

Hello, Global Scholars Mentors and Student Candidates,

I have finished reviewing 25+ Cultural Literacy Reviews/Reflections written by our Global Scholars candidates. Below are a few quotes pulled from their reflections. They are very interesting for a couple of reasons. First, our students are reflecting and writing about governance systems, revolutions, caste systems, gender roles, ethnic clashes, and cultural norms at a fairly sophisticated level. Secondly, there is a detectable discomfort in their reflections. They tentatively draw conclusions and hesitantly look for connections to their own dominant culture. Some of the literature and films have set them off balance a little. Their perceptions about the world are evolving. That is exciting! Without this format (cultural reflections) and GEAC overall, I wonder where this repeated stretching of understanding would take place. If you'd like to read any of the reflections, I have them all on file.

Leah Luke-Lechleiter
Mauston

Reflection/Review Quotes

"Before I read the book Before We Were Free, I honestly didn't know anything about the Dominican Republic. Although I am not proud of it, I usually just focus on things going on in America, or things that directly affect me."

"I didn't realize that the Soviets had invaded Afghanistan and I definitely didn't realize that the Taliban were doing that much harm to the country...I think living in a small town in America, we tend to forget about all the things going on in other countries." (The Kite Runner)

"In First They Killed My Father Loung talks about her life as the Khmer Rouge Regime under Pol Pot took over. The Khmer Rouge wanted to get rid of anyone who worked/supported or was associated with the Lon Noi government."

"The main settings of this book were Phnom Pheb, Ro Leap, Pursat and a few refugee camps. ..The government in Ro Leap was a man looking for ethnic-cleansing and an agrarian society."

"Anita's family lived on a compound together where at one point her whole family lived and they were close. In our culture it's only common for the nuclear family to live together." (Before We Were Free)

"The Amazon has always been fascinating to me, but I always assumed there wasn't anyone left who hadn't been touched by civilization." (City of the Beasts)

"Before I read the book, I really didn't know anything about Cambodia. I knew Cambodia was in Asia, and I assumed that all Asians had the same basic features. I learned that there are actually a lot of differences. Some people have lighter skin tones, or flatter noses, or rounder faces. You really get an understanding for it because throughout the book, Loung describes the features of a variety of people." (First They Killed My Father, Reader #2)

"...I assumed that all ethnicities in Spanish Harlem would at least be tolerant of each other as they live together...I was unaware of the hatred different Hispanic groups have for each other. In the book the Cuban hate the Puerto Ricans. It's interesting to me because the two cultures have so many similarities." (Bodega Dreams)

"Really every race thinks they're the best and everyone else is garbage. So unless one country is completely one race there will always be racism with one race thinking it's better than another." (Bodega Dreams)

"The main reason, in my opinion, that the government is in turmoil is a power vacuum for control of the country. Human greed and the desire for power can turn any country upside down, especially Afghanistan...Afghanistan is one of the most war torn countries and it is easy to see through the characters how it has affected the people of Afghanistan." (The Kite Runner, Reader #3)

"I did not feel very connected to the characters in this story, but that is only evidence of the relatively simple life I have lived in comparison to the downtrodden Nicaraguans." (The Sandinista Revolution)

"Leading up to and during the revolution, Politics became a central theme in the lives of every Nicaraguan. Sandanistas and supporters of Somoza went to war, not only with weapons, but with ideas. Propaganda campaigns were used heavily to sway citizens on both sides."

"Nicaragua was only one of many 'proxy wars' fought by two superpower countries duking it out in the Cold War, namely the United States and the Soviet Union. This issue revolved more around Communism than anything else, and so it could have been a conflict in other countries with similar circumstances."

"I would not like to visit Japan when this book was written for a couple reasons...[1 reason] because of gender relations. The expectation that the man is the head of the household seemed to be common in this book. It is something I would find challenging if I were to visit the Japan of this novel." (Shizuko's Daughter)

"I struggled to find parallels between the culture represented in this film and my culture. After thinking about it awhile, I realized the movie itself is a parallel. Many cultures love scary movies!" (Diabolique, film)

"A parallel I found between the cultures in the book, and the culture I live in were the cities full of temptations, money, and loss. This is common (ex: Las Vegas) in our culture, to have extremes in cities, and it happened in the novel. Siddhartha spent years of his life solely trying to earn more and more money, gamble and risk more and more, and indulge in other pleasures. This is definitely a parallel to our own culture." (Siddhartha)