

Musings from Music, Mime, Movies and More

Jerusalem in July. Jam-packed conference. ETA I doing what it does best: providing English teachers from across the country with the venue, infrastructure and opportunity to meet. The presenters and participants provided the rest.

From warm welcomes by Susan Bedein, Eleanor Satlow and Michele Ben, to refreshing preludes of music performed by two excellent musicians of the host school, I along with those I observed around me were immediately caught up in the excitement of the event.

Not only were the main hall, workshop rooms and book exhibitions bustling and brimming with people, so too were the ideas, experiences and techniques being shared amongst all the attendees of this two-day summer conference.

Judy Steiner's opening plenary was no exception either. With the theme 'More from the Ministry', an update on revisions to the national English exams, she had everyone's attention from the get-go. Even those of us who teach different classes elsewhere than kindergarten, primary and secondary schools in Israel could follow the thread of the topic of 'meaningful learning'.

Coming from conservative Switzerland, I was absolutely fascinated to experience the lively interaction of the audience as they posed questions to understand the relevance and implications of changes to their personal circumstances. I was just as equally impressed by the patience, competence and clarity with which Ms Steiner answered each and every question.

Other sessions I attended were equally thought provoking and stimulated ideas for my own teaching and personal development exploration. Just a few gems I gleaned include:

In *Write Your Way*, David Young stressed: include short letter with book submission: 1) synopsis; 2) technical details, word count, chapters, target audience, genre; 3) sell yourself as 'expert' but be truthful.

One idea from Ritti Katz's session on *Music and Speech Writing & Presentations*: while students listen to M. L. King's 'I have a Dream' speech, they note use of repetition, vivid word pictures, metaphor, etc, for their own speeches / presentations.

The main character 'In Her Shoes' who we watched in Susi Secemski's workshop *Via Film Clips* was limited in life (job search) not due to lack of intelligence, but slow reading. Encouragement from one single person telling her 'you can do it' made the difference.

I learned that art can be used to build writing skills in Susan Bedein's *More Art for More (Using Art in the Classroom)*. Students find pictures which depict a text, e.g. a poem, then describe it (e.g. mood) while others draw pictures as they hear it illustrated.

Russell Stannard also captivated my attention and piqued my interest in his plenaries *M for More and Making the Most and Where is Technology Taking Us?* Jing, Snaggit or Screencast, can be used to record (audio) errors in students' texts and to give (asynchronous) explanations about how to correct mistakes. The Gorilla Test exemplified how viewing the same thing does not mean everything will be noticed, recorded or remembered by everyone. We are all unique.

On that note, no doubt the musings of this conference goer will differ to others who attended the same conference in Jerusalem this year. Nevertheless some things will remain and this shared time and space will not easily be forgotten. I hope our paths cross soon again. You are all always welcome to visit our conferences in Switzerland!

Dr JoAnn Salvisberg is an ETA I Member and President of the English Teachers Association, Switzerland

