

READER'S GUIDE

This guide is designed to enrich your reading of the articles in this issue. You may choose to read them on your own, taking notes or jotting down answers to the discussion questions below. Or you may use the guide to explore the articles with colleagues.

For example, many teachers discuss *Forum* at regularly scheduled meetings with department colleagues and members of teachers' groups, or in teacher-training courses and workshops. Often, teachers choose an article for their group to read before the meeting or class, then discuss that article when they meet. Teachers have found it helpful to take notes on articles or write a response to an article and bring that response to share in a discussion group. Another idea is for teachers to try a selected activity or technique described in one of the articles, then report back to the group on their experiences and discuss positives, negatives, and possible adaptations for their teaching context.

"This American English Class": A New Model of Cultural Instruction (Pages 2–12)

Pre-Reading

- 1.** Do you incorporate cultural instruction in your teaching? If so, how do you do it? If not, what are your reasons for not including it?
- 2.** What resources do you have that you could use in cultural instruction? Can you think of other resources that would also be useful in cultural instruction?
- 3.** What questions have students asked you about cultures other than their own? How have you responded? What do you do or say if you are not sure how to answer?
- 4.** Why is it necessary to teach culture along with language? What are some problems or difficulties that people might face if they learn only a language but none of the culture that goes along with that language?

Post-Reading

- 1.** Explain the Cultural Facilitation Model in your own words. What are the strengths of the model?
- 2.** The authors note that "No single native English-speaking instructor can completely represent the many pieces of his or her home culture." Do you agree with this statement? If this statement is true, what does it suggest about how culture can or should be incorporated in a language class?
- 3.** Ask students to come up with questions, similar to those at the very beginning of the article (e.g., "How close are Americans to their co-workers?"), about another culture. Select some of the questions. Then search for materials—on *This American Life* or by using another source provided in the article—that you might be able to use in class to help students answer the questions. What materials can you find? Consider asking your students to do research of their own and develop answers to the questions. If possible, ask them to apply the Cultural Facilitation Model as they develop their answers.
- 4.** What questions do *you* have about a culture—or cultures—different from your own? Keep a list. Use the list as a guide for enriching your own multicultural knowledge and/or as a source of content to include in your teaching.

Engaging Language Learners with Biography-Based Lessons, Units, and Courses (Pages 13–25)

Pre-Reading

1. Have you used biographies in your English teaching? How did you select the biographical subjects (that is, the people) for your students to read about? What were the purposes of assigning your students to read biographies in English?
2. What do you think are some benefits of reading biographies in English class? Think about benefits for teachers as well as benefits for students.
3. Suppose you decide to ask your students to read a biography as an assignment in English class. Take a moment and think: What tasks and activities could you assign to supplement the reading of the biography?
4. Whose biography would you be interested in reading? (That is, what person would you like to read about?) Why? Would you also like to ask your students to read a biography of that person? Why or why not?
5. What is the most recent biography you have read? What do you remember about the person whose story was told in the biography? What do you remember about the way the biography was written?

Post-Reading

1. The authors provide a list of biographical subjects they used in their classes (Frank Lloyd Wright, Wilma Rudolph, Estée Lauder, and Milton Hershey). Would you use biographies of these people in your classes? Why or why not?
2. By yourself or with colleagues, brainstorm a list of people you think would be appropriate biographical subjects for your students to read about. Then have your students brainstorm a list of their own. How similar or different are the two lists? Can you explain the reasons for the similarities and differences? Ask students to explain why they think the people on their list would be interesting and appropriate subjects. Then assign students to select people to read biographies about and report on.
3. Suppose you decide to incorporate biographies in your English teaching. Would you prefer to have all students read the same biography or to have each student (or pairs or small groups) read about a different person? What are the advantages of each approach?
4. In the first paragraph of the article, the authors point out that after class, their students gather and often talk about . . . people. Do your students do the same thing? How can you make use of your students' interests—the things that they talk about before and after class—in your teaching?
5. The authors offer a number of activities based on or related to the biography of Frank Lloyd Wright, an architect. Suppose your students are reading not about an architect, but an author. How might the activities be adapted? How might the activities be adapted for other careers (musician, artist, scientist, politician, businessperson, teacher, athlete, actor, etc.)?
6. Explore the sources given at the end of the article in the section called Finding Biographies and Biography-Based Materials. Which one(s) seem best for you and your students to use? Select a biography from one of the sources; then select one of the activities described in the article and use it in your class. Or, if possible, have students explore the sources and report on what they find: How easy is the site to navigate? What level of English language knowledge is required to use the site with confidence? How interested are students in the biographies they find?