

**APPROACHES TO TEACHING WORLD LITERATURE IN THE
INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE DIPLOMA PROGRAM: A
NARRATIVE INQUIRY**

by

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Abstract

This research investigates approaches to teaching world literature in the International Baccalaureate (IB) English A program. Reading world literature can connect students with experiences outside their own, and build bridges between different cultures, times, and places. This research suggests practices for the world literature classroom that help students foster understanding between cultures and an awareness of multiple perspectives, and supports the IB aim of creating “a better and more peaceful world” (IB, 2009). Combining literature review with narrative interviews of eleven IB English teachers, the research also articulates challenges to teaching world literature (the enduring power of the literary canon, difficulties of working in translation, prior knowledge of students, limitations of schools and curricula) as well as potential benefits of reading world literature (self awareness, increased empathy, connection to other places and times). The findings suggests that to meet the international and peace aims of the program the IB should take measures to increase the diversity of texts taught in the Works in Translation component of the course and provide additional resources for classroom teachers to engage with new texts outside the traditional canon, with a particular emphasis on the inclusion of Indigenous and post-colonial texts. These approaches will allow students to interact with a broader range of stories and experiences, and contribute to the possibility of a better and more peaceful world.

Preface

The UBC Behavioral Research Ethics Board approved this research as minimal risk. Full research approval was granted on March 6th 2012. The approval certificate number is: UBC Ethics Approval H12-00386.

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Dedication

For all my teachers, and all my students.

And to Mark who allows me to be both.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Literature transported me to other worlds, other experiences... it enabled me to imagine things that I had never encountered such as the mill in an English village or the Court of Chancery in London... literature could provide one with a space of thinking outside the strictures of codes and custom. (Gikandi, 2012, p. 9)

Simon Gikandi opened the January 2012 edition of *PMLA* with the two questions his grandmother asked when he began to study literature: “what is this thing called literature? What work does it do?” (p. 9). Gikandi’s editorial uses a biographical and theoretical approach to answer this question and concludes that literature is like a lamp that “enables the encounter with the text, which in turn opens up the world.” He continues the metaphor saying that for him, “literature has been the lamp of knowledge, a symbol of enlightenment and a path to immeasurable freedom” (p. 20).

The questions of Gikandi’s grandmother resonated deeply with me in my search for meaning as a teacher of literature and a student of literacy education. My research stems from a broad and enduring question: how can teaching and learning make the world a better place? Throughout my study and reading I have narrowed the question to a more specific investigation: how can the process of reading and interacting with texts help students connect to and appreciate multiple perspectives in the world around them?

The potential of literature to open hearts and minds is often cited and has been explained in different ways, from a psychoanalytic perspective Holland (1968), to neuropsychological Holland (2004), to deeply personal Adiche (2009), to political Beck

(2005); Elkins & Luke (1999); Freire (1970, 2000). The belief in the power of literature is so strong that it has become an issue of national political debate for instance, in the U.S. The decision of the Tucson, Arizona school board to cut their Mexican American Studies program received national media attention in the spring of 2012. In that case, even the presence of certain texts in the classroom was perceived as a threatening force. One of these banned texts was Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which suggests that the impact of reading is recognized both by those in power and those who challenge power.

Reading can be an act of empowerment, inspiration, escape, or connection. In this research I am interested in ways to teach reading that help students develop international understanding. This investigation stems from my interest in connecting literary study with the real world and my experiences teaching in the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program (IBDP) where the curriculum demands sophisticated academic engagement, and hopes to develop global mindedness in students and peace in the world. I believe if students can use literature to make connections to experiences beyond their own, they will be taking an important step towards the empathy and generosity needed to make the world a better place. I think teachers have an important and difficult role in fostering these connections and opening up new perspectives and points of view.

Autobiography: Situating the researcher

When I began teaching, I would say to interested friends and family members, "I am convinced that education is the answer to making the world a better place, and as a teacher I want to be a part of making that happen." Now with six years of classroom

teaching under my belt, my aims have become slightly more focused. Last September I gave my English students a welcome letter that said:

This year I'm hoping to share my passion for language and culture with you. While I don't know your past experiences in English classes, it is my personal goal that this class will help you find your strengths as a writer, a book you fall in love with as a reader, and ways to use your voice and your ears effectively as you communicate with others.

Reading that invitation I realized that its contents, while important, were remarkably individualistic and detached from the broader world. Broader concepts of looking beyond the self to make the world a better place seemed to have disappeared from my practice. My students appeared to want self-improvement and academic success, and I wanted to help them meet their goals.

Working within the rigorous International Baccalaureate program I found my energy was directed towards teaching academic skills and preparing students for assessment tasks. Though the IB learner profile called for students to be caring, open, and reflective, I was struggling to explicitly teach these alongside the more concrete curricular requirements. I still wanted to be a part of making the world a better place as much as I did when I began my teaching practice, and the world appears to need critical, compassionate, engaged, and open minded citizens as much or more than it ever has, but I was confused about just how this global engagement should be encouraged. My challenge in classroom teaching came from the realization that simply being with students and the curriculum and desperately wanting them to connect with the world around them wasn't sufficient for all students to make that connection. So I began this

research to look at approaches to teaching literature for engagement with different contexts and experiences. In this way I hope to bridge ideas of academic and social development.

The curriculum and mission of the school where I teach also informs this research project. I work at one of thirteen United World Colleges, international schools that have a shared mission to bring together students from all over the world so they can learn about each other and develop leadership skills to foster peace, justice and sustainability. This desire for students to connect with diversity, and to understand many points of view, is central to the aims and work of the college. In this way, my research focus complements the existing aims of the school and the curriculum and the mission to “make education a force to unite people, nations and cultures for peace and a sustainable future” (UWC, 2011).

As a teacher at a United World College working with the IB program, my students come from a wide range of backgrounds and are expected to read diverse literary texts throughout their two year course, allowing them to engage with authors from different continents, works from different times, and texts originally written in a language other than English. The IB hopes this diversity of course content will encourage “an appreciation of the different perspectives of people from other cultures, and how these perspectives construct meaning” (IB, 2011, p. 9). This research represents my quest to develop curricular ways to build this appreciation.

Purpose

This research aims to articulate ways I, as well as other teachers, can engage students with literature that represents different perspectives, places and times. Through a review of relevant literature, and interviews with experienced IB teachers about their experiences and reflections on teaching world literature, I have gathered stories, lessons plans, and suggestions for how and why multiple perspectives should be taught in the IB DP classroom.

Focus

This research is focused within the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program as it has an explicit aim to “create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect” (IB, 2011, 5) and develop learners who are academically rigorous and also open-minded, caring and reflective (IB Learner Profile, 2008). This broader aim connects to my hopes about education as a force for peace in the world, and provides an example of teachers working to meet this broad ideal alongside the concrete teaching of their subject area. Several researchers have investigated the academic focus of the IB (Mayer, 2008; Saavedra, 2011) and recent studies have investigated the connections of the program to international mindedness (Rodway, 2008), peace education (van Oord, 2008; Bent 2009) and cosmopolitanism (Loh 2012). Rodway addresses the IB’s own definition of international mindedness, while van Oord works from Ian Harris’ typology of peace education where the IB represents peace education through international education. Bent’s research employs Johan Galtung’s concept of negative and positive peace, where positive peace is more than just the absence of conflict, but also requires justice and equal opportunities. In her discussion of cosmopolitanism in education Loh envisions a type of teaching that transcends national boundaries and allows students to see the world from both a local and a global perspective.

Of these studies, both Bent and Loh focus on the possibilities of promoting global mindedness and peace education within the English A curriculum. They address the power and possibility of literature to engage the imagination and ignite the heart particularly within World Literature/Works in Translation section of the English A program. Bent, Loh, and van Oord all suggest that this component of the course presents

the greatest possibility to connect with other cultures and experiences and lays the groundwork for students to develop intercultural understanding and respect.¹ My research focuses on this part of the course, as this section, referred to as Part 1, most explicitly asks students to connect with experiences and stories outside their immediate context.

This part of the English A program requires teachers to select several works from a lengthy “Prescribed List of Works in Translation” supplied by the IB. In studying the works, students are meant to be sensitive to both the cultural and literary elements of the work. This section of the curriculum culminates in an externally assessed essay where students explore “a literary aspect of one work, informed by some understanding of the cultural underpinnings of that work” (IB, p. 11). The task is accompanied by a brief reflective piece where students show how their understanding of cultural and contextual elements was developed through class discussion and activities.

Using semi-structured interviews with experienced teachers of IB English Literature, I asked about their perspectives and stories and lesson ideas on teaching and reading world literature in the IB context. I hope these reflections and teaching ideas will be of use for other teachers of literature, both within and outside of the IB program.

¹ The IB clearly concurs as the Course Guide states: The IB’s commitment to intercultural understanding is particularly evident in part 1 of the syllabus, in which students are introduced to other cultural perspectives through the study of works in translation, selected from a list that contains works in more than 30 languages. Through the study of these works, students gain a deeper understanding of how works of literature are an important part of their cultural contexts and how they reflect or describe experiences and values (IBa, 2011, p. 8).

Context: (Curriculum)

History

The International Baccalaureate was founded in Geneva, Switzerland in 1968 to provide “a common pre-university curriculum and a common set of external examinations for students in schools throughout the world,” and to provide students with “a truly international education” (IB, 2012). Today the IB works with 3,461 schools in 143 countries offering programs to 1,045,000 students aged 3 to 19 years (Ibid). The majority of IB schools use English as a working language (2,001 English to 27 Spanish and 255 French respectively (Statistical Bulletin 2011, p. 6) and 51 percent of IB schools are in the Americas compared to 33.68% in Africa, Europe and the Middle East [a broad category] and 14.94% in Asia (Ibid, p. 7).

In 1993 the IB expanded to offer a Middle Years Program (MYP) and in 1997 added a Primary Years Program (PYP) in order to offer an “educational continuum” from ages 3-19 (IB.org). The three programs share “an emphasis on intellectual, personal, emotional, and social growth” and address “all domains of knowledge, involving the major traditions of learning in languages, humanities, sciences, mathematics and the arts” (ibid). The three programs also share a learner profile stating an aim to “develop internationally minded people who, recognizing their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet, help to create a better and more peaceful world” (IB.org) (See Appendix D: IB Learner Profile).

Of the three programs, the Diploma Program has the greatest focus on academic achievement, preparing students for admittance to, and success in, institutions of higher learning around the world. Students study “two modern languages (or a modern language

and a classical language); a humanities or social science subject; an experimental science; mathematics; one of the creative arts,” and take a minimum of three subjects at the higher level (240 classroom hours, compared to 150 classroom hours for standard level subjects (IB 2011a, p. 3). My study addresses the tension between these aims of “making a better and more peaceful world” and preparing students for rigorous intellectual tasks. For instance, Bent’s research with English A teachers in a Peruvian IB school (2009) suggested that some teachers feel the assessment components of the program overshadow the social justice elements. My research focus is on one of the six IB subject areas, Language A, in English, a course of literature and language study for students who are experienced using English in an academic context (IB 2011a, p. 4).

Curricular Change: Language A

This research investigates the practices of teaching world literature within the Language A curriculum, which is concluding a process of transition, as the outgoing course, Language A1, graduated a final cohort in May of 2012. This course was replaced in September 2011 with a suite of three new courses: Literature, Language and literature, and Literature and performance (interdisciplinary subject). In all three courses:

The study of texts, both literary and non-literary, provides a focus for developing an understanding of how language works to create meanings in a culture, as well as in particular texts. All texts may be understood according to their form, content, purpose and audience, and through the social, historical, cultural and workplace contexts that produce and value them. Responding to, and producing texts promotes an understanding of how language sustains or challenges ways of thinking and being (IB 2011a, p. 4).

As the IB language curriculum is in transition, I have focused on reflections from the outgoing course, Language A1, that are relevant for the teaching of world literature (now called literature in translation) in the new Language A family of courses. The world literature component of A1 remained fairly similar in the Language A: Literature course, with students studying three texts in translation,² and writing a written task. Changes from the outgoing course include the addition of a reflective statement (see above) and an increased requirement that students participate in an interactive oral activity to address cultural and contextual considerations of the literary works. The new course also formalizes the pre-writing process, requiring that each student write a piece of supervised writing following the interactive oral for each text. This writing is meant to springboard students into the final written task, a 1200-1500 word essay on a literary element of one of the three works. This essay is externally assessed and is worth 25% of the student's final IB grade for the course.

To a certain extent this new course, with its more explicit pedagogy, addresses some of the questions I set out to explore about ways teachers might help students connect to texts. Yet despite creating strict outlines for how time is to be apportioned to each section of the process, the curriculum guide is still vague on how teachers might structure these elements in their own classes and what connections to peace and a better world students might develop through these activities. My hope is to add to the somewhat dry curriculum guide the reflections, stories and ideas of teachers, to bring the teaching of world literature to life, and suggest some complexities not present in the formal text.

In my research I also interviewed some teachers of the new English A: Language

² Two at the standard level.

and Literature course which balances the study of literary texts with the study of cultural texts, including mass media, and texts looking at language and gender, race, politics, power, and other dynamics. In addition to the general goals of the IB Language curricula, the Language and literature course aims to “develop in students an understanding of how language, culture and context determine the ways in which meaning is constructed in texts” and to “encourage students to think critically about the different interactions between text, audience and purpose” (IB, 2011a, p. 9). These aims reinforce the importance of students stepping outside their own experience or first impressions to engage with the complexity of texts and contexts. Though the world literature section of this course is reduced to one text in translation³ the focus on multiple perspectives is interspersed throughout. In this way, teacher reflections from the outgoing A1 course, and on the new Literature and Language and Literature courses come together to generate points of comparison and contrast in pedagogy and practice of teaching texts, contexts, and perspectives.

Sites of study

The primary focus of this research is on the experiences of teaching world literature in the English A program, and of teachers’ reflections on classroom practice. Though I have not adopted a comparative case study approach, several teachers mentioned the circumstances of their individual schools, and compared their work to that of teachers with a similar course load in other schools. The contrast in my study came

³ With the option of a second text in translation at the higher level.

between public schools offering the IBDP, and full-scholarship international schools offering the same program in a different environment. The major differences cited by teachers were class size (26-30 students in public school classes, and 12-18 in international schools), ethnic and cultural diversity of the student body (greater by nationality in international schools), and access to funds and resources for text choices and enrichment opportunities (perceived to be greater in international schools, though teachers in all settings expressed concerns in this area.) Irrespective of these differences, teachers in both settings raised a similar range of ideas, challenges, and experiences of teaching world literature.

I am interested in how different approaches to reading texts can help students make connections between their own lives and the outside world and build from these connections and empathy and appreciation for other ways of seeing. My reflections on the needs of students and the curriculum (and my hopes for the world at large) suggest that skills to analyze and appreciate multiple perspectives in texts, and beyond texts, are some of the most important skills students can have.

While the IB guide draws few explicit connections between building a better and more peaceful world and specific pedagogical practices, the literature courses do require students to recognize and appreciate different perspectives on and within texts. Certainly this aim is present in the new language and literature curriculum where students are expected to analyze texts through a variety of lenses, and “demonstrate an ability to evaluate conflicting viewpoints within and about a text” (IB, 2011b, p.10). My interviews with teachers suggest that reading world literature can allow students to connect to and evaluate multiple perspectives within a text but also connect to multiple

perspectives in the world.

As participants in a global society, students need intellect to understand and evaluate multiple points of view, and empathy and self-awareness to build connections to experiences different from their own. If teachers can foster these connections in their classroom practice they will be teaching to make the world a better place. I hope this research contributes to these kinds of teaching practice and ways of being in the world.

Chapter 2: Investigations: Literature Review

While this research has a close focus on the study of world literature within the English A International Diploma Program, the broader field of scholarship on world literature forms the intellectual and philosophical foundations for this investigation. Through a brief overview of the history of world literature and of the challenges and critiques of the field, I hope to provide context for current teaching practices. In addition, I identify the construction of world literature in the IB context and recent studies that challenge the aims and scope of the IB world literature program.

What is world literature?

Though the debate over the definition and role of world literature is current within contemporary scholarship, the idea of world literature is not new. While Goethe is often credited with coining the term *weltliteratur* in his conversations with his protégé Johann Peter Eckermann, Goethe scholar John Pizer suggests the term's first recorded use predates 1827. Therefore, credit should be given to Christoph Martin Wieland or August Ludwig Schlözer who used the term at least fourteen years before Goethe (2006). Nevertheless, Goethe's focus on reading works in other languages, and even on reading his own works in translation, gave weight to the idea of reading beyond a national or linguistic setting. In "What is a world? On world literature as a world-making activity" Pheng Cheah argues that Goethe presented *weltliteratur* as a process of exchange and mirroring. This process allowed new perspectives on German literature as well as on texts from further afield. Goethe was interested in world literature as a series of transactions; as Cheah argues, he was interested in the ways the world "arises in these intervals or mediating processes" (2008, p. 28).

Interestingly, Marx and Engels presented a similarly cosmopolitan argument in *The Communist Manifesto* (1847) when they argued that with political interdependence of nations should come interdependent intellectual production. They posited that “the intellectual creations of individual nations become common property. National one-sidedness and narrow mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures, there arises a world literature” (p. 4). The inevitability of global exchange as described by Marx and Engels seems to have come to fruition in our interconnected modern world, but with increased connection, communication, and technology, the act of defining world literature has become an even greater enterprise.

David Damrosch, the preeminent current scholar on the reading and teaching of world literature, defines world literature as encompassing “all literary works that circulate beyond their culture of origin, either in translation or in their original language (2003, p. 4). He goes on to argue that it is possible for readers of world literature to overcome the challenges of culturally specific literary traditions without devolving into a flat and oversimplified global melting pot of understanding. By arguing that world literature is “a mode of circulation and of reading,” Damrosch presents a didactic and critical approach to reading wide ranging texts (p. 5).

In the definitions above it becomes difficult to define world literature without also addressing what happens in the process of reading world literature. How the reader and the text interact and the meanings that are imposed and reflected between the two, can have wide ranging results. It seems Goethe had high hopes for the reading of world literature when he stated: “The idea is not that nations shall think alike, but that they shall

learn how to understand each other, and, if they do not care to love one another, at least that they will learn to tolerate one another” (Goethe, in Cheah, p. 28). This hope that by reading other stories we will better understand others, and thereby create a more peaceful world, becomes an assumption that underpins many rationales for reading works from different contexts and times.

Indeed John Pizer in his book, *The Idea of World Literature: History And Pedagogical Practice* (2006) argues that it is not how we define the category of world literature that is important, but how we conceptualize the idea of world literature that is of interest. While some early definitions of world literature focused on non-English European writers in translation, and reflected a very western sense of “the world,” later definitions of world literature were set up in contrast to, and sometimes in competition with the western literary canon. In 1960 Werner Friedrich argued that “world literature” failed to encompass much of the world, and might more accurately be dubbed “‘NATO Literatures’ and that even “that would be extravagant’, Friedrich added, “for we do not usually deal with more than one fourth of the 15 NATO-Nations’” (Damrosch, 2009, p. 1). Choo argues that when Third World Literature was introduced as a course in English Departments in the 1960s its aim was to “construct a counter-canon that displayed civilizational differences.” With a focus on the other, this approach “reinforces the west vs. the rest binary that ironically strengthens colonialism as a disciplinary frame” (Choo, p. 57). Conceptualizations such as these are critiqued for being too limited in scope, or too imperialist in interpretation.

Critiques of world literature as a broad category tend to focus on the dangers of flattening perspectives and ignoring oppression by essentializing works and nations into

tidy comparative pieces (Figueria, 2010; Ricard, 2007; Siskind, 2010). Figueria argues that current world literature studies reflect a market-based consumerism that treats the other as a commodity of difference rather than recognize the complexity and richness of texts and contexts. The fear of essentializing echoes concerns raised by Ricard in his “On the Powers and Limits of Literature” where he suggests that world literature is too often driven by the desire for best-sellers and doesn’t reflect the complexity and diversity of nations, regions, and peoples. Siskind critiques a recent text on teaching world literature by arguing, “each of these cultures is thus reduced to a singular essentialized meaning: a traditional Japan that lives on in the West’s imaginary, a tribal Africa that falls victim to the violent social restructuring of colonialism, a Latin America forever doomed to political unrest and the pre-modern identity of private and public domains (p. 354). These examples suggest a continuation of the critique of McLaren & Giroux, in 1992, that pedagogy and language may be sufficient to express difference but insufficient to challenge power dynamics and injustice.

In a transnational and cosmopolitan world, it becomes increasingly difficult and perhaps decreasingly necessary to categorize literature by national or ethnic boundaries. Amitiva Kumar has argued the need for ‘World Bank Literature’, this countercanonical interpretation would mix together “novels with pamphlets, short stories with journalism, memoirs with economic reports” (In Forsdick, 2010, p. 140). Gary Harrison acknowledges this complexity and suggests that a study of world literature should help students appreciate that “national literatures are not static, essentialized entities but dynamic and heterogenous systems participating in in larger transformative global networks of exchange and transformation” (Harrison, in Damrosch, 2009b, p. 214).

Teachers must engage students in conversations that bring this complexity to light.

Moving forward with the study of world literature seems to demand recognition of its complex and sometimes idealistic past. Pizer (2006) argues that the study of any world literature texts should be accompanied or prefaced by the study of the history of the idea of world literature. This contextualization is one way to help readers connect with and challenge assumptions of what they will achieve through engagement with one text.

Another approach to avoid flattening texts with surface comparisons is to adopt Lazarus' view of "local universalisms" and "local cosmopolitanisms" which the reader must situate as best they can. This approach limits the broad assumptions that such reading can generate as readers are not asked to essentialize based on the national elements of the text, but rather to become more specific in situating landscape, community, awareness of self, gender, language and other factors as completely as possible (2011, p. 133-134).

Challenges of Context and Translation

The importance of addressing context and mode are emphasized in the work of Dawes (2012), Lo (2010), Mason (2008), Schlumpf (2011). Dawes argues that by addressing colonialism, the power dynamics of language and translation, and recognizing mode and method, readers can recognize "how power and economic clout of languages impact our readings" and "limit the ability to deeply connect to texts" (p. 294). As an example, Schlumpf presents a comparison of films by Goddard and Guo and argues that the analysis between the texts "only gains interest with careful attention to histories (personal, national, and global), texts (literary and filmic), and languages (French, Chinese, English, and broken English) (p. 7). Scholars who advocate for a fuller reading of mode, complexity, and contexts have high hopes for the practice. Dawes argues if the

practice is developed it may allow readers and writers:

To recover the dignity of the literatures of other cultures and in so doing, enact, not so much the quest for a universal voice or a universal understanding, but one that allows for multiple voices to dialog with each other in ways that can result in understanding and, ultimately, beauty (p. 297).

Throughout the theory of reading world literature, hope for the potential of the venture seems to overwhelm the concerns and limitations of the practice. Many scholars outline the challenges of reading across culture, yet the challenges seem to be outweighed by the possibilities of building connections and elucidating new ways of seeing. The authors cited here consistently argue that the practice of reading world literature is important and worthy of the dedicated effort and attention it demands.

Of all the contextual challenges to reading world literature, the fundamental challenge of crossing languages is perhaps the most formidable. Translation itself presents challenges to the desire for connection across cultures, spaces, and times. Translation has the power to exponentially increase readership and access to texts, but also to reinforce colonial language dynamics and patterns. Schlumf (2009) argues that readers must acknowledge the intermedial context of reading translations, and avoid oversimplifying their context and complexity. Other writers have taken the contextual argument further, most famously Ngugi Wa Thiong'o who saw translation itself as a colonial project, and in 1986 decided not to write his novels in English, but rather in Kikuyu, his first language, a process explained in his essay "Decolonising the Mind."

Yet the power of translation to connect people and stories is immense. Translators dance between worlds, and inhabit "the foreign text from the outside" (Schlumf, p. 2).

Goethe was an advocate of translation, and benefitted from translation both as a writer and reader. In Cheah's analysis, Goethe felt translation "best exemplifies tolerance of particularities because it does not remove, but attempts to bridge differences" (2008, p. 28). It is this hope for tolerance and for bridging, for inspiring individuals to see connections, that I find so inspiring about teaching world literature.

Why teach world literature?

The concept of bridging and building connections is central to many arguments for the reading of world literature. Though the practice is laden with historical baggage and inequality, the potential for connection and empathy remains powerfully strong. As Siskind argues, world literature can be "capable of leading the way towards global peace, the project of a global culture... in which all the emancipatory potential of 'culture' can finally be released" (2010, p. 356). Variations of this vision inspire theorists and teachers of world literature from the hallowed halls of academia, to humble high school corridors.

The most compelling arguments for the study of world literature in the high school setting come from practitioners in the field. Bingen (2002), Downing (2002), Kerschner (2002), and Quereshi (2006) describe the pedagogy and aims of the high school world literature classes they respectively teach. Bingen and Downing both argue that a study of world literature develops self-awareness. In Downing's words, "by exposing our students to different worlds in print, we help them make sense of their own lives as well as the lives of others (p. 51). Kerschner focuses on the ability for students to better understand people and become true world citizens, while Quereshi's course also aims to help students "exude compassion, resiliency, humility and, most importantly, concern." Her social justice aims are further stated in her hope that students will continue to find the

questions that challenge the social structures that perpetuate oppression, hatred, and fear. In this way, world literature goes beyond merely mirroring society to becoming a reflection of students' inner potential to deal with that society” (Quereshi, 2006, p. 39).

I find the idealism of these teachers inspiring. Though they are working outside of the IB, their aims for the students fit within and expand upon the IB aims and purpose for teaching world literature.

World literature in the IB English A program

While the entire IB English A course can be viewed through the broad lens of world literature, the unit of study in the A1 course entitled “World Literature” now renamed “Works in Translation” has the specific focus to appreciate “different perspectives of people from other cultures and to consider the role that culture plays in making sense of literary works” (IB, 2011a, p. 18). In this way the IB uses the idea of a work in translation as a way to ensure that the texts for investigation will show students perspectives and contexts different from their own.

It is interesting to challenge the idea of ‘the other’ in an international curriculum with students, faculty, and schools located in and connected to places all over the world. Perhaps it is useful to adopt Lazarus’ frame to understand that students are interacting with many local internationalisms in every text. For instance, this year I read Ondaatje’s memoir *Running in the Family* with my three classes of English A1 students. We did not read the text as part of the works in translation unit as it was written in English, yet for most of my students the experience of reading this memoir was of reading different perspectives of people from other cultures. The IB requirement that students read works in translation to learn about world literature seems to ignore the broader idea of world

literature, and that literature written in English can come from many cultures and places around the world. The outgoing English A1 course had a troubling nomenclature that drew attention to this misunderstanding, where the “World Literature” section referred only to literature in translation. Yet, particularly with English as a global language, students could read exclusively works written in English and still find a range of texts and perspectives from all five continents. World literature is clearly a broader category than simply works written in a language other than English. This scope and diversity is emphasized somewhat in the new IB courses, as each syllabus must be composed of works from at least three different time periods and two different continents/regions. The nomenclature has also been revised, and the new courses refer to “Works in translation” for the section of translated works, and the curriculum as a whole represents the idea of world literature.

In recent studies focusing on the IB English A program Loh (2012) and Bent (2009) highlight the limitations and possibilities of the world literature program for developing global mindedness and fostering peace education. Loh critiques the assumptions of the IB DP that developing openness may not lead to a further understanding of other cultures but rather may create “a superficial emotional multiculturalism that is effective for teamwork in transnational corporations” rather than fostering deep social change or peace (p. 222). While she argues the IB framework may be parochial and focused on a western humanist tradition, Loh also has great hope for the program. If teachers are supported in challenging the canon and using the process of curriculum construction as “a critical exercise for self-reflection and understanding” then students will engage with the complexity of texts that challenge them to potentially become both “globally mobile and

socially responsive national and world citizens” (Loh, p. 232).

The challenge of teaching global citizenship is further articulated by Suzanne Choo (2011) who argues:

Essentially, the aims of global citizenship centre on the development of tangible, instrumental skills geared towards preparing students to compete in a global world while the aims of responsible citizenship emphasize non-measurable values that promote a climate of critical and reflective stewardship of resources and, more importantly, extend the space of accountability beyond one’s community and nation (p. 54).

Choo’s analysis here mirrors Loh’s in her exasperation with market-based internationalism in the place of a complex, accountable and responsible understanding of the self in the world.

Bent’s research focused on IBDP English teachers and their attitude and approach to peace education in the classroom. Her findings were similar to Loh’s in that, “the academic side of the course overshadows that of the philosophical, which is not uncommon, but means that the assessments become the driving force instead of a larger commitment to social transformation through an education for peace” (p. 66). Despite the IB’s explicit commitment to peace education as an organization, Bent’s research showed limited support for IBDP teachers to implement intentional practices of peace education in their classrooms.

Rodway (2008) also identified these critiques of the IB’s ability to genuinely address global engagement through curriculum in a 2008 thesis about international mindedness in the IB. She concluded that “international mindedness is taken for granted

and not generally a concept that is intentionally considered by teachers during lesson planning” (p. 96). These conclusions suggest that teachers need more support in addressing the fundamental philosophies of the IB, including the concept of international mindedness.

As this chapter reports, world literature is a broad category, which continues to evolve with the advent of new textualities and increasingly complex definitions of nation and identity. Several scholars suggest that an increased focus on the contexts and modes of texts will allow readers to connect with content and characters on a more complex level, rather than simply essentialize works as simple representations of fixed culture. This research suggests that classroom teachers carry the responsibility of teaching students in a way that allows them to recognize complexity and context, and perhaps even to challenge the categorical definitions of world literature itself.

Scholars writing on the IB program itself suggest that the program has not fully recognized these tensions, or supported teachers in addressing the complexity of world literature as a genre. The cosmopolitanism of international school students confounds simple definitions of world literature as representing another geographic region, while the vague aims for peace and a better world are not directly manifested in the structure of courses or assignments.

In contrast to the frustrations expressed about the IB curriculum, classroom teachers who designed their own world literature courses reported on the richness and optimism of teaching world literature. They argue that reading and studying these texts contributes to self-awareness in students as well as connections to other places and times, developing international understanding. In my interviews with teachers some shared these concerns

about the limitations of the IB, while others felt that the process of teaching world literature and exploring texts and contexts in class was sufficient to develop the sensitivity and connection needed for global citizens. My approach to gathering these reflections and ideas from teachers forms the body of the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Preparations: Methodology

In my initial research into approaches to teaching world literature, I was frustrated by the limited examples of specific approaches for teaching world literature in a high school context. Most suggestions I found addressed the topic theoretically. It seemed that a helpful point of entry in this research was to begin with experienced high school teachers and glean some of their reflections and wisdom as a starting point for developing or evolving new curricular approaches. I based my research around a series of eleven qualitative interviews of International Baccalaureate English teachers carried out over a six-week period. In conjunction with these qualitative narrative interviews, I conducted a review of the literature relevant to teaching and reading world literature.

In *Interviewing as Qualitative Research* (2006) Irving Seidman argues that “stories are a way of knowing” and that so much research is done on schooling, but little of it is based on the perspectives of students teachers, administrators, and the people who make up the fabric of the school (p. 7). In interviewing teachers I had a specific interest in hearing their experiences of teaching world literature, of the motivations teachers brought to their classes, and the meanings they made from the intersection of motivation and classroom experience.

Foregrounded throughout my research is the question of how to be of use to my research participants and contribute directly to the teaching community. Though this project stems from an area of particular interest to me, I am aware that in addressing my questions I can also share resources and ideas that will be of use for my colleagues and for other teachers.

My aim for this research was not to determine a single teaching method that

would help all students connect to world literature, but rather to generate a toolbox of ideas and suggestions teachers may choose to draw from in their practice. For this reason a qualitative approach based on stories, classroom reflections and teaching suggestions seemed best suited to answering my research question.

Research design

The research design includes both in-depth qualitative interviews and a detailed literature review. After completing an initial literature review I determined that semi-structured interviews with experienced IB teachers would provide insight and suggestions for practice not currently available to teachers. With this in mind, I developed a research proposal to investigate the teaching practice and reflections of 6-10 interested teachers.

My interview schedule was based around Seidman's (2006) model of in-depth phenomenological interviewing. From Seidman I borrowed the idea that there are three phases of focus for the interview. He argues these phases should be conducted in three separate interviews using the idea of three phases of an interview cycle: from life history, to details of experience, to a reflection on meaning. For my research I used these categories as guides for three phases of the interview, providing context on the teacher's experience, inspiration and background as it relates to world literature, asking specific questions about their teaching practice, and concluding the interview with broad questions about the significance of teaching world literature and works in translation. This approach invited teachers to connect to their past experiences and make meaning in the present context.

After obtaining ethical approval for the study from the University of British Columbia, I contacted the IB departments at three different study sites: two public IB

schools in the lower mainland of British Columbia Canada, and two full scholarship international schools. After seeking the relevant permission within the respective districts/schools, I contacted department heads and sent an email they could forward to their IB teaching faculty (Appendix A). These schools were selected as I had professional connections with each of the IB English Departments and I was interested in hearing the reflections of these teachers on the practice of teaching world literature. The possible complications of backyard research (Glesne, 2011) in choosing study sites connected to my teaching practice are discussed later in this chapter.

Teachers who responded to my initial email with interest received more detailed information about the study, as well as a digital copy of the consent form (Appendix B). At this point I used phone or email to schedule a 30-60 minute interview with the teacher in a time or place convenient to them. At the interview, I reviewed the consent form with participants and also determined if they were comfortable having the interview audio recorded, and if the participants wanted to receive an email copy of the research project upon completion. Throughout the research process, participants had access to contact information for the primary investigator and the UBC Research Ethics office. Participants also had the right to withdraw their participation up until the point of data analysis.

The consent form also detailed that the study was anticipated to be minimal risk as it addressed topics within the professional sphere of teaching and explained that confidentiality would be maintained through the use of pseudonyms. Following each interview all identifiable data was stored securely in a locked drawer, or in a password protected computer account. While there was no remuneration or compensation for participants, it is hoped that the findings will be of interest and use for the participant

teachers in their classrooms.

Participants

All eleven participants in the study were teachers with at least one year of experience teaching the IB English A program. The teachers came from four different schools, two public schools in the lower mainland of British Columbia, Canada, and two United World College international schools.

Though in several cases I contacted other teachers at the respective study sites, all participants but one were either current or past colleagues of mine, or fellow graduate students at the University of British Columbia. Given that I conducted my interviews in June, a very busy time for most teachers, I suspect the teachers who had some personal connection with the interviewer elected to participate to be of use to my research and because they had a sense of, and an interest in, the investigation. As a teacher who has disregarded research requests in the past, I must admit a personal connection would be much more compelling to me than a seemingly anonymous request particularly at a hectic time of year.

The teachers in the sample were primarily selected based on IB teaching experience. This was the homogeneous element I wanted to maintain throughout the research. Though I was not aiming for a representative gender sample, the group of eleven participants was divided between six male and five female teachers. The teachers' experiences with the IB English A program ranged from one year to over 20 including several teachers who worked as examiners and engaged in curriculum development. Interviewing eleven participants allowed me a depth and range of opinions and ideas, but also limited the data to an amount I could successfully compile and synthesize.

Research questions

My main research question asks: What approaches to teaching world literature help students connect with experiences different from their own? More specifically this research focuses on the teaching of the International Baccalaureate English program: both A1 last exam May 2012) and A: Literature (first exam May 2013). As the IB Language A curriculum guide states, the program aims to “encourage, through the study of texts, an appreciation of the different perspectives of people from other cultures, and how these perspectives construct meaning” (IB, 2011a, p. 9). My focused research question then asks: How do IB teachers cultivate “an appreciation of the different perspectives of people from other cultures” and foster understanding between cultures to support the IB aim of creating “a better and more peaceful world?”

In the interview schedule I also asked questions about the experiences as readers and students that teachers brought to the classroom and the challenges and benefits they’ve encountered teaching world literature. A complete list of questions can be found in Appendix C: Interview Schedule.

Data collection procedures

During the interviews I used a semi-structured schedule asking participants questions about their life history, experiences teaching works in translation, and their reflections on the meaning of their experiences (see Appendix C for interview schedule). The interviews lasted from 35 to 70 minutes and most interview subjects replied robustly to the questions at hand. In addition to the open-ended questions I also collected more concrete data, specifically, suggestions of IB approved texts that teachers had enjoyed teaching and would recommend for use in other classrooms. This research question

stemmed from my experience in workshops and social settings where teachers are often very keen to get text suggestions from their colleagues.

The interviews took place in classrooms during breaks, in department prep spaces, in coffee shops after school, and in participants' homes. Due to the broadly professional nature of the conversations, the interview participants seemed comfortable speaking in these different spaces. A few interviews seemed rushed due to a lack of time, while others sprawled on, addressing wider ranging topics.

In some interviews I adjusted the sequence of questions to suit the environment or the teacher's experience, not asking questions about the A1 program to a teacher who had only taught A, for example, or rephrasing a question for a teacher who didn't connect to the first question. Asking open-ended questions, I found teachers generally responded ardently. As I was interviewing teachers of English, they were also quick to correct me on the phrasing of my questions and the etymology of certain words. This suggested to me an openness and comfort on behalf of the participants, and lent a frank and honest tone to the conversations.

Throughout the interview process I was overwhelmed by the generosity of ideas presented to me, the care teachers place in their practice, and the passion and humour necessitated by the teaching profession. One of my interview notes reads "English teachers love being interviewed" (June, 2012). While this is clearly a grand statement, I did feel fortunate throughout my interview process to talk with people who were so passionate and knowledgeable in their field, while remaining keen and curious about continuing to develop their practice.

Using a form of member checking, all participants were sent the fragments of

dialogue and ideas that were selected for inclusion in the final synthesis. At this point participants had the opportunity to clarify their words or phrasing before inclusion in the published research.

Concurrent with the data analysis I continued the literature review process seeking examples and ideas that would support and challenge the outcomes from the interviews. I also used this time to follow-up on text and resource suggestions raised by teacher participants. These form a list of suggested texts included in the Data Analysis section.

Data analysis

As a researcher, I began the first phase of data analysis in the process of transcribing the interviews. Spending the dedicated time turning an audio recording into a complete transcript, gave me the opportunity to interact closely with each conversation, and to reflect and remember the ideas and the emotions expressed in each interview. I transcribed the entire text of each interview, including pauses, questions and tangents, so I would have a complete record to begin my analysis. Kvale (1996) argues that punctuating the transcript is a beginning point of analysis, and must be done thoughtfully. Certainly I found the act of transcribing gave me space to really listen to the words of the interview participants and begin to notice areas of commonality and difference in their responses.

To continue the process of analysis I followed the method outlined in Seidman, first reading over each transcript and highlighting anything that stood out to me as interesting. In this process I found it helpful to trust my instincts as a teacher and researcher and to err on the side of inclusivity. After the first round of highlighting I wrote a list of general

categories I'd begun to notice: the influence of a teacher's biography, specific approaches to teaching texts, challenges and benefits of the new curriculum, recommended works, and challenges to teaching works in translation. In this way I followed Huberman and Miles' (1994, in Palys and Atchison, 2008) approach by noting patterns and themes and clustering ideas together to see connections. In forming the clusters I used my original questions, "what texts do you recommend" "how do you sequence your classes" as guides, but I also let new categories emerge from the data. On a second reading of the highlighted sections of the transcripts I found it fairly straightforward to connect ideas under these broad categories (*Teacher biographies and frameworks, Approaches and activities for teaching, Recommended texts, and Challenges of teaching world literature*). Within the broad categories, sub categories began to appear, finding commonalities with and points of comparison between and within interviews.

From this point it became possible to group and articulate the data clearly. In some cases I elected to use block quotations to give the reader a sense of the speaker's voice. In other cases I synthesized several voices that expressed similar sentiments about a text, an experience, or an approach to teaching. Using this combined thematic/narrative approach I hoped to strike a balance between letting the words of participants speak for themselves, and shaping the findings into more concrete categories. I hope the findings will be accessible, engaging, and thought provoking for readers.

Limitations

As I have ongoing professional and social relationships with many of the participants, this research could be classified as backyard research (Glesne, 2011, p. 41). I entered the research very cognizant of the possible relational challenges of working as

researcher and colleague. Despite the possible room for conflict, I felt the professional nature of the interview and the focused scope of the topic limited serious conflicts of interest. The conversations I had with teachers were collegial in nature and focused on their personal stories, classroom experiences and reflections on practice. My aims were to capture these collegial conversations and share the findings with other teachers, to further conversations about teaching practice.

As a young female researcher I did not often feel in a position of power with my interview participants. Most of my participants had far more teaching experience than I, and it truly felt like they were teaching me, sharing their experiences to forward my understanding. This power dynamic was effective for the type of research I was hoping to conduct.

At times I felt a fear of appropriating the words of my colleagues as discussed in (Seidman, 2006, p.13). Using a form of member checking helped me feel more confident in my synthesis.

This research does not aim to speak for all teachers of IB English, rather it aims to highlight and reflect on the experience of eleven teachers and share ideas from their classroom practice.

Trustworthiness

In conducting the interviews I tried to speak as little as possible and let the interviewees voice and experiences form the bulk of the conversation. Listening to recordings of the earlier interviews I heard myself making emphatic “hm” and “yes” noises while participants were speaking. While positive reinforcement can be encouraging, I did feel like my response to participants’ comments may have been too

active. In later interviews I attempted to rein in my encouraging tendencies, and found participants shared just as much without my additions.

In transcribing, I tried to be as authentic as possible, recording laughter, pauses, and questions. I ended each interview with an email thanking the participant for their contribution and asking if they had anything they'd like to add, and following up with a thank you email and invitation for further thoughts and reflections. Using member checking I gave participants the opportunity to clarify quotations and ideas I selected to use in the analyzed data.

My presence is even stronger in the process of analyzing the data, what I chose to include and to leave out. In asking myself Hollway and Jefferson's four core research questions (2002 in Glesne 2011, p. 201) I found that my research maintained a fairly tight focus on teaching within the English A curriculum, and that I strove to keep my interpretations based on the words of participants and to be explicit about my assumptions and generalizations.

Chapter 4: Interpretations: Data Analysis

This chapter contains findings from the interviews I conducted with eleven teachers of IB English focusing on their experiences teaching world literature and literature in translation. The conversations were wide ranging but shared many themes. This chapter is organized in three broad categories: teacher biography and frameworks, approaches and activities, and challenges to teaching world literature.

Within each section I have aimed to preserve the voices of different teachers, presenting data in a narrative style. I have also attempted to synthesize key ideas and present some concrete suggestions for classroom practice that flow from the teacher interviews. In using this approach I hope the reader can connect with the lively humour and dedication to practice that I experienced at each interview.

Teacher biography and frameworks

As a researcher and a teacher I loved the process of interviewing colleagues about their experiences with world literature. Early in the conversations I asked teachers about their own background and what brought them to teaching, as well as their formative experiences as readers. In the sections that follow I have highlighted certain themes that surfaced in several interviews relating to teachers' biographies and frameworks for teaching.

Teachers as readers

One unsurprising shared element that came up in every interview was the powerful relationships to reading described by teachers. Since my research aims to help students make connections with texts, it was illuminating and inspiring to hear how teachers

themselves first connected and continued to connect with literature.

One teacher talked about being “in love with books” and remembered “devour[ing] them in a day” as a young reader (William). Several teachers talked about escaping into another world through literature:

I’ve always been a voracious reader with no cultural boundaries. I don't remember a time when I wasn't reading. It was always something I wanted to do. It was the first skill that I wanted to acquire because people didn't read enough to me, so I happily read to myself. And I was a very quiet, shy child, not very much like I am now, and there are also other family reasons why I was often alone with a book. And that was just for me, the easiest and most wonderful thing in the world.

(Tobias)

Several teachers talked about the solace and adventure of disappearing into another world:

I used to sit in the library when I was eight years old and read Greek myth and Egyptian myth and Norse myth, Hawthorne's tales of puritans and witches, just anything. And there really was a whole world opened up to me as a child. (Judy)

On a really personal note, I moved a lot as a child so literature was a really important way for me to – in a strange sense – create a fictional community. Because I was constantly moving and creating new community, reading fiction became a really important way to help me understand the world and I think it helped moving a lot to become an easier process because it helped me understand how people think and the various ways people cope with change... Literature,

particularly fiction, has really been key in helping me understand the world.

However, at this point in my life I gravitate more toward nonfiction but during my childhood and throughout much of my twenties and thirties fiction really helped me understand myself and the people around me. There is so much comfort and discovery possible in the fictional world. (Olivia)

One teacher reflected on the connection she felt reading *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, as she was a teenager:

Somehow, that was like the right age and the right book, but what I think that did for me, was maybe just to recognize, there's a great deal of connection and solace to be gained, in being able to connect with a book. (Sophie)

While teachers described the power and place reading held in their lives as young people, many also addressed their continued excitement reading new texts as adults. One teacher described a recent experience while reading *Black Rain* by Masuji Ibuse. She said it was her first time reading a Japanese novel and she found it exciting to get a sense of a culture and experience so different from her own. She said it was “amazing” to be immersed in another world as she read the author’s description of the response to Hiroshima, “to see the culture of Japan fighting with a human response to an emergency” (Rebecca).

Another teacher described her ongoing love of learning by saying:

I think education itself thrills me, I am excited by people who know things, and the possibility of learning something new. To me it's like a moment in a museum when something calls out to you and you have an experience of the world that you haven't

before and literature has always done that for me. (Amelia)

Beginning with these examples of teachers as passionate readers, I hope to establish the tone of my conversations with teachers, and to see these examples of connected readers as inspiration for connecting students to texts.

Teachers as students

While many participants described reading actively outside of school as children, others also talked about the ways schooling influenced their reading. One teacher talked about the feeling of coming home to reading, and how a standardized test in school allowed him and his family to see reading as a significant intellectual activity:

My father is a professor of economics, and we don't share the same type of brain, and so when I was young it was a very hot topic that I was not good at math, and was seen as sort of a family freak until I took a reading comprehension test, when I was a freshman, and maxed it. At which point, my father started thinking maybe I was good at something academic and then I just, I mean, everybody complains about standardized tests, but I feel like that, strangely, the little experience kind of set me free, in that I was able to, I kind of gave myself permission to be one of the smart kids in my English classes. And realized there wasn't really anything I'd read, at that point, that I didn't understand, and that that wasn't the same for everybody else. So, then I had probably a pretty standard arc in that I had three or four teachers who were outstanding and passionate and were able to take literature and relate it to the larger context, and talk about why we should understand why "Dulce et Decorum Est" is a really important ending to the poem, because it talks about honour, which is about WWI trenches and about constructions of

masculinity and there's all this stuff that can spin up from literature. I still hadn't really caught up on to this as something I wanted to do with my life, until I got to college and after my freshman year as an English major, I realized I'd learned a lot about 17th century England, and 18th Century England, and 19th Century England, and uh, I realized that you could learn about the world, about people, through literature. (William)

Another teacher described his motivation to teach literature stemming from his experiences in a high school class:

But I never really considered myself wanting to be a teacher until Grade 12. I had a teacher, and he was young and he brought an energy and enthusiasm, and he taught me English Lit. And I had been successful in English previous to that, but it had never become a possibility that I would want to teach that, but then I saw him, and this wonderful course, The History of English Literature. And because my parents were teachers I was exposed to some of this before and so I was seeing all kinds of connections and he brought it to me in a way that seemed very exciting. I think a seed was set...it kind of went from there it took still a while through University to get the sense that this was what I wanted to do. That was really the beginnings of it. (Jason)

Two of the teachers I interviewed were past graduates of the IB English A course, and one articulated a deep appreciation for the depth and scope of the IB as a student:

I think one of the amazing things about IB is that it is how I wish an English major could have been. So in fact I didn't major in English [at university] because I didn't want to mainly read English literature -- that felt extremely stifling to me.

As a guy in his early 20s, I didn't care if a text was written in English or in Russian. I read across cultures and disciplines and language; I read what I wanted to read. I took a wonderful Great Books program in first year and it shaped my vision what a university education could be. I was spoiled. English literature, as it was delivered in English departments, never felt like that to me. (Jeff)

Teachers and theory

I received a range of answers when I asked teachers if/how they were influenced by different theoretical schools as teachers and as readers. Teachers mentioned reader response, hermeneutics, feminism, Marxism, post-colonialism, and close reading as influential perspectives. Several participants articulated the idea of being influenced by many theoretical schools, and believing in the importance of teaching students multiple theoretical lenses. As one teacher said:

I see my job as a teacher of literature to supply students with theoretical frames so that they can deploy them... I probably use the feminist lens more than anything else in my own readings of texts, but it is not really the job of the teacher, to read texts professionally, so, [laughs] I believe very strongly that the whole point of a English literature class is to strengthen students' ability to critically think and to ascertain the arguments of other people. Therefore, a great deal of what I do is discussion based, and hopefully rigorously so, in that if someone starts in the contemporary parlance, talkin' shit, then I usually don't let them get away with it, or I reinforce the challenge of another student so that the social dynamic of the classroom reinforces people making great arguments if they are willing to back them up, or great critiques if they are willing to back those up. (William)

Other teachers echoed this idea of multiple perspectives:

Well I suppose a lot of my study at university was in the New Criticism, but let's say close reading which isn't quite the same, and I've certainly been influenced by lots of theories, Marxist theory, post colonial, feminist theory, I take it all in. So there are bits of it all there, I think I can indicate to students how this might be looked at differently from the way I am talking about it at any particular moment, but I also am eclectic, so I think there ought to be a bit of all those styles together. Certainly close reading is something that I, that's always been at the centre of the way I look at literature. (Judy)

I'm definitely influenced, I would say, by those three [post-colonialism, feminism, reader response]. The most important thing for me, is understanding that students respond to the text and trying to shift that from an academic exercise to one of personal discovery. That might mean discovering the way that power relationships play out in their own lives, whether that's around place or gender or class or ability. The students that I teach are mostly new immigrants - some are first or second generation Canadians but most are first generation Canadians - so there are lots of questions around language and power the kinds of internal and external conflicts that can arise out of being in a new culture and place. Those are some of the bigger issues that I'm trying to get at. Especially I am trying to empower voices of students who are historically disempowered, although here at my school that number is becoming less and less as our students tend to be from more and more privileged backgrounds. (Olivia)

Post-colonial theory emerged as an influential lens in many conversations. One teacher described the post-colonial world as “constantly in the front of her mind” as a teacher, while another described the complex colonial relationship in Canada and said:

Something I’m always aware of when I’m teaching these works is the connection to Canada. And the weird thing is, that my students, having immigrated from China, have no responsibility whatever for what happened and no understanding about what happened in Canada, and I don’t want to say, no concern for it. No understanding of the residential school issue and so... I find myself teaching Canadian history as much as I find myself teaching South African history. Certainly even just, last week, I thought it would be fun to take Fugard, take *Master Harold and the Boys* and set it in Canada, and have Sam and Willy be Native, see what happens with that. Then you get, again, into the whole cultural appropriation of things, would it be an appropriate commentary on what has happened in Canada? I don’t actually know. (Red)

Another teacher talked about his study of Canadian multicultural literature and Indigenous theory:

All of that helped me to broaden my horizon... and where I'm coming from, in terms of theoretical background, over the years I've come out of a school of... Post-colonial criticism very strongly, mostly the post-structural school of post colonialism but also very strong feminist component. (Tobias)

All teachers described an element of synthesis in their approach to theory, and a recognition of the evolutionary process of engaging with texts. As one teacher explained

when describing his practice:

I think I have evolved, I have evolved in many ways in my teaching, but I have evolved in a way that it's the relationships that matter. It's about that context, that the one thing that is valuable about the teaching experience in the classroom is that we're all there together. And it is a specific time, it is a specific context. If I don't address that relationship, of the particular work with the context that's going on, if we don't explore it, I think there's some disservice. (Jason)

Teachers' use of theory in the classroom was often connected to their hopes for teaching world literature. Using theoretical lenses in the classroom is one way to identify multiple perspectives, reading works from different places and times is another way to see the world differently.

Why teach world literature?

When I asked teachers at the end of our interview why they thought it was important to teach world literature, I received a range of responses:

Building empathy for others and for oneself. Building bridges. (Olivia)

I think, first of all, to use a cliché, we are in a global village now. And so, for that reason alone, it's very important that students study literature from all over the world. But for another, it's a very enlightening experience as a human being to be able to see different perspectives to human activity... In essence, what does literature do? To my mind it demonstrates action and human experience, in its diverse ways. But you see the operative word here is human, so if literature is

showing us something about the human condition, what is it that is unique to the humanity of a particular region, what is it that is universal to all human beings.

(Daniel)

This is a hard question because there are a thousand reasons why it's good. The most important reason is because it is a metacognitive example of why perspective is important, why understanding other people, other arguments is important. So that you can represent yourself well, but also it's an act of intellectual empathy. A prescribed literature in translation list begs the question, why do we read all these dead white men. Which is a super important question about power. And if I may be so bold. It seems like it is an implicit critique of a great books course. Which is also an implicit critique of capitalism and its relationship to literature. (William)

Again, I think it all comes back to that relationship, that connection that students have with the text. If they are seeing this as someone from another time in another place, we could be reading science fiction. But if we're able to see these people as beings in a context that have relevance to their own lives, then I think it can be a very positive thing... I think it's the one that I mentioned, just seeing the world through different lenses, we, I think especially in North America we think this is the way we should export this system to the world, and why isn't the rest of the world doing things the way we do, and I think there's, there comes to be an appreciation through looking at these texts that, wait a minute, other people do

things in different ways, it is successful and yeah. It can be a very powerful lesson for a lot of them: that there's not just one way to look at things, and I think that's where TOK [Theory of Knowledge] comes in again in a huge way, since many of them have an epiphany about so much that they knew, they knew everything in Grade 10. (Jason)

Maybe the only point is, there are different perspectives, so be cautious before you come to a conclusion. You add that piece to the TOK piece, and you should have students who are quite cautious of coming to conclusions. Who should be cautious of taking their first reaction, their instinct, as being the only reasonable solution to a problem. The works we study reveal colonial patterns; some people can see a problem where others really don't see a problem, and the works that we study reveal that to our students. I think Canada's a perfect example of a society that doesn't think there's a problem, but if you were to ask someone of First Nations' descent, they'd say, yes, there's a problem. So our works surface that. I think it would be easy to construct a curriculum in IB where that doesn't surface. (Red)

How could you not? Nothing is worse than a limited perspective on the world and the navel gazing that comes with it, as we've seen in all cultures that bar themselves from other influences. (Tobias)

Literature should open up the world to students. (Jeff)

I think, is that the whole idea with IB is to create global awareness and tolerance for other cultures so that things like the second world war would never happen again. But when you read a work from another culture on an elementary level, you're transported to that place, like you can travel the world through literature as they say, but I think when you are able to study it as a work of literature and they can look at the nuances of language and the images that the author is trying to draw attention to and the messages that are being communicated through motifs or symbols, and you get an understanding of what's important to that writer and they start to see the, not just the literal depiction of another place, but also the thoughts and feelings of people who are existing in that time and place, what matters to them, that there are certain emotions and thoughts and feelings that transcend time, and that's why we're able to appreciate them years and years later.

(Rebecca)

I would like to open up the world to students. That yes, they do need to know their own culture, whatever that may be, we're so mixed in Canada, they should know their own culture, they should know the culture where they are living if it's not the same, but they should also go way beyond that and open up to the world, and what better way to do that than literature. And who was it, L.P. Hartley who said, The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there, so just reading something written from the past is discovering another culture in itself and humans, you know, humans of today didn't spring from a vacuum, we are

remnants of 10,000 years ago or more, so to see that development. To read Sophocles 3,000 years after it was performed in a public arena, and find out that it still says something to me about civil disobedience for example, in *Antigone*. That's fantastic, I mean it's sad we haven't solved that problem in 3,000 years, but it's a human problem, not easy to solve. To read Shakespeare, to watch my students watch a performance, and think 400 years after other people were watching his performances they're laughing at the same jokes. (Judy)

Reading over the responses from teachers I noticed the repetition of words and ideas that connote opening, surfacing and bridging. Nearly every teacher raised the idea of bringing new ideas to light and connecting students to experiences beyond their own. Several addressed the challenge to the status quo that is implicit in reading beyond the western canon, and in giving voice to structural injustices students may be ignorant of. Many teachers addressed the importance of challenging assumptions and inviting students to see the world from another perspective. These aims connect to the IB mission and values and present an explicit connection between reading literature in the English curriculum and fostering a better and more peaceful world.

Approaches and activities for teaching world literature

This section brings together suggestions from teachers on ways to approach world literature in the high school classroom. Most of these suggestions come from texts and units studied in Part 1: World Literature in the old English A1 course, or from the remodeled part, now titled: “Works in Translation” in the new English A: Literature course. Other suggestions come from across the English A curriculum, sometimes

referring to texts originally written in English but well within the broad definition of world literature.

I have grouped lesson ideas, stories, reflections and suggested resources into ten broad categories. Each collection is meant to highlight an approach to teaching world literature and suggest options and tools for teacher practice. All teachers I spoke with suggested several approaches and emphasized that approaches should vary based on the unique alchemy of each text and classroom.

Text selection

IB English teachers draw the most of their texts from two lists: the Prescribed Literature in Translation List (PLT) and the Prescribed List of Authors (PLA). While the PLA comprises hundred of authors of prose, drama, and poetry from around the world (all originally published in English) the PLT lists hundreds of works including drama, prose and poetry all written in languages other than English. In the new English A: Literature course, teachers select three works in translation to teach at the higher level and two works to teach at the standard level. This is a noticeable decrease from the old course which mandated teaching five works in translation at the higher level and a minimum of four at the standard level. In selecting which works to teach in world literature/works in translation section, teachers take many factors into account.

Jeff described the process of text selection as “a wonderful little puzzle and “a testament to the skill and expertise of teachers” who select from enormous lists of novels to construct balanced and interesting combinations of works. Many teachers discussed the importance of diversity in text selection aiming to represent a range of regions, time periods, genres, and cultures above and beyond the basic IB requirements.

Tobias argued that five world literature texts was a perfect number because teachers could teach books from five continents, and explore world literature from a geographical perspective. Amelia discussed the challenge of including gender diversity in her curriculum, saying that the female perspective could be represented by female authors or by female characters. Dealing with issues associated with gender can involve “thinking about the implications and the successes of different authors generating realistic characters in relation to gender.” She also challenged teachers to go beyond a stereotypical understanding of ‘culture’ as merely referring to ethnic diversity, and seek a range of perspectives in the works, looking for voices that represent culture as associated with generations, ideologies, or historical perspectives.

The idea of world literature as defined through geographical constraints is also challenged in this framework. Amelia explained how she will approach Cormac McCarthy’s *All the Pretty Horses* in another section of the curriculum. The novel is a contemporary North American work that is “completely foreign to our students although it is set in North America, is a contemporary work, and written in English. The region and era and values portrayed are culturally distinct from the North America that my students recognise. McCarthy presents a culture of horsemanship and isolation, and a wilderness motif that hearkens back to biblical literature.”

Certainly a work does not have to come from another continent or another language to represent very different perspectives. A group of teachers I interviewed taught Gabrielle Roy’s *Windflower* as one of their works in translation. The novel is by a Canadian author, written in French and describes a community in Northern Labrador

from Indigenous and American perspectives. This work could be classified as domestic for Canadian students though its setting and characters have little immediately in common with the typical student's experience in an urban Vancouver classroom. Another teacher spoke about his colleague's choice to teach three Latin American novels for the World Literature section as "eye opening in every respect -- from a cultural perspective, from a theoretical perspective, you name it. Just considering character development from this perspective was a real cultural awakening for the students" (Jeff).

Selecting the works for the course lays the foundation for the students to see the world from multiple perspectives and challenges teachers to expand their own literary horizons.

Research and context

In *How to Read World Literature* (2008) David Damrosch argues that the process of reading world literature involves going back and forth between the familiar and the unfamiliar. Readers need to pass through the metaphorical looking glass and enter into a set of literary expectations and assumptions different from their own. The teachers I interviewed suggested several different ways to help students understand the context of literary works.

As discussed in the introduction, the new IB Literature course includes an interactive oral for all three works in translation studied. The interactive oral is described as a "focused class discussion" on the ways context impacts the reading of a work. Students must lead at least some part of the discussion for one of the works studied. The prompt questions include:

- In what ways do time and place matter to this work?

- What was easy to understand and what was difficult in relation to social and cultural context and issues?
- What connections did you find between issues in the work and your own culture(s) and experience?
- What aspects of technique are interesting in the work? (IB, 2011a, p.30)

The IB guide also suggests teachers may consider “artistic, philosophical, sociological, historical and biographical” elements of texts as “possible areas of study to enhance understanding of the works” (IB, 2011a, p.18).

The requirement of the interactive oral seems quite compatible with the practices of many of the teachers I interviewed. When I asked how they introduced students to works set in contexts very different from their own, most teachers suggested some type of research/presentation or guided discussion. One teacher described making up a very detailed list of questions for each work and using the questions as “a starting point for a million different things” from small group presentations on literary theory or historical context, to full class seminar style discussions (Sophie).

Other teachers described the use of text introductory presentations, brief ten-minute presentations, where students would expand on several elements of the text. For *Crime and Punishment* students could be assigned to present on Dostoyevsky's biography, the emancipation of the serfs or a related philosophical topic such as the *ubermensch* (Amelia). These presentations were excellent practice for students who would go on to produce an Interactive Oral Presentation as part of their internal assessment, and also gave students the opportunity to take turns being experts on each work.

The interactive oral requires that students take an active role in presenting contextual information. This resonated with the comments of many teachers that students develop a better understanding of contextual information when they have an active role in researching and presenting. One teacher said she “used to do more of a lecture format to present that kind of information” but decided “a lot of it drifts over their heads, or they're so busy writing it down, but then they never return to it” (Sophie). She suggested small research groups presenting to the class and then having the teacher or other students knowledgeable in that area add information was a more interactive and engaging method.

Several teachers commented that the interactive oral format emphasized a student-centered approach. Most teachers found the orals engaged students and helped deepen their understanding of context: I think in certain ways that [the interactive oral] really helped the kids access the texts like *The Cherry Orchard* whereas in the past they just floated by, but this time they connected with the characters” (Rebecca). Jason described deep and engaging discussions stemming from the interactive orals in his classes:

We had some wonderful moments [with the interactive orals] in *To Live* where I learned so much about this text. Because the students, most are from a Mandarin background and a significant number, interestingly enough the Mandarin teacher at the school also chose *To Live*, so they were studying it in the original Mandarin, they were studying it here, they'd done it in Mandarin and they were explaining the relevance of cultural practices as it related to their parents' generations and grandparents and then there would be debates on those who had gone to Taiwan, and those who were seeing this as propaganda in some ways, and those who were not – it never got to a tenor that I had to intervene and say, 'it's

just a book here.’ But it was always a wonderful discussion that they had and so that was perhaps something that changed my position, but I think the students too, a fair number of the students had gone through their schooling in China, so they had a sense already of what it was like to go through a system even though it was so many years removed. That was huge, I think a lot of students and myself included, changed their views, or got a new appreciation. (Jason)

Yet if students come to a text without background knowledge or critical research skills, they can come up short in their ability to deepen anyone’s understanding of the text. As one teacher put it:

I don’t know how effective it is. You become aware of the gaps long after so much class time has been devoted to establishing the setting and context. With very little teacher input, I’m sort of torn, because I find if I sit there and provide them the context when I go and I read their works that flow from that, all I see is my ideas, and all I see are my words and my interpretations. So turning it over to them, getting them to do the research seems to me to be actually not such a bad idea, because it gets me out of the way. Unfortunately, what I see in its place is just a lot of Wikipedia stuff, and really minimal research. (Red)

As this is the first year of the new Literature course, it remains to be seen how teachers and students will follow the new requirements. The teachers I interviewed generally spoke positively about the potential of the new structure to help students connect to contexts and works, though meeting the requirements demands many dedicated class periods for each work studied.

Several additional ideas for teaching context came up in my interviews. One

teacher suggested the power of using quotations by or about the author to bring biography and voice alive. “I like using quotations and having them kind of get to hear the voice of the author... We looked at quotations of Chekov’s own thoughts about writing and it brought him to life a bit which was quite wonderful” (Rebecca). Another teacher suggested the power of Google Earth to help students understand setting and get a sense of the interconnectedness and interrelations of the different works and contexts. He described teaching Gabrielle Roy’s *Windflower* and realizing he could use Google earth to “see pictures of that region, of that spot in Northern Labrador, and its mind blowing, you can totally visualize it as a result of a computer” (Red).

Film

Many teachers described the power of film to make another world come alive. Two teachers working with Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things*, suggested the Annenberg Learner *Invitation to World Literature* website which features films, readings and multimedia resources on thirteen world literature texts (<http://www.learner.org/courses/worldlit/>). The films contain interviews with critics and authors that help students see the work in context and also develop their own critical vocabulary. These teachers mentioned that once students had watched the film about *The God of Small Things*, ideas from critics popped up in their written analysis and presentations.

Teachers articulate different opinions about watching films of the novels they study. Some feel that watching the film does a disservice to reading the novel, and that students will have weaker interpretations of the text, relying instead on the film as a source text. Others found films of the texts themselves very helpful ways for students to connect to literary works. When reading *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* one

teacher showed her class the film version and said, “that kind of brought it to life because I think they were able to appreciate what Solzhenitsyn was experiencing when he was in the Gulag camps. I think the film is very powerful” (Rebecca).

This teacher also told me the story of a young student she taught “a real joker” who used to laugh when she told the class how much she admired Solzhenitsyn as a person saying “I think he was just such an amazingly inspiring man he just had this wonderful way of looking at life.” In teaching the novel she would sometimes say, “Oh I love Solzhenitsyn” and the student would roll his eyes. She decided to show the class some excerpts from Alexander Sokurov’s dialogues with Solzhenitsyn (currently available on YouTube with English subtitles) and have students write down their ideas about his thoughts. At the end of the class the young joker approached the teacher and said, “I just want you to know that I really appreciated what you did, because I just love this.” And he said, “I get him, I get what he was doing... I thought it was fantastic.” According to the teacher, the student really settled down after that: “I just thought that was really neat to see this relationship occur between this 80 year old man and this little guy, and he's only in grade 11 and he's reading about Gulag camps but he got it” (Rebecca).

In “From Archetypes to Xenophobia: World Literature is the Rite Stuff”, classroom teacher Mark Bingen suggests several film resources he uses in his World Literature class:

Public Television's *Legacy* explores the influence of ancient cultures on our lives today. This film series does a particularly thorough job of analyzing the legacy bestowed on us by Gilgamesh's Uruk and ancient China. The Moyers collection's

interview with Chinua Achebe, *A World of Ideas*, enlightens us to his intentions as writer and storyteller in *Things Fall Apart*. *Ancient Futures: Learning from Ladakh*, a video that studies the effects of "civilization" upon a little-known "primitive" culture, fits well as a modern partner with Achebe's IB experience...Fictional foreign films are particularly powerful as the music, the faces, the scenery, the food, the language, the very feel of the film. (2002, p. 42)

The power of film is also articulated in Quereshi's 2006 article about teaching world literature in a high school context where she argues watching foreign films "allows students to actively experience the text through a different medium, especially for those students who struggle to reconstruct such unfamiliar faces, landscapes, and images" (2006, p. 38). The reconstruction in film can inspire students to return to the text in greater detail, revisiting sections they may have skimmed over, now they have an access point into those references.

Conversation

It seems the most compelling conversations in the classroom have an element of spontaneity, and when I asked teachers what helped students connect to literary works several people mentioned the draw of a lively classroom conversation. One teacher said that the way to help students understand a perspective different from their own is through sharing:

Through sharing cultural insights, cultural knowledge, stories, and narrative. This is the one thing that explains perspective the best, because it highlights the choices people made, subjective, or the ones they've socialized and the horizons of what they can see and perceive. Because it structures all of our interactions, our

thinking. And it really is a philosophical perspective that's what stories are all about, to share certain perspectives because we can empathize and we can understand from narrative on a different level than just having someone explain to you. And then that is probably the greatest gift this kind of classroom can give us.

(Tobias)

When students feel safe and comfortable sharing their stories, the result can be wonderful conversations, and these conversations can do more to challenge and engage students than any pre-set teacher planned activity.

Another teacher described the experience of interactive orals as “wonderful, wonderful discussion, debates and involvement” where:

It was just all of the students talking about certain passages, talking about their experience, talking about their ideas and throwing out those questions, and once you have one or two responses off they went, it was just a big rolling discussion and debate...And it's just worked with the class. So much depends on the context. We had two students who would always take opposing sides of an issue and some kids would actually sneak in just to see them debate. It would just be sort of a sideshow. (Jason)

Sequence

Teachers expressed a range of preferences for sequencing the study of literature and context. As discussed above, several teachers began a unit with a series of text introductory presentations and then began a close reading of the text. Another teacher began by delivering an introductory framework to the work and then asked students to present the interactive oral and felt that students were parroting back her ideas without

developing their own. A third approach is to begin with the text and give the students time to connect to works free from the influence of biography. As Tobias explained:

I usually start out not giving much context but starting with the text itself but certainly, keeping track of all the questions that come up. As someone who often also uses the "Death of the Author" as a theoretical text in class I keep the biography away for the longest time, unless there's significant reason why it should be included. And then we slowly broaden the cultural background by using all kinds of media from music to other texts to images to tasks that explore part of the history of colonialism in Indonesia, and with that, give them material to explore and deepen their understanding and make connections. (Tobias)

The desired sequence and amount of contextual information needed may vary from text to text and based on students background knowledge. In my teaching experience I've found some students enjoy peeling back layer after layer of meaning in a text while others find it frustrating. I've also taught works where I assumed students had contextual information and only after they have struggled through the novel I have understood how the lack of context compromised their ability to appreciate the text. Soter discusses the experience of this "aesthetic restriction" in an article where she posits that young readers may be particularly disoriented by texts without contextual framing or introduction (1997 in Rogers & Soter). In my experience some students don't recover from a text they've lost touch with, while others are motivated by the opportunity to see the work in a new light, and with the addition of new information, come to appreciate works they once disliked.

Co-reading

One of the challenges in teaching world literature is the nearly infinite depth of the field. Staying within the IB Prescribed Literature In Translation list a teacher could dedicate every summer to reading and still not come close to knowing all the texts. Several teachers described one way of addressing this challenge: teaching a work they were not expert in, and learning alongside the students.

One teacher talked about reading Yu Hua's *To Live: A Novel* with her class of students from a predominantly Chinese Canadian background. The novel is set in China and as the teacher expressed:

In my classroom I am probably the least expert on this book. The students have way more information than I do about living through the Cultural Revolution in China, so as a result they become the experts in the classroom. The stories they've heard throughout their childhood connect with what they read. We talk theoretically about the importance of students' ability to connect with their personal lives with texts, and that really happens with *To Live*, so that was very powerful in many ways. (Olivia)

Another teacher described a courageous process of giving (email) copies of the Prescribed Literature in Translation list to his students and having the class select the work they wanted to study. When the class narrowed down to three favourites and selected *Love in the Time of Cholera*, it was a novel the teacher hadn't read. So he constructed a unit where the students and teacher would uncover the work in-step with each other:

We made a deal that the whole class would march forward, 30 pages at a time,

and no one would read ahead, and we would all experience it in these little chunks, including the teacher. So we would make bets about which character was going to get offed, and whether this would happen or would he finally win the love of Fermina Daza or not, and so on, and so forth, and I would rank everybody's liking of the book, in increments. (Williamc)

He decided to read the novel with a reader response lens, and then after they finished the novel to add in different lenses, historicism, literary critical theory, and biography and then ask students how their reading changed with addition of new information. This teacher was also working in the new Language and Literature curriculum, which emphasizes the interplay between texts and contexts.

Reflecting on the idea of co-reading another teacher said, “it is such a beneficial experience to encourage people to be courageous readers and to allow that, to make reading part of the classroom experience, and their own limitations as much as the students’ limitations. You don't have to be the authority in the classroom” (Tobias).

This practice not only broadens the range of texts for study, but also allows different students to become experts. One teacher discussed reading Ondaatje’s *Running in the Family* and having a fairly quiet student just blossom when she invited students to share their experiences related to the memoir:

The student, like Ondaatje, lived a few years in Sri Lanka and had a vast family there, and said he all of a sudden saw his entire family in a different way through reading that text, he didn't even know about the things he didn't know, he started talking to his parents and his grandparents and aunts and uncles and for him, well life changing is a bit dramatic, but it really opened something into himself, that he

didn't know was there. But also then he came and brought things into the classroom. That of course I wouldn't have known, and of course everybody loved it, that he brought that experience. And I think that helped a lot of other people do similar things. (Judy)

Reflective/responsive

The process of making connections to texts is often very personal. Teachers foster this reflective behaviour when they make space for students' personal responses to texts.

One teacher described beginning the reflective process by sharing his own stories in the classroom:

I bring my stories of experiencing the world, my experiences of travel, of reading in different languages. And I encourage that in others. And because for many of the students or most of the students, English is not their first language, we have many good discussions about contextualizing literature in their cultural perspective. (Jason)

By modeling the process of engaging with texts, teachers can give students implicit permission to do the same. Teachers can also facilitate this personal process by using a private medium such as a journal for response activities.

One teacher began every class with a five minute free-write in a journal where students would respond to a prompt about the work they were studying. He said some students liked the process so much they began keeping journals outside of class as well. Another teacher said he would often begin the study of a work by having students write a simple response to the text asking what connections they made to themselves, what connections they could make to other literature, and what connections they could make to

the world around them. This teacher described using student response as a starting point to determine how to structure the study of the work:

Sometimes I'll have them do an initial response the first thing we do is, tell me, tell me about your response to the book, was it difficult, was it easy, did you understand everything that was going on? What parts didn't you, what was challenging? And from that we had a discussion and then from that I think that's where I get a sense of okay, what do they need to learn so if I need to come in, and I need to teach a particular idea, or we need to look at context a little bit more.

(Jason)

The importance of the reflective element is enshrined in the new literature course where students must write a reflective statement in response to the prompt: “How was your understanding of cultural and contextual considerations of the work developed through the interactive oral?” (IB, 2011a, p.30). This element ensures all students have some opportunity to reflect on their learning and also provides an opportunity for teachers to check-in with students about their understanding of context and perhaps provide more information or resources if needed.

Dramatic/creative

Creativity is needed in order for a reader to enter a text and see the world from another point of view. Teachers suggested several creative activities they employ to help students engage with a work and another way of seeing. Suggestions ranged from role-play and scene presentations to creative writing and transposition activities.

Olivia and Daniel described an activity called “hot seating” that had students take on the role of a character and then sit in front of the class and respond to questions as

authentically as possible. Olivia described the importance of inference and connections for students to inhabit the mind of a character, that activity “requires the students to really know the text inside and out and they have fun because they are role-playing” (Olivia). Jeff described a similar activity where students focused on narrative voice and became a character or described a situation. Students then asked themselves Stanislavski’s questions: “What do I do? Why do I do it? And how do I do it?” Jeff said this activity often made students aware of how much they did and didn’t know about the text, and helped them recognize how complex narrative voice can be.

Several teachers described using drama in the classroom, particularly having students script and act out key scenes. Sophie shared a lesson plan for a dramatization of *A Doll’s House*. She listed several key scenes and gave the students the following instructions:

A Doll’s House –Playtext to Performance Text

Choose any approximately 2 page excerpt (1 page from photocopied text) from either Act 2 or 3. You may choose one of the ideas below or one of your choice; if choosing a scene discussed in class, avoid repeating that discussion.

Perform your scene considering aspects such as blocking, tone of voice, pacing, costumes, set, etc. You can act either the entire two-page excerpt; or a carefully edited version; or a tableau of how the characters appear during one particular key line; or your own invention. How will you fruitfully interpret your scene to achieve specific effects and thematic outcomes? Consider adapting to another time/place or with changed gender roles or other changes that you can justify in supporting an alternative interpretation of the play. Be prepared to

analyze your choices in class discussion after your performance. Your ability to enhance your understanding of the play through this exercise is more important than your acting skill, but we do like to be entertained!

She explained this approach can really push students to see a text in new ways and has generated many memorable scenes:

Once with *A Doll's House*, because they get it so well that they can, understand the idea of shifting, they turned it into Darth Vader and Luke Skywalker kind of a thing. I guess what they were trying to show was the way that Nora's husband changes and how he turns into the bad guy and yet, someone who she so thoroughly needs and is thoroughly connected too. Those kind of things are really funny, when they can really articulate their understanding of a play by putting it in a time frame, setting it in a different country, often they would do things like I would say, try changing the gender of one of the characters and just see what happens, see how you view what happens in the scene differently, or something like that or sexual orientation. (Sophie)

Challenging students not only to inhabit a character or text, but also to take elements of the text and transform or re-articulate, can push students into deeper understanding of a work. Tobias found it powerful to have students translate works into different media, turning a chapter of a novel into a poem, or a picture, or even a podcast or a piece of music. He described the process of transposition as:

Similar to a poet who will stick with one metaphor for a long, long time, and tease out the various nooks and crannies or the various applicabilities. Doing that in a different medium may actually really benefit students in their understanding of

literary structures. (Tobias)

This list of creative prompts is not exhaustive, but does suggest some approaches to deepening students' connection with works as well as honing their interpretive powers.

Sensory immersion

Making a text come alive sometimes means going beyond language and inspiring the senses to ignite a connection to another place or time. Teachers talked about using music, guided visualizations, sensory tours, and extreme environmental adventures to help connect students to texts. One teacher described teaching *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* to a group of students midwinter. On a cold day he had them go outside without jackets and said, "it was perfectly apparent what the point was, because it was only 5 below or something like that, so take that and multiply it, imagine being in the same clothes and it being 25 below. That worked very well, but it's sort of luck of the draw you don't really get that everyday" (Red).

Other teachers used music to deepen connections. As his class read Tim O'Brian's *The Things They Carried* one teacher played '60's protest rock as students were arriving to class. He would begin each class by explaining who wrote the song, and why it was important.

A few years ago I taught Ondaatje's *Running in the Family* in partnership with a mentor teacher. Together we constructed a sensory tour for students where they could taste papadams and smell coriander and touch cinnamon bark. There were so many rich descriptions of smells and tastes and sounds in the text and I felt students couldn't fully appreciate them without a sensory vocabulary. My mentor teacher also constructed activities where she encouraged students to pick out something from the book and then

find a way to create that sound or textural sensation and share it with the class.

Bingen (2002) and Downing (2002) also stress the importance of sensory activities in their world literature courses. Bingen suggests field trips, and cultural meals as ways to connect with texts while Downing has students enact a “blind” experience as they read *Oedipus Rex* to “come to understand Tiresias's specialized way of knowing the world, but we also see how Oedipus's seeming certainty was just one part of the truth” (p. 41).

Jason argues it is a teacher’s job to make texts relevant, to find:

Anything to give a greater appreciation of what it would be like to be living at that time. I think brings the text always closer, and it's that as soon as you can start to really understand that this person isn't so different, so other than yourself, the discussion becomes much more interesting. (Jason)

Theoretical lenses

Of the teachers I spoke with, some explicitly taught theoretical lenses while other paired certain theories with specific texts, and others did not explicitly teach literary theory in their classes. Olivia explained how she usually taught theoretical lenses explicitly to students. She would help students make these connections through a series of steps: “first introducing the lenses, then introducing the specific context of the piece of literature, then introducing questions that will help them link the lens with the context to the literature.” This year, with advent of the interactive oral, she assumed students would uncover the theory themselves as they dove deeper into the texts. Instead she found that students didn’t go as deeply as they have in the past with the old curriculum and she’s decided to bring those lenses more explicitly into her teaching again so students can “take

those theoretical lenses into their presentations and into their reflections and then into their final piece of writing” (Olivia).

William argued that his job as a teacher was to supply students with theoretical frames they could deploy and explained how students reacted to some of the different frames in his course:

I feel very strongly, that part of learning argument is the ability to step into other perspectives and try them out, so I'm often asking my students to do this, so I'll say, I would like you to read this article from a Marxist perspective...but the big idea of Marxism isn't that complicated, how you critique the world through its material modes of production. So a bright 17 year old can totally get their head around that, so if you ask them to try out a Marxist lens, after they practice a little bit, they can do it, same thing with Feminism, post-colonialism. The one I feel like they stopped at, which is hard for them to get, post-structuralism is hard to get around. Anything like language theory was difficult for them, reader response, they all took off. Because I think teenagers love reader response, they love I. A. Richards because they are 17 year olds so they think that by nature of their developmental stage, most days they are pretty self-involved, and they're like: that's right, the most important thing is what happens between me and the book.

(William)

William mentioned the resource of the new IB *English A: Language and Literature Course Companion* (2011), which lists brief descriptions of theoretical frames on p. 10 - p. 22. Another useful resource for teaching theoretical lenses is Deborah Appleman's *Critical Encounters in High School English: Teaching Literary Theory to Adolescents*

(2009), which provides accessible summaries of different theoretical lenses and very helpful suggested activities and approaches for high school students. As several teachers expressed in interviews, teaching theoretical lenses is an excellent way for students to approach the same text from different perspectives, practicing both critical thinking and hopefully empathy for another way of seeing the world.

Close reading/analytical

For some students, a close or comparative reading of the text allows them to appreciate and connect with a work beyond their initial personal response. Once they can identify elements of the writer's craft or as Damrosch argues, the literary assumptions specific to the work, then their understanding and appreciation of the work increases.

Two teachers I interviewed discussed Ngugi Wa Thiongo's novel *Matigari* and explained that students had difficulty connecting with the work on first reading. After discussion and analysis of ways of telling stories and the oral tradition, students made a close reading of the work and were able to connect to it and see it as an effectively constructed narrative within a specific cultural tradition.

Jeff discussed an approach to close reading that allowed students to develop a very close connection with the texts. As students had their own copies of texts and marked them up, "their books became living things. At the end they had novels they felt they owned and truly possessed." The potential magic of this approach is outlined by Dennis Sumara in *Why Reading Literature in Schools Still Matters: Imagination, Interpretation, Insight*, as he outlines the practice of "Commonplace Books" where students read, annotate and re-reread texts for insight and interpretations (2002). Teachers who are not able to have students write on texts achieve similar (if not as intimate) effects

by having students excerpt key phrases and passages on first reading for comment, and then return to these excerpts and comments in a second, or third reading.

Amelia discusses two activities she designed to help students practice literary criticism on their own work:

In approaching *The Crucible*, to ensure that students respect the genre of drama as distinct from that of the novel, I assign a dramatic presentation. This is in two parts: the first is the enactment of the scene, and the second is an oral analysis of the directorial decisions made by the presentation group. Students pick a two-page scene to produce, and then give a talk about such things as their lighting, choreography, gestures, costumes, and use of voice. This activity asks them to become the critics of their own construction.

The other activity that we do that encourages them to think about authorial control and decision-making is to have them write a class novel chapter and to annotate it with references to literary features which they have purposefully included. They must identify their inclusion of symbols, allusions, metaphors, or lesser known literary features. The annotation should explain the value or effect of the feature. The purpose of the activity is to suggest to them that if they can purposefully include such features, then it's highly likely that a published author, might have intelligently included similar features and possibly for similar effect. It doesn't completely eliminate the 'How do you know he meant that' questions, but it does provide room for thoughtful discussion. (Amelia)

Giving students the skills to read closely and analytically helps them deepen their readings of texts and often enhances their connection and appreciation of the works.

This combination of depth and analysis can also be highlighted by a comparative approach. Damrosch argues that the best way to understand the literary assumptions of a work is to read other works from that time/place and notice what holds constant. Tobias articulated the significance of comparative skills in close reading and appreciation, saying students should cultivate an understanding of “similarities, of authors from the same culture, but also how authors from different cultures would approach that aspect. Students should constantly be asking, what is going on here? How does that compare, what are the parallels?” (Tobias).

By honing these critical skills, and in employing some of the other approaches outlined in this section, students have a variety of access points into texts, and are enabled with new perspectives.

Recommended texts

When I asked teachers what kinds of questions they had about teaching world literature many teachers wanted suggestions for texts. Here is table of teaching texts suggested by the participants in this research. All texts are from the new (2011) Prescribed Literature in Translation list.

Table 1: Recommended works in translation

Title in English	Original Title	Author	Genre	Original Language	Gender of Author	Original Publication date	Context/ Setting
Fie!a's Child	Fiele se Kind	Matthee, D	Novel	Afrikaans	F	1985	South Africa
Midaq Alley	زقاق المدق	Mahfouz, N	Novel	Arabic	M	1947	Egypt

Title in English	Original Title	Author	Genre	Original Language	Gender of Author	Original Publication date	Context/ Setting
Season of Migration to the North	Saison de la migration vers le nord	Salih, T	Novel	Arabic	M	1969	Sudan
Time of the Doves	La plaça del diamant	Rodoreda, M	Novel	Catalan	F	1962	Spain
To Live: A Novel	活着	Yu Hua	Novel	Chinese	M	1993	China
Madame Bovary	Madame Bovary	Flaubert, G	Novel	French	M	1856	France
The Outsider	L'Étranger	Camus, A	Novel	French	M	1942	Algeria
From Sleep Unbound	Le sommeil délivré	Chedid, A	Novel	French	F	1952	Egypt
God's Bits of Wood	Les bouts de bois de Dieu	Sembène, O	Novel	French	M	1960	Senegal
Windflower	La rivière sans repos	Roy, G	Novel	French	F	1970	Canada (Québec)
So Long a Letter	Une si longue lettre	Ba, M	Novel	French	F	1980	Senegal
Persepolis	Persepolis	Satrapi, M	Graphic novel	French	F	2000	Iran
Black Rain	黒い雨	Ibuse, M	Novel	Japanese	M	1965	Japan
I Will Marry When I Want	Ngaahika Ndeenda: Ithaakoria ngerekano	Ngugi wa Thiong'o	Drama	Kikuyu	M	1982	Kenya
Matigari	Matigari ma njiruungi	Ngugi wa Thiong'o	Novel	Kikuyu	M	1987	Kenya
A Doll's House	Et dukkehjem	Ibsen, H	Drama	Norwegian	M	1879	Norway
Dom Casmurro	Dom Casmurro	Machado de Assis, JM	Novel	Portuguese	M	1899	Brazil
Anna Karenina	Анна Каренина	Tolstoy, L	Novel	Russian	M	1877	Russia
The Cherry Orchard	Вишнёвый сад	Chekhov, A	Drama	Russian	M	1904	Russia
One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich	Один день Ивана Денисовича	Solzhenitsyn, A	Novel	Russian	M	1962	Russia
Life of Lazarillo de Tormes	El lazarillo de Tormes	Anonymous	Novel	Spanish		1554	Spain

Title in English	Original Title	Author	Genre	Original Language	Gender of Author	Original Publication date	Context/ Setting
Pedro Paramo	Pedro Páramo	Rulfo, J	Novel	Spanish	M	1955	Mexico
The Kiss of the Spider Woman	El beso de la mujer araña	Puig, M	Novel	Spanish	M	1955	Mexico
Chronicle of a Death Foretold	Crónica de una muerte anunciada	Garcia Márquez, G	Novel	Spanish	M	1981	Colombia
Love in the Time of Cholera	El amor en los tiempos del cólera	Garcia Márquez, G	Novel	Spanish	M	1985	Columbia
Paradise of the Blind	Những thiên đường mù	Duong, T H	Novel	Vietnamese	F	1988	Vietnam / Russia
The Sorrow of War	Nỗi buồn chiến tranh	Ninh, B	Novel	Vietnamese	M	1990	Vietnam
		Murakami, H	Short stories	Japanese	M	1980 -	Japan
Antigone	Ἀντιγόνη	Sophocles	Drama	Classical Greek	M	440 BC	Greece

Challenges of teaching world literature

While all teachers I interviewed felt it was essential to teach works from different contexts in the IB English program, teachers also articulated the challenges they faced teaching world literature within the English A curriculum and teaching world literature more broadly. Teachers experience challenges working in translation, working within the time and financial contrasts of schools, and working with and against the power of the literary canon.

Challenges of translation

While teaching works in translation allows readers to connect with experiences and places often very different from their own, there are also difficulties for teachers and students reading in translation. Several teachers commented on what is lost in translation,

arguing that a work in translation loses the flavour of the text and “may never carry the nuances of the original” (Daniel).

Teachers also commented on the epistemological debates that translation engenders. Students like to challenge the validity of translations, and wonder how much of the translation belongs to the original writer and how much belongs to the translator. While many teachers said they would engage students in conversations of this nature, teachers also argued that for the purposes of the course, the text for study is the translated text. Red posited that a good translation can make the reader forget it isn't the original:

Sometimes I actually forget that I'm reading works in translation. Certainly with *The Outsider* text that we use it is so spare and beautiful in its own right, that it's an amazing piece of English literature. So too with *Windflower*, whoever translated that did a beautiful job.

Several teachers suggested playing with multiple translations where possible.

Daniel explains how he worked with several translations of *The Outsider*:

One method I've used before, where there have been different versions or different editions of the same work, is to get some short passages, from the different versions. So get, for example, the opening paragraphs and share them with the students and let them discuss the similarities and differences. Ask them to perhaps conjecture as to why the versions are different, and therefore, to see the translator's own perspective, the translator's own biases and how those biases influence the way we react to the text.

This tension between multiple versions of a text can be rich conversation fodder, but can also be difficult to navigate when asking students to engage in close readings.

Sophie explained how she responds to issues of validity and translation:

Sometimes translations can provide what seem like kind of an awkwardness to the text, and again what we've tried to talk about in that sense is, let's look at this text as a text in itself, let's just think about, this is what we've got, and just see it as, now this enters the world as another text. I don't let them question the validity of close reading of a passage. Asking is this what the author really said? In essence, we say it doesn't matter what the author really said, because this is our text, this is what we are doing.

Though translations can seem difficult when contrasted with the seeming simplicity of an English language work, the benefit of crossing language borders and exploring the limits of language can be most worthwhile. When asked about the benefits and challenges of teaching works in translation Tobias replied:

The benefit is cultural understanding, and anyone who comes from more than one language or knows more than one language, or has lived in more than one place, gets a sense of what different things mean, or the untranslatability of certain metaphors that overlap but they never fully completely cover each other.

Translating in the classroom, if you can do that with a class, is actually a wonderful thing to do because it shows the limits of what is possible in one language, because there are certain expressions that are not possible, or certain recognitions that are almost beyond the grasp of the word.

Limitations in schools

When I asked teachers about the challenges they faced using world literature in their IB classes they addressed some structural elements of the IB course and their own

schools, which limited their ability to teach as they wished.

When I asked which texts were challenging to teach many participants named lengthy Russian novels that they loved to read but didn't have time to teach in the IB syllabus. As Judy opined about *Anna Karenina*, “sad to say we just have too much pressure in the IB curriculum really to do it justice, I have taught it, but I just, I can't do that to kids anymore” (Judy). Teachers recognized the pressures students face in English and all the other IB Diploma courses, and felt that shorter world literature texts would be better received and would allow students more success in assessments that demand in-depth knowledge of a work.

Teachers also raised the limitations of classroom hours and suggested that even when students are willing, there are texts that simply demand more time than is available. The new course prescribes many classroom hours by requiring the interactive orals (most schools use at least two class periods per text), a reflective statement, and in-class timed writing. Jason said the new part of the curriculum took “a good part of Jan to May,” but was worth it for the depth of understanding students gained. Other teachers weren't sure the time commitment resulted in a commensurately deeper understanding and suggested they might structure the course differently another year.

A final school-based limitation for teaching world literature comes from financial constraints on text selection. Many book rooms are well stocked with western classics (*The Outsider*, *Madame Bovary*), but may not have a collection of texts from other parts of the world. One school described the challenges of finding African playwrights they wanted to teach, but realizing that the plays cost twenty-five dollars apiece. With a program of 200 students, the school would spend 5000 of their 7000 dollar text budget on

one book (Red). Sophie said that financial constraints also limit teachers from taking risks with new texts, arguing that many teaching texts are chosen because they are “available and in the book room.”

Students' prior knowledge

When I asked what helped or hindered students in making connections to texts set outside their own experience, teachers praised students for “rising to the challenge” of difficult texts. Yet teachers also reported students struggling with complexity and ambiguity and certain issues outside their experience. One teacher mentioned her students struggling to see the comedy in *The Cherry Orchard* and suggested they watch the television series *The Office* as a way to connect with that type of humour.

Other teachers wondered about the students' ability to put works in context (either literary or historical) when they had limited knowledge of background and limited experience with other works in the genre or style. Jason discussed trying to engage students in a discussion of the style of *To Live*:

I find it would have been so much more powerful if they had a better sense of the history of language, of literature. To compare it to the 19th century, and we don't have time for that. But to you know, in [19th Century literature] someone dies and it takes 30 pages and it goes on, and it talks about this and that... And then you come to a work like [*To Live*] and you recognize immediately, oh, my goodness, this is so different, why is it like this? But they don't quite have that context and I'm not quite sure how to fix that. (Jason)

Red discussed the challenges he had helping students tease out the nuances of power and relationships in *Windflower*:

I guess for me, memorable was my frustration with *Windflower*, my frustration with students being unable to figure out what was going on with setting and story, the Americans were, they have an air force base and army base up in Northern Quebec, and my students were unable to realize that the Americans were there in a military fashion in French speaking Canada and so the Americans are speaking English, the Quebecois are speaking Quebecois, and then there was the Native population who were speaking their first language there as well, and the complexity of that setting really confused my students, they were unable to separate out the American presence in Canada from Canada being America... So now, the layers of colonization and imperialism that were part of that story led to some interesting discussions, but it could be a language issue trying to distinguish between imperialism and colonization you know, the Americans as imperialists, the Canadians, the Quebecois as the colonists, seemed to be a nuance there that was lost on my students. And the Native population in Northern Quebec reacting to both the imperialists and the colonials. There's a lot of nuance there and they weren't able to grasp all of it.

Reflecting on her own experience reading literature as a student of the IB program Sophie suggested that maybe what students who are 18 years old, and far from home, “want the most is just to see their own reflection all the time.” The sustained work of learning about another cultural context, another literary tradition is a direct contrast to the easy escapism that many students associate with reading. Students need support and time to develop the skills and patience required to read another way.

As previously discussed, there are limitations to time in the classroom that

prevent teachers from delivering a world history course or a history of English literature course in conjunction with the world literature requirements. However some teachers argue that students don't need an understanding of the English canon in order to engage with works outside the canon. Tobias suggests there's an iterative process that takes place as readers use one text to guide them to another text:

That goes back to my experience writing about Indigenous literature and being exposed to post colonial theory very early without knowing the traditions, and then starting to question those traditions. I mean part of why I write on early Canadian women's drama in my academic work, is because I worked in contemporary and started questioning, or wondering, what the traditions are. And I think you get a different perspective on the constructed nature of tradition and what is neglected out of a canonical reading out of our perception of where we are now. And I love that upside down perspective because it turns everything around. So I do think if one is curious, and if one has the kind of literary education that inspires one to read widely and question things, a critical approach, you will do that by yourself. You will start wondering why Orwell cites Virginia Woolf, if you pick up on it, and only if you read broadly, and widely, would you start noticing these intertextual works more and more. (Tobias)

Teachers can also facilitate that process by scaffolding a course in such a way that texts speak to each other across time and context. This allows students to see the tip of the iceberg, and the rich intertextuality that will reward their further inquiry.

The power of the canon

20th Century literature in translation is like the rest of the world screaming at the

overseeing which is super powerful and amazing, but that means that you just have to say ‘I guess we will read, another book besides *Things Fall Apart*.’ So I think there is a problem, it's institutional and structural in terms of the thing that the IB is admirably trying to solve with the literature in translation list is this power dynamic. But it's taught by, as we saw today in our class, a bunch of middle class white people, who have read what they read in college, which was the canon probably. (William)

As the IB aims to deliver a curriculum for peace and the world literature program intends to help students connect with experiences different from their own, the organization faces a challenge from the power of the literary canon (Leggo, 2001). The idea of the literary canon as a group of established predominantly Western texts that are granted status as academic and literary (and superior to other texts) emerged in nearly every conversation I had with teachers. A discussion of the role of the literary canon with English teachers can be tense with contradiction. Teachers of literature are often educated with an emphasis on canonical works, and have feelings of love and appreciation and comfort for those works. At the same time, literature teachers also tend to have an interest in new literature, new voices, and new perspectives. As the English A course allows room for a range of texts, it is expected that teachers will engage with the canon. The outgoing literature course required at least one Shakespeare text, and the new course retains a requirement to teach works from different time periods, which tends to invite the inclusion of canonical texts. Sophie argued for a balance of texts including some “old chestnuts” and some lesser-known works so students can engage in cultural conversations and with other ways of seeing the world. Many teachers I spoke with felt balance

between canonical and non-canonical texts too often fell on the side of well-worn Western European classic literature. In the World Literature/Works in Translation section, they felt this was not representative of the global spirit of the IB.

Interviewees who are also examiners said they read papers from many schools where students wrote on predominantly Western European novels for the World Literature component. Rebecca posits that teachers may feel safer with these options because they can access many teaching resources on the texts, and other teacher's mentioned the way the canon tends to reproduce itself as teachers select texts they studied at University, which tended historically to represent a very western version of the world. When William asked his students to select a work from the Prescribed Literature in Translation list he found they fell into a similar pattern:

They just went through [the list] and found books that they had heard of, or that they had read before. Which was an interesting testament to the power of the canon because they had heard about the books that people hear about, which means they had heard about the canon. Some of them had heard about other authors, but because they're UWC students, what would happen, is they would do that, they would create a list, and then they would gravitate towards the more interesting and exotic version of that canonized list which is how we ended up with Marquez, I think. (William)

Other teachers talked about the economics of time and the challenges of introducing new texts, developing lessons and finding resources. Kershner describes ordering a teaching resource for a new text online, and realizing when the resource arrived that it was entirely in Chinese (2002, p. 80). As Red suggested, "we were always

sort of planning on changing the curriculum, and it was always just one step ahead, like okay, so I'm not going to read a book and bring a whole new perspective to this thing at this point, I'm just going to wait until this is over and then we'll reexamine." This comment suggests teachers require institutional support at the school and organizational level to take textual risks.

The list

In creating a prescribed list of works in translation, the IB is perpetuating the canonical idea that some works are selected for close study and academic worth above others. While the list is extensive and covers authors from all continents, teachers described some frustrations when attempting to build their courses. Red spoke about his frustration with the number of Asian works and the number of female authors: "it was a very frustrating process putting together this curriculum, it seemed like we had a very narrow list of people we could work with if we wanted to speak to our Chinese population in a meaningful fashion."

Others spoke about the lack of Indigenous voices on the list. Tobias said, "I was very disappointed to see the new PWT, because certain things have fallen off the list. And they've gone back to very conservative, what are the canonical texts in each culture approach. Not, what has been happening in the last 10-15 years, discussing that could be very fertile." Both he and Red expressed frustration at the dearth of Indigenous writers on the lists. Red suggests:

It turns out that one of our works of literature [works in translation] is from Canada, which is nice, which is a trick, it's a way to bring some more Canadian literature in, but honestly, we were looking to teach a work by a Canadian Native

writer, and I would have accepted a work by an American Native writer, Sherman Alexie, but he's not approved. Sherman Alexie is definitely Native and Washington State and all that stuff, and every first nation has a cultural value of its own, its own voices, and it's hard to access that so it would have been perfect if we had the ability to access Indigenous texts from our region and we can't.

(Red)

Both teachers suggest the IB needs to provide more support for those who wish to broaden their students understanding, and that they need to push reluctant teachers into taking more curricular risks:

It would be great if we could find a way, a mechanical way, to get voices from all continents, and it would be nice if there was something to the effect of to have an Indigenous voice as part of the curriculum, because the Indigenous voice is not part of our course. It is part of our curriculum through a white woman's perspective but that's really different than an Indigenous voice, and that's absent.

(Red)

And part of what annoys me about cutting back on the WL component, is that the number five was perfect, because you were able to teach books from 5 continents, you could actually explore world literature, if you wanted to. I see why most people in their courses, would not necessarily do that. Because as an examiner I see lots of course outlines and I know what other schools do, and they fall back to a certain few that they seem to think they know very well. And not risking actually exposing students to a broader literary perspective. And I wish the IB

would actually provide more support for that. (Tobias)

As this chapter demonstrates, there are many ways to approach the teaching of world literature, and the teachers I interviewed articulate the possibilities and challenges of connecting students to experiences different from their own. I was inspired by the reasons teachers described for teaching world literature, as well as by the many suggestions for teaching and the suggestions they had for classroom practice. Several teachers experienced challenges teaching works set in complex post-colonial contexts, and struggled to have students recognize these geopolitical tensions. Here the experiences of teachers connect with current scholarship, teachers recognize that reading world literature can be a more cosmopolitan experience than what is currently required by the IB. Indeed most teachers I interviewed suggested they tried to increase the geographic and representative scope of their texts far beyond the IB requirements. With aims of introducing students to the world, some teachers report feeling stymied by limitations in the IB booklist or in their own reading. In order to support teachers and to allow students to connect with a wide range of perspectives, the IB must provide resources to inspire the teaching of non-canonical texts, and resources to address complex post-colonial and transnational tensions in works and in the world. Without these resources and without institutional support many teachers will struggle to bring a diversity of voices into their classrooms, or will struggle to connect students to works and contexts so different from their own.

With institutional support, in the form of workshops, mentorship programs, and resources, the IB can support students and teachers reading widely, critically, and compassionately. If students can connect to many points of view, recognize their own

perspectives, and appreciate complexity, they will be well on their way to meeting the IB aims of creating peace and a better world. The final chapter discusses recommendations from this research to meet these aims.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter presents a reflection on the findings of the literature review and teacher interviews. I have also collected recommendations for the International Baccalaureate Organization, for teachers and schools with world literature programs, and for my own practice, including changes I hope to make in light of this research.

Conclusions

At the beginning of this research I asked how reading and interacting with texts can help students connect to and appreciate multiple perspectives in the world around them, and specifically what and how students should read in order to develop international understanding and address the IB aims of education for peace and a better world.

A review of literature shows that the question of what to read as world literature is actively negotiated and the boundaries of the genre are contested. Interviews with teachers suggests they recognize these tensions and carefully construct their reading lists to represent a range of voices and perspectives. Teachers consider the representation of age, gender, place, culture, and time, and many classroom teachers articulated the importance of selecting texts that recognize marginalized voices and speak back to the western canon as essential practices of reading for social change.

The question of how to read raised a plethora of suggestions. Without recommending a blanket approach, teachers generated a rich toolbox of ideas and resources, suggesting that research, film, discussion, co-reading, response activities, drama, sensory immersion, and literary lenses are all effective ways to help students connect to texts. Teachers and students can read socially, reflectively, creatively,

imaginatively, comparatively, immersively, and bravely to connect with texts and experiences different from their own.

Teachers articulated strong enthusiasm and passionate rationales for teaching world literature including building empathic bridges to others and deepening the understanding of the self. Though all teachers had an appreciation for the underlying foundations of the IB, several were frustrated by institutional structures and prescribed limitations. The immensity of the field, the tenacity of the canon, and structural limitations in schools including time and financial resources were all cited as challenges to teaching world literature in the high school context.

To truly promote the aims of education for peace and a better world, the IB must push teachers to use a broad range of texts in their classrooms, and support teachers with resources and mentorship focused on non-canonical texts and the knotty challenges of post-colonial works and contexts. The next section outlines ways that the IB organization, as well as individual teachers can deepen their practice of teaching world literature, and allow students to connect to many stories from many places and times.

Recommendations

International Baccalaureate Organization

My research corroborates the findings of Bent (2009), Loh (2012) and Rodway (2008) that the academic focus of the IB in the Diploma Program can overshadow the ideals of the course and the focus on peace and international understanding. When reflecting on the Works in Translation assignment Olivia observed:

The interesting thing with teaching IB Literature is we can offer these lenses to

look through, but at the end of the day, most of the examination is around the literary features of the texts. On one hand I know IB has [teaching multiple perspectives] as a goal, but when it comes to the testing, with the exception of the WL paper, which even then, you can focus on setting and safer topics, I don't know, I guess it would be great to see IB move us towards those lenses a little bit more and push the kids, because we can push them in our classroom, but I don't think the actual assessment tasks push them.

These reflections mirror concerns raised by Bent about the limitations of the teaching world literature in the IB context, and particularly about the way that academic concerns overshadow peace education.

While it is difficult to measure and assess open-mindedness or a student's commitment to peace, there are several ways the IB can reinforce the aims of developing “internationally minded people who, recognizing their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet, help to create a better and more peaceful world” (IB, 2009, p.9).

Structural changes to the new Language A suite of courses could demand all schools address a greater breadth of texts. The textual diversity requirements could be increased to requiring three or four regions are represented across the two-year course. Alternatively, the course could include at a requirement to teach at least one post-colonial text or voice. All the teachers I interviewed constructed rich diverse lists, yet teachers who were also examiners reported seeing many schools where only canonical western texts were taught.

The IB can also increase support to teachers in terms of ways to teach world

literature and improve access to resources on little known texts. Sites like the Annenberg Learner *Invitation to World Literature* site show just how much is possible in this field by combining history, criticism, multimedia, and other resources. A teacher in my research also suggested the IB could create Category 3 (experienced teacher) workshops with a focus on teaching world literature. These workshops could outline classroom activities, thematic connections, and rationales for how and why to teach these texts.

Some teachers wanted the prescribed list of works in translation to be expanded, while others wanted improved access to texts on the list. The idea of site licenses or easy access to digital copies of resources in the public domain would support teachers who want to address lesser-known texts. To incorporate multiple perspectives and voices, the list should be expanded to include more Indigenous voices, and support and encouragement should be provided for teachers to take risks and select texts beyond their comfort zone. This is needed to give students the opportunity to connect with the complexity of the world.

Teachers and schools

This research validates the importance of connection and sharing ideas, as well as the importance of reflection on practice. The teachers I spoke with were enthusiastic in their reflections, and thoughtful in their course delivery. I felt spoiled to hear so many excellent ideas for classroom practice, and validated to hear common concerns and challenges repeated across the board. Several teachers spoke about the richness of collaborating within the IB course, and my recommendation would be to help IB teachers connect and share resources on texts and practice as much as possible. This is corroborated in research by Rhine & Gillespie which suggests that interdisciplinary team

teaching can enrich both the student and teacher's study of world literature (in Damrosch, 2009b).

The second recommendation for teachers and schools is to encourage pedagogical risk taking. Teachers need encouragement to introduce new texts, and to read outside their comfort zone. Schools can support teachers in taking these risks through professional development, collaboration, and mentorship.

My own practice

I began this research with my own concerns that my practice had become too outcomes based and left idealism aside. My interviews with teachers validated the importance of idealism and the political nature of literature. Secondary readings suggested that the learner profile and aims of the IB should be valued on par with the academic requirements.

I will begin my classes this year with a reflection on the IB learner profile and I will ask my students to track their development of those characteristics alongside the academic indicators. I will use theoretical lenses in the classroom as a way of having students see multiple points of view, and I will employ many of the suggested approaches in hopes that all students will see a new perspective or way of seeing in at least one of the texts we read together.

Strengths and limitations of research

As addressed in the methods chapter, this research focuses on a small qualitative sample. It is not meant to represent the experience of all teachers of literature, but rather to highlight the depth of a few voices and experiences.

There are limitations to the research on IB English A/A1 as the study was conducted just as the new course was introduced. Further research should be conducted once a cohort of students and teachers have completed the new program.

Suggestions for further research

This research raises areas for further investigation in the teaching of world literature in the IB program and beyond. As suggested above, it will be interesting to see how the curricular changes play out over the two-year curriculum. Wilkinson & Hayden's (2010) study about IB grads' attitudes towards international mindedness could be repeated with this new cohort who are completing a more structured and uniform WL course.

A similar narrative or qualitative study on student experiences reading world literature would yield a different and valuable set of data on text selections and pedagogical choices. It would be particularly interesting to conduct a more longitudinal study and trace student responses to texts of difference across a two-year course.

Technology presents many opportunities for further research in this area. Student Blogs or annotations of digital texts could be used to encourage and record student connections to texts, and could perhaps include a response/interactive element in the style of Sumara's commonplace book (2002). The use of ebooks or open site licenses could also allow teachers and students access to a wider range of world literature in their classrooms.

Finally, more research on teachers as risk takers, teachers as co-readers, and teachers navigating the canon is needed to support the creation of rich challenging

diverse booklists both inside and outside the IB. With a wide range of texts and perspectives, and a toolbox of approaches, teachers can help students to build bridges and connections to other worlds and times.

Dissemination of research findings

It is my hope that the reflections of these teachers, and the collection of current literature on teaching multiple perspectives, will be of use to other teachers of world literature. I hope the teacher reflections will be of interest to International Baccalaureate researchers and curriculum writers. In particular I hope my reflections and my colleagues' suggestions on the texts and content of curriculum will be of use to the IB's curriculum review panel, and that newer iterations of the English A course push students and teachers to read every more widely and to grapple with the complexity of challenging non-canonical texts.

More broadly, I hope this study will be of use to teachers who want to combine critical literacy and social justice practice with the demands of rigorous academic programs.

Conducting this research has motivated me as a teacher to deepen my practice, expand my reading, and bring my questions and concerns to my colleagues. One of the most powerful components of the research came from the synthesis and connection expressed by different teachers on similar themes. I hope to look for ways to continue these generative conversations in my own practice and the schools where I work. I hope other teachers are supported in making these conversations happen wherever they are. Together, teachers and students can discover literature as a lamp that lights up the world.

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Appendices:

Appendix A: Letter of initial contact

Letter of Initial Contact: Approaches to Teaching Literature in Translation in the International Baccalaureate Program

Dear _____,

Thank you for your interest in the study “Approaches to Teaching Literature in Translation in the International Baccalaureate Program.” I look forward to the opportunity to speak with you about your teaching experiences.

I am attaching the research consent form here for your perusal. The form contains an overview of the research purpose and procedures, as well as the potential risks and benefits of the study. After you have read the consent form, and if you feel comfortable participating in the study, please email or call me so we can set up a time for your interview. I will collect the signed consent form at the interview. You can ask me any questions about the study at any time, and you can withdraw your participation at any time.

If you have any concerns about this research you can contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 604- 822-8598 or if long distance, e-mail to RSIL@ors.ubc.ca or toll free 1-877-822-8598.

Thank you very much for your time,

Jeanie Morton
Co-investigator

Researcher phone number
Researcher email

Appendix B: Consent Form



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Department of Language and Literacy Education

2125 Main Mall

Vancouver, B.C., V6T 1Z4

Consent Form:

Approaches to Reading World Literature in the International Baccalaureate English Classroom.

UBC Ethics Approval H12-00386

Principal Investigators

Carl Leggo, Professor, UBC Language and Literacy Education, (***) ***-****.

Theresa Rogers, Professor, UBC Language and Literacy Education, (***) ***-****.

Student Investigator

Jeanie Morton, MA Candidate, UBC Language and Literacy Education, (***) ***-****.

Purpose:

This research is undertaken as part of the requirements towards a graduate degree in Language and Literacy Education, and will be published as a thesis. The purpose of this research is to explore approaches to teaching world literature in a high school setting, with a focus on complexity and social justice. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are an experienced teacher of world literature and the International Baccalaureate (IB) and I am interested in your professional reflections as well as your ideas and stories on this topic.

Study Procedures:

This study consists of a series of qualitative interviews with experienced IB teachers. Study participants will commit to one hour-long interview with the possibility of a follow-up interview after the initial data collection. You will be asked a series of open-ended questions about your experiences teaching world literature, and working in the International Baccalaureate curriculum. The sessions will be audiorecorded with your consent.

Subjects are invited to participate by email to school heads. The study has nothing to do with the schools that the heads represent, and the heads will not be told who does or does not choose to participate.

The subjects are a non-random sample based on their experience as IB teachers and their interest in the teaching of world literature.

Potential Risks:

This is anticipated to be a minimal risk study as it addresses topics within the professional sphere of teaching.

Potential Benefits:

Results of this study may benefit other teachers of literature as well as the study participants as

they will have opportunities to reflect on their practice, and perhaps to glean new ideas or approaches to teaching world literature.

After participation in the research, all participants who are interested in obtaining the results of the study once they are published, can request an email copy.

Confidentiality:

The identities of all people who participate will remain confidential, and identities will be protected with the use of pseudonyms for subjects and study sites. Subjects should be aware that details provided in anecdotes could provide sufficient detail to identify a subject to other people in the school or field.

Identifiable data will be stored securely in a locked drawer or in a password protected computer account. All data from individual participants will be coded so that their anonymity will be protected in any reports, research papers, thesis documents, and presentations that result from this work. All documents will be identified only by code number and kept in a locked filing cabinet.

Remuneration/Compensation

We are very grateful for your participation. However, you will not receive compensation of any kind for participating in this project.

Contact for Further Information About the Study

If you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study, you may contact Dr. Carl Leggo or one of his associates at ***-***-****.

Contact for concerns about the rights of research subjects:

If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research subject, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 604- 822-8598 or if long distance, e-mail to RSIL@ors.ubc.ca or toll free 1-877-822-8598.

Participant Consent and Signature:

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time. If you withdraw from the study prior to analysis your data will be withdrawn.

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records. Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study. You do not waive any legal rights by signing this consent form.

I consent to have my interview audio recorded Yes / No

_____ Subject Signature _____ Date

_____ Printed Name of the Subject

Yes, I am interested in receiving an email copy of the final results: _____
Email address

Appendix C: Interview Schedule

Interview Schedule:

Approaches to Reading World Literature in the International Baccalaureate English Classroom.

UBC Ethics Approval H12-00386

Life History:

How would you describe your approach to teaching literature? Does a particular theoretical school influence your practice? (post-colonial, postmodern, reader response, new criticism)

What brought you to teaching literature? What are your formative experiences with literature in translation?

The IB Diploma strives to cultivate “an appreciation of the different perspectives of people from other cultures, and how these perspectives construct meaning.” What are some ways you have fostered this appreciation of different perspectives in your literature class?

Contemporary Experience:

What are three of your favourite world literature texts/texts in translation?

What is the most challenging WL text you have taught, why do you think it is challenging?

Is there a particularly memorable interaction you’ve had with a student when teaching a WL text? / Have you had experiences teaching a text where students have expressed a change in their world-view because of ideas or questions raised in literature or class discussion?

What might a unit of study for a text look like? How do you introduce students to a novel set in a context that is unfamiliar to them? How do you deepen their understanding of context?

What approaches have you found most helpful to make the text come alive for students? / Is there a particular activity you like to use to help students connect to very different settings or contexts and develop global consciousness?

Reflection on Meaning:

What are the challenges and advantages of teaching works in translation?

What value do you see in teaching works from diverse contexts?

How would you express your beliefs about the power of literature to challenge assumptions and change perspectives?

Appendix D: International Baccalaureate Learner Profile

The IB learner profile

The aim of all IB programmes is to develop internationally minded people who, recognizing their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet, help to create a better and more peaceful world.

IB learners strive to be:

Inquirers	They develop their natural curiosity. They acquire the skills necessary to conduct inquiry and research and show independence in learning. They actively enjoy learning and this love of learning will be sustained throughout their lives.
Knowledgeable	They explore concepts, ideas and issues that have local and global significance. In so doing, they acquire in-depth knowledge and develop understanding across a broad and balanced range of disciplines.
Thinkers	They exercise initiative in applying thinking skills critically and creatively to recognize and approach complex problems, and make reasoned, ethical decisions.
Communicators	They understand and express ideas and information confidently and creatively in more than one language and in a variety of modes of communication. They work effectively and willingly in collaboration with others.
Principled	They act with integrity and honesty, with a strong sense of fairness, justice and respect for the dignity of the individual, groups and communities. They take responsibility for their own actions and the consequences that accompany them.
Open-minded	They understand and appreciate their own cultures and personal histories, and are open to the perspectives, values and traditions of other individuals and communities. They are accustomed to seeking and evaluating a range of points of view, and are willing to grow from the experience.
Caring	They show empathy, compassion and respect towards the needs and feelings of others. They have a personal commitment to service, and act to make a positive difference to the lives of others and to the environment.
Risk-takers	They approach unfamiliar situations and uncertainty with courage and forethought, and have the independence of spirit to explore new roles, ideas and strategies. They are brave and articulate in defending their beliefs.
Balanced	They understand the importance of intellectual, physical and emotional balance to achieve personal well-being for themselves and others.
Reflective	They give thoughtful consideration to their own learning and experience. They are able to assess and understand their strengths and limitations in order to support their learning and personal development.

(IB, 2009, p. 7)