



03

**Joanna
Łękawska**

**Elements of Western Culture and
History in Neil Gaiman's *Neverwhere*.
A Possible Resource for Teaching
English as a Foreign Language**

PROFESSIONAL PAPER

JOANNA ŁĘKAWSKA

University of Warsaw

Elements of Western Culture and History in Neil Gaiman's *Neverwhere*. A Possible Resource for Teaching English as a Foreign Language

This paper aims to explore the elements of Western culture and history in Neil's Gaiman's novel *Neverwhere* and show how it can be used in teaching EFL. The novel is an urban fantasy set in London, in which the protagonist by accident discovers the existence of London Below, a realm ruled by its own laws, but very connected to its counterpart in the "real" world. The city of London is almost a character in the novel, with both its dark and illustrious moments of history and the complexities of a modern city. The novel may be used to teach London geography and explore its rich history. Each tube station or street name which is mentioned contains an additional meaning, which helps the reader broaden their vocabulary and improve the use of metaphoric language. The novel also abounds in allusions to literary works, from *Robinson Crusoe*, Shylock from Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, to *Mansfield Park*. Lastly, by exploring the reality of London Below, the novel may be used as a teaching tool for the problem of homelessness and the attitudes that surround it, all in the context of TEFL.

KEYWORDS

urban fantasy, literature, EFL, London, metaphor, homelessness

1. Introduction

Neil Gaiman's *Neverwhere* is an urban fantasy novel set in London, in which the protagonist, Richard Mayhew, by an act of kindness discovers the existence of London Below. It is a realm ruled by its own laws and regulations, while remaining very connected to its counterpart in the "real" world, London Above. The city of London is a key element in the novel, with both its dark and illustrious moments of history and the complexities of a modern city. As Hadas Elber-Aviram argues, the novel is "overtly and deeply concerned with the material history of the city" (2). It contains an enormous wealth of geographical and historical detail, which enable the reader to experience the city almost tangibly. Furthermore, Gaiman uses many literary and cultural allusions, which give the novel an additional richness. By juxtaposing the parallel worlds of London Below and Above, the author also explores the themes of social injustice and homelessness present in large cities. All of these elements make the novel attractive as possible EFL teaching material. When writing about the relevance of literature in language instruction, Truong Thi My Van states that "in addition to developing students' English language skills, teaching literature also appeals to their imagination, develops cultural awareness, and encourages critical thinking about plots, themes, and characters" (2). Gaiman's novel has the right characteristics to address all these educational objectives. This essay aims to analyse the historical, literary and social elements presented in the novel and briefly show how they can be used in teaching English as a foreign language to advanced learners.

2. Using literature in the EFL classroom

Before delving into an analysis of *Neverwhere*, the role of literature in language instruction shall be briefly discussed. It is an area of study that has gained much prominence in the last decades, and its role "as a basic component and source of authentic texts of the language curriculum ... has been gaining momentum" (Hişmanoğlu 53). Rather than as an end in itself, literature in TEFL is used as a tool to teach language in a more engaging way. Hişmanoğlu lists several reasons for using literature in English instruction, such as the usage of "valuable authentic material, cultural enrichment, language enrichment and personal involvement," as well as "universality, non-triviality, personal relevance, variety, interest, economy and suggestive power and ambiguity" (54). As "authentic material," literary texts give the learners access to "unmodified language," which is often "difficult or unknown," and they thus develop skills to also use such language outside of the classroom setting (Clandfield and Duncan 1). The cultural and language enrichment aspects allow the students to "learn about history, society, and politics of the country described in the novel or story" and to discover "the more subtle and varied creative uses of language" (Koutsompou 75). Both of these features abound in *Neverwhere* and shall be discussed further on. When it comes to personal involvement, a well-chosen literary work can

engage the learners emotionally to such an extent that the language learning process becomes very enjoyable. It certainly helps with the students' motivation to learn because, as Gillian Lazar points out, "a good novel or short story may be particularly gripping in that it involves students in the suspense of unravelling the plot" (15). Koutsompou also observes that "designing stimulating activities that motivate the learners is the greatest challenge for language teachers, and literature has a strong motivating power due to its calling on to personal experience" (75). Choosing literary works that appeal to the learners and cater to their linguistic and cultural development needs is, thus, an important part of the teaching process.

2.1. Fantasy literature in the classroom

While the use of literature in EFL instruction is rather widely accepted, fantasy novels as part of the curriculum are still not very common. In her article "Teaching Fantasy: Overcoming the Stigma of Fluff," Melissa Thomas argues for the use of this genre in the classroom for two basic reasons, namely, that "students like it," and that "it is a metaphor for the human condition—ripe with mythic structures, heroic cycles, and social and religious commentary" (60). In recent years there has been an increased interest in fantasy literature, especially among young adults¹, and due to globalisation, this applies to native speakers of English and EFL learners alike. When writing about the use of fantasy as a way to motivate students in language classes, Jóhan Daniel Jimma argues that "a great majority of EFL students will have seen Jackson's *The Lord of the Rings* or *The Hobbit* trilogies. ... This has resulted in fantasy literature having the benefit of being relevant to EFL students, since it is close to something they have enjoyed and engaged with throughout their entire lives" (61). Moreover, because of its use of metaphors and appeal to the imagination, fantasy writers often speak cross-culturally and are universally acclaimed, while remaining deeply rooted in a specific culture. Fabrizi writes the following:

One of the most interesting aspects of fantasy literature is that it tends to ask the "big" questions of life, forcing students to consider such topics as the nature of good and evil, universal morality, the afterlife, heroism and the quality of one's character, the role of the individual in society, and the importance of cultural diversity. (1)

These topics range from existential to social issues, and provide an opportunity for the reader to reflect upon and exchange ideas on important questions. Furthermore, as Thomas explains, "in addition to religious issues, authors are taking on global issues on a more human scale: hunger, pain, loss, confusion, simple human fallibility, and triumph. Their characters, while remaining fictional, experience very human emotions" (62). This further engages the reader emotionally and probes into important questions through fictional characters set

in secondary-world settings. All of these elements, when treated in a way that makes the literary material accessible to the students, can be of great educational value to EFL learners.

Because of its rich cultural and linguistic content, Neil Gaiman's *Neverwhere* is a good novel to use in TEFL. The language, cultural references and social issues which the novel addresses make it more suitable for adult learners, such as university students, rather than for younger learners. Besides age, Lazar mentions the students' "emotional and intellectual maturity" among the criteria for text selection (52). The motifs and themes used in the novel, such as the assassination of Door's family or the question of homelessness, require a certain degree of maturity often lacking in a younger reader. Similarly, the many cultural references to British and London history as well as the frequent uses of metaphorical language may be more appropriate for an adult learner. Van observes that "for many university teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL), the study of literature is indispensable because it exposes students to meaningful contexts that are replete with descriptive language and interesting characters (2). Gaiman's *Neverwhere* certainly offers such a context and language.

3. Cultural elements

One of the possible approaches to the treatment of literature in the EFL classroom is the "cultural model," in which the literary text "is treated as a source of information about the target culture" (Clandfield and Duncan 2). Koutsompou states that through the literary text "students get to know the background not only of the particular novel but also they learn about history, society, and politics of the country described in the novel or the story" (75). The innumerable references to British history and society in *Neverwhere* can give EFL students "access to the culture of the people whose language they are studying" (Lazar 16). In this case this access is mostly to London culture, with its rich history as well as its cosmopolitan character.

3.1. London and its geography

One of the most prominent aspects of the *Neverwhere* is the city of London, and this can help the EFL student to learn a great deal about its geography. From the very first sentence of the novel, the city is presented in a way that closely relates to the novel's protagonist. Gaiman opens the Prologue with the sentence, "The night before he went to London, Richard Mayhew was not enjoying himself" (Gaiman 1); he closes it by saying that "Richard Mayhew went to London feeling like hell" (Gaiman 5). Both sentences sound like a foreboding about the young man's stay in the metropolis, and express the contrast between the city's greatness and its possible dangers. There are several other references to this

double dimension in the Prologue and it is perhaps best summarised by the old woman who tells Richard's fortune, "You got a long way to go. ... Not just London. ... Not any London I know" (Gaiman 3). The city which Richard gets to know and experiences has more to it than what meets the eye. This is what he especially discovers when he crosses the threshold of London Below. Furthermore, from the very beginning London is presented almost as one of the characters of the novel. In the Prologue itself, the name of the city is mentioned fourteen times, whereas Richard's name is given nineteen times; almost the same weight is quantitatively given to both. London is not merely the setting of *Neverwhere*, it is one of the novel's intrinsic elements.

The city is also very well delineated as far as its streets, boroughs and landmarks are concerned. In her article "The Past Is Below Us': Urban Fantasy, Urban Archaeology, and the Recovery of Suppressed History," Hadas Elber-Aviram argues that urban fantasy is characterised by "the genre's concern with the material history of the metropolis," and thus, "its predominant interest in the concrete, tangible details of the city, and the way in which these details cohere to form a larger narrative of the city's past" (2). In *Neverwhere*, the narrator minutely describes the different sights and monuments of London, which are intrinsically connected to the plot. He gives the exact names of locations, provides precise directions of how to get to them, as well as their historical background. The range of the described places varies from closed tube stations, such as the British Museum (Gaiman 169), to Harrods (Gaiman 109). A very useful pre-reading activity to help EFL students with "the historical and cultural background to the story" (Lazar 84) could be a look at the history of the London tube and the main stations which appear in the novel.

It is even possible to go on a sightseeing tour of London using Gaiman's descriptions and trace the characters' steps through the city. In addition to the official Neil Gaiman website, which presents "A Stroll in Old London at Dusk," there are blog entries on the internet that discuss possible sightseeing routes based on the novel. The author of the blog *Walked-In London*, who discusses the locations presented in different literary works set in the British capital, argues that "Many of the locations in *Neverwhere* are real although some are virtually unknown to many Londoners. Due to the location of London Below a lot of the action takes place in sewers, disused tube tunnels and alleyways and if you look hard enough they really are there" ("Neverwhere - Neil Gaiman"). He then provides a map of fifty-one locations across London, in which the action of the novel takes place. Gaiman himself suggests that much of London remains hidden to its inhabitants when he describes his protagonist's first journey with the Marquis de Carabas: "Richard wondered where they were. This didn't seem to be a sewer. Perhaps it was a tunnel for telephone cables, or for very small trains. Or for. . . something else. He realized that he did not know very much about what went on beneath the streets of London" (Gaiman 48). In another passage, while going to the Floating Market with Anaesthesia, the narrator remarks that Richard "was astonished that they

were still under London: he was half-convinced that they had walked most of the way to Wales" (Gaiman 98-99). Throughout the novel, the reader is encouraged to explore further the city's landmarks and places mentioned, especially because so many of their aspects seems to remain undiscovered. For the EFL student this is especially enriching as he or she learns about London geography and history. Just as one reading Tolkien's *The Lord of Rings* should have the map of Middle-earth always present, the plan of London is a necessary companion to the perusal of *Neverwhere*.² This map is literally mentioned in the novel several times, and already in the Prologue when Richard receives "the gift of the white umbrella with the map of the London Underground on it" (Gaiman 1) from his friends. This motif of the map of the London tube appears repeatedly throughout the work and further underlines the tangibility of the narrative.

3.2. Allusions to literary works and popular culture

Besides references to specific places and historical events, there are many allusions to literature and popular culture in the novel. Most of the former make mention of British literature, either explicitly or implicitly, but there are also references to the Bible and works from Classical antiquity. When Door is recovering in Richard's apartment after he has rescued her from the two assassins, she finds a copy of Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* and begins to read it. The narrator points to the fact that "Richard had not previously known that he possessed" this novel (Gaiman 41). An analogous passage appears at the end of the novel when Richard and Door recover from their final encounter with Islington at the Black Friars' monastery. When Richard enters Door's room, he sees her "sitting on the edge of her bed, reading a copy of *Mansfield Park* that [he] was certain the friars had not previously known that they had" (Gaiman 341). The narrator does not reveal to the reader whether Door finishes reading Austen's novel, nor what she thinks about it, and it could be worthwhile to explore this further as one of the activities in the EFL classroom.

Besides Jane Austen, the narrator also refers to Daniel Defoe (Gaiman 41), Charles Dickens (Gaiman 209), and most frequently to Shakespeare. A rather grim allusion to the words of Shylock from *The Merchant of Venice* is given in the following conversation between the two assassins: "Mr. Croup turned out the lights. 'Oh, Mister Vandemar,' he said, enjoying the sound of the words, as he enjoyed the sound of all words, 'if you cut us, do we not bleed?' Mr. Vandemar pondered this for a moment, in the dark. Then he said, with perfect accuracy, 'No'" (Gaiman 75). As opposed to the original text (Shakespeare III.i.66), in which the words are meant to show the humanity of Shylock, here they point to the inhumanity and villainy of Croup and Vandemar. Another play of Shakespeare's that Gaiman refers to more explicitly is *Macbeth*. There is a very witty reference to a citation that is sometimes misquoted. When Richard is about to enter the room, in which he has to face the ordeal of the key, the narrator describes it in the following way:

'Right,' said Richard. And he smiled, unconvincingly, and added, 'Well, lead on, Macduff.' Brother Fuliginous pulled back the bolts on the door. They opened with a crash, like twin gunshots. He pulled the door open. Richard stepped through it. Brother Fuliginous pushed the door closed behind him, and swung the bolts back into place. He led the abbot back to his chair and placed the cup of tea back in the old man's hand. The abbot sipped his tea, in silence. And then he said, with honest regret in his voice, 'It's 'lay on, Macduff' actually. But I hadn't the heart to correct him. He sounded like such a nice young man. (Gaiman 240-241)

Pascal Tréguer explains the meaning of both "lay on, Macduff" from Shakespeare's text, and "lead on, Macduff," and he also points to the origins of the distortion of the primary text. The phrase mistakenly used by Richard means "let's get going, start us off;" whereas the original means "go ahead (and give it your best effort)" ("Meaning, Origin & Early Occurrences of *Lay On, Macduff*"). This rather dark-humoured passage points to the sophistication of Gaiman's language and allusions. There are also several other references to Shakespeare's heroes, such as to Prospero from *The Tempest* (Gaiman 89) and to the eponymous hero of Shakespeare's *King Lear* (139), but they shall not be further considered here.

There are also several allusions to the Bible in the novel, either to specific characters, such as Lucifer, to whom Richard refers in his final encounter with the Angel Islington (Gaiman 324), or to chosen passages, such as the one about Tower of Babel (Gaiman 291). Irina Rata argues that these references "allow a dialogue between the Bible and the novel, accentuate the oppositions between the two Londons" (96). Just as the Biblical episodes explicitly mentioned in the novel—the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Gaiman 135) or the rebellion of Lucifer—show the constant tension between good and evil, they also point to the unspoken strife between the two worlds of London Above and London Below, and between the powers within both. Even though the novel does not explicitly deal with religious themes, there is a considerable number of references and images that point to the narrator's concern with the supernatural. A thorough analysis of all the literary allusions present in the novel exceeds the scope of this paper; it is certainly a valuable one to explore, especially when using *Neverwhere* in a language teaching setting.

Besides references to literature, the novel is laden with images and characters from contemporary Western culture. These include various pop-cultural items, such as Richard's "Batmobile-shaped telephone" (Gaiman 57), images, such as the "giggle ... [of] a Japanese girl" (Gaiman 84), and people, such as Rupert Murdoch (Gaiman 58). They are often placed side by side with historical or fictional characters or elements, and this gives the novel an additional depth. For example, the fictional Arnold Stockton, Jessica's boss, becomes more credible when juxtaposed with Murdoch or Robert Maxwell (Gaiman 193). Similarly, a vivid description of Lear's saxophone rendering of "Burt Bacharach and Hal David's 'I'll Never Fall In Love Again,'" (Gaiman 137-138), or of "the old Julie London 'Cry Me a

River: *Now you say you're sorry...*" (138) gives the musician a semblance of historicity. Other allusions to songs, people and expressions common to contemporary Europeans help the reader to relate more to the characters and experience the narrative in a more tangible way.

4. Linguistic elements

In addition to the cultural elements that can be explored in a literary text, "the language model for teaching literature [aims] to give students knowledge with some sense of the more subtle and varied creative uses of language" (Koutsompou 75). It includes both the grammatical and lexical elements of the novel, but also draws attention to the stylistic and aesthetic value of literature. This approach is more "learner-centred" and it encourages him or her "to make meaningful interpretations of the text" (Clandfield and Duncan 2). The linguistic richness of *Neverwhere* makes the novel a very appropriate choice for an EFL classroom.

4.1 Metaphorical language and rich vocabulary

Gaiman's *Neverwhere* is a work of great linguistic value, especially considering its numerous metaphors and well-chosen vocabulary. The title itself seems to contain several levels of meaning. A very fitting pre-reading activity to create student interest in the novel may be "a group discussion about what the title of the story suggests" (Lazar 84). At first glance, "neverwhere" seems to mean *nothing*, or "no place and no time." The word "never" gives the impression of non-existence in time or atemporality, and, connected with "where," it seems to imply no specific place. As has already been shown, however, the novel has a well-defined setting: the city of London with its rich history. Furthermore, the names in the novel often contain a meaning or a historical reference. Irina Rata gives a detailed account of the onomastic allusions present in the novel, in which she discusses the names of the primary and secondary characters. For example, Richard's surname recalls the two prominent Mayhews who greatly contributed to the development of London (Rata 90), as well as the Marquis de Carabas. The latter "takes his name from the main character of Perrault's fairytale *Puss in Boots*," and "embodies the cleverness and resourcefulness of somebody, who provides services by trickery for a living" (Rata 90). Similarly, the name of every, or most, characters in *Neverwhere* points to various linguistic and historical sources which are relevant to the novel's plot.

A prominent feature of the novel is the significance of the names of the London tube stations. These frequently refer to well-known landmarks or streets, which are taken for granted by most Londoners. Gaiman presents these names in a new light when he takes their literal meaning or changes the spelling of the original words. There is the first hint of this already in the Prologue when Richard

Mayhew reads the tube station names on the London map umbrella he gives to the old homeless woman: "Earl's Court, Marble Arch, Blackfriars, White City, Victoria, Angel, Oxford Circus ... Richard found himself pondering, drunkenly, whether there really was a circus at Oxford Circus: a real circus with clowns, beautiful women, and dangerous beasts" (Gaiman 4). What is at first a seemingly thoughtless consideration of a drunken man becomes a reality when Richard enters London Below. When he suddenly finds himself in the court of a real earl at Earl's Court Station, he continues his musings about the meaning of the names: "Earl's Court', thought Richard. 'Of course.' And then he began to wonder whether there was a Baron in Barons Court Tube station, or a Raven in Ravenscourt" (Gaiman 151). He gradually becomes less surprised as he discovers the literal meaning behind each of the stations he visits, and does in fact meet real Black Friars at the Blackfriars station (Gaiman 240) and the Angel Islington at the Angel Station located in the Islington Borough (Gaiman 132).

A passage which is especially rich in metaphors is the description of Knightsbridge. In London Above it is considered to be a rich neighbourhood, to which "Richard would accompany Jessica on her tours of such huge and intimidating emporia as Harrods and Harvey Nichols" (Gaiman 12). In London Below, however, Anaesthesia, who is Richard's guide to the Floating Market, calls it "a really nasty neighbourhood" and is genuinely scared of it (Gaiman 92). The narrator draws explicit attention to the metaphor in a conversation between Richard and Hunter and the events that follow:

They walked toward the bridge. ... Richard looked at the woman in leather. 'Is there anything, really, to be scared of?' 'Only the night on the bridge,' she said. 'The kind in armour?' 'The kind that comes when day is over.' Anaesthesia's hand sought Richard's. He held it tightly, her tiny hand in his. She smiled at him, squeezed his hand. And then they set foot on Night's Bridge and Richard began to understand darkness: darkness as something solid and real, so much more than a simple absence of light. He felt it touch his skin, questing, moving, exploring: gliding through his mind. It slipped into his lungs, behind his eyes, into his mouth. (Gaiman 101-102)

This passage presents a masterly example of vocabulary teaching and discovering additional layers of meaning. "Knight" is not only revealed as a homophone of "night," but it may also metaphorically refer to the idea of crossing the bridge as a form of combat, in which someone always loses. There is a toll one has to pay to cross it, and Anaesthesia has become this toll (Gaiman 104). The language used to describe darkness as almost a living being also provides the instructor with many possibilities when using this passage in a language class.

5. Social elements

The Critical Literacy learning approach draws attention to the social elements inherent in literature and "reveals the interrelationship between language use and social power" (Van 7). Even though social issues are not central to EFL instruction, they can certainly be very enriching, especially when presented in an attractive way through engaging literature. According to scholars who wish to implement Critical Literacy in the EFL classroom, there is a "need of introducing *critical literacy pedagogy* into the language teaching curriculum as a means of promoting social justice ... [b]y teaching students to read texts in an active, reflective manner for a better understanding of power, inequality, and injustice in human relationships" (Bobkina and Stefanova 679). In this context, Gaiman's exploration of the theme of social inequality, especially as depicted through *London Below*, may in the EFL classroom serve as a teaching tool for raising awareness of and sensitivity towards this social issue.

5.1 Homelessness

Gaiman presents the topic of homelessness in the Prologue when Richard meets the homeless woman who warns him about the future (Gaiman 2). Already in this passage, the protagonist is shown as one who is sensitive to another's suffering. He does not ignore the woman, but enters in conversation with her. There is a stark contrast between Richard's attitude to the homeless and his fiancée's, Jessica's. Elber-Aviram argues that Londoners turn "a blind eye to the city's downtrodden; allowing them to plunge into an under-city termed 'London Below' that lies beneath the surface of upper-class 'London Above'" (11). Jessica represents those who are blind to see the suffering poor, which is clearly shown when she steps over a bleeding young woman without taking proper notice of her. The disparity between the attitudes of the couple is well-presented in the following, rather lengthy but important, passage:

'Jessica?' He could not believe that she was simply ignoring the figure at their feet. 'What?' She was not pleased to be jerked out of her reverie. 'Look.' He pointed to the sidewalk. The person was face down, and enveloped in bulky clothes; Jessica took his arm and tugged him toward her. 'Oh. I see. If you pay them any attention, Richard, they'll walk all over you. They all have homes, really. Once she's slept it off, I'm sure she'll be fine.' She? Richard looked down. It was a girl. Jessica continued, 'Now, I've told Mister Stockton that we...' Richard was down on one knee. 'Richard? What are you doing?' 'She isn't drunk,' said Richard. 'She's hurt.' He looked at his fingertips. 'She's bleeding.' Jessica looked down at him, nervous and puzzled. 'We're going to be late,' she pointed out. (Gaiman 24-25)

Jessica not only does not notice Door lying on the ground, but remains unmoved by her suffering, even once she does see her. Even though Door is physically

visible to Jessica, she remains invisible to her as a person. Seeing their suffering and helping the poor, in turn, makes one invisible to the rest of society. Irina Rata says that "in the novel, the metaphor of invisibility of the poor and homeless is literalised. Richard becomes invisible to everybody, and as a result becomes homeless and jobless after helping Door" (Rata 91). Even though nothing has changed about him externally, he loses his official identity and is rejected by society. Richard's reaction to hearing his landlord talk about his belongings is insightful, inasmuch it provides a voice for the poor. He says, "It's not rubbish ... It's my stuff" (Gaiman 65). Short phrases like this one are a powerful statement about the dignity of each person and their superiority over things.

Throughout the novel there are further examples which underline the distance between London's upper-class and its poor. Rata draws attention to the posh style represented by Clarence, Jessica's assistant, who uses the latest "portable phone" and wears an "Armani suit" (184) and all those present at the opening of the exhibit organized by Jessica's office at the British Museum. On the other side of the social spectrum are the lowest inhabitants of London Below. Rata continues: "the extreme poverty of some of the inhabitants of London Below is represented by Sewer Folk, who scour the sewers for all sorts of junk to sell, including dead bodies" (93). It is true that the Sewer Folk's degradation is enormous, but it is also true that Clarence's and Jessica's insensitivity is equally degrading to them as persons. What seems to be Gaiman's strongest commentary on the subject of this social injustice is the incommunicability between the two realms. Even though they share some streets and the London tube, there seem to be no connecting routes between the two worlds. The theme of homelessness and social inequality is also one which can be further developed. It can certainly lead to numerous EFL classroom activities, "where students need to share their feelings and opinions" (Lazar 17), develop "critical thinking abilities" and engage in debate (Hişmanoğlu 64). This can be of great value in teaching the English language to foreign students, especially in today's social and political context of increased migration.

6. Conclusion

To conclude, Neil Gaiman's *Neverwhere* is a novel which contains many elements of Western culture and history which can serve as valuable "authentic" material in the EFL classroom. The novel presents the history and geography of Great Britain and London in great detail, and helps the reader to experience the places mentioned in an almost tangible way. There are numerous allusions to literary works and popular culture, which can be greatly explored in an English language teaching setting, as has been shown. Finally, Gaiman also points to important social questions, such as inequality and homelessness, and provides interesting insight into them and gives ideas on how to grow in sensitivity towards others. Even though *Neverwhere* is a novel that is very rooted in a particular

setting, its discussion of topics such as language, friendship, or injustice transcends cultural borders and can be enjoyed by many—which in turn makes it a tremendous resource for teaching English as a foreign language.

End Notes

- 1 See, for example, Derrick Smith's article "Bringing Fantasy and Science Fiction into the Classroom" (2012) in which he shows the reading preferences of young adults in the United States in 2011; it is included in the Works Cited.
- 2 The first Polish edition of *Neverwhere* (*Nigdziebądź*) provides the map of London in the appendix.

Works cited

- Bobkina, Jelena and Svetlana Stefanova. "Literature and critical literacy pedagogy in the EFL classroom: Towards a model of teaching critical thinking skills." *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, vol. 6, no. 4, 2016, pp. 677-696. DOI: 10.14746/ssl.2016.6.4.6.
- Clandfield, Lindsay and Foord Duncan. "Teaching materials: using literature in the EFL/ESL classroom." *The Internet TESL Journal*, vol. 10, no. 12, 2004.
- Clute, Judith. "A Walk from Aldgate to Tower Hill." *Neil Gaiman*. November 2005, <https://www.neilgaiman.com/works/Books/Neverwhere/in/195/>.
- Elber-Aviram, Hadas. "'The Past Is Below Us': Urban Fantasy, Urban Archaeology, and the Recovery of Suppressed History." *Papers from the Institute of Archaeology*, vol. 23, no. 7, 2013, pp. 1-10. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/pia.426>.
- Fabrizi, Mark A., editor. *Fantasy Literature. Challenging Genres*. Sense Publishers, 2016.
- Gaiman, Neil. *Neverwhere. The Author's Preferred Text*. Headline Publishing Group, 2013.
- Gaiman, Neil. *Nigdziebądź*. Translated by Paulina Braiter, Wydawnictwo Mag, 2001.
- Hişmanoğlu, Murat. "Teaching English through literature." *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2005, pp. 53-66, <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/jlls/issue/9921/122816>.
- Jimma, Jóhann Daniel. *Fantasy and Student Motivation: Examination of motivational benefits that fantasy literature provides to EFL education*. 2020. University of Iceland, Master's Thesis, <http://hdl.handle.net/1946/35339>.

- Koutsompou, Violetta-Irene. "The Use of Literature in the Language Classroom: Methods and Aims." *International Journal of Information and Education Technology*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2015, pp. 74- 79, DOI: 10.7763/IJIE.2015.V5.479.
- Lazar, Gillian. *Literature and Language Teaching*. Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- "Neverwhere - Neil Gaiman." *Walked-In London*. March 19, 2011. <https://walked-inlondon.blogspot.com/2011/03/neverwhere-neil-gaiman.html>.
- Rata, Irina. "Trials and Tribulations in London Below." *Revista de Investigación sobre lo Fantástico*, vol. 5, no. 2, 2017, pp. 85-105, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/brumal.408>.
- Seah, Jaclynn. "Finding Harry Potter, Sherlock Holmes and Neverwhere in London." *The Occasional Traveller*, June 20, 2014, <https://theoccasionaltraveller.com/finding-harry-potter-sherlock-holmes-neverwhere-london/>.
- Shakespeare, William. *The Merchant of Venice*. Ed. John F. Andrews. London: Everyman, 1993.
- Smith, Derrick. "Bringing Fantasy and Science Fiction into the Classroom." *The ALAN Review*, vol. 39, no. 2, 2012, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21061/alan.v39i2.a.3>.
- Thomas, Melissa. "Teaching Fantasy: Overcoming the Stigma of Fluff." *The English Journal*, vol. 92, no. 5, 2003, pp. 60-64. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/3650426.
- Tréguer, Pascal. "Meaning, Origin & Early Occurrences of *Lay On, Macduff*." *Word Histories*, <https://wordhistories.net/2020/02/24/lay-lead-macduff/>.
- Van, Truong Thi My. "The relevance of literary analysis to teaching literature in the EFL Classroom." *English Teaching Forum*, vol. 47, no. 3, 2009, pp. 2-17. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ923454.pdf>