



Words of Wisdom from Rosanne Klass: Author, Teacher, U.S.ENGLISH Member

Rosanne Klass, the author of Land of the High Flags: Afghanistan When the Going Was Good, embodies the mission and spirit of the U.S.ENGLISH Foundation. Her memoir recounts her experiences teaching English at Afghanistan's Teacher Training Institution back in the 1950's, when all Afghan women were totally veiled in the all-encompassing burqa later forced on them again by the Taliban.



middle school a Hungarian refugee boy was put into her class — bewildered, scared, not knowing any English. She appointed a couple of boys to be his buddies, and within a day or two, Imre had learned his first essential vocabulary from his new pals — “pizza”, “Strike-three-you're-out” and “home safe” — and was smiling. Within a few weeks he was speaking

English, clumsily but enthusiastically; and by the end of the school year he was on his way to fluency — all without formal language instruction.

She was the first woman ever to teach boys from the most remote Afghan villages. Nobody knew how the teenage boys and young men would react to an unveiled woman. Officials at the ministry of education worried that it would be risky; they feared an international incident. Friends warned that it might be downright dangerous. Only the school's American-educated director was enthusiastic, but Ms. Klass trusted his judgment — and he was right. It turned into a remarkable learning experience for her as well as for her students (some of whom went on to take doctorates in the U.S.)

“The boys wanted to know everything about America, and much about me — had I really gone to a university? How many books had I read? And eventually they were asking, if I could be educated and teach, why couldn't their sisters do it, too.”

What does Ms. Klass believe to be the best way to teach and learn any language? Immersion. As a teacher — not only in Afghanistan but later in the New York schools and at Berlitz — she found that translation interfered with her students getting a working grasp of English. Reading proved secondary. “Though it's always helpful for the teacher to have a book,” she adds, with amusement, noting that in Kabul she had none and had to improvise. “And of course, eventually you have to tackle the confusions of English spelling. But when they can speak, communicate, and understand others, that gives them self-confidence and everything else follows. And for someone coming to America, immersion is relatively easy because they are surrounded by English.”

Her judgment is based on experience. In a New York

“As a writer, editor and teacher, English has been an essential part of my life. I've seen it become the international language, the one everybody evrywhere wants to know. And I know the importance of language as a unifying cultural factor. I've been around the world, lived in and observed other countries where language differences divide and even come close to wrecking a country like India, Canada or Belgium. America has always had a unique genius for taking in people from every corner of the world and transforming us all into Americans, and a major factor in that has always been the fact that, whatever language we were born to or speak at home, we can talk to all of our fellow Americans everywhere — in English. What an astonishing achievement!”

Having studied with S.I. Hayakawa, Ms. Klass joined U.S.ENGLISH soon after he founded it. “I am aware of the misguided efforts to turn this into a bilingual or even multilingual nation.” she says. “What a tragedy that would be! Imagine an America in which a Californian couldn't talk to an Iowan or get a job in Vermont. I am proud and grateful to share with my fellow Americans the heritage of our common language — and lucky to have it be the richest and most useful of the world's languages, and I want to share that gift with others. I have therefore included a planned gift in my will for the U.S.ENGLISH Foundation, to support its efforts to keep English as our common language, uniting us from sea to shining sea as citizens of a united land, and to help pass that blessing on to other new Americans who will surely come to join us in the future.”

Scholarship Application Deadline is May 31st!

The U.S.ENGLISH Foundation is dedicated to helping immigrants learn the English language so they may reap the economic and social benefits available in the United States today.

The yearly scholarship awards \$1,500 to a student focusing on the teaching of English as a Second Language (ESL) for practical application in the United States. The recipients of the scholarship will be American graduates who wish to continue their education with postgraduate study.

Hurry! Applications must be received **by May 31st** for the award for the following fall semester of classes. For a scholarship application or to receive more information about the U.S.ENGLISH Foundation ESL Scholarship, please send an email to vrenard@usenglish.org.

Share your story about teaching or learning English! Contact vrenard@usenglish.org or call 1-800-787-8216.

Common Language Trust

More than **24 million people in America cannot speak English**. Plus, the growing number of immigrants that struggle to learn English is affecting our schools, our courts, and our communities more and more. We see it and feel it in a very real way every single day.

But, we have the ability to stop that from happening.

Support the U.S.ENGLISH Foundation's **Common Language Trust** as it disseminates information on English teaching methods, sponsors educational programs, develops English instructional materials, represents the interests of Official English advocates in the courts, and promotes opportunities for people living in the United States to learn English.

The Common Language Trust is comprised of a select circle of civic-minded individuals exemplified by Ms. Rosanne Klass (see feature article) who have chosen to make a **legacy gift** to the U.S.ENGLISH Foundation.

But, there is more to a legacy gift than just tax benefits. It is a strong statement on your vision for the future. What world do you wish to leave for your children and grandchildren?

If you'd like to receive our free **Guide to Giving** brochure which outlines how to reduce your taxes or possibly reduce taxes for your loved ones should you decide to make a gift through your will, please call Victoria Renard, Director of Special Programs at 1-800-787-8216. Victoria can provide you with all the information you and your attorney may need. All inquiries will be completely **non-binding** and **strictly confidential**.

As always, your steadfast support of the U.S.ENGLISH Foundation is greatly appreciated!

With your help, we are protecting English, our common, unifying language.



1747 Pennsylvania Ave., NW • Washington, DC 20006

Thank You

All of these programs, research projects, and education initiatives take financial resources. We are able to be on the forefront of Official English because of your valued support.

Sincerely,

Mauro E. Mujica