering Spanish courses in Peru, amongst other places. The opportunity to realise two long-held ambitions in one holiday — to improve my Spanish and to see Machu Picchu — proved irresistible.

§ 2. My misgivings disappear the moment I am met by my home-stay family, the Rojas, at Cusco airport. They greet me warmly, like an old friend. Carlos is an optician and Carmucha owns a restaurant. With their four children they live in a comfortable house right in the centre of town. Then I'm taken to a family friend's birthday party, where I understand nothing apart from the bit where they sing 'Happy Birthday'. By the end of the evening my face aches from holding an expression of polite, but uncomprehending interest, and I fall into bed wondering what I've let myself in for.

§ 3. The following morning, I'm off to school and get to know my new group mates. We're aged between 19 and 65, each spending up to a month studying before travelling around Peru. We have all clearly got to know about our new families. We're all keen to meet our teachers and see which class we'll be joining, but after sitting the placement test, we learn that as it's not yet high season and the school is not too busy, tuition will be one-on-one. Although some find the prospect frightening, to my mind, this is a pretty impressive ratio — though even in high season the maximum class size expands to only four pupils.

§ 4. As the week unfolds, I slip into a routine. Four hours of classes in the morning, back home for lunch, then afternoons free for sightseeing.

§ 5. As the week wears on, a strange thing starts to happen: the dinner-table chatter, which at first was so much 'white noise', starts to have some meaning and, wonderfully, I can follow the thread of the conversation. What's more, I've started to dream in Spanish!

Выберите один из предложенных вариантов ответа в соответствии с содержанием приведенного текста.

What put the writer off the idea of doing an 'immersion' course?

- 1) the thought of staying with a host family
- 2) having relatively little time to devote to it
- 3) her own lack of fluency in the language