

Organization to Promote Adult Literacy

Last year, I worked with a group of authors and illustrators from around the world to create a collection of stories. Each story was written to celebrate a special day like: International Literacy Day, Grandparents Day, Talk Like a Pirate Day, World Animal Day, World Food Day, etc. The collection was titled A World of Stories and published by Gumboot Books (Vancouver, BC Canada). All of the pictures and stories were donated so that the book could be used to raise money for literacy projects across North America. Schools and literacy groups were encourage to use the finished book as a fundraiser.

One of the stories (A Game of Peace) was written by Dixiane Hallaj. She is the head of the Organization to Promote Adult Literacy (OPAL) which harkens from northern Virginia. She is a true advocate of adult literacy both here in the United States as well as abroad. One of her projects was to develop along with a group of editors, a web resource of stories that adult readers as well as tutors could access and use. I began to correspond with Dixiane about the project and my interest in writing farm stories which reflect the counties were I teach (Prince Edward, Buckingham, and Cumberland). The web site is now up and running and I encourage you to take a look at his wonderful resource. Tutors may copy any of the stories for teaching purposes.

The web site is easy to access: www.opaliteracy.org Click on **New Readers** then choose a level: **Very Simple, Beginner, Intermediate, Advanced**. Try to match a level to material that your student is reading during your sessions.

For example, “The Good Bad Rooster” is found on the Very Simple level. The story was written by Jean Kipfer. It tells a story of a rooster that chases the narrator (a little girl) as well as her grandmother. One day the bad rooster winds up as a Sunday dinner. The story is told in seven sentences with bright illustrations. An adult reader who is reading at a first or second grade level would find success in reading this story.

Dixiane Hallaj wrote “Helping Hand” which is found on the **Beginner Level**. The story tells of George who is married to Rita. They have a son named Johnny. When George loses his job, he doesn’t have the money to pay the doctor who is taking care of his son. The doctor takes care of he boy for free and George finds a way to return his kindness. This timely story is told with simple sentences and basic vocabulary words. If your student is

using “Talk of the Block” or “Laubach Level 2” then this story would be appropriate.

I contributed three stories on the **Intermediate** and **Advanced** levels. All of my stories center around the character of Lowell Halloran (a farmer) and use different narrators. They describe events at different points in his life. In “A fence to Mend” a mother tells her daughter Sara a story she remembers from her childhood. We learn that the central character in the story (Lowell) was misunderstood by his classmates because he was different than they were. It takes a nearly tragic accident for the narrator to discover that she too misjudged the young man. The story is six pages long with a few subtle illustrations. There is a mixture of short and long sentences. A student reading at a seventh grade level would enjoy this story.

I see the OPAL stories as a great summer supplement. Your student can call them up on a computer in the library. The important thing is to guide them toward an appropriate level. Dr. Samuel Johnson once said, “The only end of writing is to enable readers better to enjoy life or better to endure it” I believe that is why writers are giving their work to the OPAL web site. The stories are free and there to be enjoyed.

Works Cited:

1. Bradfield, Bill (editor) Books and Reading. 2002. Dover Thrift Editions. Mineola, N.Y.

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