

Jimmy in Baku.

Written by Elizabeth White. March 2018

I never knew my grandfather. He was born in 1890, and he died when my mother was still child. All we knew of my grandfather was a photograph in a silver frame, a photograph of a middle-aged man in a dark suit that stood on my grandmother's hall table. He looked very serious.

The only things my grandmother kept from her husband's life were: a medal, some silver cigarette boxes – and a couple of photograph albums, full of tiny, square, black and white photographs. These were from my grandfather's travels on business, in the early years of the twentieth century. He worked for a company which was originally called the Anglo Persian Oil Company (which is now BP).

Most of the photographs show city scenes and railways stations, without people and without names. They could be anywhere. But one of the photographs shows my grandfather, as a young man. He's standing on a seaside boulevard, a calm sea behind him, and some fine buildings in view. It's winter, because he's wearing a fur coat, with enormous square shoulders, a coat which reaches to the ground. For some reason he has no hat on; he's smoking a cigar, and he has a big smile on his face. And under the photo, in his own writing, it says: **JIMMY IN BAKU.**

It must have been a hundred years ago – perhaps 1919. And a century later, here I am in Baku. It's high spring, and I need no coat or hat in this good weather. The Caspian Sea is still calm. And I may be in Azerbaijan for a different reason, but perhaps I have the same smile on my face.

I've also been here for longer than my grandfather's business trip. For four years now, nearly five, I have been working as Director of the British Council Azerbaijan, and I am very conscious of my good fortune. My work is fascinating, and I believe it is useful and worthwhile; the British Council makes links between people and organisations in the UK and Azerbaijan in education and culture, and supports English language teaching and learning. This year the British Council celebrates 25 years in Azerbaijan.

It's also been my good fortune to have four years to get to know Azerbaijani life and culture, and Azerbaijani language too. Before I came here I knew very little of Azerbaijan (except for my grandfather's photograph) – so when I first arrived in Baku I was so curious to know everything, to learn as much and as quickly as

possible. When you arrive in a new country you notice everything, and you ask about everything, since everything might be important.

My first impressions were very good. I wrote to my family that people were super-friendly and very welcoming; that the city was fine-looking and shiny clean; that many people wore black clothes; that it was hard to find a good cup of coffee in a tea-drinking country; that I heard both Russian and Azerbaijani spoken on the street; that my colleagues were great; that the weather was – whatever the weather was, it's always of interest to the British.

These were first impressions, superficial ideas about a new place – the kind of idea which help you to find your place in a new world. After five years of living and working in Azerbaijan, I know much more, and have thought and discussed a lot, and I understand some things better.

Some things have changed in themselves over five years – smart new buildings, the fall in the price of oil and the economic changes, the increase in tourism, the profile of women in work and in government, the fact that you can now get good coffee in Baku. **People in general speak more English, and I speak more Azerbaijani.**

Some things I now understand better – the relation between people and government, the way the education system works, the role of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict in shaping opinion, the aspirations of Azerbaijan to assert its identity and to be an important player on the international stage, the mugham tradition, how to make tea.

Some things haven't changed. People are still friendly and polite, and the quality of welcome is still marvelous. My colleagues in the British Council are still great. Teachers in schools still deserve more recognition and reward. The differences of opportunity between the regions and the capital are still notable. The wind in Baku is still outrageous.

I know very much more than my grandfather ever knew about Azerbaijani life and culture. There is so much still to learn. I hope I get the chance.

Vocabulary

Keywords: enormous, conscious, fortune, fascinating, impression, superficial, asserts, outrageous

Class Activity: Teach different colours and how it represents different things. Show symbols and images and describe the elements of these symbols and images and what they represent especially comparing various times and periods in Azerbaijan history.

Questions:

- What did the author want to share with the reader?
- What is retrospective description?
- What takes more place in the story – the historical facts or author’s feelings and perceptions? Can you bring examples from the text to prove your answer?
- Following the tips below, can you write your own personal story and share it with your friends?

Tips on how to write Life Reflections story

Life Reflection Stories are not lengthy chronicles to share every adventure we experienced, nor are they volumes of information detailing every historic event from our lifetime. Rather, they are a distillation of what we determine is most significant as we reflect upon the life journey we have experienced so far. It’s our opportunity to get to the heart of what really matters so that our next generations can live their lives well. For some, this task is accomplished in a few inspiring paragraphs. For others, it may take an entire story or many short stories about each stage throughout a lifetime. The length and format do not matter. What is most important is that our words speak from our heart to the loved ones currently in our life and those who will come long after we are gone.

The easiest way to begin is to think about who you are writing to – your loved ones. You define who you hold near and dear to your heart and who is within your inner circle. Write their names in the dedication and keep them in mind as you write.

Subject:	Class:	Date:	Lesson:	Time:	No. of pupils: (boys/girls)	Teacher
Social Students	Grade 4 / 5 / 6 / 7			1 hour		
Topic/Context				Prior learning/experience		
Personal Stories and Experiences: Jimmy in Baku				Basic knowledge of English Language in the classroom		
Resources				Focus of observation (if appropriate)		
Materials prepared for the purpose of teaching English through social studies				<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Learning English language through social studies 2. Connecting our societies with the rest of the world 		
Learning Objectives/Intentions: By the end of the lesson students will be able to:				Success Criteria /How Progress will be demonstrated:		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Learning from peoples stories and personal experiences living and working in Azerbaijan 2. Understand Azerbaijan from the eyes and lens of others 				<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Student ability to make connection between history and society over different centuries 2. Appreciation of the peculiar features of Azerbaijan 		

Clock Time	Learning Activity (TS3)	Key Questions (TS4)	Differentiation (TS5)	Assessment Opportunities (TS6)
	Starter/Bell Work (Where appropriate): LA1: Welcome student to the lesson; attendance and messages LA2: Review of previous lessons	How has our knowledge of previous lessons helped our understanding?	Some students might be new to the class, revising past classwork help them to connect with the lesson	Retentiveness of past lessons; producing text of previous homework
	Main Activities: LA3: Personal stories about “My impressions. Students share their first impressions about places or events they have visited or taken part in. LA4: Stereotypes –some of the stereotypes people have about our gender, or countries, or races	What are some of the things we are looking for when we encounter something for the first time? Why are stereotypes formed and how can we address the issues of negative stereotypes	Students can work in group to explain and share knowledge	Oral description and commentary skills
	Plenary/Review: LA5: Keywords –meaning and learning oral skills presentation Prepare spoken words about impressions and stereotypes	What are some of the colours, symbols, images identified if any?	Some students are better in artistic choices that the others.	Critical thinking
	Homework /Independent Learning LA6: Post-reading questions	What have learned from the personal experience of two generations in Baku?	How can students show understanding and connect to learning objectives	Research ability

