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Editor’s Corner

Who doesn’t love stories? A number of the articles in our current issue focus on stories—telling them, listening to them, and reading about them. With autumn harkening the start of new classes and the entry of new students, we think this issue’s articles—and stories—will inspire you to explore new resources and ideas with your classes.

Personal stories written by students are a common part of the ESOL or literacy classroom as they personalize instruction and let students share what they know. But how about the teacher’s personal stories? Should a teacher use his/her life as a backdrop for instruction? In “Personal Stories,” we talk about why teachers should use personal stories, when appropriate, to enhance instruction.

Adult education teachers are always looking for new resources that challenge students and keep them engaged in learning. If you are not yet familiar with StoryCorps, then you’ll want to discover more about it and see how it can enrich your classroom. Our story “Using StoryCorps in the Classroom” identifies a story from the site that will likely interest many adult students.

Next, in this election year, a topic on many peoples’ minds is the economy. Many Americans were shocked by a Federal Reserve report released this spring revealing that the recession wiped out nearly 20 years of wealth for the average family. We’re using a story that appeared in News for You as a springboard to help students practice reading comprehension, analytical, and math skills.

Finding housing is a challenge for anyone, but it can be particularly hard for ESOL students who may not have the appropriate language skills. Our article “Role Play Fun: Finding an Apartment” uses a role play to help practice a conversation between a prospective tenant and landlord.

As in every issue, Exploring Resources introduces a number of websites you and your students will enjoy.

Last but not least, in our Student Profile, we highlight a new ProLiteracy staff member who took an incredible path on her adult learning journey.

The Editor

NOTE about photocopying: You may photocopy for use with students any of the activities in this issue or in the Notebook section of the ProLiteracy website (see Notebook Online, on the left). This includes material provided by New Readers Press, the publishing division of ProLiteracy. To learn more about New Readers Press products, request a catalog at (800) 448-8878, or go to www.newreaderspress.com.
Sharing Your Stories with Students for Vocabulary and Writing Practice

By Abbie Tom, Orange County Literacy Council, Carrboro, North Carolina, with Vanessa Caceres

Purpose
To discuss various ways teachers can use their real-life stories to introduce and practice new vocabulary with students in the ESOL and basic literacy classroom.

Rationale
Teachers may not always consider using their lives as a springboard for ESOL and basic literacy reading, writing, and vocabulary practice. “During my first 40 years of teaching ESOL, I rarely talked about myself to my students. It seemed like doing so would take advantage of my position as a teacher and might bore them,” says article co-author Abbie Tom. However, Tom found when she started to create stories about herself and her family to use in class, students enjoyed getting to know her better.

Personal stories also give teachers a way to control the content, vocabulary, and structures to fit what students are studying in class. They come in handy when the class textbook doesn’t specifically cover something you want students to learn. Stories also help vary the regular textbook routine.

Finally, teachers’ personal stories also serve as models for students to write about themselves.

The Basic Activity
Although you can make personal stories about almost any topic that students will study in class, this article will focus on basic personal information.

First, write a short story to tell students about yourself. The story length should be level appropriate, keeping in mind that the story will eventually serve as a model for students’ writing. Page 4 shows an example used by Abbie Tom in a beginning-level ESOL classroom. You can then fill out a similar story about yourself on the first set of blanks on p. 5 of this issue.

More Information

Language Experience Approach (LEA)
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zAMdcyL1RRU
This YouTube video from Bow Valley College in Alberta, Canada, gives a short demonstration of how to use LEA in the adult ESOL classroom.

Multimedia Strategies
http://www.prel.org/eslstrategies/multimedia.html
Take your personal stories to the next level with digital storytelling. This website, from the Honolulu, Hawaii-based Pacific Resources for Education and Learning, gives examples of digital ways to create stories. The examples shown are from the K–12 setting but could also apply in an adult classroom.

365 ESL Short Stories
http://www.eslfast.com/
If you’d rather use ready-made stories than your own personal stories, this website has 365 stories appropriate for intermediate and advanced ESOL students. Story topics range from the practical (shopping and politeness) to the zany. Each story has related vocabulary, dictation, cloze, and other exercises.
Alternately, you can write a similar story but modify the personal information to focus on other things, such as children, pets, how long you have taught, and other topics. The information you focus on should include vocabulary or other information you would like students to learn. For example, the story shown here incorporates the introduction and practice of first name, last name, city location (e.g., “I live...”), date of birth, and the name of a job that person does.

Decide if you want to share personal photos to accompany the story. The photos can be printed to accompany the story, or you can just take the photos with you to class (or show them on your camera/phone).

In class, give students a copy of the story you wrote and the model that they should follow (see page 5 for a handout with a template students can use called “My Day”). After students sufficiently understand your story and have the chance to ask any questions, encourage them to write a story about themselves. Explain that the blanks on the handout represent where they will fill in their personal information. (Students not working can say they are a mother, father, student, etc.) Review stories for grammar, spelling, and usage. Ask for volunteers to share their stories with the class.

You will also find on page 5 a sample story called “My Teacher's Day,” which Tom has used in her classroom. Based on Tom’s story, students can write a short story about their typical day when you are practicing grammar or vocabulary related to daily routines. Alternately, you could share a short story about your daily routine but still use the “My Day” blanks on page 5 for students to write about their day.
My Teacher’s Story

My first name is ________________. My last name is ________________.

I live in ____________________________, ________________________.

I am a ______________________________. My date of birth is ________.

Write About You

My Story

My first name is ________________. My last name is ________________.

I live in ____________________________, ________________________.

I am a ______________________________. My date of birth is ________.

My Teacher’s Day

I wake up at 6:30. I take a shower. I get dressed.

I exercise. I don’t shave. I cook breakfast.

On Mondays and Wednesdays, I teach English.

On Saturdays and Sundays, I don’t wake up at 6:30.

My Day

1. I _________________________________.

2. I _________________________________.

3. I _________________________________.

4. I _________________________________.

5. I _________________________________.

I don’t ________________________________.

I don’t ________________________________.
More Information

Here are a few other links from the StoryCorps website that may interest you.

About StoryCorps
http://storycorps.org/about/

Ten Ways to Bring StoryCorps to Your Classroom
http://tinyurl.com/98kxhmt

Resources for Educators
http://storycorps.org/education/storycorpsu/resources-for-educators/

Record Your Story
http://storycorps.org/record-your-story/

Great Questions List
http://storycorps.org/record-your-story/question-generator/list/

Using StoryCorps in the Classroom

Purpose

To demonstrate how adult education instructors can use stories from StoryCorps (http://www.storycorps.org) to help students practice a variety of skills.

Rationale

StoryCorps is a Brooklyn, N.Y.-based nonprofit group with the goal of recording and preserving a variety of diverse American stories. The group has archived more than 40,000 stories from 80,000 participants since its inception in 2003. StoryCorps’ weekly program on National Public Radio has millions of listeners. StoryCorps has also published two New York Times best-selling books focused on themes of motherhood and love. This article discusses a way to use a StoryCorps story in an ABE or advanced ESOL classroom. You can use this sample to create similar lessons with other StoryCorps stories that interest your students.

The Basic Activity

The story used with this lesson plan is called “Theresa Nguyen and Her Daughter Stephanie.” It is about a Vietnamese mother and her daughter. The story focuses on the mother’s strict upbringing of her daughter. It also discusses some of the challenges of living as a teenager in the United States while having parents from another culture.

1. Before class, listen to the audio clip at: http://storycorps.org/listen/stories/theresa-nguyen-and-her-daughter-stephanie/
   The clip is about two minutes long. Make a plan to help students listen to the audio clip in class, either with a computer that you control, in a computer lab with headphones, or even as a podcast you can play on a compatible device (the link StoryCorps website above provides another link with information about using the free podcast service).

2. Identify vocabulary from the audio that might be challenging for your students. Depending on the level of students with whom you’re working, this might include words/phrases such as upbringing, compromising, world revolves around, acculturate, and resent. Make note of this vocabulary with any of your class preparation materials.

3. Ask students the following questions: What is it like to be a teenager? Is it easy or hard? What is important to a teenager? What makes being a teenager more difficult? How can being a teenager be even more difficult if you have parents from another country/culture? Try to elicit the themes addressed in the story, such
as the importance of friendship to teenagers and the challenges of fitting in.

4. **Introduce any of the vocabulary that you noted earlier.**

5. **Play the audio clip.** If you have ESOL students, you may want to play it once, check for general comprehension, and then play it again. After one or two listens, ask the following comprehension questions orally, on a handout, or on the board:

   a. What are two examples that Theresa and Stephanie shared about why Stephanie thought her adolescence was especially difficult?

   b. What did Theresa say she would do differently if she were raising a teenager again?

   c. What did Theresa say she has difficulty saying to her daughter? Why is this difficult for her?

   d. Why do you think Theresa and Stephanie wanted to share their story?

   e. What did you learn about the Asian culture from listening to this audio clip? (Note: The audio talks about both the Asian culture in general and the Vietnamese culture specifically.)

   f. What are themes in their story with which people can identify?

   Have students write answers to the questions and then discuss them with a partner or as a class.

6. **Consider ways you can expand the practice with the story.**

   • Have students write or tell stories about a challenge they experienced while they were a teenager (or, alternately, a challenge of being a parent).

   • If you have access to a computer lab (or enough computers for each student and/or pairs of students), take students to the StoryCorps site (http://www.storycorps.org) and have them choose another story. They should choose the “Listen to stories” link on the left side of the page. They can also search stories by keywords or categories on the right side of the page.

   • Create dictation or cloze exercises with the target vocabulary.

   • Encourage students to record their own stories or stories of those around them, including friends, fellow students, and family members.
Critical Reading from the News—Comprehension, Analysis, and Math Skills

Purpose
To focus on reading comprehension, analytical skills, and math by using an article about the loss of wealth to the average American family due to the recession.

Rationale
Adults in ABE/GED classes often need practice in multiple skill areas. This activity, which uses an article from the weekly newspaper News for You, enables students to practice reading, analytical skills, and/or math. Teachers can choose which skill areas to focus on when using the story with students (or they can focus on all skills).

The Basic Activity
First, access the article “Recession Wiped Out Nearly 20 Years of Wealth” from the News for You website. It was originally published on June 27, 2012, and is based on a triennial report called “Survey on Consumer Finances,” released in 2012 by the Federal Reserve. You can access this article at no charge at http://www.newsforyouonline.com/recession. The article and parts of the activity below are used with permission from New Readers Press.

Make sure you print enough copies of the article for your class (or have enough computers where they can access the article). Identify new vocabulary you want to introduce before students read the article. Depending on your students’ level, some words that might be more challenging include struggled, wiped out, free fall, steeply, asset, and stable.

With your class, ask how the economic recession has affected them and people they know.

Have students read the article. Discuss areas that are unclear.

Practicing Reading Comprehension
To check students’ comprehension of the article, ask the following questions (answers follow in italics):

1. By how much did the median net worth drop for Americans from 2007 to 2010? (The average net worth dropped 40%).
2. Who was hurt most by the drop in housing values? (The drop in housing values hurt minorities and the poor the most.)
3. What was the median income in 2010? How much of a percentage drop was that? (The median income was $45,800. It was an 8% drop.)
4. How has credit card debt changed in the past few years? (Fewer people owe money on credit cards. They owe less money. The median balance dropped 16%. More families have no credit card debt.)

5. What are some signs of recovery in the economy? (The family net worth has gone up a little this year. Housing prices have been more stable.)

You can then personalize the information in the article with the following discussion questions:

1. What information from this study surprised you?
2. How does the information in the study compare to your family?
3. How did the recession change the way that you spend or save money?
4. How long do you think it will take for the U.S. economy to recover from the recession?
5. What do you think are some good ideas to improve the U.S. economy?

**Practicing Analytical Skills**

To help students practice analytical skills, the following activity gives them a chance to work in small groups and discuss ways to improve the economy.

Ask each student to use a blank piece of paper and copy the grid shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Government</th>
<th>Large Businesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small Businesses</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you used the discussion questions in the Reading Comprehension section of this activity, ask students to once again consider the last question, *What do you think are some good ideas to improve the U.S. economy?* (If you didn’t use those questions before, you can just present the question for the first time to the class.) Students should consider whether their ideas are things that should be done by the government, a large business, a small business, or another organization/person.

Divide the class into groups of three or four students. Group members should share their ideas and write each individual’s ideas in the appropriate category from the grid above. The group should then choose one idea to discuss in more detail. They should address:

— How the idea would get started
— How the idea would benefit the economy
— Who would benefit

Provide groups with 15 minutes to discuss their individual ideas and select the chosen idea of the group. If students are having trouble generating ideas, remind them of ideas, such as the creation of jobs in needed areas, providing economic incentives, holding campaigns to encourage people to buy from local small businesses, etc.
The group should then prepare to present their chosen idea to the class. Other students in the class should be prepared to ask questions about the ideas they hear or give suggestions on how to improve them.

Practicing Math

Use the worksheet below to provide students with math practice based on the article. The answers follow below. We also indicate the numbers from the article that students would use to find the answers.

“Recession Wiped Out Nearly 20 Years of Wealth”

1. What was the dollar amount that Americans’ net worth dropped from 2007 to 2010? Based on that calculation, what was the net worth in 2007?

2. The article says that the median income fell nearly 8% in 2010, to $45,800.
   a. By what dollar amount did the median income drop?
   b. What was the median income amount in 2007?

3. The article says that debt payments that were very late rose from 7.1% in 2007 to 10.8% in 2010. By how much of a percentage did those late payments increase?

4. What can you learn about changes in median net worth from the bar graph in the article?

Answers:

1. $166,400
   - $77,300
   $49,100

2. a. $3,664
   b. $49,484
   Students should multiply $45,800 by .08 and then add that total to the original amount of $45,800.

3. It is approximately a 52% increase. (Note to teachers: See sidebar resources on page 8 for more help with percentage calculation.)

4. There was only a very small increase in median net worth from 2001–2004. From 2004–2007, median net worth increased by 20%. From 2007–2010, median net worth decreased by 40%.
Role Play Fun: Finding an Apartment

Purpose
To give high beginning and intermediate ESOL students speaking practice with a role play focused on looking for an apartment.

Rationale
Finding a place to live is a challenge for anyone, even native-English-speaking adults. ESOL students may have extra hurdles, including where to find available housing, communicating with those who are offering rental housing, and understanding housing ads. This lifeskills lesson gives students practice with reading classified ads commonly used to find available apartments. The lesson comes from Lynne Weintraub, Jones Library, Amherst, Massachusetts, and is adapted with permission from the newly updated Teaching Adults: An ESL Resource Book (2013, New Readers Press).

The Basic Activity
1. Have students review the classified ads shown on p. 13. Have a copy of this handout ready for each student in advance. Make sure students are already familiar with most of the vocabulary shown in the ads.

2. Tell your students to imagine they need to find a new place to live. The apartment they are looking for must be near a bus route and have laundry facilities. Brainstorm with the class a list of things they might want to know about the apartment before they would sign a lease. This will get them thinking about the vocabulary they will use in the activity.

More Information

Finding an Apartment?
http://bogglesworldesl.com/findinganapartment.htm
This link has a lesson using dialogs to give students practice with finding an apartment.

Teaching Function: Finding an Apartment
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S_BSyFo3lFs

Apartments for Rent
http://www.esl-lab.com/live/liverd1
This link from Randall’s ESL Cyber Listening Lab, a well-known site for ESOL practice, includes a brief conversation students can listen to in which native speakers talk about finding an apartment. It also includes listening comprehension, vocabulary exercises, and post-listening activities.

Using the Newspaper to Find an Apartment
http://aeonline.cls.utk.edu/Instructors/pdfesol/oldCG/esol_6_2.pdf
This two-page excerpt from the Tennessee Adult ESOL Curriculum Resource Book focuses on reading classified ads for apartments available for rent.
3. **Have students work in pairs to use the form on page 13 to practice making “phone calls” to ask for details about each apartment listing.** One student should play the rental agent/landlord and answer questions. The other person is a prospective tenant. The prospective tenant should write the rental agent’s answers on the form. Encourage students to be creative and have fun with their role plays. For additional practice, students can practice arranging a time to go see the apartment. They can then fill in the apartment time on the line where it says “Appointment?” on page 13.

4. **As students perform the role plays, note ways that they might improve their pronunciation, sentence structure, and word choices to be better understood.** Also think about social/conversational conventions that might make the interaction go more smoothly, such as the use of greetings or small talk. Encourage the student to incorporate these suggestions as you role play calls about the other two ads.

5. **If you want students to focus more on reading ads, you can select ads for apartment rentals online or from your local newspaper that have common abbreviations.** This might include BA = bathroom, BR = bedroom, apt = apartment, util = utilities, yr = year. Teach those abbreviations.
Finding an Apartment

**N. AMHERST**

Location: _______________________
Near bus? _______________________
How long is the lease? ________________
Smoking or nonsmoking? _____________
Laundry? ___________________________
Appointment? _____________________

**HADLEY**

Location: _______________________
Near bus? _______________________
First or second floor? _______________
How much is the rent? ______________
Laundry? _________________________
Appointment? ___________________

**AMHERST**

Location: _______________________
Near bus? _______________________
How many bedrooms? ______________
How much is the rent? ______________
Laundry? _________________________
Appointment? ___________________
Updated NRP Products to Round Out Your Resources

http://www.newreaderspress.com

New Readers Press has updated some of its most popular publications. The fifth edition of *I Speak English* focuses language learning on real-life experiences and integrates reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The latest edition also covers technology, including smartphones, tablets, and the Internet and addresses native language literacy and Spanish literacy as the first step to English. The update of *Teaching Adults: An ESL Resource Book* includes more than 57 ready-to-use activities on topics such as language experience approach stories, phonics and grammar, and fluent oral reading. The book also integrates technology and considers some of the most recent research regarding effective language teaching. *Teaching Adults: A Literacy Resource Book* includes essential background on the characteristics of adult learners and covers topics such as assessment, reading fluency, and word recognition and vocabulary. Both *Teaching Adults* books can be used in one-to-one or group instruction and include ideas for expanding or adapting to higher or lower levels.

ProLiteracy Launches Video Library

http://www.proliteracyednet.org

In response to requests from local literacy programs, ProLiteracy has created a new online video library. Initially, the library will house videos from the *Training by Design* literacy and ESOL series published by New Readers Press. Most of these demonstrate instructors using a variety of teaching strategies in a one-to-one or small-group setting. The videos can be incorporated into tutor training or can be used by trained tutors and teachers looking for new ideas. Sample topics include understanding the needs of adult learners, dialogues and role plays, writing, the language experience approach, improving comprehension and vocabulary, and total physical response. You can access the library by going to the ProLiteracy Education Network website listed above (also called ProLiteracy EdNet) and clicking on “Video.” All resources on ProLiteracy EdNet are free, including the self-paced online courses.
Save the Date for USCAL 2013

http://www.uscal.org

Make plans now to join the 2013 United States Conference on Adult Literacy (USCAL), to be held October 31–November 2, in Washington, D.C. Building on the 2011 USCAL, the 2013 meeting will cover workforce training and career pathways, citizenship education, health literacy, financial literacy, technology and digital literacy, and public policy and advocacy concerns. Early-bird registration begins in May.

USCAL Southern Regional Conference

http://www.uscal.org

In other conference news, also mark your calendar for the USCAL Southern Regional Conference, to be held May 1–3 in Nashville, Tennessee. Topics will include basic literacy and ESOL instruction, grant writing, and volunteer retention and recruitment. For more information, including accommodations, offsite event details, and workshop descriptions, contact conference@proliteracy.org.

Showing the Importance of Healthcare Communication

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dOZLrf-RYvHk

“How Effective Healthcare CommunicationContributes to Health Equity,” a seven-minute video from the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), can be used with adult education teachers and healthcare providers for an introduction on how culture, language, and health literacy are important during healthcare-related interactions. The video also discusses an online training course from HRSA to help healthcare providers effectively interact with diverse patients.

TV411

http://www.tv411.org

TV411 is a new website designed to help adults gain basic reading, writing, math, and science skills. The site has a number of multimedia activities to help students develop those skills. There are also a number of links in the “For Teachers” section to explain to teachers how they can maximize use of the site’s videos and related lesson plans. There are also some lessons available in Spanish. The site is a project of the nonprofit Education Development Center’s Learning and Teaching Division.

Help Students Improve Their Typing Skills

http://mtc.edu/able/websitesFREEtypinglessons.pdf

There are a variety of reasons why adult education students would want to improve their keyboarding skills. Some students are new to computers and see the value in practicing typing to learn how to use the computer and its keyboard more efficiently. Others are preparing to take education tests that are only available online and want to refine their typing skills to do so. A document on the Marion, Ohio-based Marion Technical College website leads students to a variety of websites with free typing lessons, games, and activities.
If you have called ProLiteracy since we moved to our new office in May, you may have had the pleasure of speaking with Wanda Cruz. Cruz is a new receptionist for ProLiteracy. Her warm, welcoming voice puts you at ease. But you may not anticipate the story she has to share as a former adult education student.

“I had my first kid when I was 16,” says Cruz, who was born in Brooklyn but later grew up in Massachusetts. Although she attended school while pregnant, when she reached 11th grade, she thought she would have to repeat the year. “I said, ‘I can’t do this,’” says Cruz. She dropped out.

Cruz was in her 20s and pregnant with her fifth child when her husband was assaulted, robbed, and murdered. Depressed and thinking about her children, Cruz naturally wondered how she would care for them. “I realized I couldn’t do it without education,” she says. When her sixth child was six months old, Cruz decided to get her GED® diploma. She credits her first instructor with pushing her to continue. “She was so nice, and she always told me, ‘You can do it, you’re so smart,’” Cruz says.

Cruz enrolled in a 12-week GED program that she finished in eight weeks. Her love for education inspired her to attend the Community College of Rhode Island. She went on to graduate in 1998 with an associates degree in legal administration with high honors. While Cruz was on campus, her children were cared for by a babysitter who lived nearby. Cruz took two buses each way to and from school. She often stayed late at campus to finish homework. “Those were three difficult years,” she says.

She credits her GED diploma and higher education with changing her life for the better. “I was able to help my children with their homework, and I felt more optimistic. They saw a better mom, and they were better off,” says Cruz.

Cruz remarried in 2006 and moved to New York. Her children are now in their 20s, and she is helping her husband’s 14-year-old son from Puerto Rico learn English while he also takes ESOL classes in school.

Cruz has worked at secretarial jobs that combine with social activism. Before coming to ProLiteracy, she worked for a nonprofit in Syracuse called P.E.A.C.E., Inc., where she also earned a family development credential offered in collaboration with Cornell University.

Staff at ProLiteracy think Cruz is a wonderful addition to the office. “She goes out of her way to make sure every person who walks through ProLiteracy’s front door feel that they are a valued part of our community, and that we are happy that they have come,” says Cruz's manager, Katie Bova.

Bova notes that Cruz continues to broaden her skills by taking part in outreach efforts such as Syracuse's Duck Race fundraiser to end racism and ProLiteracy's Literacy for Social Change training. “Those both took place outside her work schedule,” Bova says.

Cruz notes she is happy to be part of the ProLiteracy family. “I feel it is an honor to be working here. I can relate to the adults.”