

MAPLE CONNECT

MAPLE LEAF INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

A WRITING WORKSHOP WITH DEBBIE JACOB

By Gena Mohammed & Alix Hobday

“All you have to do is write one true sentence, write the truest sentence you know.”

– Ernest Hemingway

The above quote was advice that Ms. Debbie Jacob imparted, at the Grade 10 Writing Workshop of the Maple Leaf International School, held on the 29th September and 27th October 2011 respectively. Ms. Jacob is a local author, Trinidad Guardian columnist, English Teacher and Teacher-Librarian at the International School of Port of Spain.

Organized by the Maple Leaf’s Librarian, Ms. Gena Mohammed and Grade 10 English Teacher, Ms. Alix Hobday, Ms. Jacob shared many insights into her writing craft and the writing process in general.

Ms. Jacob began the sessions by sharing that it was reading *Miguel Street* by V.S. Naipaul that inspired her to migrate to Trinidad in the 1980s. Citing her favourite authors as Gabriel Marquez Garcia (Latin America), Wilson Harris (Guyana) and Reinaldo Arenas (Cuba), Ms. Jacob stressed the importance of reading for at least thirty minutes a day. She explained that

she felt the key to writing a good short story was the ability to “clearly and concisely integrate all elements of literature, such as characters, dialogue, theme, plot and setting”. She



urged students to understand that writing must become a discipline and encouraged them to set aside time for writing. Ms. Jacob shared that having to complete her newspaper column, helped her to keep the writing discipline in check.



Throughout the two sessions, each one catering for the Grade 10 English sections, students interacted with Ms. Jacob by asking her many questions about how to fight Writer’s Block, how to outline a story and what her favourite type of writing was, among others.

Ms. Jacob encouraged thoughtful discussion with the students about literature, leaving students eager to continue honing their writing skills. We were truly privileged to hear and learn from Ms. Debbie Jacob.

“Life affords no greater responsibility, no greater privilege, than the raising of the next generation.”

Mission

To be recognized as the premier elementary and secondary school in Trinidad & Tobago.

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Vision

MLIS develops self-directed learners who demonstrate excellence and integrity in becoming leaders and well-balanced contributors to the global community.