



AIRC NEWS

Newsletter from the American Information Resource Center (AIRC), Chennai
January - March, 2006

From the Publisher:

New Year Greetings from AIRC Chennai.

I am pleased to bring you this issue of our newsletter focusing on literature, creative writing, reading and English as a Second Language (ESL). Just as an update, AIRC inaugurated an **English as Second language** Corner on November 21, 2005. More than 130 school, college and university teachers attended the event. Teachers and students should find the ESL collection, comprising more than 500 books, audiocassettes, videotapes and CDROMs most useful. I encourage you to visit the AIRC and make use of this excellent new resource. The audio, videotapes and CDROMs listing is also provided in this issue.



I hope you will find the issue informative and interesting and I look forward to seeing you at AIRC!

Ravi Candadai
Consul for Public Affairs

LITERATURE AND CREATIVE WRITING

Excerpts of the Speech delivered by Mr. Christopher Wurst, Deputy Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Consulate General, Chennai at MOP Vaishnav College, Chennai

I am here today to talk about literature and writing—and, share, some books I've recently read.

I think we should start very close to home—with your great writer R.K. Narayan. I am a huge and devoted Narayan fan; Narayan is a master at saying a lot with a little. He's neither flashy nor difficult, and yet many would argue that he's the greatest English writer India has yet produced. His style is crystal clear, his sentences short and sweet, his words basic. His books begin with a single, simple protagonist. Their character is developed, merely by illustrating mundane daily life, and, finally, invariably the protagonist goes through a life-changing passage of some type. In the end the characters, though changed, move forward. Because that's what we humans do.

Great literature, by definition, is transcendent. It touches your soul; it stirs your emotions; it makes you think; but, it must be felt—and in that way, it can never be entirely explicated. Great literature occurs when writers take aim at that which is visceral—that which defies understanding—and manage to break through to the other side, if only for a fleeting instant.

So, you ask: "What is great literature?" And my answer is: there is no formula, no particular style, no favored genre, no superior time period, no subject and no ambition that results in great literature. What is great literature? I know it when I read it. Great literature changes you, makes you a different person simply because you read it. And, in order for that to happen, you make a personal connection with the literature. It is not a one-way street. You must give yourself up to the literature you read. Only then can it rock your world.

Now, here's a warning and a promise: the more you read, the more complex and interesting the world becomes. Or, to paraphrase Socrates: "The more you know, the more you know how much you don't know." If you are seriously going to engage literature, you need to be fearless about going forward with an open mind.

First: **Read. Read. Read. Read.** Read widely; read what's new. Read classics; read magazines; read everything. The more you read the clearer an understanding you'll begin to have about what you enjoy. But, I guarantee, the more widely you read, and the more open-minded you stay, the more likely that your tastes will converge with what might be called good literature. Here are my last twenty books: *Oh The Glory Of It All* (Sean Wilsey), *The Final Solution* (Michael Chabon), *Swami and Friends* (R.K. Narayan), *Samskara: Rites for a Dead Man* (U.R. Anantha Murthy), *On Photography* (Susan Sontag), *The World is Flat* (Thomas Friedman), *Humboldt's Gift* (Saul Bellow), *The Bachelor of Arts* (Narayan), *The Dark Room* (Narayan), *Midnight in Sicily* (Peter Robb), *If On A Winter's Night A Traveller* (Italo Calvino), *The Leopard* (Giuseppe di Lampedusa), *The English Teacher* (Narayan), *Freakonomics* (Steven D. Levitt), *Sitting Pretty* (Al Young), *Cloud Atlas* (David Mitchell), *Mr. Sampath—the Printer of Malgudi* (Narayan), *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* (Jonathon Safran Foer), *Essence of Camphor* (Naiyer Masud), and *The Devil's Picnic : Around the World in Pursuit*

Dates to Remember

- January 10, 1946 - First United Nations General Assembly: Anniversary
- January 16 -Martin Luther King, Jr: Birth Anniversary
- February 1-28 -National African American History Month
- February 21 -Presidents' Day
- March 1-31 -Women's History Month

of *Forbidden Fruit* (Taras Grescoe).

The point is: Read. So, my second piece of advice to you is: ***Life's too short to read bad literature.***

The 20 books I just listed are the last 20 books that I've finished. They are not the last 20 books I have begun. If you are reading a book that is causing you to suspect that you might be narcoleptic—stop! Put it down! You owe no allegiance to a book that is giving you no rewards. Find something you like. Now, just because a book is difficult or at times confusing shouldn't cause you to abandon it. Reading is work—remember, the amount of satisfaction derived from reading is exactly proportionate to the amount of yourself you invest in any given book—and sometimes it is hard work.

There's nothing wrong with hard work. However, sometimes you might find yourself reading an author whose style does not connect with you at all, or a book you cannot find a way to relate to. Stick with what works for you. This leads me to my third point: ***Only you can decide what you like.*** Why do you read the books that you read? Foremost, probably, it's because someone—your professor, your parents, your friends—have told you to read certain books. Maybe because you receive a certain book as a gift. Maybe even because you've read an interesting book review in the newspaper. But the point remains that a lot of what you read is initiated from outside sources. There's nothing wrong with this—I constantly listen to people's advice and try to read every book gifted to me.

Think for yourself and think critically. Or, for short. Think! is my fourth point. Don't take someone's advice about why this book or that book is great—make up your own mind. Learn to employ the word 'why.' If it takes your breath away, it's great. Which leads to this advice: ***Use your brain, but follow your gut.*** As I said earlier, good literature should move you; it should touch you, and thus change you, however subtly. In order for this to happen you need to: ***Find a way to connect with what you are reading.*** How can you personally relate to a work? The fact is, the more you read, the more prepared you are for the world. So, when all else fails: Read, read, read. Every book you read better prepares you for your next book.

My next piece of advice: Great ***literature necessarily needs to be well-written.*** I learned how to write by reading. In that way, I am the sum of all the writers I've read. Bad writing is a dangerous and highly contagious disease. The foremost job of a writer is to communicate. The best writers invariably find ways to communicate in

AIRC Holidays

January 11 - Bakrid
January 13 – Pongal (In Lieu of)
January 16 – Martin Luther King's Birthday
January 26 – Republic Day
February 20 – President's Day

story and inserting themselves into the story. As writers

you should strive to keep your style simple, with short sentences and as few words as possible. R.K. Narayan is a master writer, whose prose is so deceptively simple that you'd be forgiven if you thought anyone could do that. I urge you to read him if you haven't—if for nothing else, to learn cues on how you should write.

It's important to know about the authors that write the books we like, just as it's vital to know about their surroundings, their exposure, and their intentions. Reading the thoughts and reactions that intelligent and eloquent people have when they read literature is fascinating. Please, please use your honest and informed reactions to fuel your brilliance; let your brilliance be your own.

In closing, I offer not advice, but an admonition: Read with passion. Remember, the more of yourself you are willing to give up to the task at hand, the more reward you will receive. Just as you must think for yourself, you must also always read first for yourself.

English as a Second Language: resources

The following is a listing in addition to books available at the AIRC.

CDROMS

Active Listening: Introducing Skills for Understanding: [student's book 1] (CD 428.3 HEL)

Active Listening. Expanding Understanding through Content. (CD 428.3 HEL)

All Clear! Idioms in Context (CD 428.24 FRA)

American Voices: Movers and Shakers: A Low Intermediate Reading Text. (CD 428.64 JOL)

Basic Grammar in Use (CD 428.24 MUR)

Basic Vocabulary in Use (CD 428.24 MCC)

Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary (CD 423 CAM)

Cracking the TOEFL CBT, 2004. (CD428.24 MIL)

English for Everyday Activities: [sound recording]: [a picture process dictionary]. North American ed (CD 428.24 ZWI)

English in Action 1-4, includes Workbooks (CD 428.24 FOL)

Grammar in Use: Intermediate (R 428.24 MUR)

Hotel English. (CD 428.34 TIM)

Instant Immersion: English Grammar and Pronunciation (16 CD-ROM set) (CD 428.34 PIL)

Rosetta Stone's English/US English, level 1 (CD 428.24 ROS)

Rosetta Stone's English/US English, level 2 (CD 428.24 ROS)

TOEFL Practice Tests. V.1 (CD 428.0076 TOE)

TOEFL Practice Tests. V.2 (CD 428.0076 TOE)

Well Said: Pronunciation for Clear Communication.2nd ed. (CD 428.34 GRA)

Audio Cassettes

Active Listening: Expanding-Understanding Through Content (SC 428.3 HEL)

Active Listening: Skills for Understanding (SC 428.3 HEL)

Clear Speech: Pronunciation and Listening Comprehension in North American English (SC 428.34 GIL)

English for the Teacher: A Language Development Course (SC 428.007 SPR)

Exploring Spoken English. (SC 428.3 CAR)

More Dialogues for Everyday Use. New Interchange, level 1-3 (SC 428.24 RIC)

Open Sesame: Understanding American English and Culture Through Folktales and Stories. (SC 428.64 PRI)

Presenting in English (American English) (SC 658.452 POW)

Small Talk: More Jazz Chants. (SC 428.34 GRA)

Teaching Pronunciation: A Reference for Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages. (SC 428.007 CEL)

TOEFL Practice Tests. V.1 (SC 428.0076 TOE)

TOEFL Practice Tests. V.2 (SC 428.0076 TOE)

True Colors (4 v) (SC 428.24 MAU)

Word English, 1, 2 & 6 (SC 428.007 WOR)

Working it Out: Interactive English for the Workplace. (SC 428.24 MAG)

Video Tapes:

Rethinking America. 1 -3. (VTR 428.64 RET)

Websites

Office of English Language Programs Home Page
<http://exchanges.state.gov/education/engteaching/>

English Teaching Forum Online
<http://exchanges.state.gov/forum/>

Forum Electronic Journals
<http://exchanges.state.gov/forum/journal/>

NEW AT AIRC

Books

Beginning Visual Web Programming in C#: From Novice to Professional / Daniel Cazzulino ... [et al.]. Berkeley, CA : Apress, 2004 (005.72 BEG)

Blix, Hans. **Disarming Iraq** / Hans Blix. New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 2004 (956.7044 BLI)

Broadbent, Marianne. **The New CIO Leader: Setting the Agenda and Delivering Results** / Marianne Broadbent, Ellen S. Kitzis. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2005 (658.4038 BRO)

Chatterjee, Sayan. **Failsafe Strategies: Profit and Grow from Risks that Others Avoid** / Sayan Chatterjee. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Wharton School Pub., 2005 (658.155 CHA)

Cohen, Stephen P. **The Idea of Pakistan** / Stephen Philip Cohen. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2004 (954.91 COH)

Diversity and Public Administration: Theory, Issues, and Perspectives / edited by Mitchell F. Rice. Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2004 (352.608 DIV)

Harvard Business Essentials: Manager's Toolkit: The 13 Skills Managers Need to Succeed. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2004 (658 HAR)

Hentoff, Nat. **American Music Is** / Nat Hentoff. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2004 (780 HEN)

Kumar, Nirmalya. **Marketing as Strategy: Understanding the CEO's Agenda for Driving Growth and Innovation** / Nirmalya Kumar ; [foreword by Philip Kotler] Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2004 (658.802 KUM)

Landes, William M. **The Economic Structure of Intellectual Property Law** / William M. Landes and Richard A. Posner. Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2003 (346.73048 LAN)

McGahan, Anita M. **How Industries Evolve: Principles for Achieving and Sustaining Superior Performance** / Anita M. McGahan. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2004 (658.4012 MCG)

Odom, William E. **America's Inadvertent Empire** / William E. Odom and Robert Dujarric. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004 (320.973 ODO)

Oliver, Richard W. **What is Transparency?** / Richard W. Oliver. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2004 (174.4 OLI)

Peabody, Bo. **Lucky or Smart? Secrets to an Entrepreneurial Life** / Bo Peabody. New York, NY: Random House, 2005 (658.4 PEA)

Articles

THE BIRTH OF GOOGLE

By John Battelle. Wired, August 2005, pp. 1-4.

CAN WE BURY GLOBAL WARMING?

By Robert H. Socolow. Scientific American, July 2005, pp. 49-55.

GROWTH, INEQUALITY AND POVERTY: SOME HARD QUESTIONS

By Ravi Kanbur. Journal of International Affairs, Spring 2005, pp. 223-232.

RELIGION AND THE WEST

By Peter L. Berger. K. National Interest, Summer 2005, pp. 112-119

RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE

By Martha Nussbaum. Foreign Policy, September/October 2004, pp. 44-45.

SOLAR POWER, LAKOTA EMPOWERMENT

By Gary Wockener. World Watch, July/August 2005, pp. 11-17.

STRATEGIES THAT FIT EMERGING MARKETS

By Tarun Khanna, et al. Harvard Business Review, June 2005, pp. 63-76.

WIRED TO EAT

By David E. Duncan. Technology Review, July 2005, pp. 52-59.

DVDs on Management

AIRC has just received a set of nearly 20 DVDs focusing on the related areas of management such as communication skills, Conflict Resolution, Problem Solving, Stress management, Commendable Customer Services, Business Communications, Negotiating, strategies for success, Corporate Social Responsibility, Keys to success in Business, etc. Patrons are encouraged to view them at the library. Institutional members may borrow these on a first-cum-first-served basis.

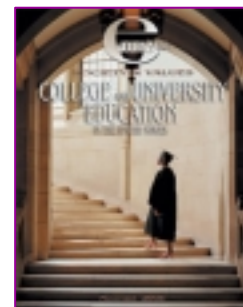


This issue of Economic Perspectives explores some of the most promising applications of biotechnology from microorganisms engineered to produce hydrogen gas from organic waste and bacteria engineered to break down environmental pollutants to crops that add vitamins to what we eat and novel drugs for treating human diseases such as Alzheimer's and diabetes

<http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/ites/1005/ijee/ijee1005.htm>

Electronic Journals

This journal includes descriptions of various types of U.S. institutions of higher learning, followed by articles that feature more detailed information about individual university programs, as well as articles about the concept of a "major," college life, and the American styles of instruction.
<http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/itsv/1105/ijse/ijse1105.htm>



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