THE BOOK SUMMARY

*Almost French* is an appealing story of a highly spirited young woman Sarah Turnbull, who sets out for an adventure but landed in Paris against her expectations. Besides the outlandish scenery of the new countryside, she finds the French culture and lifestyle of its people largely unbearable. As she finds the way out of the highs and lows of the foreign Parisian life, she finds the love of her life in the world’s most romantic city – Paris. This event changes her traveling plans forever as she is determined to stay with her “French Frenchman” husband Frederic. In the course of her stay in Paris, the author recounts the challenges the two conflicting cultures brought her way in the areas of dressing, language, romantic expression, fashion, eating habits and other categories of the social dangers. By the end of it all, Sara manages to master the much needed art of French culture any foreigner would need to fit in the French society. Sarah eventually learns to conduct herself and love just like the French people do hence the title of the book is “Almost French”.

PART II: CULTURE

Seeing Frederic’s apartment for the first time and sharing their first at-home dinner, Sarah Turnbull was greatly influenced by her own Australian culture and made certain assumption about the French people. It is most remarkable that she later modified these assumptions so as to fit into the French society because literally everyone in the French society does his/her thing the
French way hence there is no room for the practice of foreign cultures. The self thought conservative Sarah Turnbull was under an obligation to conform her ways into the surrounding cultures and not assume any element of the culture.

France and Australia are different but also similar in many ways. The similarities are seen in the social values such as respect for self and others, public etiquettes and social ethics. Likewise, differences between the two cultures predominantly emanate from language, public expression of romance and lavish lifestyle. The same differences and similarities also apply to France and America through the two cultural settings exchange their values at a rapid rate.

The author tells us, “The biggest shock during these first months is how different France is from my romantic imaginings,” this illustrate that Sarah Turnbull envision France as excessively romantic compared to her country of origin, Australia. She first perceives this phenomenon as awkward prior to her final conclusion that French romanticism is highly congenial and is an important element of the society.

It is difficult for Sarah Turnbull to adapt to French ways due to her rich background in the Australian culture that is in gross conflict with the French culture. Secondly, she feels very invisible in the French society because her Australian ways of doing things were not recognized in the French social settings and in many instances considered to be inferior.

Frederic’s reaction to Australia is different from what Sarah Turnbull expected because she thought he was deeply attracted to the Australian people and their cultures, but later realized this was not the case. Frederic was a “French Frenchman” as described in the book.

INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

The fact that Frederic and Sarah speak different languages creates a lot of misunderstanding between them that are hilarious at times. Considering the two lovers come from two different and
conflicting cultural and social backgrounds, their social and cultural values are explicitly clashing as manifested in their eating habits, mannerism at the public parties, dressing styles, and public romance. These sharp interpersonal arguments of a large magnitude of this nature require proper constant communications to resolve. Nevertheless, the much desired amicable solution to such critical misunderstandings cannot be attained without a common language and culture. I once had such a similar experience of gross misunderstanding when I shared a room with a foreign friend. Our mannerism was strikingly different but we lacked a common language to communicate in a bid to resolve our difference in a friendly manner.

Sarah Turnbull’s style of communicating changes after having lived in Paris for a while. Her usual way of expressing culture shock in Paris diminishes as she gets assimilated into the French culture. Her initial resistance to social and romantic cultures of the French people is no more as she describes the French elegance and style with passion towards the end of the book. This transformation in the communication styles attests Sarah has deserted her former Australian culture and instead embraces the prevailing French culture.

MEDIA

In the book *Almost French* Sarah Turnbull’s describes her work as a journalist with a lot of passion and zeal. Without any doubt, the author is deeply interested in her work, which enables her to interact with diversified cultures and people around the world. In this manner, the practice of journalism has really widened her scope of thinking and perception of different realities around the world particularly on contemporary matters.

In a separate count, the author describe the French media as that marred with censorship with the sole intention of promoting French local cultures, fashions, and politics. This makes it extremely hard to popularize foreign cultures. Based on my course reading, censorship is more
prevalent in France that in the United States of America. I would classify French media as authoritarian based on the press theory knowing that the content of the media must be first vetted by the political class before their final consumption.

As a result of reading this book, I have learnt that culture is a dynamic way of life and it is largely influenced by the surrounding environment where one lives. I have also learnt that good mastery of culture makes one fit in a new environment so easily. This book has enhanced my interaction skills with foreigners. I now got to understand and adapt to new cultures without posing any resistance or rigidity to learning the new ways of life more than ever before.