



You Have to Live in Somebody Else's Country to Understand

Poem by Noy Chou

**Teaching Immigration
Across the Curriculum
Online Teacher Workshop**
Public Education Institute
at The Immigrant Learning Center,
Malden, MA



Instructions

You Have to Live in Somebody Else's Country to Understand

- This poem was written by a ninth-grade student from a high school in suburban Boston who was born in Cambodia.
1. Listen to the poem read aloud in English by a native Chinese speaker. [Click here.](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=THwcWDOOnR9Y) (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=THwcWDOOnR9Y)
 2. Next, read the poem individually by going through the following slides.
 3. Notice how it makes you feel both the first time when you hear it and then when you read it.



You Have to Live

in Somebody Else's Country to Understand

What is it like to be an outsider?

What is it like to sit in the class where everyone has blond hair and you have black hair?

What is it like when the teacher says, "Whoever wasn't born here raise your hand."

And you are the only one.



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Then, when you raise your hand, everybody looks at you and makes fun of you.

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What is it like when the teacher treats you like you've been here all your life?

What is it like when the teacher speaks too fast and you are the only one who can't understand what he or she is saying, and you try to tell him or her to slow down.

Then when you do, everybody says, "If you don't understand, go to a lower class or get lost."

You have to live in somebody else's country to understand.



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What is it like when you are an opposite?

When you wear the clothes of your country and they think you are crazy to wear these clothes and you think they are pretty.

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What is it like when you are always a loser.

What is it like when somebody bothers you when you do nothing to them?

You tell them to stop but they tell you that they didn't do anything to you.

Then, when they keep doing it until you can't stand it any longer, you go up to the teacher and tell him or her to tell them to stop bothering you.



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They say that they didn't do anything to bother you.

Then the teacher asks the person sitting next to you.

He says, "Yes, she didn't do anything to her" and you have no witness to turn to.

So the teacher thinks you are a liar.

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What is it like when you try to talk and you don't pronounce the words right? They don't understand you.

They laugh at you but you don't know that they are laughing at you, and you start to laugh with them.

They say, "Are you crazy, laughing at yourself? Go get lost, boy."

You have to live in somebody else's country without a language to understand.



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What is it like when you walk in the street and everybody turns around to look at you and you don't know that they are looking at you.

Then, when you find out, you want to hide your face but you don't know where to hide because they are everywhere.

You have to live in somebody else's country to feel it.



Reflection

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- When you listened to the audio of the poem, what words, feelings or situations stood out for you?
- How did the reader's accent affect your feelings toward the poem?

Reflection

You Have to Live in Somebody Else's Country to Understand

- Was there ever a time when you felt like an outsider or felt judged? If so, did the person/s know you personally or know of your circumstances? Share a situation when this happened to you or when you witnessed it happening to another.
- Have you witnessed a person being alienated in a school system or community because they came from a different place? If so, what was your reaction or the reaction of those around you? How could the situation have improved?



Thank you

