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Editors’ Corner

Dear Readers,

In harmony with the delightful autumn spirit around us, this issue brings to you a mosaic of articles that, we hope, could add more variety and colour to your busy ELT lives.

The autumn theme starts with an article with which Bill Templer continues his explorations of American short fiction and its potential to teach English, but also global issues like friendship, support, self-sacrifice – this time Bill brings *The Last Leaf*, one of O. Henry’s most touching short stories, into focus. It is followed by a contribution by another seasoned ELT professional: Dennis Newson’s reflections on his attempt to equip an adult learner with some basic spoken English – a fine illustration of the impact teacher’s and learner’s beliefs have on language teaching and learning. Next, a lesson plan by Tsvetelena Taralova, the third-prize winner of the 9th round of BETA Competition, suggests a sequence of teaching activities for enhancing students’ vocabulary on seasons with the help of web tools.

There are two reports in this issue: Tanya Bikova gives us a taste of *ELT Signposts*, the annual autumn conference of our partners from the Association of Teachers of English of the Czech Republic, and Diana Velcheva-Emmanouilidou evokes memories of childhood, summer and play with her description of an English-language project, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. The issue also includes Tanya
Bikova’s interview with Caroline Murphy, a Fulbright/America for Bulgaria English Teaching Assistant for 2016-2017.

The autumn thread finishes with the poetry corner, where you can enjoy Helen Bar-Lev’s *A Leaf*.

Traditionally, we conclude with details about forthcoming ELT events and the e-newsletter contribution guidelines.

Happy reading!

Zarina Markova

Issue Editor
Teaching a Touching Tale about Three Artists: O. Henry’s “The Last Leaf” (1907)

Bill Templer

Bill Templer is a Chicago-born educator, a trained Germanist, sociolinguist and translator, with teaching + research interests in ELF, American Literature, Social Justice Pedagogy, Jewish History and Minority Studies. He has taught English and German at universities in 10 countries over several decades, including those in Shumen, Veliko Turnovo and Svishtov. Bill is active on the GISIG/IATEFL Committee (gisig.iatefl.org), within TaWSIG (www.teachersasworkers.org), and is on the Board of www.jceps.com. He is based in eastern Bulgaria. Email: templerbill@gmail.com

Introduction

Among the most popular and moving short stories by O. Henry (William Sidney Porter, 1862-1910) is “The Last Leaf” (1907). It is a tale about friendship and self-sacrifice among struggling artists in Greenwich Village in New York City during the ‘Gilded Age’ around 1900, with a characteristic O. Henry ‘surprise’ ending. This is one of the first short stories by any writer to be set in Greenwich Village, the famous neighborhood of artists and writers in Lower Manhattan. The tale is also the single
story by O. Henry that has led to the most cinematic versions of an O. Henry tale, both in Hollywood (1952) and more recently, available on youtube. O. Henry was very interested in ‘unpredictability’ in our lives, what seems ‘random,’ how it occurs – 100s of his stories hinge on an unexpected sharp turn of events. I will refer below to this “impact of the highly improbable” (Taleb 2010), an intriguing philosophical, existential and also ‘epistemic’ question: i.e. what can we know?

O. Henry’s tale is available online in the original (2,375 words) and also in a greatly simplified version in VOA Special English (1,500 words), both of which will be introduced here. Teachers should read this brief article about the story for orientation, and this introduction. O. Henry moved to New York in 1902, and wrote over 360 short stories there until his death, many set among the ordinary people of New York City at the time. He is likely the only major American fiction writer who spent three years in penitentiary for a quite minor crime. While in Ohio State Penitentiary (1898-1901), writing stories, he adopted the pen name O. Henry, perhaps from Ohio State Penitentiary. Many have called for his pardon, the charge of ‘embezzlement’ of ca. $800 seems ludicrous. As a young man, William worked as a licensed pharmacist in Greensboro/N.C., knowledgeable about illness, perhaps reflected in this tale. The VOA version tests for Flesch-Kinkaid Grade Level at 3.95 and Flesch Reading Ease 84.10, average sentence length of 9.73 words, quite simple—check with this excellent readability tool. By contrast, the original tale is Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level 5.40, Flesch Reading Ease 78.91, average no. of words per sentence 12.68. But the core difficulty in the original is the literary lexis.
Mr. Pneumonia

Central to the story is the personification Mr. Pneumonia, a disease that ravaged both rich and many poor in New York and across the United States a century ago (see below). This is a tale about pneumonia, its dangers and victims, still today a killer in the flu epidemics that arise each year, most recently in Australia and New Zealand 2017. That has been the worst flu epidemic those countries have seen in many years, and perhaps a dark harbinger of what is expected in Europe later this year and into 2018. It raises the local question: what do students (and their teachers) really know about Mr. Pneumonia, who strikes ‘at random’?

Working with the Tale

1. Ask students first to look at the image above of an old bearded man. They can discuss in groups of three. What is he doing? Why could he be doing that? What time of day could it be? What do they think the story could be about? They can also describe the second image of the leaf detached yet clinging.

2. Also discuss with students what they know about pneumonia. Perhaps some have a story in their own family or among friends and neighbors.

3. Show students this animated Bedtime Story adapted from the story, in very simple English. It gives the basic plot, and could serve as an introduction even before reading and listening to the story. They can also watch this video summary of the story. Perhaps it is best not to reveal the ‘surprise’ ending too soon.
4. Introduce the story with the simplified VOA version, reading the first sections and also listening to the reading on MP3 provided at the site. There is a detailed lesson plan that teachers can use or adopt: you can decide how to proceed. The lesson plan is based on the CALLA approach, which teachers can familiarize themselves with if they have no experience with that. It has five elements: Prepare / Present / Practice / Self-Evaluate / Expand, also works with a range of metacognitive and task-based strategies explained in the lesson plan. Here several vocabulary flashcards teachers can use and expand on inventively.

5. Students at higher intermediate level can also read the original version, and listen to a reading of that version. Here another illustrated version with a reading.

6. Here some questions and answers re the story; utilize with the lesson plan.

The Characters

The story has three characters, two young female artists Johnsy and her friend Sue, and an older immigrant artist, Mr. Behrman, who lives downstairs of them. How long have Johnsy and Sue known each other? Where do they come from in the United States? What has attracted them to New York, and why Greenwich Village? They met by chance, where and how (see original tale)? What is Johnsy’s problem? Do the women have family nearby, or perhaps a boyfriend? What is their relationship with Behrman? Does he have any family, a wife, a son or daughter? As you read the story you will see he speaks a strange ‘immigrant’ English. Where could he be from? Is he a successful painter? Do they live, like many artists, in relative poverty, perhaps isolation, loneliness? There is another important character in the story, the doctor. What role does he play?
Ask students to look at the still photo below from the 1952 Hollywood film of the story, starring Anne Baxter as Johnsy and Jean Peters as her friend Sue, both famous actresses. What can we see? What is on the wall? Anne Baxter (Johnsy) is lying in bed, looking away – at what? What is the totally ‘improbable’ and unexpected ending of the tale? Does the story have a ‘message,’ ethical or other?

http://goo.gl/1y9XKA

The Impact of the Unpredictable

Ask students to ponder the role of chance, randomness and the unpredictable in this story. It is also a huge fascinating factor in our own lives, and in human history on the planet (Taleb 2010). For example, Sue and Johnsy meet by chance, i.e. happenstance, at a restaurant. As the original tale notes: the girls “found their tastes in art, chicory salad and bishop sleeves so congenial that the joint studio resulted”—i.e. they by chance discover that they share as young lonely artists their rather ‘random’ tastes in painting, simple cheap food and full-sleeved blouses. Sue is from Maine and Johns from California, the two furthest states from each other in the continental 48 states. This difference is important because Johns is unaccustomed to the harsh cold winters of New York. Sue, from Maine, is hardened to sub-freezing weather. This will play an ‘unexpected’ role in the
story. They find an apartment, by chance. By chance, downstairs lives an elderly artist Behrman. Johnsy falls ill, again by fateful chance, with pneumonia. The doctor tells Sue: “She has one chance in - let us say, ten,’ he said, as he shook down the mercury in his clinical thermometer. ‘And that chance is for her to want to live.”’ So this is the dimension of ‘chance,’ what is fortuitous. For the doctor, her survival is dependent on her basic will to survive. There are other unpredictables in the story, but the truly ‘improbable’ is the tale’s startling end, the ‘leaf’ that does not fall from the vine, thus ‘saving’ Johnsy’s life (and in effect taking Behrman’s life as he falls fatally ill). This ending is a total ‘outlier,’ “as it lies outside the realm of regular expectations, because nothing in the past can convincingly point to its possibility” (Taleb 2010: xxii). O. Henry, of course, explains this “leaf,” it is the product of Behrman’s decision, making it explainable after the fact. Otherwise, with no explanation, it might become a kind of ‘miracle,’ perhaps the work of a ‘guardian angel.’ Taleb analyzes such events that are rare, highly improbable and with an extreme impact (yet retrospectively ‘explainable’ by human reason) as ‘Black Swans.’ He observes: “A small number of Black Swans explain almost everything in our world, religions, to the dynamics of historical events, to elements of our own personal lives” (Taleb: ibid.). Ask students to ponder how the unpredictable plays a role in their own personal lives, in fact in some ways on a daily basis: accidents, chance encounters, totally new ideas. Daily news is full of such Black Swans, like hurricanes, wildfires in California and their terrible destruction, wars no one could predict, terrorist attacks, on and on. But in terms of the role of chance, randomness and unpredictability in human life, we ourselves are all unique beings, the product of chance marriages between people who became our parents. This is not a Black Swan in the strict sense, but indeed reflects the role of chance in much of what we are, and do, and hope to achieve. Teachers can also ponder this about their lives. As Nassim Nicholas Taleb (2010:
xxiii) stresses: “Look into your own existence. Count the significant events, the technological changes, and the inventions that have taken place in our environment since you were born and compare them to what was expected before their advent. How many of them came on a schedule? Look into your own personal life, to your choice of profession, say, or meeting your mate [...] How often did these things occur according to plan?” The events in November 1989 in Bulgaria were clearly an iconic ‘outlier’ and Black Swan Event. This also raises basic questions about what is ‘knowledge.’ As Taleb (ibid.) contends: “Black Swan logic makes what you don’t know far more relevant than what you do know.” We navigate in a kind of fundamental “epistemic opacity” (Taleb, ibid.: 302). He notes: “An epistemocrat is someone of epistemic humility, who holds his own knowledge in greatest suspicion” (ibid.).

### Comparing the Two Versions

Here the beginning in the simple version: “Many artists lived in the Greenwich Village area of New York. Two young women named Sue and Johnsy shared a studio apartment at the top of a three-story building. Johnsy's real name was Joanna.”

Here the first sentences of the original’s beginning, much longer: “In a little district west of Washington Square the streets have run crazy and broken themselves into small strips called ‘places.’ These ‘places’ make strange angles and curves. One Street crosses itself a time or two. [...] So, to quaint old Greenwich Village the art people soon came prowling, hunting for north windows and eighteenth-century gables and Dutch attics and low rents. ...”
O. Henry’s very literary beginning describes the strange streets of Greenwich Village, many unlike streets anywhere else in New York City, curving even back into themselves here and there. So this special architecture of the cityscape there, the old streets, many with cobblestones (as still in some Bulgarian cities, like Shumen), attracted artists, in fact from the 1860s, to settle there. The simplified tale continues: “In November, a cold, unseen stranger came to visit the city. This disease, pneumonia, killed many people. Johnsy lay on her bed, hardly moving. She looked through the small window. She could see the side of the brick house next to her building.”

The original is much more elaborated: “That was in May. In November a cold, unseen stranger, whom the doctors called Pneumonia, stalked about the colony, touching one here and there with his icy fingers. Over on the east side this ravager strode boldly, smiting his victims by scores, but his feet trod slowly through the maze of the narrow and moss-grown ‘places.’ Mr. Pneumonia was not what you would call a chivalric old gentleman. A mite of a little woman with blood thinned by California zephyrs was hardly fair game for the red-fisted, short-breathed old duffer. But Johnsy he smote; and she lay, scarcely moving, on her painted iron bedstead, looking through the small Dutch window-panes at the blank side of the next brick house.” No real view at all: but by chance a vine is growing up that wall, and plays a fateful role in the tale.

Students can compare the many differences in the description, the very literary vocabulary of the original, verbs like ‘smite,’ ‘trod’ and ‘strode,’ adjectives such as ‘quaint,’ ‘chivalric,’ nouns like ‘zephyrs,’ ‘duffer,’ ‘mite.’ Working in small groups, students can note what ‘hard,’ low-frequency words have been eliminated or rephrased in the VOA rendering. Ask students who are advanced beginners and
perhaps at lower intermediate level to search for seven words in the original story whose meaning they don’t know. O. Henry enjoyed using many similes, metaphors, frequent figurative language; most such figurative expressions have been removed in the simpler downshifted version. Teachers with students at advanced elementary (A-2) or low-intermediate level (B-1) can concentrate on the fine simplified version of the story, since the original is lexically quite complex.

**Discussion Points Galore**

Looking out the window at the blank brick wall and dying vine, its leaves falling, Johnsy begins to identify with the plant as a kind of icon of her own situation. She thinks she will die when the last leaf falls. It is some kind of *supernatural* sign. This seems foolish in the eyes of the doctor, Sue, and especially old man Behrman, but they understand it is hard to convince Johnsy that is a silly notion. Her mind has been affected by the illness, she just wants to die. She says: “I'm tired of waiting. I'm tired of thinking. I want to turn loose my hold on everything, and go sailing down, down, just like one of those poor, tired leaves." She is resigned to dying and very weary of her illness. Perhaps students know of people who believe in various ‘signs’ that something will happen, a kind of popular superstition about what we can know, ‘supernatural epistemics.’ Or something that if you do it, will bring you ‘bad luck.’ The tale has a message about the ‘will to live,’ which we all need. As a pharmacist, O. Henry knew the limitations of the ‘pharmacopoeia’ to heal.

O. Henry does not tell us much about the immigrant ‘failed’ artist Behrman. He seems to speak a kind of Germanized English. He may stem from Germany. He cannot sell any paintings and perhaps drinks too much gin, alluded to by mention of the smell of juniper berries he exuded. His family name is also a quite common
Jewish family name, sometimes spelled Berman. O. Henry probably knew this, but he mentions nothing about this poor older immigrant’s background. How does he survive if he cannot sell what he paints, or cannot in fact paint much at all? In the story, Sue sketches to sell drawings to a magazine for a few meager dollars and asks Behrman to pose, he finally agrees. In some way Behrman may silently adore the girls as if they were his own two daughters. In the end, saying nothing, he goes out into a cold and rainy night to paint a small leaf high on a brick wall, risking his own health and even his very life. It becomes his final act as a man and as a failed artist, almost a kind of self-sacrifice. What was his motivation? What has been his great dream? Did it in the ironic and tragic, totally ‘unpredictable’ end come true?

Another focus is Behrman’s earlier life. How did he live before the two girls came to live upstairs of him? Did he have a family? Students could write an imaginary ‘autobiography’ of Behrman, perhaps working in groups of three. Was he from a German background, or perhaps Jewish, even a speaker of Yiddish? Why did he emigrate to New York? He has a “Michael Angelo’s ‘Moses’ beard.” This is the statue O. Henry refers to. Although O. Henry could not know, a famous Polish-Jewish painter, Abraham Adolf Behrman (1876-1943) would later gain fame in the 1920s and ‘30s in Poland, and was murdered in a Nazi concentration camp in 1943. Here his striking painting of a ‘Jewish bride’ (1914). One of the biggest Jewish publishing houses in the U.S. is Behrman House. These are associations readers in New York may have today, as did readers a century ago, I am sure.

Students can imagine Johnsy’s life in California before she moved to New York, or Sue’s in Maine. What was it like? How did she decide to become a painter? What is her great dream? They can also imagine or write about what happens after the story ends. Does Johnsy realize her dream to become a successful painter? Does
she go to Italy to paint? Such ‘dreams’ often lead to so many unpredictable events in our own lives and in literature. Do Sue and Johnsy stay together? Johnsy could write a letter to a friend describing her ordeal and ‘incalculable’ ‘1-in-10’ recovery.

**Cinematic Adaptations**

Teachers can alert students to the various versions of the story in cinematic adaptations, most accessible online. The best-known is in the Hollywood film “*O. Henry’s Full House*” (1952), based on five of his stories. ‘The Last Leaf’ is dramatized from min. 34:45 to 54:20. There are numerous differences from the original tale, but basically it remains the same. Students can discuss the evident differences. For example, Johnsy is pictured having a quarrel with her boyfriend at the very beginning, and she runs out of his apartment into the cold and stormy night, where she then falls ills with pneumonia. There are three other versions students can watch, enjoy and compare: first perhaps this directed by Matt Gatlin, very close in dialogue and text to the original version. Then there is another version by writer/director Kathleen Weir, set during the great 1919 flu pandemic in New York and across the world. A student film version done in California was recently put online. Students will like another wise animated version of the story from India, inspiring to make ‘one last try.’ There are other versions, including even a very well-produced *Mormon ‘Easter parable’* (1984) online — for my own sensibilities far too Christianized, the failed painter as self-sacrificing Savior.

The film “*Falling Leaves*” (silent, 1912), directed by Alice Guy Blaché, also set in New York City, was partially inspired by O. Henry’s story. Trixie tries to cure the fatal TB (consumption) of her beloved sister Winifred by hanging leaves in the fall garden; then by mere chance she meets a bacteriologist, Dr. Headley, passing by
the house, who can cure her. In the final scene, Winifred may be falling in love with Dr. Headley, and he with her. Ms. Guy Blaché was the first truly famous and influential female film director, who worked in France and the U.S. Here a brief overview on this great filmmaker. Today US showbiz bemoans the striking lack of female film directors. Students can watch “Falling Leaves” and discuss what is being said, what can be seen, the power of silent film to galvanize speaking. Here a slapstick silent film by Alice, “A Sticky Woman” (1906), mayhem in a post office.

Applying Lexical Frequency Analysis

Useful for teachers and learners is a frequency analysis from lextutor (see the Appendix) of the original story, there are 163 lexemes (word families) above the K-2 level [!], making for much new more difficult vocabulary, including 36 K-4 lexemes, 17 K-5 words, 22 lexemes K-6, 12 lexemes for K-7 and for K-8 level, and even 5 lexemes each for levels K-10, K-11 and K-15. By contrast, the lextutor analysis for the simplified version has only 21 lexemes above K-2 level, including three words at K-6 and two at K-8 level—a huge contrast to the original tale.

Teachers and students should learn to use the lextutor.ca tool for difficulty analysis with a great variety of texts. K-1 comprises the 1,000 most frequent lexemes (corpus-based, here BNC and COCA). Students can also test single lexemes for their level. For example, ‘chivalric’, ‘shaggy’ and ‘swagger’ in the original version are K-9 lexemes; ‘gnarled’ is K-10, ‘quaint’ and ‘jew’s-harp’ are K-7, ‘twang’ (a drawn-out vowel in pronunciation, referring to Sue’s Maine accent) is K-11, the lexeme ‘duffer’ meaning a stupid person is K-15, its synonym ‘dunderhead’ is K-22, as is the odd lexeme ‘flibbertigibbet’ for a silly, terribly talkative person, very low frequency as a lexeme. You can test any single word.’
Exploring O. Henry, His Fiction and Beyond

Students can read about William Sydney Porter, alias O. Henry, his life and work. The Complete Works of O. Henry are online, start browsing. Here another site with biography and 100s of the author’s stories. Here a brief biography. A standard study is Current-Garcia’s (1993). The Hollywood film “O. Henry’s Full House” (1952) is based on five of his stories and can be explored a bit with students, introduced by John Steinbeck. Here O. Henry’s famous collection of tales set in New York The Four Million (1906). A number of O. Henry’s stories are available in VOA Special English, and most of his tales can be found online in the original. He is still a popular writer, and his stories are read in many school syllabi in the U.S. Some students might be encouraged to concentrate on his stories, a good way to learn English by such ‘narrow reading’ of work by a single author (Krashen, 2004) that is actually very broadening. Fresh, inventive approaches to literacy pedagogy are badly needed here in Bulgaria in TEFL and teaching Bulgarian (Novinite, 2016), including far more free voluntary reading (FVR), and extensive reading (Templer, 2012). Ordinary learners, especially in Bulgaria, often from very low-income, modest backgrounds, deserve more options, especially through independent EFL reading, in my view also in native L1 Turkish and Romani, ‘ethnic FVR.’ Templer (2014) introduces one of O. Henry’s most famous stories about Christmas. Templer (2016) discusses a simple X-mas tale “Kin” by the social reformer Jacob Riis, a classic mini-fiction (661 words) about New York poverty on the street at Christmas in the 1890s. Templer (2017) presents another story by O. Henry set in NYC. More generally, here are numerous classic very short stories for American high school students. Many authors’ works are here [not just U.S.]. They can whet students’ appetites for story brevity. There’s an annual O. Henry Award for best short story.
Expanding Into the Historical World

(1) What was and is Greenwich Village, a major spatial focal point in New York and U.S. cultural history? Students can explore the article. Allusions in the story to “Dutch attics” and “small Dutch window-panes” are to NYC’s ‘Dutch’ colonial past.

(2) Gentrification in parts of New York has led to extremely high prices for buying an apartment in Greenwich Village today, for example, where prices can average $23,000 per m². This means that a small 45m² apartment may cost $1,035,000, over a million dollars. Perhaps even something like the studio in the ‘squatty’ 3-floor building that Johnsy, Sue and Behrman lived in over a century ago. See also this overview of real estate in the West Village and NYC today. Students can learn more about the dimensions of gentrification. They can read an article on its effects, numerous downsides. Here the situation in Philadelphia.

(3) Mr. Pneumonia. O. Henry probably knew from direct experience the 1889-90 ‘Russian flu’ pandemic, when many Americans fell ill, developed pneumonia and perished. Pneumonia in the ‘Gilded Age’ was widespread among the poor in slums and tenements across the United States, not just in New York City. The worst flu pandemic in modern history ravaged in 1918-19 across the planet, a super-Black Swan Event, infecting some 500 million persons, of whom some 10-20% died (perhaps 100 million all-told). In the United States, between 500,000 and 675,000 are believed to have died, often from fatal pneumonia. The disease ‘Spanish flu’ appeared in Queens/New York in March 1918, and one of its earliest victims was the grandfather of President Donald Trump, the hotel manager Frederick Trump, who fell suddenly ill in late May 1918 while out walking with his 13-year-old son Fred (Pres. Trump’s father) and died the very next day, aged 49. A serious
influenza pandemic is ‘predicted’ for winter 2017-18 in Europe and N. America following the huge flu epidemic in Australia/NZ. In Britain, the NHS fears “the worst flu season” since 1945, very harsh January 2018 to come. Also be prepared in BG: vaccination, avoid touching metal on buses, soapwash all coins. Beware!

But remember: much illness is basically unpredictable, random. We cannot know when and where we may be exposed to a virus or bacterium and if we may fall ill.

References


## Appendix (Lextutor data)

### Original Lextutor THE LAST LEAF

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→163 words [word families] above K-2 (2,000 most common lexemes)
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<th>Tokens (%)</th>
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<tr>
<td>K-1 Words</td>
<td>310 (82.67)</td>
<td>394 (82.08)</td>
<td>1334 (88.34)</td>
<td>88.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-2 Words</td>
<td>42 (11.20)</td>
<td>44 (9.17)</td>
<td>61 (4.04)</td>
<td>92.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-3 Words</td>
<td>8 (2.13)</td>
<td>8 (1.67)</td>
<td>11 (0.73)</td>
<td>93.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-4 Words</td>
<td>7 (1.87)</td>
<td>7 (1.46)</td>
<td>12 (0.79)</td>
<td>93.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-5 Words</td>
<td>1 (0.27)</td>
<td>1 (0.21)</td>
<td>5 (0.33)</td>
<td>94.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-6 Words</td>
<td>3 (0.80)</td>
<td>3 (0.62)</td>
<td>6 (0.40)</td>
<td>94.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-7 Words</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-8 Words</td>
<td>2 (0.53)</td>
<td>2 (0.42)</td>
<td>7 (0.46)</td>
<td>95.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

→ 21 words [word families] above K-2
Reflections: “You can take a horse to water, but you cannot make it drink”

Dennis Newson

M.A.(Cantab), P.D.E.S.L. (Leeds), has taught in Ghana, Sierra Leone, Qatar, Norway and Germany in middle schools, secondary schools, teacher training colleges and universities. He was a consultant for short periods in Bosnia and Kosovo. At present, he is on the advisory board of IATEFL's GISIG. Email: djn@dennisnewson.de

These reflections are based on journal entries I made for myself when I recently gave seven of a planned series of ten private, one-hour English language lessons to a friend I will call Dekram, who retired recently as a teacher and teacher trainer of German at the age of 65. (We both live in a north German town). I wanted to use this opportunity to explore whether a number of personal routines, convictions and practices in the teaching of EFL were still effective. Although I am still actively involved in TEFL through my work on a couple of TEFL committees, I have done no regular face-to-face teaching regularly since my retirement 17 years ago.

Dekram, who is bilingual, Turkish and German, had often told me that that he had always regretted that he could not speak English. At school he was very interested in learning the language, but the teaching was done by a Turkish teacher whose English, reported Dekram, was appalling, and a volunteer American soldier who rarely turned up for lessons!
Apart from his long-standing wish, Dekram was well motivated for the following reasons: A few years ago he bought a house in Turkey, and he returns there several times a year. The house is new and is on an estate where many of his neighbours are British – these homes are their second homes - and Russians. The lingua franca both amongst the very sociable house owners and in the shops and restaurants in the small harbour town is English. Dekram, himself a very sociable person, was becoming increasingly frustrated at not being able to communicate easily and fully with his neighbours in Turkey.

I was convinced that I could help Dekram in a fairly short time to speak some of the English he needed.

My core conviction about effectively learning another language is that it is a matter of learning to mean what ones wants to mean using the resources of language in question. It is not, in isolation, about learning how to use tenses, prepositions and the most frequently used vocabulary. In other words, it is socially and communicatively motivated.

I set myself the objective of enabling Dekram to learn some of the English he needed in ten 60-minute lessons, once or twice a week. The lessons, by design, took place in an English atmosphere, in my study at home, packed with English books, magazines and framed photos. Dekram had also emphasised that he wished us to concentrate on spoken English.

My procedure, reflecting my stand on a number of classical TEFL pedagogical issues – the use or non-use of the mother tongue, attention or not to grammar, learning to hear and speak a word before learning its written form, the use or not
of a textbook – was: (1) only to use German, the language, we had in common, to quickly find out what kind of English Dekram needed; (2) Apart from its use as in (1) I planned for myself to rigorously avoid speaking German and consistently encourage Dekram not to use it either; (3) I planned to record all our sessions together so that I could refer back to what had been said by both of us and Dekram, for his work at home, could listen to what he had said and hear again, and have available for repetition the practice that arose from the dialogues we had focused on in the set hour. I posted these recordings as MP3 attached files to Dekram after each lesson together with some written comments. My strategy was to enable him to hear as much English as possible and not exclusively my English. Knowing Dekram’s love of music, I also worked with some recorded songs that I thought he would enjoy and benefit from – over the years many adults from different countries have told me they learned much of their English by listening to songs sung in English. So, having worked on the meaning of the songs’ lyrics with Dekram face to face, I sent him their recordings after each session as an attachment, hoping that he would play them frequently, train his listening abilities and pick up some additional English.

I chose songs like the Beatles’ ‘She’s leaving home’, https://youtu.be/oAYiuFBqyLE and ‘Let’s Fall in Love’ by Eartha Kitt https://youtu.be/rU1U5adSknM believing that, in addition to the intensive work we did on the dialogues, some language learning might also take place if he listened to such singers passionately communicating through their musicality in English.

Dekram turned out to have an excellent ear and had no difficulty repeating what I said to him – though I quickly discovered that I needed to check rigorously that he understood what he was saying. This was not automatically the case. In my
explanations I fought shy of using German, but did so, rapidly, when it would have been pointless not to do so.

For the intense practice of performing the phrases that I wanted him to produce, I frequently used the old technique of back-chaining. If you want to get the learner to say, for example: ‘If I’d known you were coming, I’d have tidied up’, start with the last word, or syllable, and gradually work back to the start. For example, Instructor: ‘Say after me: up’. Learner: ‘Up’. Instructor: ‘tidied up’. Learner: ‘tidied up’. Instructor: ‘uv tidied up’. Learner: ‘uv tidied up’. Instructor: ‘I’d uv tidied up’ and so on. (Notice the importance of short forms, elisions etc). Dekram performed the sentences, importantly, copying my pronunciation, rhythm, intonation and tempo.

After intense practice of conversations of this kind, we role-played them with Dekram playing his own part and me filling in with the words of the respondent. In this role I deliberately used to vary my part, saying something appropriate, but with slight differences so that conversations were not in danger of becoming memorised set pieces uttered unthinkingly. I also employed the classic substitution table mode of practice, e.g.

Teacher: If I’d known you were coming, I’d have ..... baked a cake
Learner: If I’d known you were coming, I’d have baked a cake.
Teacher: shaved.
Learner: If I’d known you were coming, I’d have shaved.

Here are a couple of examples of some of the scripts I produced for Dekram which he learned to perform with me. As explained above, the dialogues were my
attempt to create the language he had said he needed using our common language – German. These comprised appropriate greetings, polite questioning of how people were, suggestions and arrangements for activities together. They were individual, tailor-made, not taken from a structured course book.

Script 1

1. Hi!
2. What are you doing today?
2.1 What are your plans for today?
3. I want to ask you if you would like to come with me to a restaurant in Kalkan tonight?
4. You go down the hill towards the town centre.
5. On the right is the shopping centre Yalu. Go a little further and on the left you will see the restaurant...
6. I suggest we meet at 6 o’clock tonight in the restaurant.

Script 2

Outside the restaurant. 7 o’clock. The neighbour is there. Dekram is not. The neighbour looks at his watch and frowns.

Neighbour. Hmm. He’s late. I hope he hasn’t forgotten.

At this moment Dekram comes running down the hill. He is sweating and out of breath.

Dekram: ‘I’m so sorry I am late. I really do apologise. Just as I was leaving the house, my sister phoned from Hamburg. She wanted to tell me something about my father’. Etc, etc.
Journal entry Week 7

Quite by chance, I discovered that at home Dekram had gone through the text of the Beatles: ‘She’s leaving home’, which we had listened to during the last hour. He had underlined the words he did not understand. He started to read them aloud to me, many mispronounced, and with many supplementary questions: ‘Why not this instead of that...?’ An accompanying message I had sent him read: ‘I shall be sending you...’ and his question was: ‘Why not “I will send you”’? I explained that spending part of our one-hour face-to-face answering such questions was not a very efficient use of our time. We were not studying the text.

I had played it so that he could hear more English, and not only mine, and knowing that he would enjoy the music and be curious about the meaning, I assumed he could use a dictionary alone at home to check on words he did not understand. I seemed to convince him. I also preached against his belief that he had to see a word written down before he could say it because of the real danger of being led into mispronunciation by the idiosyncrasies of the relationship in English between the written form of many words in contrast to how they are pronounced. Since we had agreed that our focus was speaking English, I wanted him to practise hearing and then pronouncing words first, and finding out how they were written after he had mastered them vocally. The result of all this explanation was that there was not time to do what I had planned for the hour.

I also noticed that Dekram had copied out the text, although I had sent him a typed version and that he had translated it into German. I explained to him my belief that as part of the learning process, translation was a bad practice — one reason being that it encourages the expectation that there is a one-to-one meaning between words and expressions in the two languages and, secondly, because it encourages habitually thinking in two languages instead of practising
thinking and communicating in the target language only. I reminded him of the aim of our experiment, to enable him to speak English – translation was not part of that process. It turned out that he and his wife had worked on the translation together, having a long discussion about points of usage.

I also discovered that he had found a course on the internet and had bought it. I listened to it with him. The format was to listen to voices uttering sentences illustrated by pictures. Listen and repeat. A gap-filling exercise was given as a test to see if new vocabulary items had been learned. Dekram skipped the first part, guessed at the answers, muttered constantly in German and when the answer was spoken on the recording, did not listen to it – instead he read, mispronouncing, following the written text.

In other words, away from our contact hour, Dekram had reverted, presumably, to his old ways of study. Despite this disappointment, though, I do believe up to this point Dekram was able learn some English that subsequently he used on his next visit to Turkey. And I also believe he could have learned even more if he had continued to work with my approach rather than switching to the commercial course he found on the internet.

October, 2017
Seasons with Tablets

Congratulations to Tsvetelena Taralova, No. 88 Secondary School, Sofia! Tsvetelena is the third prize winner in the 9th round of BETA competition - 2017!

Lesson Plan

**Teacher:** Tsvetelena Taralova  
**Age of students:** 14-15  
**Level:** Pre-Intermediate  
**Lesson:** Seasons with Tablets

**Teaching aids and materials:** YouTube videos, a handout, a Padlet wall [https://padlet.com/](https://padlet.com/), an evaluation rubric [http://www.rcampus.com/](http://www.rcampus.com/), a game on seasons with [https://getkahoot.com/](https://getkahoot.com/)  
evaluation of the lesson with an online tool [https://answergarden.ch/](https://answergarden.ch/)

**Background of the group:** Students have been studying English intensively since September 2016.

Tsvetelena Taralova has been a secondary English language teacher and Erasmus+ coordinator for 13 years. She has completed teacher training courses in Dublin and London, and has been part of the Educational Leaders' Training Program, organised by America for Bulgaria Foundation. Tsvetelena is interested in using ICT in teaching and has been an eTwinning Erasmus+ ambassador for Bulgaria. At present, she works as the Head of the foreign language department at School No 88 in Sofia.  
Email: ts_taralova@abv.bg
**Main aim:** To enable students to revise vocabulary and learn new words to describe seasons in interactive ways using tablets and Web tools suggested by the teachers.

The lesson has been planned and carried out by two ELT teachers. The lesson was observed by English teachers and colleagues who teach other subjects at 88 School in Sofia.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT</th>
<th>WHY</th>
<th>HOW</th>
<th>Timing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage / Procedure</strong></td>
<td><strong>Objectives</strong></td>
<td><strong>Interaction pattern</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td>Warm-up activity to arouse interest in the topic.</td>
<td>Teachers and students</td>
<td>3 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are asked the following questions:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many seasons are there? What are they? What is the season now?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Revising and enriching vocabulary</strong></td>
<td>To revise and enrich season vocabulary.</td>
<td>Students in pairs. Teachers and the class</td>
<td>5 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students watch the clips of Vivaldi’s <em>Four Seasons</em> and write as many words as possible in the correct section of the handout.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>One of the teachers asks students to read the vocabulary on their lists. The other teacher writes the items on the board. The next group adds their words</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
to the list. Then the teachers suggest more words for each season.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Presenting the rubric to evaluate students work</th>
<th>To inform students about the tool they will use to evaluate each other’s work.</th>
<th>Teachers and the class</th>
<th>2 mins</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.rcampus.com/rubricshowc.cfm?code=HX8XBA9&amp;sp=yes">http://www.rcampus.com/rubricshowc.cfm?code=HX8XBA9&amp;sp=yes</a></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Writing season’s poem
Students work on the padlet wall
https://goo.gl/aWAmxm They choose a season and write a short acrostic. The name of the season is written in capital letters vertically, and each letter is the initial letter of a line in the poem. (If it’s difficult, it could be the second/third letter), e.g. WINTER. Students use the vocabulary on the board and their handout, and construct sentences starting correspondingly with W, I, N, T, E, R to finish the poem about this season.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3. Writing season’s poem</th>
<th>To give students practice with the revised and new season vocabulary.</th>
<th>Students in pairs work on their tablets</th>
<th>15 mins</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students work on the padlet wall <a href="https://goo.gl/aWAmxm">https://goo.gl/aWAmxm</a> They choose a season and write a short acrostic. The name of the season is written in capital letters vertically, and each letter is the initial letter of a line in the poem. (If it’s difficult, it could be the second/third letter), e.g. WINTER. Students use the vocabulary on the board and their handout, and construct sentences starting correspondingly with W, I, N, T, E, R to finish the poem about this season.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Reading aloud and evaluating the poems
Each group reads their poem aloud. Students evaluate their classmates’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4. Reading aloud and evaluating the poems</th>
<th>To encourage students’ self- and peer evaluation.</th>
<th>Students in front of the class</th>
<th>15 mins</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
poems using the rubrics. The authors of the best poem get excellent marks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5. Game time</th>
<th>To stimulate students to use the season’s vocabulary in an interactive way.</th>
<th>Students on their tablets</th>
<th>7 mins</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students play a kahoot game about the four seasons</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="https://play.kahoot.it/#/login?next=%252Fk%252Fe2f93f5d-3603-48be-8330-f29889217df9">https://play.kahoot.it/#/login?next=%252Fk%252Fe2f93f5d-3603-48be-8330-f29889217df9</a>, (registration needed)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6. Evaluating the lesson</th>
<th>To receive students’ feedback.</th>
<th>Students on their tablets</th>
<th>2 mins</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students evaluate the lesson using an online tool</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="https://answergarden.ch/450577">https://answergarden.ch/450577</a></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ADDITIONAL MATERIALS:**

**YouTube VIDEOS ON DIFFERENT SEASONS**

Spring: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=24&v=jirTPdRemPI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=24&v=jirTPdRemPI)

Summer: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VC3qO2V1AXY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VC3qO2V1AXY)

Autumn: [https://www.vbox7.com/play:f3036c940e](https://www.vbox7.com/play:f3036c940e)

Winter: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pgs_zB6Et2Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pgs_zB6Et2Q)

**STUDENT’S HANDOUT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seasons</th>
<th>Weather</th>
<th>Colours</th>
<th>Nature (birds, animals, plants)</th>
<th>People’s feelings</th>
<th>Holidays</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spring</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE GAME
https://getkahoot.com/

Questions:

1. What happens in winter?
   The flowers bloom, the air turns warm, the bears wake up, the days get dark early

2. When spring rains fall, the plants:
   become weak, lose their seeds, burst up from the dirt, bend towards the ground

3. In summer, what happens to the plants?
   they fall to the ground, they grow leaves and flowers, they give off bad smells,
   their stems dry up

4. In winter, what do the birds do?
   they go to sleep for the winter, they make nests and lay eggs, they hide under
   piles of leaves, they may fly to warm places

5. What happens every season? animals hibernate, the weather changes,
   we wear warm clothes or jackets, the time changes

6. Which is the most colourful season?
   summer, spring, fall, winter

7. What can you do in winter?
   go to the beach, build a snowman, jump in the leaves, plant seeds or flowers
SNAPSHOTS OF THE LESSON:
Impressions from ELT Signposts 2017, Brno, Czech Republic

Tanya Bikova

As a representative of the Bulgarian English Teachers' Association, I took part in ELT Signposts 2017, the 12th International and 16th National Conference of ATECR (Czech Association of English Teachers). It was hosted by the Faculty of Education of Masaryk University and was held on 8th and 9th September 2017 in the second largest city in the Czech Republic – Brno.

The friendly hosts had tried their best to offer a wide range of presentations on topics such as modern technologies and culture in teaching English for different age groups, teaching English in inclusive classrooms and outside school, matriculation and international English language exams, and a rich social and cultural program that made the conference an exciting and unforgettable experience for all participants.

The plenary speakers were: Don Sparling, who first came to Czechoslovakia in 1969 to teach at language schools in Brno and Prague, talked about The Dark Ages: English in the Age of ‘Normalization’; Stefania Ballotto, who studied and graduated in South Africa, with degrees from the universities in Cambridge, England and Udine, Italy, gave a plenary on the topic Learning for Life in the 21st
Century; Paul Braddock, the web manager of Teaching English, the British Council’s website for teachers, delivered a presentation about Teaching for Success – Finding Your Way Through Continuing Professional Development.

I found particularly interesting and enjoyable several sessions: Go iambic, a workshop where Alena Dobrovolná and Jaroslav Suchý illustrated various ways of working with classical poetry and playful approaches to teaching sonnets; Daniela Clarke’s Learning Beyond: Challenging the Teenage Brain and Michael George’s Current Events in Your English Language Classroom, where he introduced the audience to websites with ready lessons about current world events.

There were also some cultural events like the play Should I Stay or Should I Go?, starring Mark Andrews and The Bear Educational Theatre, during the lunch break; an evening concert of Latin and English songs performed by our hosts – Brno
teachers and professors of English who sounded very professional, and, of course, a guided walk through the city with the local university students.

My first conference in a foreign country will definitely be memorable not only because of all these events, but also because of meeting old friends and getting to know new, interesting colleagues.

On a final note, I would like to thank BETA Committee for the opportunity to officially represent our English teachers’ association in Brno.
Theater in English as a Foreign Language – a Way of Building Student’s Personality

Diana Velcheva-Emmanouilidou

"Theater - a higher instance of solutions to life issues." – Alexander Herzen

"We should never forget that the theatrical scene serves as a nationwide school." Carlo Gottsi

“Yes, this world is a scene, where all people are actors and everyone has a moment to come in and come out." – William Shakespeare

Thinkers of different nationalities and historical times, actors and audiences have been trying to define one of the world’s most ancient arts - theater. It is not accidental that many authors describe it as "a magic". Yes, theater is a magic, it is art, passion, love at a first glance, beauty and perfection. Theater is a quest for higher dimensions which gives wings to the spirit and elevates the personality to another

Diana Velcheva-Emmanouilidou is a teacher in Dreamers Private Secondary School, Varna, Bulgaria. She has a diploma in teaching English language as a foreign language from Shumen University and a Cambridge English TKT Certificate. Diana is the second-prize winner of the 9th Round of BETA Lesson Plan Competition. E-mail: sheherezada7@yahoo.co.uk
level of existence.

Theatrical art has a positive spiritual influence on children. In order to develop their abilities, it is necessary to provide an environment of optimal interaction which best meets pupils' age characteristics to ensure their active creativity. In my English classes, I am trying to provide such an interaction environment. The theater in English links the art to life activities by forming and complementing the layers of the personality of every single child.

“A Midsummer Night’s Dream” was an English-language project at Dreamers Private Secondary School in Varna, Bulgaria. It was based on the author's adaptation of the play for children, with choreography matching their age. Its aim was to inspire the children, through the world of art, to learn about the ancient and present etiquette and manners, English language and its development as well as dances, mystical beliefs and even the history of Ancient Greece. My students’ participation in “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” at the Puppet Theater – Varna helped them get acquainted with various topics of school subjects, ethics, aesthetics, creativity, theatrical acting, English language, and also brought them a lot of positive emotions.
There were several stages of the project. First, the children were introduced to Shakespeare's work and its historical context; they learned about the dress, etiquette and manners at the time the work was written (1590-1596). Next, we watched together the movie „A Midsummer Night’s Dream“. Then, the right music, dances and clothes for the play were chosen, and we were ready to start rehearsing.

The play was performed at the Ninth International Children’s Art Festival in English and Children’s Creativity "The World in Children's Hands" in Balchik, Bulgaria, which aims to promote "excellent work, great achievements, unconditional ability to inspire and encourage students to do their best." Our performance won second place in the category "Drama Art".

My students’ participation in the project stimulated their cognitive and emotional development, and motivated them enourmously. It is an innovative teaching method, which builds responsibility, self-confidence, builds characters. The art classes also contributed to the optimizing of the student’s relationships with the school, teachers and classmates.
Being part of a theater project not only elevates learner’s curiosity, but also fosters responsibility and boosts self-confidence. That is why, it is of a great importance for young people to be involved in this art and to become part of the great magic of the theater.
Interview with

Tanya Bikova
Interviews Caroline Murphy

Caroline is from Portland, Maine and graduated from the University of Maine at Farmington. From 2016-2017, she was a Fulbright/America for Bulgaria English Teaching Assistant and currently serves as the Communications Director of the BEST Foundation. She is a teacher, an aspiring poet, and a lover of tea and traveling.

Tanya:

Thank you very much, Caroline, for agreeing to this interview. You come from the state of Maine, USA and have been in Bulgaria for a little over a year now. How did you decide to come to our country in the first place?

Caroline Murphy:

I came to Bulgaria last year as a Fulbright/America for Bulgaria Foundation English Teaching Assistant, and I applied for Bulgaria because I wanted to experience living in a place very different from where I grew up in the United States. I also...
really fell in love with Bulgaria while working on my Fulbright application because it seemed like a beautiful country with a lively and fascinating culture.

**Tanya:**
You’ve been an English Teaching Assistant (ETA) in a high school but now you work at the English Language Institute (ELI) at AUBG, Blagoevgrad. How do like your new job? When did you understand that you would like to pursue a career in teaching English?

**Caroline Murphy:**
I love my new job! Working with many different groups of students is very exciting. I’ve known I wanted to be a teacher since I was a child, and decided to pursue teaching English once I applied to college in the U.S. because I’ve always loved language and reading and wanted to give back to the community in a way that let me share those interests.

**Tanya:**
Besides teaching at the ELI you are also involved in several other projects, one of them being BEST. For many high school teachers of English in Bulgaria (including me) this is something new, so could you tell us more about this foundation and your responsibilities there?

**Caroline Murphy:**
The BEST Foundation is a nonprofit organization that helps Bulgarian high schoolers build public speaking skills through speech and debate tournaments. Our students participate in 5 events: Original Oratory, Prose, Poetry, Duo, and
World Schools Debate, and through these events they build confidence, develop leadership skills, and practice English in a fun, competitive, and supportive environment. Our tournaments bring together students from all over Bulgaria, and we have even helped students attend international competitions in the USA! I’m currently the Communications Director for BEST, so I’m in charge of managing BEST’s social media presence as well as sharing our students’ successes with the community through newsletters and press releases. I’m just one part of an amazing team of Bulgarians and Americans working together to help students reach their full potential. You can find out more about BEST on our website www.bestfoundation.bg, and follow us on Twitter (@bestfoundation) or Facebook.

Tanya:
Taking part in a BEST competition sounds exciting! Apart from love for the English language, creativity and courage, what else is needed to be successful at a BEST competition? How would you describe your experience with BEST up to now?

Caroline Murphy:
My experience with BEST has never been anything less than incredibly positive. I coached the team at my high school last year and had so much fun working with the students on their speeches and performances, watching their confidence grow, and seeing them blossom into leaders. Now that I’m on the Management Team, I’m working on everything behind-the-scenes, and I’m lucky to have the chance to help this organization that I love to grow even bigger. To be successful at a BEST competition you should bring a positive attitude, be open to new experiences, and get ready to have a lot of fun!
**Tanya:**
What is the role of new technologies in teaching and learning English, in your opinion?

**Caroline Murphy:**
Technology has the ability to connect us with a vast amount of international resources – something that is essential in learning any language. We also communicate so much differently than we used to because of new technology, and so using those new forms of communication to enhance English language learning is important for teaching in a way that is modern and relevant.

**Tanya:**
Do you have any hobbies/interests outside your teaching career?

**Caroline Murphy:**
I love traveling more than anything – I’ve been to 12 countries so far and I have a long list of places I want to go next! I’m also an aspiring poet and really enjoy relaxing with a cup of tea and a good book.

**Tanya:**
How do you like Blagoevgrad and Bulgaria so far? Did you experience any culture shock when you first arrived?

**Caroline Murphy:**
Even though I think I handled the transition to a new country pretty well, there was certainly some culture shock! Getting accustomed to trying to communicate
in a new language was a big adjustment, and it took me a long time to figure out how the trains work here! The school system in Bulgaria is also very different from the one in the U.S., but it’s been a good learning experience for me to get sorted with the whole thing.

Tanya:
What are your plans for the future?

Caroline Murphy:
In the future I hope to attend graduate school for Education Policy and work for an organization that improves educational equality in public schools in the United States. I also want to keep traveling, teaching, writing, and growing as a person through new and exciting experiences.

Tanya:
Thank you once again for sharing what it is like to live and work in a foreign country. I hope you will choose to stay more here.
A Leaf

Helen Bar-Lev

A leaf
floating on the water
down the river
past the border
observes the clouds
sees the fishes,
like a two-way mirror,
swirls in circles
ripples and bubbles
bumps down rapids
weightless and will-less,
it floats without protest,
to wherever the river
takes it

I am this leaf
floating on Life’s river,
across borders
to different adventures,
sometimes above the water,
sometimes dunked,
sometimes happy,
sometimes hapless,
oberving the beauty
absorbing the sadness,
watching the world’s madness

Almost at the end
of this swirling journey
as the river trickles
and disappears
and the sun shrivels me
and I crunch
into nothingness

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Helen Bar-LEV, born in New York in 1942, holds a B.A. in Anthropology, has lived in Israel for 46 years and has had nearly 100 exhibitions of her landscape paintings, 34 of which were one-woman shows. Six poetry collections, all illustrated by Helen. Her poems and artwork have appeared in numerous online and print anthologies. She is the Amy Kitchener senior poet laureate and was nominated for the Pushcart Prize in 2013. She is the recipient of the Homer European Medal for Poetry and Art. Helen is Assistant to the President of Voices Israel. She lives in Metulla, Israel. www.helenbarlev.com
Forthcoming Events in the World of ELT

52nd Annual IATEFL Conference, Brighton 2018
PCEs 9th April 2018
Conference and Exhibition 10th - 13th April 2018

For further information, visit:
https://conference.iatefl.org/

IATEFL monthly webinars

For further information, visit: http://www.iatefl.org/web-events/webinars

SIG Webinars

For further information, visit: http://www.iatefl.org/web-events/sig-webinars
TESOL 2018
Chicago, Illinois
27–30 March 2018
Sustaining Dialogues Across the TESOL Community

For information visit: http://www.tesol.org/convention2017/tesol-2018-call-for-proposals

TESOL Online Courses & Virtual Seminars

For information visit:

http://www.tesol.org/attend-and-learn/online-courses-seminars

BETA Partners’ Forthcoming Events

BETA members can attend the conferences for the registration fee paid by the members of the Host Associations

- **25th TESOL Northern Thrace Jubilee International Conference ‘Overcoming Obstacles Shaping the future’,** Thessaloniki, 23-25 February 2018
- **16th ELTA Serbia Conference ‘The Teacher’s Guide through ELT Galaxy’,** Belgrade, 11-12 May 2018
Writing for the BETA E-Newsletter

Have you ever wondered if you should write an article for the E-Newsletter of BETA?

- Please DO! Your contribution may act as a springboard for discussions, inspiration for colleagues or facilitate the work of fellow teachers!

What exactly do you have to do?

If you feel you have something you would like to share:

- Send us your article in MS Word format.
- Send us a photo of you (in jpeg format) and short biographical information (about 50 words) which will accompany your article.
- You will receive feedback from us within 10 days of your submission.
- Please, check the deadlines and the topics of the forthcoming issues. Note that the topics announced are just illustrative; if you would like to submit an article on a different topic, please do. It will be considered for publishing.
- We are looking forward to your contributions.

For further information contact: beta.iateflbg@gmail.com
Notes for Contributors

- Your article must have not been previously published and should not be under consideration for publication elsewhere.
- The length of your article may vary - short contributions of 300 – 800 words are as good as long ones.
- Electronic submission of your article is preferred to the following e-mail address: beta.iateflbg@gmail.com
- Text of the article: Calibri, 14 points, with 1.5 spacing.
- Headings and subheading: Calibri, 24 points, bold, centred; first letter capitalized.
- Author names and title as well as contact details should be submitted in a separate file accompanying the article.
- About 50 words of biographical data should be included.
- New paragraphs – to be indicated with one separate line.
- Referencing should follow the APA referencing style.
- References in the text should be ordered alphabetically and contain the name of the author and the year of publication, e.g. (Benson, 1993; Hudson, 2008).
- Quotations have to include the relevant page number(s), e.g. (Peters, 2006:76).
- Tables, figures or diagrams should be numbered accordingly and included in the relevant part of the text. Each should have an explanatory caption.
- The editors will not return any material submitted, but they reserve the right to make editorial changes.
Established 1991 in Sofia, BETA seeks to build a network of ELT professionals on a national and regional (Southeast Europe) level and establish the association as a recognized mediator between educators and state bodies, public and other organizations.

BETA members are English teaching professionals from all educational sectors in Bulgaria – primary, secondary and tertiary, both state and private. BETA activities include organizing annual conferences, regional seminars and workshops; information dissemination; networking with other teachers’ associations and NGOs in Bulgaria and abroad; exchange of representatives with teachers’ associations from abroad.

We are on the web:

http://www.beta-iatefl.org/

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