

# A 360 DEGREE VIEW OF THE WORLD

**Ameena Saiyid**

I am so glad to have an opportunity to look back at my time as a school girl because it gives me such pleasure to look back at those days and really brings a smile on my face.

My piece is about my teacher of English, Mr. Dolmen at my school, Karachi Grammar School.

I used to look forward to the English class and always felt comfortable and relaxed in this class because of the approach and manner of our teacher. In those days, most teachers were quite authoritative and patronizing but not our English teacher. He did not talk down to us or put us down and, unlike others, treated us as equals. For example, he did not insult our intelligence by handing down to us his versions of facts, his opinions, and his conclusions. He would encourage us to think for ourselves, do our own research from different sources, process and analyze the information gathered, and then form our own opinions and draw our own conclusions.

If we had to do a project on a given subject, he would encourage us to read books by different authors with different perspectives on the same subject so that, on balance, we had a chance to form our own opinions and not be brainwashed by one school of thought. By constantly encouraging us to read, he tried to equip us with a dynamic and independent means of searching for, discovering, examining, and profiting from knowledge. We were not burdened by ideological concerns or dogmas and our natural curiosity for learning was facilitated.

Whenever any of us pupils did something well like answering a question or writing a good essay or even a good part of an essay, our teacher would praise our efforts wholeheartedly and repeat and read what had been written to the whole class and explain why it was worth learning from. In this way, he not only encouraged us to try and do our best rather than try to be the best, but also used the good work as an example for the rest of us. He thus taught us through the work of our classmates which was very effective. He would choose the strong points of our work and discuss those with the rest so we all felt encouraged and motivated to learn from each other. The minds of children are like snowflakes; no two of them are alike and yet each is perfect in its beauty. Our teacher recognized and understood our differences and found good in our work in its different ways. He encouraged individuality, originality, and creativity. This is so important for teachers to understand and implement because creativity in children sits like a winged creature ready to soar but falls prey to the heavy-handedness of our educational system.”

*Ameena Saiyid is the Managing Director of the Oxford University Press in Pakistan.*