

Portland People and Places

PORTLAND PEOPLE AND PLACES

Stories from the Rose City for Beginner Students of English

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WELCOME!



Portland is a wonderful place. It has many interesting stories. Please enjoy them!

Welcome to Portland! We're glad you are here!

— Tim Krause, Instructor

English for Speakers of Other Languages

Portland Community College

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The text was written by Timothy Krause, ESOL Instructor, Portland Community College.

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You may also be interested in these titles:

- [Home and School](#) (beginner)
- [Seven Wonders of Oregon](#) (intermediate)

A SMALL CITY



This is Susan. She is a student at Portland Community College. She lives in Portland.



Portland is a small city in Oregon. Oregon is a state in the United States of America.



There are many trees, rivers, and mountains in Oregon.



This is the flag of Oregon. It is blue. Oregon is called the “Beaver State.”



Summers are warm and dry in Portland. Susan likes the sun.



Winters in Portland are different. They are cool and wet. Susan doesn't like the rain.



Portland is near a mountain. The name of the mountain is Mt. Hood.

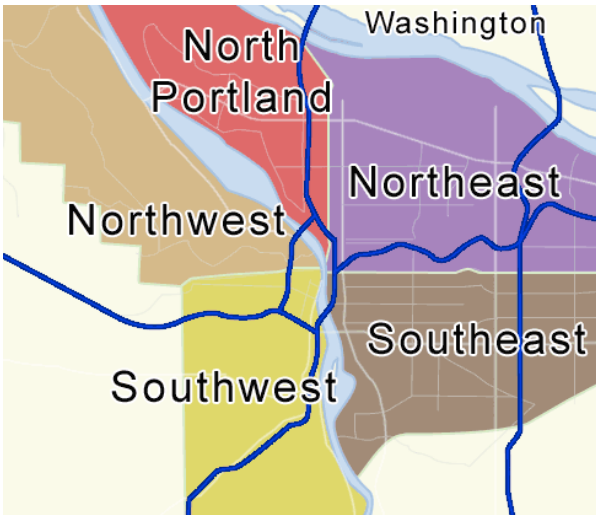
(Mt. = Mount. This is another word for “mountain.”)



This is the flag of Portland. The green is nature. The blue lines are two rivers. The names of the rivers are the Willamette River and the Columbia River.



Portland has many bridges. Some are for cars. Some are for trains. Some are for people and bikes.



Portland has five parts. Susan lives in Southeast.



Susan has a garden with lots of trees and flowers. One flower is a pink rose.



Portland has lots of parks. Many parks have gardens with roses. Portland is the “City of Roses.”



Susan rides her bike to the parks. Portland has many bike lanes on the streets. It's easy to ride a bike in Portland.



Susan eats lunch outside in the summer. She likes food carts. There are many food carts in Portland. Susan is vegan.

(vegan = she does not eat animals)



Susan also likes soccer. Portland has two soccer teams. They are called the Portland Thorns (women) and the Portland Timbers (men).



Susan likes living in Portland.

Comprehension Questions



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Discussion Question

Susan is from Portland. Where are you from? Tell a classmate about it.



**PORTLAND
OREGON**

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A STRANGE HOBBY



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That is Brian. He is always learning new things. He learns very fast.



Brian has a strange hobby. He plays the bagpipes. The bagpipes make weird music.

("Weird" means unusual.)



One day, Brian sees something strange in the trash. He thinks it is a bicycle. It isn't. But it's a unicycle!



The unicycle isn't easy to ride. It has only one wheel. There are no handlebars. There are no brakes. But Brian likes to learn new things. He learns very fast. He rides well.



A friend asks Brian, “Can you play the bagpipes and ride the unicycle at the same time?” “Yes, I think I can,” says Brian.



And he does. Brian rides his unicycle and plays the bagpipes. He also thinks of an unusual name: the Unipiper.



Brian tries to be on TV. They say no. Brian tries again. They say no again.



Then Brian wears a mask like Darth Vader. He plays music from the movie “Star Wars.” He makes [a YouTube video](#), and 2,000,000 people watch it!

(Darth Vader is a person in the “Star Wars” movies.)



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Now everybody knows the Unipiper. He is in newspapers, and he is on TV. People come to Portland to see the Unipiper.



Look and listen carefully! Maybe one day you will see and hear the Unipiper, too!

Do you want to know more about the Unipiper? Then visit his web page at www.unipiper.com.

Comprehension Questions



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Discussion Question

Talk with a classmate. What are your hobbies? Say what you like to do. Example: I read books. I play soccer. I bake cakes.



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A FLIP OF THE COIN



The year is 1845. There is a new city in Oregon. It is by the Willamette River.



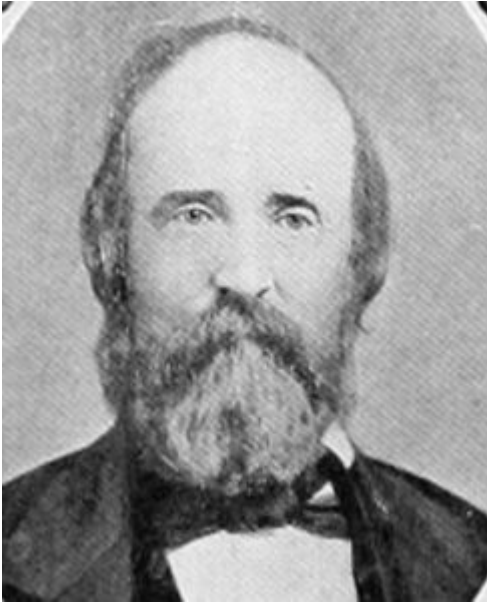
People come from far away. They want to live there. They move to Oregon in wagons.



“What is the new city’s name?” the people ask.



Francis Pettygrove comes from Portland, Maine. He wants to name the new city Portland.



Asa Lovejoy comes from Boston, Massachusetts. He wants to name the new city Boston.



The men can't decide. So they find a penny. They flip the coin three times.



First, it is heads. "Portland!" says Francis.



Second, it is tails. "Boston!" says Asa.



Third, it is heads again. "Portland!" says Francis. "Portland" says Asa.



... but the penny is the same. You can see the penny at a museum in downtown Portland. It is at the Oregon Historical Society.

Comprehension Questions

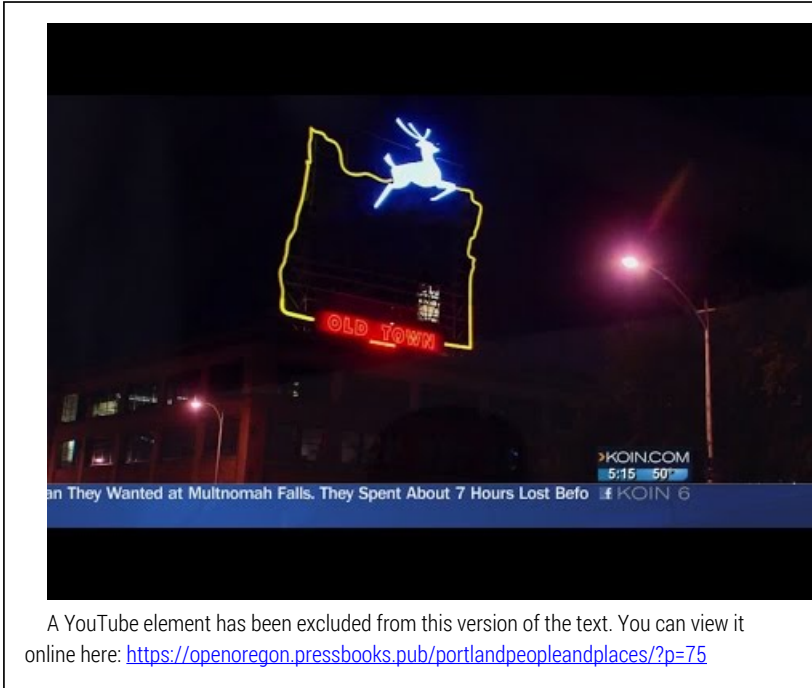


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Discussion Question

- Work with a partner. [Flip a coin 10 times](#). Count heads. Count tails.
- Now flip 10 more times. Is it the same? Or is it different? Why?



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A SURPRISE QUESTION



Isaac loves Amy. He wants to marry her.



Isaac uses his cell phone. He sends Amy a text. The text says “Come to my parents’ house.” Amy goes to their house.



Amy sees Isaac’s brother. He tells her to sit in Isaac’s car. She laughs.



He gives her headphones. She wears them, but she feels confused.



The car moves. Amy hears music in the headphones. Isaac's brother is making noise. She laughs again.



Amy sees her friends. She is surprised. They are singing and dancing in the street!



Amy sees Isaac's family, too.



Then Amy sees her family on laptop computers.



Everyone is singing and dancing in the street.



Amy is smiling. She is happy. She loves music, friends and family. But why are they doing this?



Then she sees Isaac. The music stops. What is happening?



Everyone is very quiet. Then Isaac asks Amy to marry him. Amy says "Yes."



Everyone is happy. Isaac and Amy are getting married.



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Comprehension Questions



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Discussion Question

Talk to a classmate. What happens in the story? Use your own words. Then watch the video below. Talk about family.



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AN IMMIGRANT'S STORY



Simon Benson is 17 years old. He leaves Norway, and he comes to the United States. Simon is an immigrant.



Simon lives in Wisconsin. He works at a store. He also studies English. He wants to make more money.



Now Simon is 28 years old. He moves to Oregon. He buys a big forest.



Simon starts a business. It cuts trees for wood. Business is good.



Simon is very rich. He has a lot of money. He has a nice house in downtown Portland.



Many people work for Simon. Work in the forest is not easy. The workers are thirsty.



Sometimes the workers drink beer at lunch.



Simon doesn't like beer. He says, "Drink water, not beer."



Simon watches a parade on the Fourth of July. He sees a little girl. She is crying. She is thirsty, but she has no water.



Simon gives \$10,000 to Portland. The city makes 20 drinking fountains. They are called “Benson Bubblers.”



Today there are more than 70 “Benson Bubblers” in downtown Portland. Have you seen one?

Comprehension Questions

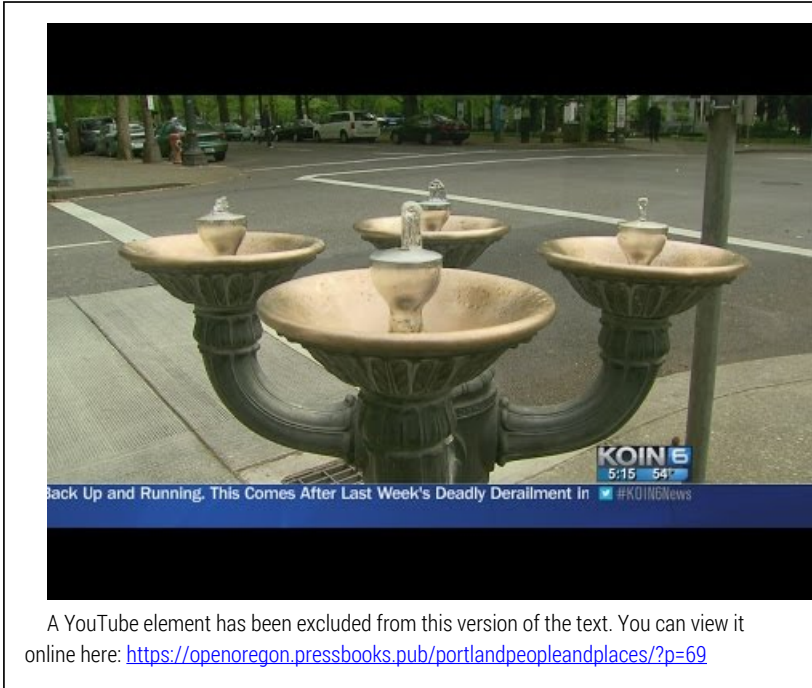


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Discussion Question

Talk with a classmate. Are you an immigrant? Where are you from? What is your story?



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A TINY PARK



The year is 1948. Dick works at a newspaper in Portland. He writes stories about the city.



He looks out his window every day. He sees a busy street. He wishes for a park.



One day he sees a small circle in the street. “What is that?” Dick asks his friend.



“It is a hole. It is for a new street light,” says Dick’s friend.



Dick is a writer. He likes to tell stories. Dick thinks of a better story about the hole in the street.

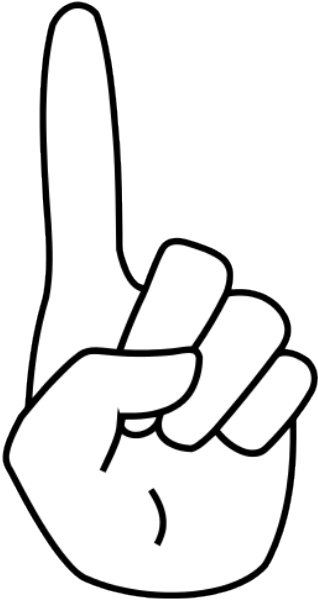


Dick looks at the hole again. Then his eyes grow big. He sees a little man in the hole! The little man is a leprechaun!

(A leprechaun is a small Irish fairy.)



Dick runs to the hole. He catches the lucky leprechaun.



The leprechaun gives Dick one wish. Dick wishes for a park.



The leprechaun points to the hole in the street. "Here is your park!" says the little man.



Dick pulls weeds. He plants flowers. He thinks it is the best park. "It's a big park for little leprechauns," Dick says. He calls it Mill Ends Park.



Dick writes many newspaper stories about the park. He says leprechauns live there. Many people read the stories in the newspaper. They all love the little park.



Mill Ends Park is the smallest park in the world. You can visit it today. It is in downtown Portland at Southwest Taylor Street.

Comprehension Questions



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Discussion Question

Dick makes a wish in the story. He wants a park. What do you wish for?

Examples:

- I want a new car.
- I want good grades.

- I want to visit New York.



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A MAN WITH AN UMBRELLA



It rains a lot in Portland. It usually rains 44 inches every year.



Some people use an umbrella.



Others do not.



One man in downtown Portland always uses an umbrella. He is the “umbrella man”!



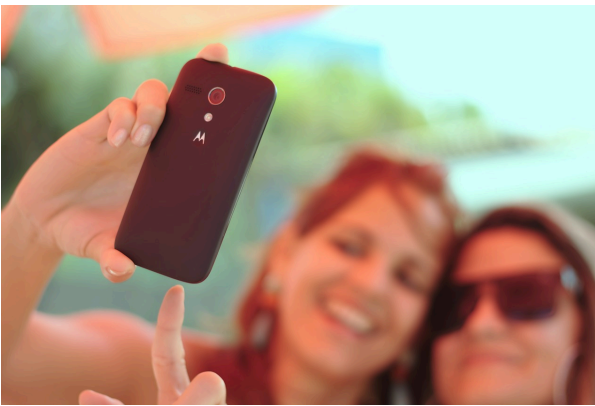
The umbrella man is a sculpture in Pioneer Courthouse Square. The name of the sculpture is “Allow Me.” But everybody calls it the “umbrella man.”



John Seward Johnson is the artist. He made the sculpture in 1983. It is bronze. It weighs 460 pounds. It is 6 feet, 10 inches tall.



John Seward Johnson is a famous artist. His sculptures are all over the world. This one is in Sarasota, Florida. It is called “Embracing Peace.”



Sometimes people think “the umbrella man” is a real man. He looks friendly! Many people take photographs with him.



Sometimes people even dress him up!



Some people say umbrellas are only for tourists. But when it rains 44 inches a year, everybody needs an umbrella — even statues!

Comprehension Questions



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Discussion Question

Talk to a classmate: Visit the artist's website at <https://sewardjohnsonatelier.org/series/> Look at more of his sculptures. Which one do you like? Why?



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A BIG FLOOD



There is a new city on the Columbia River. The city is between Vancouver and Portland. The name is Vanport.



Companies nearby make ships for the Second World War. The companies need more workers. The workers need houses.



So the companies build a new city for the workers in 1942. About 42,000 people live in Vanport during the war.



It is the state's second largest city. About 40% of the people are African-American. Vanport gives jobs to the first black teachers and police in the state.



Vanport has stores, a hospital, a movie theater, and schools. There is a college to help soldiers returning from the war. Later, the college becomes Portland State University.



In 1948, there is much snow in the winter.



There is more rain in the spring.



The snow and rain send a lot of water into the Columbia River. The river becomes very high. They say the city is safe.



However, the city was built quickly. They used cheap materials.



Only a dirt wall separates the city from the river. On May 30, 1948, the dirt wall breaks.



Water from the river flows into the city.



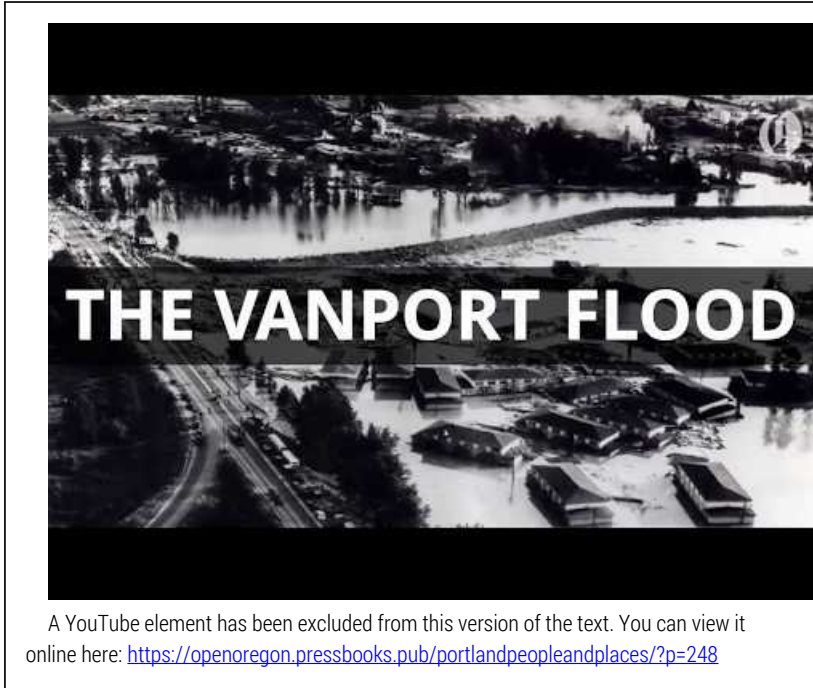
The city is under water in less than two hours.



15 people die. Buildings are damaged or destroyed. 17,500 people have no homes now.



The city of Vanport is not built again. The land becomes part of Portland. Today, it is a racetrack and a golf course.



The city is gone. Only stories remain.

Comprehension Questions



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Discussion Question

Talk with a classmate. A flood is a natural disaster. What are other kinds of natural disasters? For example: earthquake, typhoon, hurricane, tornado, wildfire, drought. What happens in your country?



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A CITY OF BRIDGES



Portland has many nicknames. Two nicknames are “Bridge City” and “Bridgetown”. That is because 12 bridges cross the Willamette River in Portland.



The St. Johns Bridge connects North Portland and Northwest Portland. It is a suspension bridge. It is the tallest bridge in Portland.



The next bridge is the Burlington Northern Railroad Bridge. Only trains use this bridge. About 30-35 trains cross the bridge every day.



The Fremont Bridge is part of Interstate 405. It is the longest bridge in Oregon. It has two levels. Each level is called a deck. Cars on the upper deck go west; cars on the lower deck go east.



The Broadway Bridge is very old. It was built in 1913. Cars and trucks use this bridge. The Portland Streetcar uses this bridge, too. It connects the Lloyd District with downtown Portland.



The Steel Bridge opened in 1912. It has two decks. Both decks can move up and down for boats underneath. The lower deck is for bicycles, people, and long trains. The upper deck is for cars and short MAX trains.



The Burnside Bridge opened in 1926. It is made of concrete. That means it is very heavy. It opens for boats about 35 times a month.

There is a skateboard park under the east side, and the Portland Saturday Market is under the west side.



The next bridge is the Morrison Bridge. It is a very busy bridge. It was built in 1958, but there were other bridges here before this one. There are special lights at night with different colors and patterns.



The Hawthorne Bridge is the oldest highway bridge in Portland. It was built in 1910. Every day 8,000 people ride bicycles across this bridge. 800 buses use this bridge, too, with 17,400 people.



The Marquam Bridge is part of Interstate 5. It is the busiest bridge in the state. More than 140,000 vehicles cross the bridge every day. It has two decks. Many people do not like this bridge. They think it is not very pretty.



Tilikum Crossing opened in 2015. “Tilikum” comes from the Native American word for “people”. So it is sometimes called the “Bridge of the People.” That’s because no cars or trucks can use this bridge. It is for people who walk or ride a bike. The busses, the Portland Streetcar, and the MAX Orange Line also use this bridge.



The Ross Island Bridge opened in 1926. It is also Highway 26. The name “Ross Island Bridge” comes from an island in the river. This bridge does not open for boats.



Sellwood Bridge is the last bridge in Portland. It was built in 1925, but the government replaced that bridge in 2016. Engineers made the bridge safer in an earthquake.

Comprehension Questions



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Discussion Questions

Talk to your classmate. Portland has many nicknames:

- Bridgetown
- Bridge City
- City of Roses
- P-Town
- Stumptown
- Rip City
- Beervana
- PDX
- Puddletown

Why do people use these nicknames?

Do you have a nickname? What is it? Why do people call you by that name?

Guide City Nicknames



Welcome to Portland

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