

# Language is his home

**Author speaks to grammar school students about migration**

By Franziska Günther

**Gräfelfing** – “between two worlds / amidst unending solitude / I would like to be a bridge,” begins the poem “two worlds” by Nevfel Cumart. The author and translator was invited on Tuesday to visit the Kurt-Huber-Gymnasium (KHG) grammar school. As part of the “Modus 21” cooperation programme, the Turkish author mainly read poems from his 13 poetry books to an audience of Year 7 pupils attending the KHG and the Volksschule Lochham. “but I can hardly / gain a foothold / on the one bank / on the other / I am losing my footing / more and more// the bridge is breaking / threatens / to tear me apart / in the middle,” the poem continues, eloquently describing the identity crisis suffered by Germany’s “second-generation immigrants”. “At home, on the inside, I was expected to be 120-percent Turkish and outside they all wanted us to be German,” explains the Turkish and Islamic scholar, speaking of his precarious balancing act “on the bridge” between two worlds.

Regarded in his childhood years as a kind of model Turk both at his birthplace Lingenfeld and at school, Cumart

finally found his home in the German language. Just how expressively and eloquently he masters the language is confirmed by his love poem “without you” and the poem “my daughter” which he wrote 14 months after “the new measure of time....sheep, elks... drifted into our home”. “I had a thirst for reading,” remembers Cumart who came “from a home without books”. When he was a child, neither his mother nor his father could read or write in German. Such was his passion for words that Cumart typed up the entirety of the first book he ever read on an old Olympia typewriter.

He later went on to “catch poems”: “Poems are always floating around me,” he says in answer to a pupil who was curious to find out how his poems came into being. He conceded, however, that his busy lifestyle these days rarely allows him to write them all down. Besides his school presentations, which he has been giving for the past 17 years, the winner of the Bavarian Award for Literature also runs creative writing workshops. Students at the school in Gräfelfing could opt to spend their afternoon inventing stories about a meditation text on animals.



*BU: Reading poems about being foreign, Nevfel Cumart engages with Year 7 pupils at German grammar school Kurt-Huber Gymnasium.*