

Teaching English in Phrae, Thailand

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I'll start by saying that teaching in Thailand is **nothing** like you would imagine.

My first full day in Phrae happened to also be my first day of school. I wore a long skirt and white top, following the particular "colored shirt requirement" for that day. My coworkers Leah, Alyssa, Brandon, Kyle, and I arrived at school around 7:50am, just in time for the morning assembly. During an assembly, the kids sing their national anthem as well as many other songs, pray, listen to announcements, and behave like little angels sent from heaven. (I'm only assuming they make announcements, as I have no clue what the teachers and directors are saying). During the assembly I was told my first class would begin at 8:30am, but before I went, I would introduce myself to the 1,500 Thai children seated before me. When I took the microphone, I told the students I was from America and would be teaching Prathom (grade) 3. I felt like a superstar when what was obviously all the 3rd graders let out a giant cheer and started clapping.



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When I arrived at my first class there was no Thai teacher present and I was told she would be out for two days. Most English classes are supervised by a Thai teacher so they can help explain activities and keep the kids under control. I figured I would be okay without her since all I was going to do was learn the kid's names. Sounds easy? No. Thai students are very, very naughty. In the four classes I taught that day, I witnessed the following: at any given time half the class is out of their seats, there is never ever a quiet moment, piggy back ride races, pulling their friends of their rollie backpacks, Kung Fu fighting, stealing my marker, leaving the class to go God knows where, making paper airplanes, creating barricades with desks at the entrance, hiding under their desks, playing cards, reading cartoons, drawing cartoons, making loud noises with a ruler or any other object, and refusing to take out a single sheet of paper. This is truly only a summation of what I have witnessed from these kids. Somehow I was able to get them to make "name tags" in which they would write, draw, and color their nickname. (Most of the students have very long, hard to pronounce names, so they all have nicknames.) In the spirit of a day full of humor and surprise, I found out Thai students have some, er, let's say *creative* nicknames. My favorites have been: Fork, Beer, Baby Garfield, Pizza, Army, Cartoon, Nine, Dream, and Eye. I can't be sure half of them even know what their nicknames mean, but funny enough, the child named Beer does. So that's something.

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