

School in America was easy, assignments sent in by e-mail, classrooms air-conditioned (...) It had to be that Americans were taught, from elementary school, to always say something in class, no matter what. (...) They never said "I don't know." They said, instead, "I'm not sure," which did not give any information but still suggested the possibility of knowledge." (...) They avoided giving direct instructions: they did not say "Ask somebody upstairs"; they said "You might want to ask somebody upstairs". When you tripped and fell, when you choked, when misfortune befell you, they did not say "Sorry". They said "Are you OK?" when it was obvious that you were not. And when you said "Sorry" to them when they choked or tripped or encountered misfortune, they replied, eyes wide with surprise, "Oh, it's not your fault".

*Americanah, by Chimamanda Adichie*

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