



VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY
English Language Center

Transcript: **What is the “Supplement to *I Never Thought of It That Way*”?**

What is the English Language Center’s Supplement to *I Never Thought of It That Way**, by Mónica Guzmán? It is a guide to support incoming undergraduate students at Vanderbilt University who want to know more about U.S. culture or who use English as an additional language. So, what does our Supplement do?

First of all, we want this supplement to help you read complex texts about unfamiliar topics. We also want to help you internalize relevant themes from the book, *I Never Thought of It That Way*. Lastly, we want to help you engage more fully in campus-wide conversations about the book and feel confident applying the advice it offers about how to build constructive conversations about difficult topics. How will we accomplish this goal?

Well, we review reading strategies such as building background knowledge, previewing, and skimming. We explore skills for improving reading accuracy, comprehension, and speed by providing a book summary, including a section about chapter structure, and explaining cultural references and slang that are not clarified directly in the book. Because this book contains many references to politics in the United States, we include links to videos and sites that can offer helpful background knowledge. And lastly, we offer a list of helpful phrases to help you implement Guzmán’s strategies for discussing controversial topics. More about that in a minute.

We hope these strategies can both enhance your reading experience for this book and model a reading approach you can use to enrich your reading comprehension and accuracy throughout your time at Vanderbilt. Before we go any further, you might like to hear from the author herself. Here is Mónica Guzmán describing how seeing people struggle to discuss sensitive or controversial topics inspired her to write this book:

Mónica Guzmán: “We’re so divided, we’re blinded. When you look at the research, it shows that when people are asked to look across the divide and guess at the views on that side, we are constantly exaggerating. And this happens from both sides. And we’re constantly over-vilifying. We’re seeing a lot of malevolence when it isn’t quite there. We’re stretching it beyond reality, and we really care about getting things right. We care about facts. We care about truth, but we’re not seeing the truth of other people. And that’s because of the depth and complexity and layers of polarization and toxic polarization in our society. It’s the kinds of signals and narratives that we receive. It’s the animosity and the high volume of these things. And it’s also, I think, very importantly, how much our relationships across difference have frayed. Very naturally and organically, one burned bridge and one burned relationship at a time, every time we decide, you know, we can’t talk about politics, that’s one more place of friction between difference that goes away. But if we don’t do it, we’re seeing the world as a projection instead of what it really is. We’re seeing people’s perspectives as something they’re not.”

As you might imagine after hearing Mónica speak, this book offers advice about how you can engage people in constructive conversations even when you are discussing a divisive topic.

You will begin a new phase of your life when you move to Nashville and begin living at Vanderbilt University. This supplement and the discussions you have about the book during orientation and in your Vanderbilt Visions groups will help you prepare to join such controversial dialogues when you choose.

To help you apply Guzmán's advice, the Supplement includes language on Page 12 that corresponds to her advice. We hope you will refer to this list if you need language to support a difficult conversation.

At the English Language Center, we want to create pathways for you to engage more fully on campus. We have created this Supplement to *I Never Thought of It That Way* to support your reading by looking at details such as chapter structure, cultural references, and the language of constructive dialogues.

We hope this supplement supports your experience with this year's Campus Reading and we look forward to meeting you during orientation!

*You can find the Supplement to *I Never Thought of It That Way* on our website [here](#).