

Global: Critical Pedagogy Materials Adaptation

Melanie Kincl

Middlebury Institute of International Studies

The Global series, published by MacMillan, makes an effort to appear more "sophisticated", "engaging," and "inclusive" (Global, n.d.) than other textbooks. The "Six quotes that inspired Global" (Clandfield & Jeffries, 2012, p. 2) in Figure 1 align with ideas of critical pedagogy, which begs the

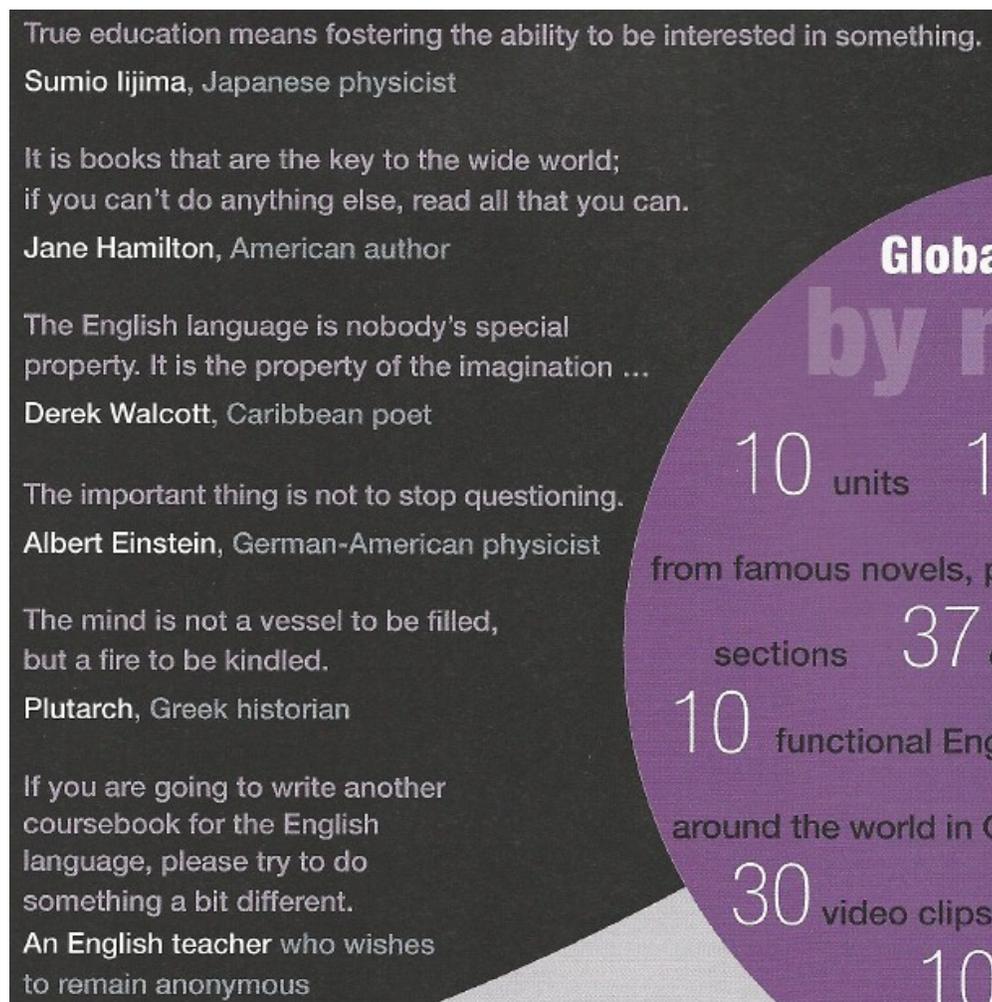


Figure 1. Six quotes that inspired Global.

question: Does this textbook support a critical-pedagogy-driven classroom? Global does not cross the 'PARSNIP' line, but it does walk right up to the line and dance around on the edge of it, before running away. Nevertheless, there is more potential in this book than in most, and with just a moderate level of motivation on the part of the teacher, it can become an excellent stepping stone for a critical pedagogy-driven classroom.

From the Teacher and Praxis Perspectives

It was the range of intellectually-stimulating topics, and the mature way they are presented that first drew me to this book. Global is designed specifically for adult English language learners in the UK, and though I have only analyzed Global Advanced (level C1) here, all the levels are designed to appeal to adult learners, with graphic elements that take care not to be juvenile. It was this visual presentation that first attracted me to Global, and I soon found that the topics had an equal maturity to them that is not present in many textbooks. I have not had much chance to use Global, but I have gotten to use the first two units in my own teaching, and have found that, while the topics have a great deal of potential, the lessons themselves need extension.

The units in this book are structured around two contrasting or complimentary themes each with great philosophical potential (e.g., "Light & Dark" or "Theory & Practice"). Flowing from these themes, there are generally four different kinds of lessons: literary extracts, interesting factual tidbits, solutions/positive stories, and surface-level looks at contentious issues. In addition, after every second unit, there is a short section, called "Global English", looking at sociolinguistic issues around English, such as language planning or Indian English.

Though this textbook touches on some extremely complex and deep issues, all the lessons stay safely on the surface. In fact, the lessons stay so safely on the surface of such deep topics at times, that they seem to almost be daring the reader to go further. The topic of one lesson, for instance, is an exhibition that simulates blindness for sighted people. The conversation questions at the end of this lesson (see Figure 2) focus on imagining the challenges that people with different kinds of disabilities might face navigating the local environment. However, the lesson ends with these conversation questions, with no hint that one might act on these reflections.

Speaking

Work in pairs. Imagine you are one of the following, and discuss the questions. If you have one of these disabilities, describe your real experiences.

blind or partially sighted deaf or hard of hearing
a wheelchair user

- How would you have come to your class today? What difficulties might you have had getting into the classroom? How could you have overcome them?
- What difference would it make to your ability to take part in the class now? What would you need to do?
- How far do you think your learning institution, workplace or leisure centre caters to the needs of people with a disability?

Figure 2. Speaking activity for *Dialogue in the Dark*.

This lack of application is a trend throughout the book: Topics with great social justice potential are introduced and then abandoned just before real progress can be made. While this trend is frustrating on the surface, it is probably this lack of following through with these topics that allowed this book to be published. Fortunately, it would take only a moderately motivated teacher to extend these topics. To illustrate the potential of these lessons, I created a table (see Table 1) indicating the lessons that most obviously lend themselves to social justice issues, and the issues they most obviously lend themselves to. To do so, I looked at each lesson and asked myself if the topics were symptoms of a larger issues, if there were other perspectives that were not represented, and what could be done with the information provided. This table is not a comprehensive list of all possible connections these lessons could have to social justice issues; it is just the topics which were most prominent to me from a quick look at each lesson. While the book opens the door to many social justice lesson-extensions, it is notable that there are still some topics that are barely even hinted at, the most obvious of these being LGBTQ+ issues. The absence of such issues could itself be a topic for investigation, especially in classes where these issues directly affect the students.

Table 1

Social justice topics by lesson

Lesson	Topic	Potential Social Justice Connections
Unit 2, Part 2 <i>The Solar Solution</i>	article on the benefits of solar power, both for the environment and third-world countries	environmental issues and access to technology
Unit 2, Part 3 <i>Dialogue in the Dark</i>	exhibition helping sighted people understand the blind experience	ableism
Unit 3, Part 4 <i>The God of Small Things</i>	excerpt from a novel by an Indian author; the excerpt describes a mute boy, but the novel touches on many more topics	rigid social roles (classism, gender, etc.), ableism, victim blaming
Unit 4, Part 1 <i>The Myth of Mars and Venus</i>	men and women are actually very similar	gender, LGBTQ+ issues
Unit 4, Part 3 <i>El Sistema</i>	music program in Venezuela which aims to help impoverished neighborhoods	classism
Unit 5, Part 2 <i>World Vision Volunteers</i>	various NGOs and volunteers	white savior complex, equality vs. equity, colonization
Unit 5, Part 3 <i>Crimes and Punishments</i>	punishments in the past	prison industrial complex, authoritarianism
Unit 5, Part 3 <i>Piracy</i>	focus on modern day piracy, with a ship captain's perspective and a Somali pirate's perspective	failed states, colonization
Unit 5, Part 4 <i>The Stanford Experiment</i>	brief overview of the experiment	prison industrial complex, depersonification, authoritarianism
Unit 6, Part 2 <i>The Long Song</i>	excerpt from a short story set around the abolition of slavery in Jamaica	slavery, modern day slavery, colonization
Unit 6, Part 4 <i>The New Golden Age</i>	about the current value of gold	access to resources/conflict resources, environmentalism, fair-trade/modern-day slavery
Unit 7, Part 4 <i>Attachment Theory</i>	early child development and the importance of a safe environment	racism, classism
Unit 8, Part 1 <i>What are the chances</i>	statistics of everyday situations and self-selection bias	privilege, equality vs. equity
Unit 8, Part 4 <i>A Culture of Conspiracy</i>	conspiracy theory	propaganda

Unit 9, Part 2 <i>Working Time Around the World</i>	overworking	classism
Unit 9, Part 3 <i>Traffic: A Universal Condition</i>	traffic issues around the world	environmentalism
Unit 10, Part 1 <i>Isolation: When Local Goes Global</i>	cultural diversity in Oxford	racism, colonialism, cultural appropriation
Unit 10, Part 2 <i>Why Eat Locally</i>	environmental benefits of eating locally	environmentalism, fair-trade
Unit 10, Part 3 <i>Globalization and Football</i>	globalization and football	any currently issue around the World Cup or Olympics (e.g., gender, racism), globalization, colonialism
Unit 10, Part 4 <i>A Treatise on the Astrolabe</i>	description of Chaucer's treatise on the astrolabe	cultural appropriation, rewritten history

In addition to these lessons, the Global English sections beg for extension. For example, in the Global English article, "Linguistic heroes and villains" (p. 63), which touches on English as a Lingua Franca and language planning to preserve local dialects and heritage languages, the discussion questions are wimpy, at best. The speaking section (see Figure 3) almost seem to be bending over

Speaking

1 Look at the following ways that governments can impose or protect languages. How effective do you think they are? Give each one a mark from 1 (largely ineffective) to 4 (very effective).

- Establish an academy that ‘protects’ the purity of the language.
- Introduce language study at an early age for children.
- Ban or prohibit use of other languages in public spaces.
- Make a language obligatory in all public offices.
- Give money to artists, authors, film-makers, etc to produce works in the language.
- Change the language to make it simpler to learn.

2 Compare your answers with a partner.

Figure 3. Speaking activity for *Linguistic heroes and villains* Global English lesson.

backwards to avoid deep discussion, asking students to numerically rank the effectiveness of different language planning options, and then compare answers with a partner. This approach is especially problematic, as the issue of language planning may be quite contentious, depending on the backgrounds students come from. One option in particular that students are asked to rank, "Ban or prohibit use of other languages in public spaces", may even be triggering to some students if they speak a minority language that is banned in their home country. It is likely this task is so basic in order to avoid provoking such uncomfortable situations. Nevertheless, a cursory glance at the issue with no critique or platform for sharing does not help anyone learn. Even the use of the word 'discuss' could have improved these questions.

Though it is left entirely up to the teacher to develop the topics further, this does present one benefit: Teachers who know their students well will be able to focus on issues that are more relevant to students' contexts, or avoid topics that may be triggering.

From the Student Perspective

Because this is an extremely advanced (C1 level) textbook, the themes are appropriately deep, and the presentation is appropriately mature--but still visually appealing and engaging--for adults. However, the topics themselves are often one-sided and optimistic. While the textbook does have more white, male, and white-male representation than other groups, it does clearly make an effort to include non-white and female contributions. For example, in some generic people shots, such as the one in Figure 4 (left) showing two people networking, the individuals pictured are not automatically white. Similarly, in a map (Figure 4, right) accompanying a description of Oxford, both a church and a mosque are included. Generally, it seems that Global is trying to portray the ethnic groups that are most represented in UK immigration; There seems to be special emphasis on India and various former colonies, while China is barely mentioned. Though this representation is not equal, it does make sense for the students population Global is aimed at. Nevertheless, some groups are still vastly

underrepresented while others are omitted entirely from this book; as previously mentioned, there are no hints of LGBTQ+ individuals and, while there is a lesson on blindness, there are no depictions of people with disabilities.

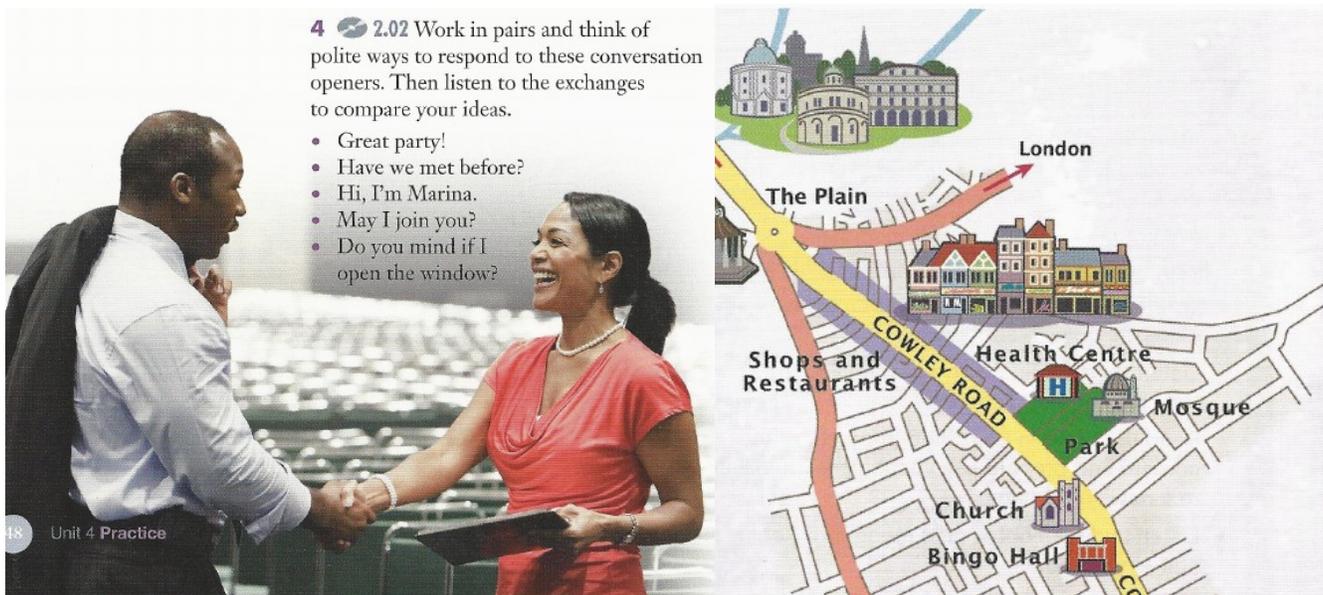


Figure 4. Two people of color being normal (left) and a map of Oxford including a church and mosque (right).

Materials Adaptation

Because this book so consistently goes up to the brink of a topic and then shies away at the last minute, it is most effective to present teachers with consistent ways they can extend most of the lessons. In order to accomplish this, I created a brief handbook (see Appendix), with categories of questions for each category of lesson, which can help teachers extend the material. To create this handbook, I started from the questions I had used to develop Table 1, and thought about questions that would naturally accompany those questions. I then looked at several specific lessons that were begging for a deeper analysis (primarily "World Vision Volunteers", "Piracy", and "The Long Song"), and thought about what questions would take on to that deeper analysis. For example, the lesson "World Vision Volunteers" seemed to me to have an air of white savior complex, so I thought about questions looking into unintended side-effects of seemingly positive solutions. As I thought of these questions, I

realized that these lessons were not structured in the same way. This meant that the same questions would not work for each of them, so I looked at the lessons overall and categorized them into five groups: interesting facts, solutions, literature/art, and contentious issues, in addition to the self-categorized Global English sections. I then repeated the initial process but with one lesson from each category. After I had a list of questions, I selected a different lesson from the same category, noted any new questions it seemed to suggest, and tested the questions I had already developed with that lesson to see if they were generic enough to fit multiple lessons. The categories which were most challenging were Interesting Facts, as the topics were so diverse, and Global English, as some of these articles had very clear implications for language learners while in others it was much harder to get to the meat of the issue. Though it is not possible to make all questions in each category apply perfectly to all lessons, I felt that most of the questions applied to most lessons from the section they were designed for. In addition, though I do not have access to other levels of Global to test the lessons, I believe that, with some rewording according to student level, many of these questions could apply to those lessons as well.

As these questions must be broad so as to apply to multiple lessons, they are meant to be starting places for extending the conversation, not the entire extension itself. In addition, not every question will apply to every lesson perfectly, so teachers should pick and choose accordingly. It should also be noted that the 'Contentious Issue' category of questions could be applied to many of the lessons, depending on students' backgrounds, beliefs, and comfort-level with the topic. Though these questions help extend most of the lessons, there were some (the lessons not included in the handbook chart) to which it was not possible to apply generic questions. This does not mean that these lessons cannot be expanded; just that they will have to be individually adapted if a teacher wishes to extend them. Though these questions do not address topics that are completely absent from Global, such as

LGBTQ+ issues and PARSNIP topics, it is likely that it will be easy to encourage students who develop a habit of questioning their textbook to also question what is absent from their textbook.

References

Clandfield, L., Jeffries, A. (2012). *Global* (Advanced Coursebook). London, UK: Macmillan Education.

Global. (n.d.). About the Course. Retrieved from <http://www.macmillanglobal.com/about/the-course>

Appendix

Lesson	Category of Extension Questions
Unit 1, Part 1	Interesting Facts
Unit 1, Part 3	Literature/Art
Unit 1, Part 4	Interesting Facts
Unit 2, Part 1	Literature/Art
Unit 2, Part 2	Solutions
Unit 2, Part 3	Solutions
Unit 2, Part 4	Literature/Art
Unit 3, Part 1	Literature/Art
Unit 3, Part 4	Literature/Art
Unit 4, Part 1	Interesting Facts
Unit 4, Part 2	Interesting Facts
Unit 4, Part 3	Solutions
Unit 5, Part 1	Literature/Art
Unit 5, Part 2	Solutions
Unit 5, Part 3	Contentious Issues
Unit 5, Part 4	Contentious Issues
Unit 6, Part 1	Interesting Facts
Unit 6, Part 2	Literature/Art
Unit 6, Part 3	Interesting Facts
Unit 6, Part 4	Interesting Facts
Unit 7, Part 1	Interesting Facts
Unit 7, Part 2	Literature/Art
Unit 7, Part 3	Interesting Facts
Unit 7, Part 4	Interesting Facts, Contentious Issues

Unit 8, Part 1	Interesting Facts
Unit 8, Part 2	Literature/Art
Unit 8, Part 3	Interesting Facts
Unit 8, Part 4	Contentious Issues
Unit 9, Part 1	Interesting Facts
Unit 9, Part 2	Interesting Facts
Unit 9, Part 3	Interesting Facts
Unit 9, Part 4	Literature/Art
Unit 10, Part 1	Literature/Art
Unit 10, Part 2	Solutions
Unit 10, Part 3	Solutions, Contentious Issues
Unit 10, Part 4	Interesting Facts, Literature/Art

Global English

- What common belief(s) does this challenge?
- Is this something you can see in your own language?
- How might this influence...
 - attitudes towards non-standard English?
 - the future of English?
 - countries where English is used as a lingua franca?
- Who has more/less power to influence this?
- How should this shape your English-learning?

Contentious issues

- What is the underlying issue here?
- What are the main perspectives on this topic? What are the "grey areas"?
- What might cause someone to choose one side or another in this argument?
- How might someone with one perspective misinterpret another perspective?
- How do you feel about the deeper issues behind this topic?
 - Do you feel tension about them? Where is that tension coming from?
 - How do these issues challenge what has traditionally been thought about this topic?
- What is society's dominant response to this issue?
 - Is this response different in different cultures?
 - Does this response harm any groups of people?
 - Should this response change? If so, how?
- What will you do with all this information?

Solutions

- What problem is this solution aiming to address?
 - How effectively does this solution address the issue? Is it equally effective in all contexts?
 - Who is affected by this problem? Do all the people groups affected have access to effective solutions?
 - Do people who are affected by this problem also participate in decision-making about solutions?
 - What are other solutions to this problem? Why is it *this* one that is showcased here?
- Does this solution have side-effects?
 - Is there a social power dynamic to it?
 - Is it sustainable (environmentally, economically, socially...)?
- What will you do with all this information?

Literature/art

- What are the cultural assumptions in this piece?
 - Who does this piece represent
 - How are societal expectations upheld or challenged in this piece?
- What does the author's/artist's perspective seem to be?
How might this piece be different if that perspective were different?
- Why was this piece chosen?
 - What major themes are reflected in this piece?
 - What other works could have been used instead?
- Is this work a classic? If so, in what ways do you think society reflects this work?
- How would you change this piece?
- What will you do with all this information?

Interesting Facts

- How reliable is this information?
- Is this information presented in a way that reflects cultural values?
 - Does the language used show positive or negative views of this information? How?
- Do most people have access to this information?
- What does this information say anything about human behavior?
- What will you do with all this information (original information and results of the discussion)?