



# ICTE NEWSLETTER

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## WELCOME

The International Council of Teachers of English (ICTE) brings NCTE international teachers from around the world together, offering support and professional development to further enhance teaching and student learning. Our affiliate draws on a wealth of NCTE support materials and will be expanding this knowledge-set to cater specifically to educators interested in international education.

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## SUBMISSION GUIDELINES:

We welcome submissions for our ICTE members stationed around the world! Manuscripts should range in length from 500 to 2500 words. Please contact us if you would like to submit longer manuscripts. Follow the NCTE guidelines for nonsexist use of language.

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# On the Frontlines for Youth and Truth Since 1994

By Jackie Majerus-Collins, *Youth Journalism International, Auburn, Maine*



Youth Journalism International is quite possibly the best thing you've never heard of for young writers, artists and photographers – and the teachers who care about them. This U.S.-based NGO teaches students all over the world about journalism, has published their work from all seven continents and runs an annual Excellence in Journalism contest open to any teenager, anywhere. But it is so much more. The organization works hard to build bridges between young people of different cultures, nations, races, religions and other potential barriers. Using journalism, YJI brings young people together to work in a peaceful, productive way. It makes the world a better place. YJI, which operates on the generosity of donors, has never charged a student to participate, making the program accessible to many young people who could not otherwise afford it.

## THE CONTEST

Part of YJI's mission is to promote and defend a free youth press. Since 2010, YJI's annual contest has highlighted the best in teen journalism around the world.

It is the only contest of its kind, open to teenage journalists and their teachers, wherever they are on the planet. Entries are easily submitted online.

There are five top categories: Student Journalist of the Year, Journalism Educator of the Year, Courage in Journalism and awards for the best newswriting and best commentary by a single individual. Winners of those five categories receive beautiful crystal trophies.

But the contest doesn't stop there. It offers dozens more categories for reporting – whether in writing or in multi-media form – in news, features and sports. Other categories award the best in photography, illustrations and cartoons. Opinion writing – including reviews, columns and editorials – offer more chances to win.

There are custom award certificates for all first and second place as well as honorable mention designations.

An impressive panel of judges carefully reviews the entries and selects the winners.

Entries are due each February for work published in the previous calendar year. Work must be published in English and – with the exception of the category for the best teacher – contestants must be age 19 or under. Winners are announced each May to great acclaim.

A complete list of the rules and the biographies of the judges is on the YJI website, along with a complete list of winners and judges' comments from each contest year.

## ROOTS

Jackie Majerus and Steve Collins, two working newspaper reporters, founded YJI as a local club in the New England region of the U.S. in 1994. They occasionally published student work in a local newspaper.



YJI believes that the key to a better world lies with global understanding and a democratic, free press.

By providing a platform for talented, idealistic and dedicated young people to let the world know not only what is happening but their views on it, YJI paves a way toward a brighter future for all.

You can get involved by connecting with YJI on social media or reaching out directly to Jackie Majerus, co-founder and executive director, at [jmajerus@youthjournalism.org](mailto:jmajerus@youthjournalism.org).

Collins created a website in 1996. It did not take long before ambitious teenagers in faraway places began knocking on YJI's virtual door, asking to write and be published.

After a few years, the duo incorporated YJI as an educational non-profit organization and eventually shifted all publishing to a strictly online format.

Working one-on-one with editors and in groups, students learn about writing, reporting techniques, press responsibility and ethics.

Reporting from their own neighborhoods, schools and hometowns, they cover everything from terrorism, teen suicide, school violence and politics to music, movies, sports and social issues.

Reporting this year has focused heavily on the covid-19 pandemic, racism and the Black Lives Matter protests.

There is still a steady stream of young people eager to join YJI's ranks knocking at our virtual door and flooding our social media accounts seeking admission.

YJI is scrambling to bring in as many as it can.

YJI website readers are of all ages and span the globe, numbering more than one million people. The organization is also active on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn and other platforms. You can see what students and supporters say about their experience with YJI by checking out the reviews online at GreatNon-Profits.

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**Jackie Majerus-Collins** is an award-winning journalist and teacher, Jackie Majerus co-founded the educational non-profit Youth Journalism International in 1994. Based in the U.S., YJI has students around the globe. Jackie loves working with young journalists and providing them with a platform for their work so people worldwide can learn their stories. Jackie be contacted at [jmajerus@youthjournalism.org](mailto:jmajerus@youthjournalism.org), website: [youthjournalism.org](http://youthjournalism.org).

# Cultivating Belonging in the Multicultural English Classroom

By Dr. Deirdre Faughey, *Oyster Bay High School, Oyster Bay, New York*

As students enter my classroom, I typically stand at the door and greet them by name. This is one small way to build a personal connection with each student. However, in a busy high school environment this quick check in can end up being the only time a teacher makes an effort to know their students. And, students are seldom given classroom opportunities to get to know each other. If we focus on finding ways to build these connections, we can find that students develop a stronger sense of belonging in the classroom.

In my combined ELA/ENL classroom, I found that student engagement in a series of culturally relevant and multimodal literacy-building activities, involving reading, drawing, questioning, discussing, and writing, supported student growth as “cosmopolitan intellectuals” (Campano and Ghiso, 2010). Cosmopolitan theory emphasizes the idea that we all have a moral responsibility to develop our own global citizenship. A number of scholars have argued that when educators value diversity, students can

build on their experiences with difference and their knowledge of others to cultivate belonging in the classroom. As DeJaynes (2018) argues, students can spend time with their classmates and teachers and still know little about them. I argue that we need to find ways to help students connect across difference while acknowledging the challenges of doing so (Faughey, 2019). Such an effort is beneficial to students and teachers, as we need to develop as cosmopolitan intellectuals as well.

One way to do this in the classroom is by introducing texts that illustrate cultural conflicts. For example, when we read “By Any Other Name,” by Santha Rama Rau, we learned about the experiences of two girls in India who attended a school led by British nuns. On arrival, these girls were asked to change their names. The headmistress suggests, “Suppose we give you pretty English names. Wouldn’t that be jolly” (Rau, 1951, p. 20).

To further illustrate this cultural conflict, I shared my mother’s experience of moving to the United States from Ireland in 1966. In Ireland, she was called Cait (pronounced Caught); however, once she began school in Queens, New York, she changed her name to Cathy to sound more American. Many of her siblings did the same thing. I also shared my first name with the students and the difficulty that so many people have spelling and pronouncing it correctly.

By sharing my family history I was providing a model and signaling to the students that they could also share their stories. This prompted several students to share their own immigration experiences. It even prompted one student to share that his family actually calls him by a different name back home in Honduras. A group of three girls came to me after class to share their frustrations with classmates who seemed to want to hide their identities, and their ability to speak both Spanish and English, at school. They were hiding so much in order to “fit in” at school.



As a class we moved on to examine a self-portrait by the artist Frida Kahlo. Kahlo depicts herself standing on the border between Mexico and the United States, with one foot in each country to show the intersectionality of her identity. Using this painting as a model, the students responded by creating their own self-portraits using the concept of juxtaposition to show their cultural identity. This activity promoted a self-examination and raised questions for students. For example, one student realized that he knew more about his father's identity than his mother's. Other students shared aspects of their backgrounds that they had not shared in class before. By sharing in this way, students were able to demonstrate their understanding of the concepts of juxtaposition and cultural identity in a meaningful engagement.

To build on this activity, I asked the students to formally interview a classmate to learn more about the life experiences that have shaped their cultural identity. These interviews were intended as a way for students to do more than simply share out. These were intended to be sites of "ongoing reflection and discovery about the self and the world" (Vasudevan, 2014, p. 55).

Before conducting the interviews, students were asked to develop a list of ten questions. Once they had their protocols, they met with partners to record their interviews. These audio recordings were done on the students' personal phones and then uploaded to our Google Classroom site.

Student experiences with the interviews varied. Some students shared that they



FIGURE 1. Noemi's self-portrait used symbolism and imagery to convey the juxtaposed identities.



FIGURE 2. Liz's self-portrait represents herself as divided among three identities.

learned they were similar to their classmates. As a student shared, "Our grandmas and moms make the most delicious food. His family makes tacos, enchiladas, and burritos. My family makes fresh pasta sauce, lasagna, and meatballs." Some learned that they had little in common, yet noted that they were still friends.

Other student interactions were more complex. For example, for two students who were born in other countries, the conversation showed that they are still trying to understand the cultural differences that they experience every day. In one partnership between two close friends, Noemi from Honduras and Amy from Taiwan, the conversation left Noemi feeling unsettled about her friend's response to one question. When Noemi asked, "Do you think that your culture is better than other ones?" Amy replied, "Yes." While it did not seem that Amy intended to be hurtful, Noemi was insulted. As Noemi shared later, "I will say I feel proud of my culture. I won't say I feel proud about how other people act about my culture." This activity complicated the relationship between the two girls, yet in this complexity there was also an opportunity

for the girls to become more familiar with one another, which as Appiah (2006) argues, does not require that we agree on everything.

The activities described here taught me that I can do so much more to get to know the students and help them know one another. While I aim to always present myself as friendly and welcoming presence in the classroom, I also need to continue to look at how curriculum and instruction can build relationships and cultural awareness. Not only is this work key to understanding literature, it is essential to understanding the cosmopolitan nature of our classrooms.

*The complete version of Dr. Deirdre Faughey's article was published in the English Journal in September 2019.*

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**Deirdre Faughey** is an English teacher at Oyster Bay High School in Oyster Bay, New York, and completed her doctorate in Curriculum and Teaching at Teachers College Columbia University in 2017. She can be reached at [dfaughy@gmail.com](mailto:dfaughy@gmail.com).

# Teaching on the Road: Lessons from Covid-19

By **LeeAnne Lavender**, *Concordia International School Shanghai, Shanghai, China*



On January 23, 2020, I boarded a plane to Vietnam from China, thinking I was embarking on a lovely eight-day holiday for our Chinese New Year (CNY) break and that our busy lives at Concordia International School Shanghai would pick up immediately afterwards. Right before we left, we had hosted our annual MUN conference (with over 1000 delegates), a local Global Issues Network conference and a half-day Shanghai-wide middle school Eco-Summit. Was I ready for a relaxing break? Absolutely!

We settled into an easy rhythm at the beach in Hoi An, enjoying morning beach walks, delicious meals, and sundowners with waves lapping at our feet. Our CNY plans did not fail to deliver some lovely R&R, and we were happy and relaxed (in fact, our Airbnb was even called “Happy Clam”, a very fitting name for how we felt that week!).

About halfway through the week, though, we received an unexpected email from our school updating us on the evolving situation with the Novel Coronavirus (which, at the time, had not yet been named COVID-19). Because the situation in China was rapidly escalating, all teachers abroad for CNY travels were strongly urged not to return. At this point, the speculation was that we would spend an additional two weeks outside of China and then return to open school.

Immediately, we engaged in hatching Plan B. Would we stay in Vietnam? Or go somewhere else? Where could we base ourselves to launch online learning in a successful manner? What inexpensive flight and accommodation options could we find?

We happened to be traveling with several colleagues from two different schools in Shanghai, and everyone spent portions of time on Skype with travel agents, trying to recoup costs

from cancelled flights back to China and booking new travel plans for the weeks to come. We would gather at meals to compare notes and brainstorm ideas. While one person was able to get Expedia to agree to refund a return fare to China, another person was unsuccessful in getting through to talk to an agent. While one couple had decided to stay in Vietnam to continue traveling and working online, another family had decided to fly back to the US. The pros and cons of various options were debated and discussed, and there was electricity in the air. None of us (and many of us were long-time international educators) had ever experienced anything like this before, and the strangeness of the situation (which we assumed would be resolved quickly) produced a cocktail of anxiety and excitement.

My husband (also a high school teacher at Concordia) and I opted to fly to Thailand for two weeks.

We found a little beachside cabin on Koh Lanta, on a very quiet stretch of beach, and it was the perfect spot to get our online classes running while also soaking up a bit of sun and enjoying some extra weeks of fresh air, both of which can be short supply in the winter months in Shanghai.

During this time, it became clear that we would not be returning to Shanghai as quickly as we had first anticipated. As COVID-19 numbers in China rose and the death rate became increasingly alarming, uncertainty multiplied. (The overall number of confirmed cases in China rose from 830 on January 23 to 9692 on January 30.) More and more questions surfaced: should we stay in Thailand? What was the situation with COVID-19 in other countries? What places were safe? Should we fly home to Canada? How much longer would we be in flux? Could we continue with teaching online using just our phones for longer than two weeks? Hours and hours were spent discussing these questions over meals and in the spaces between.

The technology question was a dominant one for us, because we had left our laptops behind in Shanghai. We wanted to travel light for our CNY holiday, packing bare essentials in tiny carry-on bags. We only had our phones, some beach clothes and travel yoga mats (thank goodness for those!). I had even left my Kindle behind, taking two novels with me that I was sure would be enough for our eight-day sojourn in Vietnam. As an English teacher and avid reader, the idea of running out of reading material was causing its own bubble of anxiety



*LeeAnne with Brian & an ISK Student*

(although I rapidly assumed backpacker habits of finding coffee shops and used book stores where I could trade in my books for new titles, and this became a joyous pursuit as the weeks unspooled).

We had minimal tech, minimal clothes, and minimal extras. Well, I thought, this was certainly a time for me to practice what I preach about the minimalism movement and how we can have more with less.

And, as the weeks turned into months, this practice turned out to be absolutely true! In fact, I came to embrace the experience and learned several valuable lessons.

In the end, we spent two months living out of our suitcases: eight days in Vietnam, three weeks in Thailand and four weeks in Sri Lanka. We taught online for an additional six weeks upon our return to Shanghai (we returned just a week before the travel ban was implemented in China on March 28th, preventing foreigners with valid visas from returning). In early May, we experienced the reopening of campus with many rules and regulations governing safety and social distancing.



Has 2020 been a crazy and chaotic year as a teacher so far? Yes, and then some. Have there been surprising and unexpected silver linings at every turn? Absolutely. 100 per cent.

What will 2020/21 hold? I wonder if every teacher (and probably every parent and student, too) is holding his/her breath, hoping we can return to "normal" for the new academic year. I also wonder if everyone is feeling, like me, hopeful that we can apply some of what we've learned in these unusual times to our educational lives and paradigms moving forward. Can we do things better? Differently? With a more open mindset? I hope we can, and I hope these lessons can stick with me moving forward.

## LESSONS LEARNED WHILE TEACHING ON THE ROAD:

Online teaching can be rich and meaningful: I teach AP Literature & Composition, and discussions are the backbone of so many lessons where we explore rich literary texts. I could not have imagined how we could replicate this in a meaningful way online but, to my surprise, my students loved our online forums, discussions and activities. They were able to link Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* and Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* to their own experiences and their own vision for life beyond high school and beyond Covid 19 with incredible wisdom and insight.

As an example, here is an excerpt from a discussion post one student wrote about thematic ideas in *The Great Gatsby*: "The cycle of hedonism and downfall that plays out in the life of Jay Gatsby parallels the economic issues that arose from the Roaring Twenties and maybe even aspects of our lives today. For example, the focus with which Western nations have tried to prop up the economy after the longest bull market in history has resulted in what could be one of the worst recessions in history. Also, trends like globalization and international air travel were great for the world while they rendered benefits but are starting to show cracks as they permit coronavirus to spread throughout the world. Again, this cycle of massive growth can be seen; benefits, growth, and seeming invincibility are followed by downfall, loss, and pain. Perhaps these trends will repeat themselves in future crises that hang over humanity, such as climate change.

Overall, the trends of hedonism and growth, followed by death and destruction portrayed in *The Great Gatsby* seem to show remarkable prescience in the economic, political, and social worldview of F. Scott Fitzgerald and do not bode well for the present and future humanity."

Some students were able to show a deeper engagement with the texts we explored during our virtual school sessions than in the "normal" face-to-face environment. I've unpacked this with my students and many of them said they felt our online conversations were more open and truthful, and that they felt they could take more risks and be more honest and vulnerable with their peers in the online environment. I want to consider this and figure out better strategies when we're back in a face-to-face context. I wonder if I should experiment more with flipped classroom strategies.

Literary studies lend themselves beautifully to online platforms: Our exploration of texts tends to follow a pretty tried-and-true pattern (read, respond, analyze, write, repeat), and this cycle is well-suited to online learning. In fact, streamlining my units into an online format allowed me to pare things down to the essentials in a way that made the learning really logical for students (and for me!). I think that in a face-to-face context, I can get distracted and side-tracked and, while this can sometimes provide excellent



*Airbnb Patio in HoiAn, Vietnam*

learning opportunities, being more focused with planning and executing lessons produced good results. Again, this leaves me wondering about exploring flipped classroom possibilities, moving forward.

Tech - I can do it!: When faced with teaching with just my phone as tech tool, I panicked. How could I do this? Amazingly, I learned to use our learning management system on my smartphone, and I got creative with recording voice comments and mini-lectures, plus using WeChat (China's version of WhatsApp) for class chats and additional file sharing and voice messaging. Some things took longer as a result of having limited technology, and grading so many AP Lit essays on my tiny device certainly fatigued my eyes on occasion, but it was possible, and I feel more tech-savvy now.

Connection should always be the top priority: Building meaningful relationships and connections with our students is the core of teaching at any time, and I was worried this would be compromised by teaching online. However, once a lot of the busyness of our normal school days was stripped away,





*Leanne at the beachfront cabin office in Koh Lanta Thailand*

I found I had extra time to focus on my students. Using Zoom, WeChat, email and Canvas discussion threads, I had more time to listen to students and connect in meaningful ways. I learned important things about some students that I don't think I would have known if we had remained in our normal routines. The take-away for me is to ensure that my co-curricular and administrative tasks during face-to-face instruction don't get in the way of making time for building relationships with my students.

Simple is best: During our time working on the road, we had to take a simple approach with everything. With curriculum, with extra commitments at school, with packing, with travel and accommodation plans, with life in general. Virtual school stripped everything down to essentials and, in some ways, it felt like cleaning out some big closets at home and school.

There were some parts of my units and lessons I had to throw away during virtual school and some of those things need to stay in the trash bin. For example, I was not able to run a group analysis activity with excerpts and close reading strategies during our exploration of *The Metamorphosis*, but replaced that with an individual task that was simpler and yielded deeper learning. Often less is more.

Flexibility is beautiful: The nature of teaching online offers more flexibility in terms of allocating time, pursuing passions and taking advantage of bursts of creativity and productivity. I am returning to my normal school routine more conscious of protecting flex time in my day or week so I can be a more satisfied and focused teacher.



*Work on the beach at Mirissa, Sri Lanka*

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**LeeAnne Lavender** is an English literature teacher and Service Learning Coach at Concordia International School Shanghai. She has been teaching in international schools since 2006; before that time, she was an English teacher in Ontario, Canada. She is a co-founder and leader of the Shanghai Service and Sustainability Network and an advocate for global citizenship initiatives that help students become change agents to make our world a better place.

# Mozambique: 'Spirit of Positivity' Thrives in Classrooms

By Rebecca Nichols, *Aga Khan Academy*  
Maputo, Mozambique

I have been asked whether I live in a mud hut, have access to the internet and travel to work on an elephant. Students that I have taught while working at IB schools in Kenya, Angola and Mozambique have all been asked similar questions and many more by people who live in the so-called 'developed' world. I am no longer surprised to learn how ignorant many people remain about this continent of 54 diverse countries, and shake my head before explaining, once again, that Africa is not a country.

I have just completed a contract in beautiful Mozambique; an immense country that is geographically, linguistically and culturally diverse. It is fringed with thousands of kilometers of white sand beaches and the clear blue Indian Ocean (though the students, many of whom are Mozambican and from other countries on the African continent, question why that label persists when the ocean is clearly Africa's too). Shortly before the current pandemic, I travelled to Australia where

a number of people I met, had never heard of the country let alone had any idea where it is in the world, even once I explained that it borders South Africa, Eswatini, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Zambia and Tanzania. They had no idea that Mozambique is home to approximately 30 million people who speak more than 40 languages. Only when I mentioned the coastal city of Beira and cyclones, did a dim light of recognition stir, a head nod and a look of pity became evident. Every time this happened, I wanted to comment that media depictions of this continent are not the lived reality for many and perceptions of Mozambique are frequently two-dimensional.

My role, which culminated in the Aga Khan Academy Maputo being officially authorised to offer the International Baccalaureate (IB) Middle Years Programme (MYP) to students aged 11-16 on the final day of term, has involved implementing and coordinating the MYP and running the vibrant and dynamic secondary school at which students understand

their responsibility to develop stewardship skills, as they prepare to be ethical and pluralistic future leaders. I have also taught English language and literature to students in grades 6-9 and, among a host of other things helped put resources, systems and policies in place to fulfill the IB standards and practices.

Some of the teachers' successes come from the focus on nurturing a love of language learning and the school was commended for its efforts to develop and encourage bilingualism by translanguaging between English and Portuguese in subjects across the curriculum to develop linguistic competence in both. They also engage students in inquiry-based active approaches to learning that differ markedly from some of their own experiences of education, as children. Teachers draw inspiration from the professional development section within the library and from collaborating with one another and colleagues who work at other schools within the network. One teacher has taken on the role of Personal Project



Coordinator and supports students to develop challenging goals, many of which focus on shifting perceptions of people and the worlds they inhabit and another is keen to lead Service Learning and build sustainable connections within the local community.

One of the most rewarding aspects of my role has been to mentor a group of Mozambican teachers who collaborate effectively to develop inquiry-based pedagogical practices that enhance their understanding of the MYP. On an ongoing basis they seek to build a vertical and horizontal curriculum that focuses a positive lens both on Mozambique and the African continent as a whole. For example, an interdisciplinary unit between Portuguese language and literature, language acquisition and Integrated Humanities is inspired by documentary film-making. It encourages grade 6 students to interview homeless children and find out what their dreams and aspirations are. They also meet inspirational adults who have brought about change for themselves by becoming teachers despite their challenging childhoods. Consequently, students are able to reflect meaningfully on the power of education to effect positive change within a society.

Teachers also create thought-provoking interdisciplinary units that connect the Arts and Language and literature. One such unit takes its inspiration from Paul Dunbar's 'We Wear the Mask' and explores the transformative experience of wearing a mask and the changes it brings to both how we see ourselves and are seen by

others. Students explore forms of mark-making, create masks of their own and write poetry in English or Portuguese to explore the masks they themselves either choose or feel compelled to wear.

As teachers create units they always focus on subject-specific outcomes but also on the approaches to learning skills, particularly those that encourage creative and critical thinking and challenge preconceived notions and ideas. An example of this is the interdisciplinary unit between Integrated Humanities and language and literature that focuses on why certain groups of people are marginalized by others. It uses a variety of factual and journalistic texts and leads not only to students creating sensitive and insightful podcasts about people they know little about, such as the Kurds and the Awá and also facilitates reflection, using a post-colonial lens on perceptions of indigenous languages, peoples and cultures in Mozambique.

It has been exhausting but also very rewarding. One of the greatest challenges colleagues and I face; however, is finding context-appropriate resources that empower and celebrate achievement. At the centre of the IB's mission and vision is the notion that its schools nurture international-mindedness to enhance global understanding yet many of the materials that are available reinforce stereotypes about the African continent and the people who live here. The students I have taught on this continent are generally well read, hard working and politically astute.



They question depictions of the continent in books such, as a recent English language acquisition textbook that contains images of homes around the world and perpetuates the reductive perception that on the African continent, this is a mud hut. They are frustrated to see that many novels focus on poverty and war and seldom identify people's entrepreneurial spirit, strength of character or ingenuity (William Kamkwambe's 'The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind' is perhaps an exception) and students often struggle to find characters like them.

Teachers consciously create curriculum that draws on expertise from the community by inviting in renowned actors, journalists and writers, including Mia Couto to speak. They also develop relationships with visiting artists who focus on upskilling students in areas from painting and drawing to creating metal masks and batik. In addition, they work with experts to develop understanding of the theatrical and dance traditions of Mapiko and Nyao and make

connections to Noh theatre from Japan and Kathakali from India. They work with experts to create masks to be worn in performances, watch Marrabenta dancers perform, and listen to the inspirational words of young leaders such as musician, Deltino Guerreiro who encourages students to focus, follow and fulfill their dreams.

The school has adopted the 'motto' of Kenyan activist and writer Wangari Maathai, after watching her speak about a tiny hummingbird who carries tiny drops of water to put out a raging fire in the jungle watched by other animals who stand idly by. In response to the animals' question about why she continues despite the size of the fire, the hummingbird replies that she is doing the best she can. In doing the best we can, the teachers and I have done everything possible to inculcate a spirit of positivity, achievement and celebration rather than one of corruption, doom and despair.

A single voice from a single country on this continent should never be called upon to speak on behalf of everyone, commented Chimamanda Ngozi



*Rebecca with her students in Mozambique*

Adichie in her 2009 TED Talk, before going on to argue that no person anywhere should be defined by a single story. I am therefore grateful to writers such as Trevor Noah whose witty and insightful memoir 'Born a Crime' has engaged and stimulated students, Binyavanga Wainaina whose satirical essay 'How to Write about Africa' resonates with so many and Nnedi Okorafor for writing 'Akata Witch' that features both the ordinary and extraordinary and also enables students to imagine using people who are like them for their inspiration. I wonder how many students on this continent are listening to voices that that empower and encourage, and believe, to misquote Tayei Selasi, that doing so, will enable learners to look at the world through dreamer-eyes and see not what it is, but what might be or what they might yet become.

I write this, while, like many people around the world I wait for the skies to open and the next chapter of my journey through life to begin.

I am about to take some time off from teaching to work on developing context-appropriate pluralistic curriculum that encourages critical and creative thinking.

As I prepare to leave Mozambique, I reflect on the fact that I arrived in a place that had been defined to me as poor and dysfunctional, yet I leave somewhere that I know to be extraordinary and diverse; a place that has taught me so much in the time it has been my home.

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**Rebecca Nichols** *has just completed a contract as MYP Coordinator and English language and literature teacher at the Aga Khan Academy Maputo. She has worked at international schools since 1995 and is about to take some time off from teaching and coordinating to consult with schools about how to develop context-specific interdisciplinary and subject-specific curriculum resources that celebrate diverse cultures and rich literary and artistic heritages.*

# Competitive Covid-19 Job Climate Offers Upskill Incentive

By **Peter Smyth**, *Search Associates, Surrey, United Kingdom*

While many teachers are preparing for the start of the new school year in a new school, a large number find themselves in a Covid-19 enforced professional limbo. Schools and teachers around the world have risen to the challenges dealt them and the unexpected realities presented by things such as visa restrictions and fluctuating school enrollment. The complexities surrounding teaching in international schools have - believe it or not - become even more complex. With so many restrictions and barriers in place it makes sense to focus on the positive.

Many teachers are taking the enforced break in their normal classroom routine to self-reflect on their practice (and newfound ones in the virtual learning world) to look at ways to become better educators - a silver lining perhaps to the global pandemic. Professional development opportunities abound and online provision study continues to grow with the increase in demand.

Whether it's taking time to complete CEU's for certification or enroll in a course with the International Baccalaureate, (IB) teachers are using the time to enhance their professional practice. As a direct consequence many will find themselves more employable and successful in their future job searches.

Many are also using this time to focus on gaining Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) or permanent certification in their home country. We are seeing more and more schools require teachers to be certified in the subjects they wish to teach and international teachers are responding to the requirement. A myriad of agencies now exist to help teachers gain QTS or certification. A simple Google search of 'how to gain QTS' will produce a whole host of options. Many US teachers are using the time to add 'endorsements' to their certificate or catch up on clock hours for re-certification.

It is clear that the recruitment landscape for the next few years will be forever changed and we will continually be adapting to ever changing restrictions and requirements.

Teachers will also need to respond to these changes (as they have done so well with the prolific advent of virtual learning) and ensure that they are professionally ready to compete for jobs in an increasingly competitive international teaching job market.

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# Talking About Race with Racially Diverse Students: 7 Short Readings to Get the Conversation Started

By **Nadia Kalman**, *Words Without Borders*,  
New York City

“I am whatever you think a black man is. You almost never think about black men.”

These captivating lines from Afro-Brazilian performance poet Ricardo Aleixo give a sense of the potential of contemporary global literature to engage students in meaningful dialogue about race. Yet, it can often be challenging to find new world literature in English – and then, to prepare to teach that literature to a diverse group of students, each of whom carries different experiences of race.

That is where Words Without Borders comes in. The online magazine Words Without Borders makes “the best in world literature in translation” available to readers for free, online. Its sister website Words Without Borders Campus ([wwb-campus.org](http://wwb-campus.org)), which I edit, is specifically designed for use with students, featuring classroom-ready world literature curated from Words Without Borders’ extensive archives. We publish this literature alongside multimedia contextual resources (maps, video interviews,

oral histories, photo essays, sound recordings, etc.), as well as discussion questions and assignment suggestions focused on fostering critical understandings and the development of voice.

Over the past months, as communities from Brooklyn to Beirut have risen up to protest racist policies, the other editors and I have been working to identify literature that helps students engage in the global conversation around race. Below, you’ll find 7 short pieces, spanning geographies and genres, but sharing a common origin – all have been translated into English from another language – and a certain immediacy of tone that right for the moment. All the literature is freely available online from Words Without Borders Campus or the magazine Words Without Borders.



## FROM BRAZIL, MEXICO, AND FRANCE, WORK THAT ASKS, “WHO DEFINES US?”

Ricardo Aleixo’s prose poem “[My Man](#)” (translated into English by Dan Hanrahan) is at once confrontational and deeply vulnerable, providing an excellent starting point for discussions of race and identity:

I am your black man. I’ll never be only your black man. I am my black man before I am yours. Your black man

The author, a performance poet, has created a video for this poem in the original Portuguese, which you can find on the WWB Campus [blog post](#) discussing it.

From Mexico, Fausto Guadarrama López’s “Marías Mazahuas” addresses itself to indigenous women, sometimes called by the racist nickname “María “ in Mexico’s cities. Resources in the Context and Playlist tabs foreground the women’s own voices.

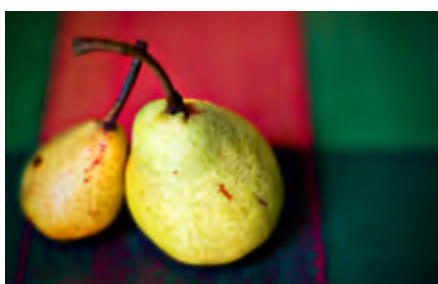
Set in Paris, France Sandrine’s Kao’s YA novel excerpt “The Park Bench,” which we discussed with educators and translator Jane Roffe during a live-stream this spring, features a boy from Taiwan struggling to understand anti-Asian racism. The boy, Alex, reflects:

But it’s not surprising—with everything you hear on the news, how can anyone be expected to think well of the Chinese?

This question takes on particular meaning today, with some politicians irresponsibly casting blame on Chinese people for the coronavirus. We discuss the story and provide potential discussion questions, resources, and assignment suggestions on the WWB Campus blog.

## SHINING A LIGHT ON RACISM IN RUSSIA, EGYPT, AND SOUTH AFRICA

Set during the Soviet era, Ludmila Ulitskaya’s story “[Pears from Gudauty](#)” exposes both the far-reaching nature and the pettiness of racism, as a Jewish mother and daughter silently listen to a neighbor’s litany of insults against dozens of nationalities.



Two pears, by Rick Harris. CC BY 2.0 license

**Recognized as an Innovator in Reading by the National Book Foundation, the site has now reached more than 20,000 classrooms, both in the U.S. and around the world.**

Arch Tait’s clear translation provides a sense of the narrator as both a child experiencing the monologue and an adult looking back on it.

Also set in an earlier time, Florent Ruppert and Jérôme Mulot’s graphic fiction “The Pharaohs of Egypt” (translated by Edward Gauvin) introduces the reader to the daily lives of Bedouin tour guides, subject to constant racist jibes from ignorant tourists. One of the guides fantasizes about a bloody revenge, but instead chooses a novel, non-violent, (if off-color) response. The relatable emotions and casual dialogue of the tour guides emphasizes the shared humanity between them and the readers. In contrast, the conversation of the tourists, who both seem to be operating from the same rigid, bigoted playbook, illustrates the ways in which racism can constrict the humanity of its perpetrators.

Another work of graphic fiction, the story series “Coloureds,” depicts life in a South African township, and was written, illustrated, and translated by Nathan and Andre Transraal, a pair of comics creators also known as “The Transraal Brothers.” (The series title refers to a term for South Africans of mixed heritage, and we recommend reading the stories alongside an [interview](#) in which Nathan and Andre Transraal discuss their understanding of the term.)

The first two stories in Coloureds, narrated by a young girl named Caitlin, expose the real-life effects of structural racism: the hunger and poverty with which her family struggles is a direct result of the South African government’s longstanding policies of apartheid. Those policies are now gone, but their legacy remains. Indeed, a 2019 article in [Time magazine](#) posits South Africa as a leading example of the worldwide increase in economic inequality.

In talking about this story with students, you might connect it to these larger issues through the lens of articles like the ones above and the U.N.'s Sustainable Development Goals 2 (Zero Hunger) and 10 (Reduced Inequalities.) Or, you might invite students to conduct their own research into the root causes of the conditions in the stories.

If you have additional time, the third story in Coloureds, "Dogville," is also well-worth reading: written from the perspective on Caitlin's younger brother Nigel, it alludes to the psychological toll of structural racism, which can create a cycle of abuse and deep pain for a community's most vulnerable members.

## AN ESSAY WRITTEN IN THE U.S. EXPLAINS WHY WE NEED TO KEEP TALKING

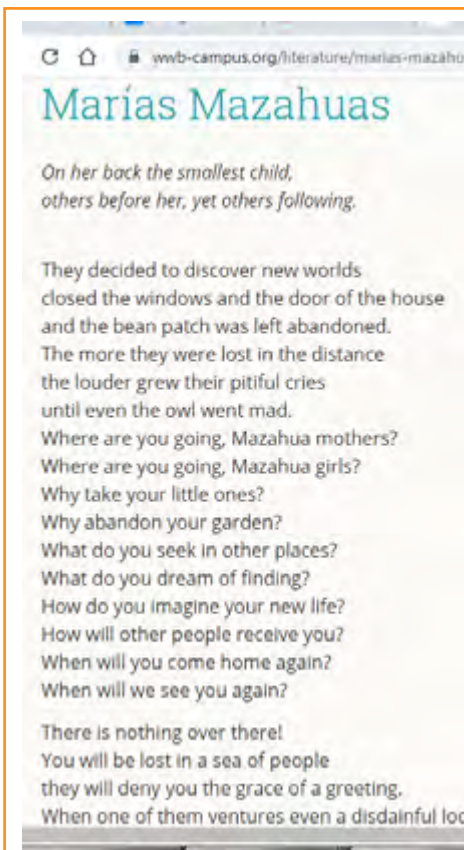
In his essay "[I Am Not Your Cholo](#)" (the title is a play on a James Baldwin comment), Peruvian-Quechua journalist Marco Avilés writes:

[I]f we don't complain to the privileged classes, they will go on imposing their points of view and their ways. They'll eat us alive...

That's why I'm sharing my story here.

Translated by Sophie Hughes, the essay is available in both [Spanish and English](#).

Marco joined Words Without Borders Campus and participating educators for a live-stream, and later responded to participants' questions about race, bilingualism, and other topics in a follow-up [blog post](#).



*The poem "Marías Mazahuas" on WWB Campus with Context tab open. Poem by Fausto Guadarrama López, trans. by Earl Shorris and Sylvia Sasson Shorris. Source [here](#).*

We at Words Without Campus hope that ISTE members like you, whose "footprint is the world!" (in the words of Stacey Wilkins) will join our worldwide community of educators, adding your voices to the lively, diverse conversations about race and education taking place over our live-streams and on our blog. Please [register](#) on the site for access to all our educators' materials and invitations to upcoming events. And if you'd like suggestions of literature for particular student populations, please do not hesitate to reach out to me: [nadia@wordswithoutborders.org](mailto:nadia@wordswithoutborders.org).

Note: This article is adapted from a [blog post](#) that appeared on WWB Campus on June 9, 2020.



**Nadia Kalman** is the editor and curriculum designer for *Words Without Borders Campus* ([wwb-campus.org](http://wwb-campus.org)), a website that introduces students to eye-opening writing from around the world and provides educators with the resources to incorporate international literature into their curriculums. A former teacher of English and English for Speakers of Other Languages at the secondary level, Nadia is also the author of the novel *The Cosmopolitans*.





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