

Talking in the New Land

*Ullah is talking
to a chalk rock*

an excerpt from a personal narrative
by Edite Cunhã





Audio
CD 1. Tr. 15

Summarize to Recall Ideas

Summarize paragraph 1 in writing.

Prologue

Edite Cunhã was born in Portugal. She moved to Massachusetts when she was seven years old. She began learning English in her new school. When this selection begins, Edite can speak English very well.

1 When I was nine, **Pai** went to an **auction** and bought a big house on Tremont Street. We moved in the spring. The lawn at the side of the house dipped downward in a gentle slope and was covered with a thick, dense row of tall lilac bushes. I soon discovered that I could crawl between the bushes and hide from my brothers in the fragrant, sweet-smelling shade. It was **paradise**.

2 I was mostly wild and joyful on Tremont Street. But **now and then** there was a **shadow** that fell over my days.

3 “Oh, *Ediiiiite! Ediiiiite!*” Since Pai didn’t speak English very well, he always called me, without the least bit of warning, to be his voice. He expected me to drop whatever I was doing to take care of something. Pai never called my brother, Carlos. No, Carlos never had to do anything but

play! Recently, I’d had to talk on the telephone to a woman who wanted some old dishes. The dishes, along with a lot of old furniture and junk, had been in the house when we moved in. They were in the **cellar**, stacked in cardboard boxes and covered with dust. The woman called many times, wanting to speak with Pai.



Pai Portuguese for *Pa*, an informal word for *father*
auction a sale in which items are sold to the person who offers the most money
paradise a place where everything is beautiful and peaceful

now and then sometimes, once in a while

shadow the dark shape formed when something blocks the sun or other light

cellar the space below ground level under a building

2

Summarize to Recall Ideas
Summarize paragraph 5 orally.

4 "My father can't speak English," I would say. "He says to tell you that the dishes are in our house and they belong to us." But she did not seem to understand. Every few days she would call.

5 "Oh, *Ediite!*" Pai's voice **echoed** through the empty rooms. I wanted to pretend I had not heard it when it had that tone. But I couldn't **escape**. I couldn't disappear into thin air as I wished to do at such times.

6 "*Ediite!*" Yes, that tone was certainly there. Pai was calling me to do something only I could do. What was it now? Did I have to talk to the **insurance company**? They were always using words I couldn't understand: **premium** and **dividend**. That made me nervous.

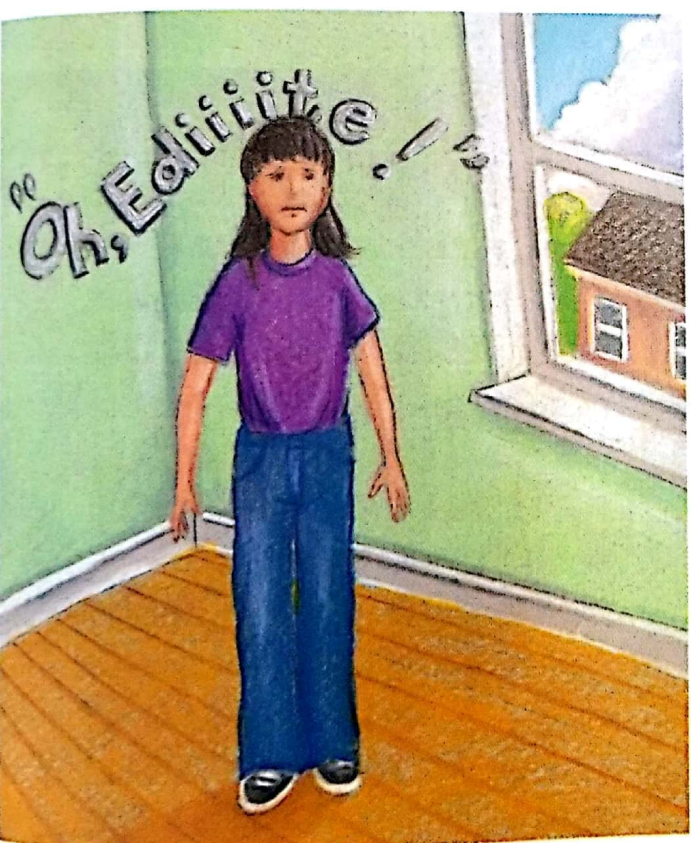
7 "Please wait. I call my daughter," Pai was saying. He was talking to someone, someone in the house. Who could it be?

8 "Oh, *Ediite!*"

9 "*Que éééé?*"

10 "*Come over here and talk to this lady.*" *

Ita es...



* Words in italic type are translations of words spoken in Portuguese.

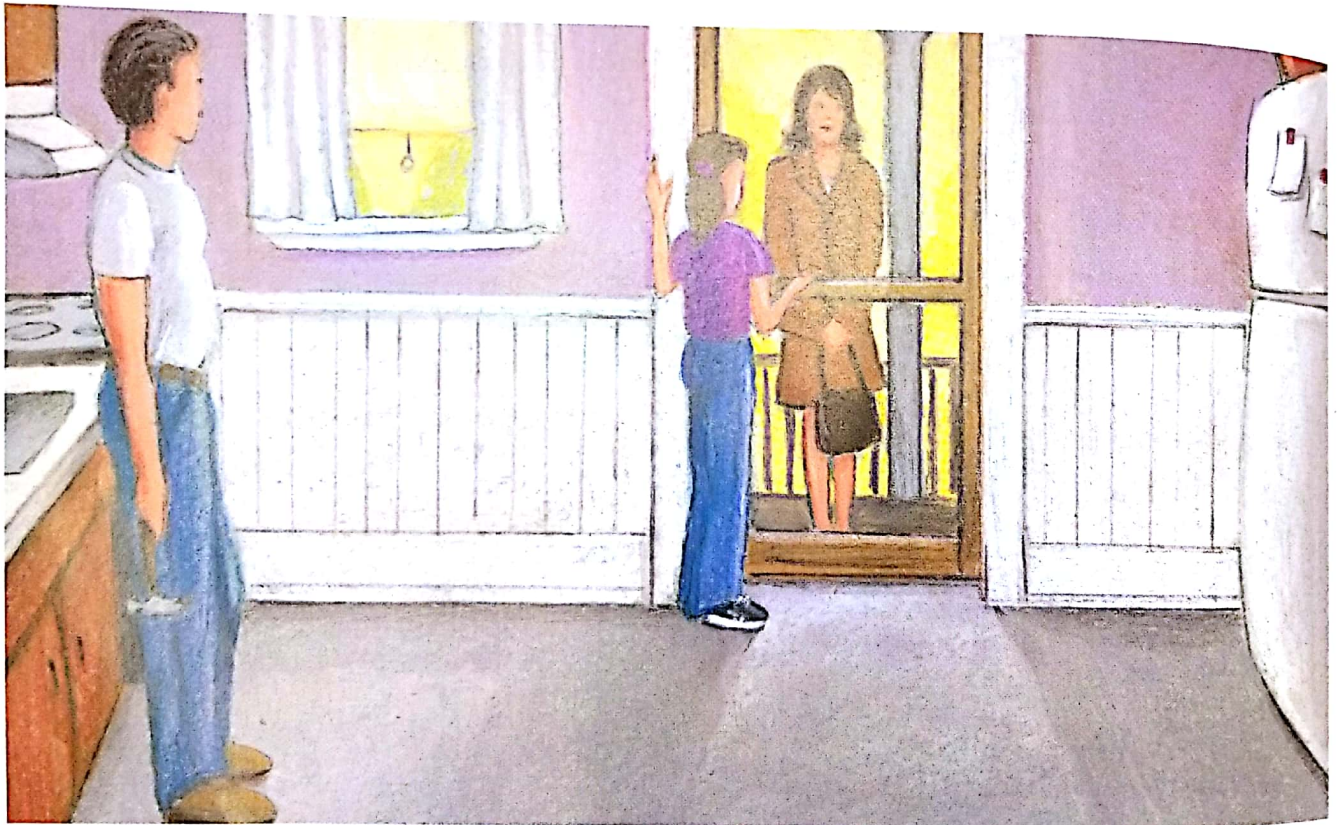
echoed repeated because sounds bounced off walls or hard surfaces
escape get away
insurance company a company that will pay for a loss or an accident in exchange for regular payments

premium the regular payment for an insurance policy
dividend money that an insurance company makes and gives to a person who has an insurance policy
Que éééé? "What iiiis (is) it?" in Portuguese

3
Summarize to Recall Ideas

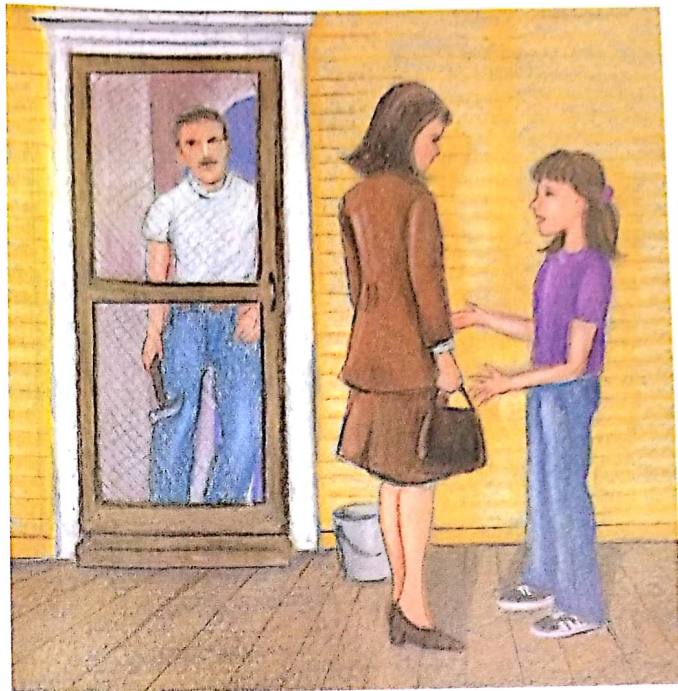
Summarize paragraph 11 in writing.

- 11 **Reluctantly**, I walked through the empty rooms toward the kitchen. Through the kitchen door I could see a slim lady dressed in brown standing at the top of the stairs. She had on high-heeled shoes and was holding a brown purse. As soon as Pai saw me he said to me, "*See what she wants.*"
- 12 The lady had dark hair that was very smooth. The ends of it flipped up in a way that I liked.
- 13 "Hello. I'm the lady who called about the dishes."
- 14 I stared at her without a word. My stomach **turned over**.
- 15 "What did she say?" Pai wanted to know.
- 16 "*She says she's the lady who wants the dishes.*"
- 17 Pai's face **hardened** some.
- 18 "*Tell her she's wasting her time. We're not giving them to her. Didn't you already tell her that on the telephone?*"
- 19 I nodded, standing **helplessly** between them.



reluctantly with hesitation
turned over felt funny

hardened looked hard
helplessly in an unprotected way



20 “Well, tell her again.” Pai was getting angry. I wanted to
disappear.

21 “My father says he can’t give you the dishes,” I said to
the lady. She **clutched** her purse and leaned a little
forward.

22 “Yes, you told me that on the phone. But I wanted to
come **in person** and speak with your father because it’s
very important to me that—”

23 “My father can’t speak English,” I **interrupted** her. Why
didn’t she just go away?

24 “Yes, I understand that. But I wanted to see him.” She
looked at Pai, who was standing in the doorway to the
kitchen holding his **hammer**. The kitchen was up one step
from the porch. Pai was a small man, but he looked kind
of scary staring down at us like that.

25 “What is she saying?”

26 “She says she wanted to talk to you about getting her dishes.”

4
**Summarize to
Recall Ideas**

Summarize
paragraph 24 in
writing.

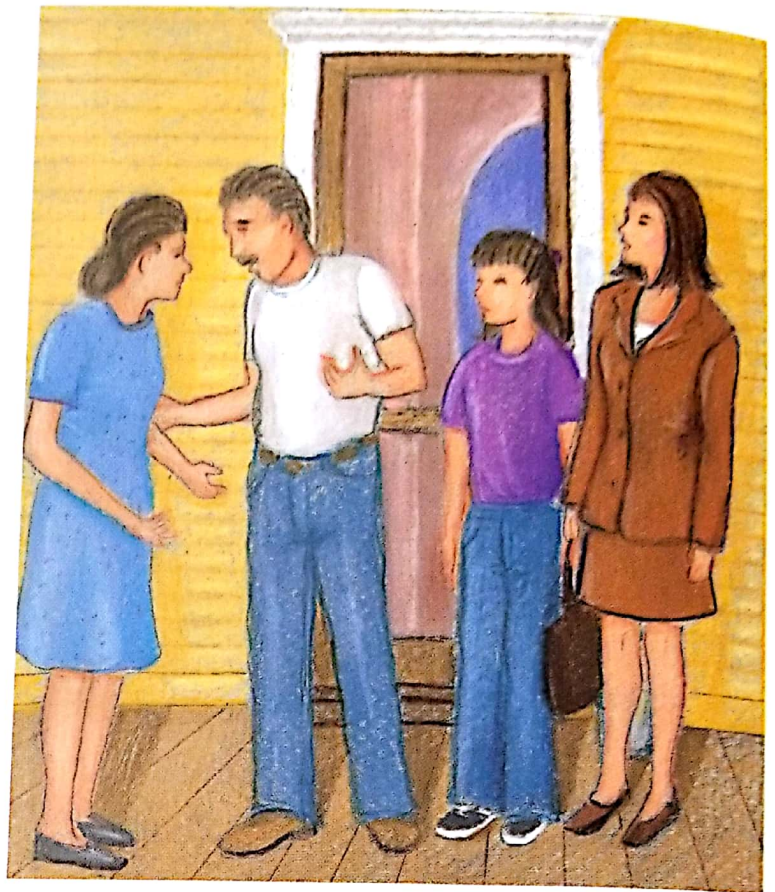
disappear go out of sight

clutched held tightly with the hands

in person physically present, face-to-face

interrupted started talking in the middle of someone
else talking

hammer a tool with a handle and a metal head used
for pounding



Summarize to Recall Ideas

Summarize paragraph 27 orally.

27 “Tell her the dishes are ours. They were in the house. We bought the house and everything in it. Tell her the lawyer said so.”

28 The lady was looking at me **hopefully**.

29 “My father says the dishes are ours because we bought the house and the lawyer said everything in the house is ours now.”

30 “Yes, I know that, but I was away when the house was being sold. I didn’t know . . .”

31 There were **footsteps** on the stairs behind her. It was **Mãe** coming up from the second floor to find out what was going on. The lady moved away from the door to let Mãe in.

32 “*This is my wife,*” Pai said to the lady. The lady said hello to Mãe, who smiled and nodded her head. She looked at me, then at Pai in a **questioning** way.

hopefully in a way that shows hope

footsteps sounds of feet moving on a surface

Mãe Portuguese for *Ma*, an informal word for *mother*

questioning looking as if you have a question

33 "It's the lady who wants our dishes," Pai explained.

34 Mãe looked at her again and smiled, but I could tell she was a little **worried**.

35 We stood there in kind of a funny circle; the lady looked at each of us **in turn** and took a deep breath.

36 "I didn't know," she continued, "that the dishes were in the house. I was away. They are very important to me. They **belonged** to my grandmother. I'd really like to get them back." She spoke this while looking back and forth between Mãe and Pai. Then she looked down at me, leaning forward again. "Will you tell your parents, please?"

37 I spoke in a hurry to get the words out.

38 "She said she didn't know the dishes were in the house because she was away. They were her grandmother's dishes, and she wants them back." I felt deep **sorrow** at the thought of the lady returning home to find her grandmother's dishes sold.

39 "We don't need all those dishes. Let's give them to her," Mãe said in her calm way. I felt **relieved**. We could give the lady the dishes and she would go away. But Pai got angry.

Summarize to Recall Ideas

Summarize paragraphs 38 and 39.



worried feeling that something bad might happen
in turn in order
belonged were the property of; were owned by

sorrow sadness
relieved freed from bad feelings or worry

Summarize to Recall Ideas

Summarize paragraphs 41 and 42 in writing.

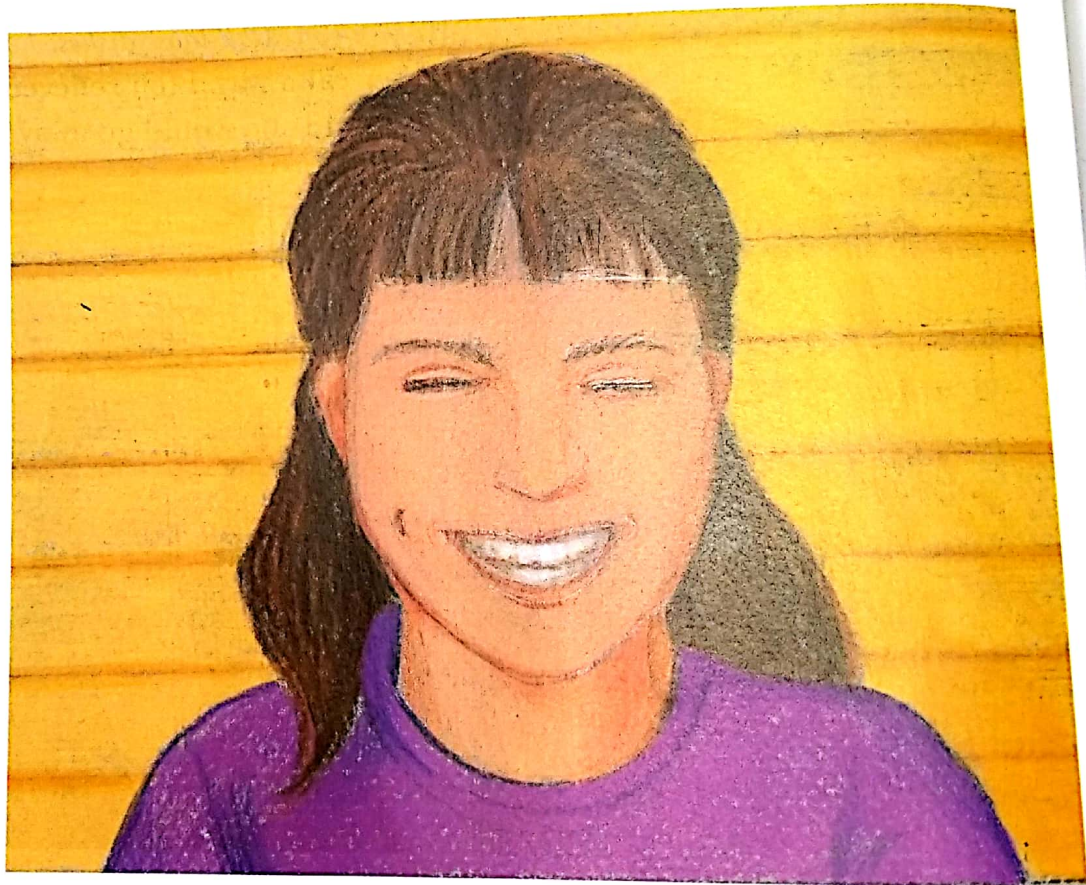
40 "I already said what I had to say. The dishes are ours. That is all."

41 "Pai, she said she didn't know. They were her grandmother's dishes. She needs to have them." I was speaking wildly and loud now. The lady looked at me questioningly, but I didn't want to speak to her again.

42 "She's only saying that to trick us. If she wanted those dishes she should have taken them out before the house was sold. Tell her we are not fools. Tell her to forget it. She can go away. Tell her not to call or come here again."

43 "What is he saying?" The lady was looking at me again.

44 I **ignored** her. I felt sorry for Pai for always feeling that people were trying to trick him. I wanted him to **trust** people. I wanted the lady to have her grandmother's dishes. I closed my eyes and **willed** myself away.

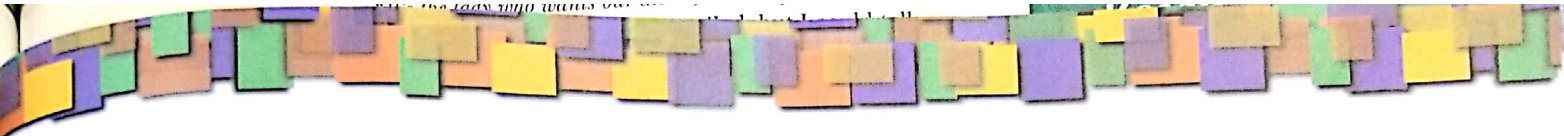


fools people who make silly mistakes

ignored paid no attention to; did not listen to

trust believe, feel that someone is honest

willed tried to control something by using the power of your mind



45 "Tell her what I said!" Pai yelled.
 46 "Pai, just give her the dishes! They were her grandmother's dishes!" My voice **cracked** as I yelled back at him. Tears were rising in my eyes.
 47 I hated Pai for being so **stubborn**. I hated the lady for not taking the dishes before the house was sold. And I hated myself for having learned English.

Summarize to Recall Ideas
 Summarize paragraph 47.

cracked sounded uneven

stubborn not wanting to change one's mind

Handwritten notes in pencil:
 I hated Pai for being so stubborn.
 I hated the lady for not taking the dishes before the house was sold.
 And I hated myself for having learned English.
 About...

About the Author

Edite Cunhã (born 1953)



Edite Cunhã started writing as a young teenager. She writes poetry and fiction. She now works as a teacher, an artist, and a writer. Cunhã says, "Writing for me is essential. It is like breath. It does not matter if my work is published or not. I must do it to feel alive at home in the world."

► What questions would you ask Edite Cunhã? How does her experience compare to that of Gonzalo in Unit 2, Chapter 4?