

Challenge: Aliens... they teach among us.

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Foreign; an alien word used in an alien country. Well not in the literal Area 51 sense of big light bulb heads and a tendency to probe but in the sense of stepping through a rabbit hole and finding yourself doing the time warp.

Coming from a place where people understand the basic: “May I have some ketchup with that”, to being completely lost and having to play Pictionary to get yourself home. I’m talking about leaving a place of comfort and stability to experience new things but it turns out to be slightly incomprehensible to completely outrageous in 5 seconds flat. Outrageous, neurotic, weird? According to whom?

The secret to remember when living in a foreign country is: YOU ARE FOREIGN> YOU ARE THE ALIEN NOW! Do not expect things to be the way you want them to be or were used to having. To survive (at first) and then learn to love Korea you need to broaden your mind, make a paradigm shift and possibly bring large amounts of nerve medication. Being in the privileged situation that I am, I interact with brilliant and motivated students and who are eager to learn and improve themselves. Once a week I meet with 8 students as part of their club activity and read “TWILIGHT” (this year) and watch movies. Afterward we discuss the details and luckily none of them have the urge to bite anybody else. Students grow and come to interesting conclusions about life, school, love and everything else. It’s an exciting moment when you can almost see the light going up when a student understands something. (a)

When students are allowed to express themselves in creative but not necessarily conventional “Korean” ways they can surprise you with their enthusiasm and who knows.. a star might be born. (b-d)

Laughter, comedy, someone slipping on the ice, those are the things that make a day memorable. You need to focus on those moments and take only the positive from a certain negative and embarrassing situation. Take the instant bond I formed with my principal. He

couldn't remember my name the first day and called from a distance, HEY YOU! At that moment, not that fantastic but looking back, it brings a smile to my face.

Hiking, an inevitable part of being Korean, is also a way of bonding, or embarrassing yourself so the sooner you learn to love it the sooner you'll fit right in. After a hard, treacherous climb, your legs' composition being that of Christmas jelly, trying to stand, after resting a short while, suddenly crushing the Principal's cookies, after making a profuse apology, your legs being in the state they are, almost landing on the lap of the Vice Principal. These silly moments are the ones that keep you positive and feeling happy. Hold on to those memories.

The opportunities we as foreigners have in South Korea are precious and I am very grateful being able to travel and see magnificent places and landscapes. Our chance to experience things that I never would have dreamed possible.

And last but not least for having a wonderful co teacher.

Hold on to those magic moments, appreciate what you have and your time in an ALIEN country will be wondrous.

ADDENDUM:

- (a) My English group (ZENITH) reading and watching movies and discussions afterward.
(Thursday nights)



(b-d) Students created a short story inspired by masks and given specific scenarios.



(e-f) Wonderful opportunities to use state of the art astronomical equipment and a visit to ULLEUNG island.

