



Nobility for the Classroom

by Robert H. Taferner (Ph.D. Candidate, Lancaster University, UK)



My children ... trust me to tell them the truth about the world. But who can I trust? The media? Big business? Politicians? Seems like everyone's got an agenda. And every year my kids' questions get harder and harder to answer. What I need is some back-up... someone who really gets the big picture. And I do mean BIG picture.

Turk Pipkin (*Nobility*, 2006)

Introduction

We are living in challenging times as we are in the mist of the near completion of a globalized world. As educators, we are responsible for facilitating a true understanding of the important events in our lives, especially those global issues that affect people at a local level. This objective is especially pertinent to international programs designed to promote an international civil service networked for global governance by introducing students to current global concerns, then having them relate to and act on these concerns locally. As the Mission Statement of Tama University in Tokyo states, we need to “cultivate capable individuals who will be successful in the international business arena and, therefore, able to quickly respond to internationalization and the information age” (2007).

With this in mind, I decided to design in-house materials within our Tama University English program to meet this challenge. In order to do so, a number of criteria were considered in determining the materials to adopt and develop to meet these unique program goals. Since most 1st-year students who have entered Global Studies programs have very little knowledge of or explicit experience with global issues, materials covering a vast number of topics within the global studies genre were needed. Of primary importance was the need to stimulate teachers' and students' enthusiasm in the classroom, to incorporate literacy practices (as stipulated by MEXT, 2003), and to include vocabulary building, the 4-skills, Internet research, critical thinking, and discussion and debate. An additional caveat was the need to enrich the delivery of content through the use of authentic materials from available multimedia to provide engaging global themes for pre-intermediate to advanced level students.

A search for applicable materials available resulted in the discovery of *The Nobility Project*, a certified education and action non-profit, and the film *Nobility*, a documentary film which features Turk

Pipkin's journey across the globe interviewing Nobel laureates about the most pressing local and global issues that we are facing today. One of the principal goals of *Nobility* is to connect people all over the world with reliable information and innovative thinking on pressing global problems like globalization, sustainable energy, health care, individual challenges and contributions, economic disparity and development, world knowledge and culture, human rights and freedoms, and general questions regarding war and peace.



Nobility for the Classroom

Once I selected *Nobility*, we began to create EFL lessons based on a systematic framework that encourages students to participate in the creation of knowledge after providing the necessary content. This is achieved through a combination of previewing, vocabulary building and guided listening tasks. Students are then required to conduct Internet research for the purpose of sharing summaries of articles and websites with their classmates to enrich their knowledge of the lesson's thematic content. The next stage is to select writing topics for further discussion, debate and closure. A post-course survey of student responses to our materials indicated that the content was interesting, and the exercises in the *Okay to Difficult* range. The listening exercises were found to be most difficult, possibly due to the authentic nature of the audiovisual materials.

Collation of the lessons which I developed throughout the school year resulted in *Nobility for the Classroom*, a viable textbook surpassing our initial expectations. *Nobility for the Classroom* is divided into 11 units, nine of which are focused on an individual Nobel Laureate, plus Introduction and Consolidation units. After exploring the numerous issues proposed by the featured Nobel Laureates, the Consolidation unit asks students to explore the achievements of Japanese Nobel laureates, discuss their contributions to the world, then propose what they can do as students and young adults to make the world a better place.

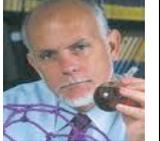
Nobility for the Classroom
Textbook Outline

Unit 1: Introduction to Nobility

Nobility is a feature documentary which looks at the world's most pressing problems through the eyes of nine distinguished Nobel laureates.

	<p>Unit 2: Decisions <i>Towards a Globalized World</i></p> <p>Steven Weinberg Nobel Prize for Physics 1979</p>
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In this interview, Steve Weinberg (winner of the 1979 Nobel Prize in Physics) expresses his concern over global warming and climate change. Every day we make decisions about things that affect us on an individual level. These choices, however minor, have the potential to influence others on a global scale. Making the correct choice takes time and correct information. But how do we decide what is correct? Will our decisions truly benefit those around us? This unit allows students to explore controversial climate change policies and globalization.

	<p>Unit 3: Challenges <i>In Search of Sustainable Energy</i></p> <p>Richard Smalley Nobel Prize for Chemistry 1996</p>
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Dr. Richard Smalley was awarded the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1996 for his discovery of the *Buckminsterfullerene* or *Buckyball*, a unique molecular structure comprised of 60 carbon atoms. Smalley's interest in science began in his early teens. He has been an eloquent spokesman for the need to educate a new generation of scientists to find solutions to the world's problems. *Be a Scientist—Save the World* was the title of his lecture on the great energy challenges we face in the coming decades. In this interview, Dr. Smalley suggests that advances in science and technology, and the implementation and support of these technologies through governmental agencies, could solve many of the problems we face today. Here, students continue this debate on both traditional and alternative sources of energy that may be necessary for us to embrace as we look towards establishing sustainable energy sources.

	<p>Unit 4: Disparities <i>Developing Health Care</i></p> <p>Harold Varmus Nobel Prize for Medicine 1989</p>
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In 1989, Harold Varmus was awarded the Nobel Prize in Medicine in recognition of his breakthrough research in identifying *oncogenes*, which have dramatically improved our ability to understand and control cancer. Dr. Varmus also co-founded the *Public Library of Science*, a nonprofit organization committed to opening the doors to the world's library of scientific knowledge by giving any scientist, physician, patient or student—anywhere in the world—unlimited access to the latest scientific research. Through the efforts of scientists like Dr. Varmus, there has been an effort to scientifically address many of the illnesses prevalent in the world through westernized medicine. In this unit, students learn about advances in medicine and get an opportunity to explore some unknown but important discoveries that may benefit their health.

	<p>Unit 5: Change <i>An Individual's Contribution</i></p> <p>Jody Williams Nobel Prize for Peace 1997</p>
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Jody Williams was awarded the Nobel Peace prize in 1997 for her work with the *International Campaign to Ban Landmines* (ICBL) to forge an international treaty banning anti-personnel landmines. Nobel Laureate Williams believes that we all need to care about the important issues in the world, and, in our own way, help to make a positive change, which will result in a stronger society. In this interview, Jody Williams expresses her views on global conflicts and describes how she is helping to make the world more peaceful.

	<p>Unit 6: Knowledge <i>Understanding Our World</i></p> <p>Ahmed Zewail Nobel Prize for Chemistry 1999</p>
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Ahmed Zewail, winner of the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1999, has made the discovery of truths about the world a primary goal throughout his life. This pursuit of knowledge has been an ongoing quest of mankind. Questions relating to the origin of our species, our purpose, and our futures have always perplexed us and continue to do so. A place to start

gathering knowledge is to look at our various cultures and histories through visits to libraries, art galleries, museums, and world heritage sites. In this unit, students realize the necessity to become knowledgeable about their own histories, cultures, and about the world around them.



Unit 7: Persistence
Achieving Important Goals in Our Lives

Wangari Maathai
Nobel Prize for Peace 2004

Wangari Maathai has made a great contribution to Kenya and the African continent through her effort to bring peace and prosperity to rural communities. For this effort, she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004. In her attempt to solve environmental problems, such as deforestation and clean drinking water, she has also addressed the needs of families to provide food, clothing, and education to their children. Due to her persistence in empowering women in communities throughout Kenya, the basic needs of these people are now being met through seeding the environment for future social and economic stability. By using Ms. Maathai as a role model, students contemplate how to achieve important goals in their own lives.



Unit 8: Peace
Conflict Resolution

Joseph Rotblat
Nobel Prize for Peace 1995

Sir Joseph Rotblat won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1995 for his relentless efforts to limit the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Nobel Laureate Rotblat spent most of his life trying to determine the issues involved in securing and maintaining universal peace in a nuclear weapon free world. In this unit, students attempt to comprehend some of the circumstances relating to war and conflict in order to grasp what is necessary for a humane and longer lasting peace in society.



Unit 9: Reason
Human Rights and Freedom

Amartya Sen
Nobel Prize for Economics 1998

Economist Amartya Sen is one of the world's leading authorities on human development human rights, and the causes of famine, for which he won the Nobel

Prize in Economics in 1998. Nobel Laureate Sen demonstrates that famine is not caused by a lack of food, but by an inability to acquire food due to poverty or a lack of freedom. Students examine the causes of poverty and lack of freedoms, and debate the issues involved.



Unit 10: Love
Truth and Reconciliation

Desmond Tutu
Nobel Prize for Peace 1984

Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984 for his role in the campaign to resolve the problem of apartheid in South Africa. From Nobel Laureate Tutu we can learn about how people work together to improve their society and their standards of living through reconciliation and love for others. The pursuit of moral righteousness through constant reevaluation of our actions may be a way forward to ensure equality amongst all members of the human family. In this unit, students reflect on how people can live and work together to improve their communities.



Unit 11: Consolidation
It's Up to All of Us

In this year-long journey, many of us have widened our perspectives about real issues in the world. Turk Pipken took the hard road by taking a year out of his life and traveling around the world reaching out to people who could help him with his quest. In this final unit, students learn about Japanese Nobel laureates and contemplate how they too can achieve something important in their lives through the pursuit of higher goals in society.

Conclusion

The decision to develop *Nobility* materials for my students' specific learning needs has led to an empowering experience both on a personal and professional level. Through their classroom experience, my students have enhanced their connection with local and global issues and intend to continue to explore their role in making the world a better place for future generations.

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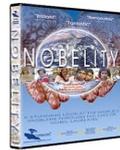
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NOBELITY WEBSITES

- The Nobility Project**
 www.nobility.org
- Nobility in Schools**
 www.nobilityinschools.org
- Classroom Lessons with Nobility**
 www.nobilityinschools.org/lessons.html
- On-line Introduction to Nobility**
 www.linktv.org/programs/nobility
- Data on Nobel Laureates**
 Search <www.wikipedia.org> for the following:
- “Lists of Nobel Laureates”
 - “Lists of Nobel Laureates by Country”
 - “Lists of Female Nobel Laureates”

“Nobility for the Classroom” Textbook

Check out the Nobility EFL text described in this article at Robert Taferner’s *Nobility* website:
 www.global-educational-resources.com/nobility



Get the Nobility DVD

Title: *Nobility* (2006)
 Director: Turk Pipkin US \$24.95
 84 minutes Close captioned
 ISBN: 1-56994-410-5

**Nobility for the Classroom:
 Internet Research**

Do an Internet search to learn more about some important issues in the world. Read an article or browse a website and write the information in your own words. Bring the article and your summary to class to share with your classmates.

Japanese Nobel Laureates

- (1) **Leo Esaki** (Physics, 1973)
- (2) **Kenichi Fukui** (Chemistry, 1981)
- (3) **Yasunari Kawabata:** (Literature, 1968)
- (4) **Makoto Kobayashi:** (Physics, 2008)
- (5) **Masatoshi Koshiha:** (Physics, 2002)
- (6) **Toshihide Maskawa:** (Physics, 2008)
- (7) **Ryoji Noyori:** (Chemistry, 2001)
- (8) **Kenzaburō Ōe:** (Literature, 1968)
- (9) **Eisaku Satō:** (Peace, 1974)
- (10) **Osamu Shimomura:** (Chemistry, 2008)
- (11) **Hideki Shirakawa:** (Chemistry, 2000)
- (12) **Koichi Tanaka:** (Chemistry, 2002)
- (13) **Sin-Itiro Tomonaga:** (Physics, 1965)
- (14) **Susumu Tonegawa:** (Medicine, 1987)
- (15) **Hideki Yukawa:** (Physics, 1949)

A. Select a Nobel laureate:

B. Write down the important vocabulary from the article you have chosen.

C. Answer the following questions about the Nobel laureate you have chosen.

1. Who is the Nobel laureate?

2. What did this Nobel laureate do?

3. How is their contribution helping the world?
