

I think we can all agree that this year was a bit... different. But different does not mean bad. For many of us, it was motivation to work on ourselves, pursue our passions, learn new skills or make new friends. So, our English teacher, Professor Sosnowska-Mulka, took this opportunity to propose a project we called Pen Pal Letters to her class 1B. Let me tell you a little bit about it.

Pen Pal Letters is a correspondence exchange between students from class 1B and 8th-grade students from a school in Canada -Terrace, B.C to be precise. This project was organized by our English teacher Ms. Professor Sosnowska-Mulka and Ms. Rebecca Greaves-Ungehojer, a teacher and class leader in Canada.

This project aimed to break down barriers, teach tolerance, show similarities and cultural differences, and most of all, meet new people and make friends for life. For the students of our school, of course, it was a perfect opportunity to deepen our knowledge of the English language and become fluent in its use.

From the very beginning, we were all very excited and looked forward to our first meeting. During an English lesson, our professor showed us a short video of the Canadian students introducing themselves, and immediately the planning of the friendship began. In discussions about who with whom, our joy increased even more.

The long-awaited day came on February 18. Both classes met for the first time over Zoom. We broke the ice, got to know each other, and just had a good time. It was an opportunity to ask questions and give answers. On March 23, we met over Zoom with the wonderful teacher Rebecca for a class with a native speaker.

What I noticed is that people who doubted their skills feared whether they would be able to speak English, always did great. Oh, and by the way, the most important thing I learned from this lesson - just believe in yourself because you are 10 times better than

you think. 😊 After that, we were matched in pairs or groups of three and this is when practically everything began. Tons of emails, an exchange of numbers, and talking for hours on social media.

Before Easter, we had another meeting and exchanged traditions in our countries. Our new friends liked Śmigus Dyngus the most. Well, no surprise here, we all love it. On March 29 and April 19, there were one-on-one meetings, and the students from Canada could just talk to us instead of sitting in class for a lesson. A few of us even took an online tour of their school. The final group meeting took place on May 25, in which the Vice Principal from Canada also participated. We checked how well we got to know each other and shared our impressions about the entire project.

*'My pen pal experience was great I wish we could have emailed more often. I hope that we can email more in the future.'* ~ Aaliya

*'I like my pen pal experience. It's very enjoyable and entertaining for me to chat with Natalia on Zoom. It is a cool thing to keep me company.'* ~ Liam

*'At first when we started with the pen pals, I was a little nervous but then when we started talking more and doing the Zoom it was great. The only thing I would change is being able to have the more zoom calls, But with the time difference it was more difficult. But overall, it was great.'* ~ Zoe

*'My time with my pen pal opened me up to new experiences but the different time zones were annoying. Overall, I had a great time with Julia.'* ~Elijah

*'I really enjoyed hearing how well everyone spoke English and hearing everyone's little stories during the zoom call.'* ~ Grayson

*'I really enjoyed getting a chance to talk to someone that lives thousands of miles away from me.'* ~ Aiden

*'I learned that people don't differ much from others even across the world.'* ~ Mila

*'I enjoyed learning about my penpal and it was neat that we both wanted to travel.'*

*~ Emma*

*'This new experience was magical for me. I met two wonderful teenagers with similar passions and dreams. Our conversations were full of goofy jokes as well as fascinating stories and interesting topics that could be written about for hours. I have found that we are all very similar, no matter where we live or what language we speak. I also learned to believe in myself and not be afraid to try new things. Do not be afraid to speak English, even if you do not feel very good, it is the best way to learn and people who speak this language on a daily basis do not care if we use the wrong time or pronounce a word incorrectly. The Internet gives us endless possibilities. Let's use them. Making friends with people from afar is really interesting and also educating. I hope that these new acquaintances will last as long as possible. '~ Natalia , student in class 1B*