Student Worksheet – Literature Prize 2018
On travel and movement

The 2018 Nobel Laureate in Literature, **Olga Tokarczuk**, has written novels, short stories and poetry. She has also been a screenwriter for several films based on her works. The 2007 novel *Flights* is one of her most acclaimed books. Let's look closely at this novel.

Flights is no ordinary novel. If you look through its pages, here and there you will find small images of maps. The book has no chapters, either. Instead it consist of longer and shorter paragraphs with names like "Home is My Hotel", "Three Hundred Kilometres" and "Travel Tales". Most of the names are connected to travel and movement. And that is precisely what *Flights* is about – how people always want to be in motion.

The original Polish title, *Bieguni*, refers to the name of an old Russian sect that did not wish to be controlled by anyone – either by a state or a church. To avoid them, sect members were constantly travelling; they were *beguni*, or runaways. But the novel *Flights* takes place in our present day and centres on modern humans who are restless and constantly travelling, moving or fleeing, both physically and spiritually. Here is a brief excerpt from the book:

Purging the map
If something hurts me, I erase it from my mental map. Places where I stumbled, fell, where I was struck down, cut to the quick, where things were painful – such places are simply not there any longer.

This means I've got rid of several big cities and one whole province. Maybe someday I'll eliminate a country.

Flights, translated by Jennifer Croft

Vocabulary list

SECT A religious group that clearly diverges from the religious mainstream in a society.

PURGE Bring to an end, or erase.

What do you think?

The excerpt you read was about maps and places where the narrator experienced unpleasant events. Is there any place you would like to purge from a map?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Can the map in the excerpt mean or symbolise something other than an actual map? What might that be?

_____

_____

_____

_____

What is the most interesting thing about the Laureate's work?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____