Welcome

Hillsborough Literacy Council
President

The power of reading and the power of communicating well with the spoken word are invaluable skills for those that wish to improve their lives.

The Hillsborough Literacy Council (HLC)'s mission is to assist adults who desire to improve their basic reading skills and/or their spoken English. Many of our students are recent immigrants who have come to the United States of America in search of better lives for themselves and their families.

Our board of director's works with staff, volunteers and students to ensure that those that desire our services are offered various opportunities to grow in their literacy and/or language usage.

We wish to heartily thank all of our volunteer tutors, tutor trainers, donors, sponsors and students for all the hard work done throughout the year to make the HLC so important to its participants.

Paul V. Suppicich
President

Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library
Director of Library Services

I want to sincerely thank all of the students, volunteer tutors and Board members of the Hillsborough Literacy Council for their hard work and dedication in committing to improve the lives of our citizens and the prosperity of our community.

We hear every day about the importance of Pre-K school readiness and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) education for the future of America's economic development. One of the often overlooked factors in our community's future is English language proficiency. New Americans and refugees are at the critical center of this need:

• According to the US Census, 20% of Florida's population are new Americans; that's nearly 5 million people.
• Tampa continues to serve as a gateway community for immigration and refugees assistance.
• Florida leads the nation in the number of refugees moving into the United States, more than double the number settling in second-place California. Since 2013, according to the federal government, 43,184 refugees resettled in Florida; one in ten resettled in the Tampa Bay area.

The process of integration for new Americans can be slow. Linguistic, economic and civic integration into the community are built on English language proficiency and having access to literacy instruction and materials. The library and its partner, the Hillsborough Literacy Council are committed to providing high-quality, free services to assist new Americans become successful and prosperous in their new lives. The courage and perseverance that you show is tremendously important.

Keep up the good work!

Andrew Breidenbaugh
Library Director
The Hillsborough Literacy Council (HLC) is a nonprofit affiliate of Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library teaching functionally and marginally illiterate adults to read and write through its Adult Basic Literacy program. In its English for Speakers of Other Languages program, participants learn to read, write and communicate in basic English.

HLC accepts adults 18 and over. Depending upon the student’s level, learning to read can take a year or more.

HLC needs volunteer tutors and will provide them training and materials. We ask our tutors to commit to one year’s work with their student(s).

HLC seeks funding partners and donations which will directly support the program by providing student materials and supplies for tutor trainings.

For more information, visit hillsboroughliteracy.org or call (813) 273-3650.

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The Hillsborough Literacy Council supports our tutors who graciously volunteer to help students develop strategies and techniques for reading and comprehension. It is a life-long learning process and our students excel in their dedication to participate in the process.

The following are stories written by our current students. The stories have been printed in the exact manner in which the student have written them. Please enjoy and learn about our amazing students through their stories.

**My Greatest Surprise!**

The most beautiful surprise I've ever had was when I was living in Bogota, Colombia and my husband who at this time was my boyfriend sent me tickets to go to Cancun, Mexico for my 27th birthday which was very romantic.

Also a big surprise was the day before my birthday when he took me to a restaurant and he proposed marriage, and we finished the night when at 12:00 the waiter brought me a cake and all sang me happy birthday. Definitely that was the most happy weekend.

Submitted by Angelica Puerta
Tutor: Lisa Longley

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**An Unforgettable Surprise of My Childhood**

The year was 1950, when dad went to another country, Venezuela, because of work. We were with mom and very sad, I was six years and spent one year, when one night at sleeping, I woke voices and laughter and surprise! brothers were all happy because my dad came back from Venezuela. I remember charged me and gave me a big hug and then handed me a beautiful doll that had for many years. Dad never turned to go and live very happy with Mom and Dad forever.

Submitted by Yolanda Rada
Tutor: Lisa Longley

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**Coping with Separation**

I was looking for a new future and prosperity in my life. This led me to leave my two children in Cuba. This separation from my sons is very difficult. I cope with this by keeping busy, studying English, and by frequently contacting my sons by phone.

My older son is Geismar Jesus and he is ten years old. My younger son is five year old Geismar Alberto. I try to keep communication with them by phone because it is the only way I have at this time. But, in the future, I think I will bring my boys to visit the United States of America.

I keep busy most of the time. I study English in different programs; with Sister Marcella, ESOL tutor, The CARIBE Program at Ewin Tech. and internet programs. This does not prevent me from communicating with my children.

I spend long hours busy at work, dealing with immigration paperwork and medical appointments. Part of the time I had a broken car. These are problems that have been overcome. Although I am very busy, I miss being with my kids. Though the distance may separate us, they are in my heart.

Only the love that I feel for them and faith in God is what gives me the strength to go ahead and overcome all of the difficulties of separation.

Submitted by Raul Risco Chacon
Tutor: S. Marcella Kiesel

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**Washington**

My first time in Washington was a long time ago. I went because my ex-husband was invited to work for one year at the NIH (National Institute of Health). Since I was younger then and able to leave my work for a year, I went with my children, Cristina ten years old and Leon five years old. We had a wonderful time there. Cristina and Leon went to the local school and found it interesting. While there, I took some English classes and made a lot of friends. I went to the NIH wives meetings and attended a cultural evening once a week. After one year we went back to Mexico. I have been back to Washington many times and have made a lot of friends there.

In December 2010, I had a terrible experience in my life. My five year old grandson Carlitos became very sick. He had developed a very bad brain tumor. All the family was looking for a place where he could have the best medical attention. In Mexico it would have been very expensive and not always the best, even though we have very good hospitals there.

Then a miracle happened. My son Leon, who was working at Smithsonian Museum and living in Washington, called Dr. Warren at NIH who is a specialist in brain cancer tumors in children. Dr. Warren found my grandson’s case to be very interesting. In seeing the medical danger, she called us to schedule an appointment for the following Sunday.

I remember it was Friday. My daughter Cristina, my son-in-law Carlos, my granddaughter Andreita and the very ill Carlitos travelled to Washington. At the NIH, they were already waiting.
Three days later, he had a brain surgery that lasted ten hours. I never felt so scared in my life, but the miracle kept going. Carlitos was fine after surgery. I was with him the night after surgery. I took his hand and talked to him all night. I said, “Thank you, God, for giving me this time with my baby.”

We stayed at the children’s hotel called Children Inn for one month. Carlitos went back to school and in March 2011 to NIH for radiation therapy. I went with him for twenty-five days. For five years, he was at medical control every six months. In April 2016 during his last visit to medical control, Dr. Warren found him healthy without complications. In the meanwhile, Carlitos went to school and learned to speak great English. He can explain everything to his doctors and is a healthy, beautiful and smart eleven year old boy. My last time in Washington was April 2016 with the wonderful notice about my grandson’s health.

God bless this nation for all their support and because my grandson was born again. God bless Dr. Warren and Dr. Astagueri who performed Carlitos’ neurosurgery and all of their team. I will never forget this gift of love. Thanks a lot. God bless you.

Submitted by
Maria Cristina Corona Ortega
Tutor: Sylvia Covington

Our English Class

I wait all week for Sunday. Because I’m coming to the library and learn more about the English language and its rules.

I love the classes, my teacher and the other students. I rejoice like a child over the homework. I love science and education.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Submitted by Fidaa Zaben
Tutor: Lark Underwood

My Morning Routine

When I wake up, the first thing I do is I give thanks to God. Then I go to my bathroom to brush my teeth and take my thyroid medicine.

Next I read my book “The Bread of Life”. I try to read one chapter every day, but frequently, I can’t.

After I eat my breakfast of oatmeal, coffee with milk, and toast, I leave with my sister to work at different houses.

Submitted by Olinfa Tames
Tutor: Lark Underwood

The Image

The Image is a mental process that has its origin in the cerebral amygdala and with which it can personify an idea of somebody or something.

In general terms it can grant the best attributes that can exist to extol and to magnify the qualities of the object or person.

The image can elevate the person or thing to such a point that nothing and no one could compare with it.

People should always have a good image of themselves so that they can feel more prepared when handling the challenges in life.

Submitted by Ernesto Millan
Tutor: Carol Bockenek

Dos Gatos

Once upon a time two feral cats came into my garden, and stared to talk to me. Both said, we want to life in your garden. I responded, you can stay and guard the garden for your work, I will feed you. Both cats rejoiced in happiness and agree to keep the garden free of unwanted visitors. One cat is yellow and white, his name is Hanson Boy, the other cat is black, and his name is Puty.

Every day when I open my back door, both cats are there to greet me. They talk to me about stories of all the animals that share the garden and those they chase away. My garden is prospering and the plants are happy and growing fast. Both casts sleep all day and work all night. The garden and my cats are happily living together and such happiness should last forever.

Submitted by Catalina Cueva
Tutor: Sylvia Covington

Who Will Be Left?

We live in a small Condon with a million view’s balcony in which we always enjoy our spare time, but some gangs broke in recently, they squeeze out from a narrow hole on one of old wooden pillar under their a pair of strong jaw. They fly here or there and seem enjoy the balcony more than us. We refuse them to accompany us without pay HOA, so an insect professor invited come in. A glut of pure white foam meal was fed through a series of drilling hole.

A few days past quietly, yesterday some shining wings return balcony again, at night I nose around sensitive area with a trick making suddenly flashlight on, nothing found, obviously little spirit has changed their strategy, next morning a few shining wings even lay on floor in hall! Oops, little guy! When did you come? Where will you want to go?

Submitted by Dongqing Li
Tutor: Frank Shidelar
My Reason For Learning English

English is the predominant language of people of the United States of America. Therefore, listening to and speaking and writing English is very important. This facilitates communication, continuing one’s education at a University, and it improves the possibility of getting a good job.

Thanks to the study of the English language, I have been able to communicate and understand people. I watch TV shows, read publications and fill out important documents. Because I am learning English it gives me the capability of helping other Hispanics who don’t understand the language.

If I didn’t understand English I would not have access to the world of knowledge. To continue my education at a university it is necessary to know the language because most writings, books, monographs, essays, etc. are in the dominant language.

Lastly, an important reason for learning English is so I can get a good job. My work performance will be better and my capacity for development and training in the job functions will be improved.

English is the preferred language of Americans and I want to become an American. This motivates me. With great interest and dedication learning English will become easier.

Submitted by Roger Fernandez
Tutor: S. Marcella Kiesel

Ma dame, I Love America!

Estellamise Pierre, and I have been learning English for about 2 years. Our friend, Clevis Jean, joined our class about 1 year ago.

Every week I drive the three of us to the Ruskin Library where we have our lessons. We feel very welcome there by the friendly and helpful people who work there. We love living in America because there is more to help us better ourselves.

In our country, Haiti, there is not so much help. We need help learning English so we can read and understand newspapers and signs, and find work. This is very hard to do if you don’t know English.

Our teacher gave us certificates when we finished the classes, before she takes a break.

Submitted by Edouard St. Felix
Tutor: Mary Ellen Lalomia

Why Learning English is Very Important

Learning English is the most important goal for me. This has been my dream since I came to the U.S.A. from Cuba just three months ago. The most difficult thing for me has been that I do not understand what people say. Becoming fluent would allow me to become a medical doctor here. Also, I want to study to pass the test to be a citizen of the United States of America.

Sometimes I have a hard time understanding people in the U.S.A. and this can be very frustrating. I know that language will be a barrier so I started school as soon as I could. I try to learn by listening and watching TV in English.

I really want to speak more confidently and understand better. Many of the world’s top films, books and music are published and produced in English. Therefore, by learning English I will have access to a great wealth of entertainment and will be able to have a greater cultural understanding.

The second reason I want to learn English is to work in my profession as a doctor of medicine. I will work as a medical doctor to help people and to improve my living conditions in this country.

Also, it is very important for me to learn English because in five years I will take the test to acquire American citizenship. All of the questions are in English. It is important to become a citizen because then my family can visit me.

Although learning English can be challenging and time consuming, I can see that it is also very valuable to learn and can create many opportunities. I will continue studying English to achieve my goal.

Submitted by
Elimerys Moro Machado
Tutor: S. Marcella Kiesel

For My 16 Year Old Granddaughter

Childhood is the time of life, when the whole world is seen as unshakable and firm. Everything in childhood is stable and maiden.

...And then our childhood changes into fast-moving, self-willed youth. It is happening so rapidly and stormy, as a mountain stream gives the beginning to a river.

...Now the coming to life youth makes the surroundings expand; it includes new countries, continents, distant planets and starry outer space.

Time now includes new dimensions: the past and the future. The roads into future are branching out and on each cross—road we need to choose our way into the future...

Submitted by Nelly Vinokurov
Tutor: Janet Dagg
**My Trip on the Cruise**

For a long time my older son was inviting me on a cruise and I said no, because I was afraid. He told me, to not be afraid. He convinced me and I accepted. When I saw the ship I was excited. Then I was happy because there was a lot of family, I had fun. The food was delicious. We danced and we took pictures, at dinner time our family and I gather together to eat.

The ship went to Key West then it went to Cozumel Mexico. In Cozumel Mexico my son paid a driver to show us around the island to sight see, we saw the shore, the water was beautiful. The driver took us to a tequila place where the owners of the farm make tequila, we had a few samples. I did not buy tequila but I brought souvenirs, Agave honey and vanilla that too make it there. After that we went to eat, we ate tacos of lobster and shrimps, we drank pina colada and Margarita. It was very good, after that we went back to the ship, we rest, and walk around the ship.

Everything was wonderful. From Cozumel we went back directly to Miami. When we arrived to Miami we stayed with my niece for two days. Then my son drove us back to Tampa. Now my son is inviting me to P.R. next year but in air plane.

Submitted by Blanca Melendez  
Tutor: Carol Bockenek

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**Placing Clarity**

My name is Tetyana Dimarova, I came to the United States in December of 2014 from Ukraine. I’ve travelled to many different countries and not so many people there knew about Ukraine. I still remember my argument with a man from Great Britain who told me that Ukraine and Russia were the same. “Your country always belonged to Russia and the Soviet Union and it is rich in wheat” - that was his only thought about Ukraine. I experienced such associations with my background very often, despite 25 years having past since the USSR fell. This 25 year period is a very small and intangible time in World History because empires take centuries to collapse.

Nevertheless Ukraine is now an independent country with its own old-world history, culture and language even though many other nations such as Russians, Tatars, Bulgarians, Poles, Hungarians, Slovaks, Romanians, Greeks, Jews, Georgians and Armenians have lived in the same territory since the beginning of time. I always point out that Ukraine is not only the granary, a dairy, an oil refinery of Europe, but that it also produces timber, electrical and nuclear power, chemical production, metallurgy, space and aircraft building.

Its people are also educated, hardworking and creative. Ukraine has been placed in a leading position in software development and IT outsourcing. Talented IT specialists provide high quality service all over the world, they keep up with the times and instantly react to market changes. The relatively slow pace of the Ukrainian economy in the 2000s was negated by aggravated corruption and by the Russian’s denial of the European Way Ukraine had chosen. Regrettably after a tragic altercation in 2014 a lot of people have been talking about the crisis in Ukraine, about shooting rebels, the president’s defection, annexation of the Crimean peninsula by Russian soldiers, and an undeclared war that is still in progress between Russia and Ukraine. Throughout the subsequent years many Ukrainian soldiers and civilians were killed by the Russian Army and were forced to become refugees. Many people on both sides who were once friends and relatives became enemies. I sadly begin to understand that it will last for an uncertain time.

I know that years ago Estonians, Poles, Slovaks, Serbs, Croatsians and Czechs equated immigrants to the USSR just as Ukrainian people are now. Perhaps they also proved their otherness to former Soviet countries but here, under the American sun they are mixing and dissolving into a big common pile of other nations. The society of the United States of America consists of competitive individuals. This competitive environment of professional individuals ignores all cultural and religious differences in its striving for success.

The migration of people is an essential process. It is a source of manpower and competition for the indigenous population. It provides enough motivation to innovate in order to survive in this evolving multicultural world.

Submitted by Tetyana Dimarova  
Tutor: Carol Bockenek

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For a Better Life

In some Countries the economic situation is not good. In my Country Mexico is very difficult to survive with a salary very low. My family worked very hard but not enough for us. Me and my brothers working hard and help my father. I that I changed our lives for good.

First of all my name are Maria Arely Hernandez and I had worked hard to improve my life. I was born in Mexico. I studied to be a programmer. My last job was IRS in my Country. When I came to the United States, my first job was at laundry place. It was very hard for me to work there. With a lot of effort from we could help my dad.

Second my dad had a small shop. Economic problems and many children to support. He worked seven days a week, but it was not enough. He decided to leave two of my brothers and I came to the United States and be able to help. He the ultimate mind could solve their economic situation and live better.

Important was the support of my brothers to help my dad. One of my brothers worked as a cook and baker. The other brother worked as repairing roofs and had his own company. They worked hard to help our father. We are working together we could solve our problems.

In summarizing in some countries economically is not good, but working hard is possible can change our lives and families like mine. That my brothers and I were able to help our father.

Submitted by Maria Hernandez
Tutor: Carol Bockenek

Alice in Wonderland

My name is Yana. I come from Ukraine with my husband and 4 year old son. Coming to US was one of the most exciting events of my life. I have been living in the USA for about 2 years. We have visited many countries in Europe. But when I came here, I felt like Alice in Wonderland. I am so amazed how big the US is. There are many different nationalities, languages, and cultures. I never took the experience itself as a challenge, but rather as an adventure and life-changing opportunity. Every day I have been learning something new about this country, culture and relationship between people.

My new life here makes me review my previous lifestyle and begin to live in a new way. I have been very lucky to meet many amazing people here. When I first arrived everything was new around me and I felt like a child who needed to learn to talk again, get a new education, make new friends, work and try to understand how everything works here.

I thought I was brave enough when I lived in Ukraine, but here I need to raise my best side again and again in every simple every day routine. To make a doctor's appointment, register my child for school, and rent a new apartment were each new adventure for me. People who just come to a new country look at it differently than local people for sure.

And one of my greatest eye opening experiences was at the library. In Ukraine people go to the library but use it for studying.

In the U.S. library is a remarkable place that you can get help, to know useful information, visit English conversation clubs, you can get help with writing a resume, and help with taxes. Here you can find a lot of programs for children and adults. What surprised me the most that it is perfectly organized and absolutely free, and it has a very friendly atmosphere.

At the library I feel more happy and confident, I don’t feel my self alone with my problems any more. Never in my life have I met such open, friendly people, ready to help with any question. In conversation classes I also find people from my country and are family friends now.

I think for people who have just come to the US, the library is a wonderful place to start and take social adaptation in new life. And I want to say Thank you to all who every day work in the library and help people like me.

You change world for the best!

Thank you!

Submitted by Yana Panchyshena
Tutor: Carol Bockenek

Brenda

Brenda is a cat, she is the baby of our family. About one year ago, my daughter took it to our home. Brenda very likes to eat, so she had become a fat cat so fast. But she is very clever and cute. We love it!

A few days ago, a funny thing had happened to it. In a morning, my husband got up, and went to balcony to take care his plants, he found something was twisting in the flowerpot when Brenda was still staring at it, he closed to watch it, and then he could sure that was a wall lizard tail! At that time, he saw a wall lizard with empty back hiding on the ceiling. My husband criticized Brenda for her careless behave, then move the little lizard outside door, on a piece of meadow we expected he grow up a new tail as soon as possible.

Submitted by Jiying Pang
Tutor: Frank Shideler
My Mama Don't Play

You might have heard someone say, "My mama don't play." If you don't know what that means, I am going to tell you.

My mother's name is Hyacinth Spike. She is a nice person. She is kind, helpful, and funny. She likes my jokes. Mommy is a great cook. My favorite thing that she cooks is her stew peas, rice, and goat meat. Her Red Velvet cake is delicious. She is wonderful in many ways, but..."my mama don't play."

Mommy’s house is clean and neat and she wants it to stay that way. Shoes come off at the door. Hands are washed before almost anything. I had to have a shower before going to bed and I better clean out the shower and not make a mess when I brushed my teeth. I had to make my bed as soon as I got up. I also had to keep all the dust off my furniture-she checked! The rule was no hats on the table and no feet on the furniture.

Mommy made sure that I had nice clothes and a book bag for school. When I came home from school, Mommy said I had to do my homework. She helped me with the hard work, but when she walked away, I went to sleep. Then she hollered, "Mark, get up!" She would be cooking dinner but still helping me. She was like a cat on a mouse with studying. Remember-"My mama don't play."

Mommy always said to say "yes ma'am and no sir." No running around in public or at someone’s house. No disrespect was allowed. Her walk even inspired respect.

I had to sit up straight and use my knife and fork. No arms on our table. Her training is still with me today. I make my bed and keep my bathroom clean. My toothpaste is neatly rolled. I press my clothes and always shower before bed. When I want to know how to cook something, I call her. I can talk to her about anything. We talk about her singing in the choir. She sings so sweetly that her songs can make me cry, but her jokes make me laugh. If I had never left her I would have been an even better man. So, all in all, I am very thankful that "my mama don't play."

Submitted by Mark Spyke
Tutor: Carol Godwin

Social Networks

I think many people will agree with me that social networks came into our lives. And the worst thing is they started to control people’s lives. More and more people in the car, in a restaurant, on a bench in a park sit and look at the screens of their phones and tablets. People forget we can see what the weather is outside, just open the door, and not to go to weather.com website

Instead of taking great food photos and posting them to Instagram - you can just try this food. Rather than write another short messages with emoticons to best friend - simply invite him for a coffee to the nearest Starbucks. We forget that we can laugh at the jokes of real people, not watching the videos on YouTube. And this situation becomes very terrible. We are turning into robots, which are dependent on their gadgets. In some countries, there were special signs on the streets - “Beware of people with iPhones.” These people do not watch their step, and read the latest news looking to the phone.

I am also a person who has lived with a computer and a phone. It’s my job and I like it. But sometimes let’s try to turn them off and enjoy the real world, which is so beautiful. I really like the idea of some of the restaurants and cafes, where you can see a sign - Sorry! No wi-fi. Talk to each other. Or you can try to play a game with your friends when you go to a cafe. Before dinner, move off all the phones on the edge of the table. Who will take his phone first - pays for all.

Submitted by Olga Medvedeva
Tutor: Frank Shideler

Beatriz's Story

I am a woman over 70 years old and throughout time have seen the telegraph to email with the communications are faster.

When I was and wanted to listen to music, I would buy a vinyl disc. Now all I need to do is download the song on itunes. All the changes are difficult. They most important thing is to try it. Like how I want to learn how to speak English so I can communicate better with my grandchildren. The age isn't the problem, the important this is to do the change.

Submitted by Beatriz Riera
Tutor: Janet Daggs

Anniversary

A year ago I contacted with the library as a resource to improve my English as a second language. The library assigned me a tutor; I meet Ms. Linda Helman on March 31, 2015 as my tutor. She is an excellent tutor, her professionalism to research into the different subject, to go further and to open my mind has helped me in my life tremendously. We meet every Tuesday at 7:00 pm for one hour at the Bloomingdale Library.

I want to express my most sincere gratitude to Ms. Linda who has been worked so vigorously during one full year. I love the strategies and resources that she has been using to help me to improve my reading; using the book, cross word puzzles, written essays, reading about the reason of celebrating the holidays thru the years, etc. I have learned so far more of what I expect... thanks for all of her support, dedication and tremendous efforts in creating happiness for me... her support has helped me mature in every sense of the word.

Submitted by Marta Morales
Tutor: Linda Helman
Some Terrible Confusion

The man who name is Tom was walking in the dark at Hyde Park. He was too upset. Because he was fired. So he wanted to be alone. He must find a job as soon as possible. He had a family and they have lots of necessities.

When he was walking and thinking like this, he saw a man was running and left hurriedly. After ten minutes two polices came and they shouted:

"Don't move! Hang your hands up!"
He didn't understand what happened. They shouted again:

"Hang your hands up!"
He hanged his hands despairingly. The police officers took him to the police station. They asked him a lot of questions:

"Where is the wallet that you stole?"
"Is there any friend that helped you?"

This situation is too complex for him. Because he didn't know anything. He was helpless.

But after half hour, everything was clear. Because the man thief was arrested. When he saw him he understood this confusion.

The thief was looks like to him. And they were the same clothes.

At least the police officers understood he was innocent. He was happy now.

Submitted by Hanife Ozan-Aslan
Tutor: Deborah Haynes

My Failed Date

World War II ended. Having survived numerous bombings, the evacuation and hungry years of living in the Uzbek republic, my mom and I had returned to Odessa Ukraine, hometown, liberated from Germans. I was 12 years old. Everything for me now was so unusual around: a set of the destroyed buildings, people without legs or hands, almost all unfamiliar neighbors. It seemed that I have got to some other world. But life goes on, and after couple days I have decided to find my old friend Sophie. She wasn't evacuated, therefore I will meet her as usual in her apartment in the building, where my late grandma lived.

"Why did I not go to visit Sophie earlier? She is a big girl now." I got very excited. It is interesting, after several months that we left Odessa I hardly thought about her. Now, I did not have the patience to wait for the next day.

The lessons at school lasted forever. But my thoughts were flying somewhere far away. Sophie probably became a beautiful teenager. She will be my girlfriend. With the bell's ring after the last lesson I flew out like a bird. I wanted to sing. Suddenly I stopped. I cannot come empty handed. It is not nice. I have to bring her something. How did I not think about it before? I pulled all change from my pocket. My mother used to give me some change, so I could buy a small bagel for lunch. Often instead of buying something to eat, I would save money to buy a book. That day I had several coins saved, but what can I buy for this change? What to buy? Suddenly I recalled my long forgotten promise: "I would bring her a lollipop." I imagine, how she would laugh at that. It would be funny.

I went to the market and bought a lollipop, a little red rooster sitting on a wooden stick end. We will have fun. I rushed back to the street, where Sophie lived. It was a long way, but it was like I had wings. I was crossing street after street, passing a street block after a street block. Here is the entrance to the courtyard. I saw girls playing in the courtyard. One girl had a very familiar dress with red flowers around the waist. Sophie? But immediately I realized that it was not her. For six years she should have outgrown this dress and the girl was blond. None of the girls playing in the courtyard was Sophie. How I was looking forward to meet her.

My friend Arik had an attractive girlfriend. Sophie probably is more attractive. I quickened my steps, I almost ran. Here is the familiar small alley. A strange thing, I noticed that Sophie's yellow window curtains were on the window across the alley. Maybe she changed her apartment. For some reason I began feel my heart pounding in my chest. I walked to her door. A strange woman answered the doorbell and looked at me inquiring:

"What do you want, boy?"
I was a little bit surprised, but I could see familiar Sophie's family kitchen table behind her back. It was encouraging.

"May I see Sophie?" I said stammering.

"You are mistaken, boy. Nobody by this name lives here."
I was confused. Suddenly a door across the alley opened and another woman looked out.

"What does this boy want?"
"He asked about some Sophie."

"Sophie...yes, there was a Jewish family with this girl. The Germans murdered her with her family at the beginning of the occupation." - She said these most terrible news so casually and then without pause moved to a daily routine:

"Ivanovna, potatoes are brought to our vegetable store. I suggest hurrying up, if you want to get some."

"It couldn't be. It's impossible." I screamed.

"Are you fool?" said the second woman impatiently. "Did you hear, they were Jewish? All Jews, who stayed in Odessa, were killed. You don't know? They were afraid to leave their belongings and paid with their lives." Her voice sounded harsh and condemning.
Both women closed their doors and disappeared. A short line: "The Germans murdered her..." almost unnoticeable flashed through in this casual exchange of words. I turned into stone. I felt like something was squeezing my temples. They were Jewish, such a logical reason for murder: they were Jewish. Sophie, probably, in that assimilated society did not know, that she was Jewish and what does it mean. Why is being Jewish, a death sentence even for an innocent child? I can not understand how people could consciously to aim at point blank and shoot at a little girl. How can you kill innocent, defenseless people. I felt like tears were running from my eyes, but I could not hold them.

"What game will we pay?" Sophie's voice distinctly had sounded in my ears. It looked like for a moment I saw her, her wide open, big brown eyes, a little nose and her plump lips. But it was an illusion from my happy past. The alley was empty and only windows indifferently looked at me. She was and no more... She was a little girl and now she was just a little corpse decaying somewhere. I was astonished. I witnessed too many deaths for my age. People were dying from diseases, from hunger or fighting in the battles. My grandfather was murdered by Germans. We got these sad news along with our neighbors whose folks lost their lives in battles. We shared our grief and our wounds healed with time. But now, when the war was over and no bombs falling from the skies, you expect to be happy, to join your friends, and such a shock.

What could be the reason to murder a little girl? I looked around. The sun was shining reflecting in windows glasses. The girls were still playing and nobody even gave a thought that a little girl lived here and she does not live anymore, does not exist anymore. I turned around and left. I walked somewhere even without looking. I could not understand why it was so necessary for the world to kill Sophie. What danger was presented by this little girl with her big, brown eyes for humanity that she needed to be destroyed? Passers-by were looking at me with curiosity. One woman even asked me, why I am crying. But what could I answer?

Could people understand each other? I tried to understand this German soldier or Ukrainian policeman who were aiming their guns at this little scared girl cuddling up to her crying mother and holding an old doll. What were they thinking looking at her big brown eyes, her trembling plump lips? Couldn't her neighbors make an attempt to save her, or they were eagerly waiting to share her family possessions? People... who could understand them? I stopped. Where am I? I found myself on the underpass called the Sabaneev Bridge. Cars and trucks were passing underneath. Life was going on. Suddenly, I felt something sticky in my hand. I open my fist and a lollypop fell on the road, a little red rooster on the gray stone road. A big dark truck rattled above it and the lollypop disappeared without a trace. Like Sophie...

Submitted by Alex Vinokurov
Tutor: Janet Dags

My English Class

Ms. Lark is a good teacher.
I like my class.
I like my English class.
The class on Sunday is good.
My English is not good.

Submitted by Maria Maldonado
Tutor: Lark Underwood

My Beautiful Island

A lot of people ben to Jamaica. But they don't no much about Jamaica. Im going to tell you about beautiful island of Jamaica. Did you know that Jamaica was ruled under British and got independence August 6/1962? Did you know we only ninety miles from Cuba? In Jamaica they have 14 parishes and their capital, is Kingston.

There are 2.8 million people in Jamaica. Our national tree is the blue Mahoe and national bird is the humming bird and Lignum vitae is our national flower. Sport is some thing so popular in Jamaica. There is so much more to know about Jamaica so please visit the Beautiful island of Jamaica.

Submitted by Barrington Watson
Tutor: Julie Tolle
**My Animals Favorite’**

Since I know I have been a lover of animals, especially for a cats and dogs. In my house always there was one dog and one cat. The animals was a yellow cat and white, black, Dalmatian dog. All two was treated with much love and were one part of our lives. I saw grow my dog Cator – so called our dog. It was a beautiful, big and very strong animal. Unfortunately I had to leave our house and gave in adoption and we came not knowing anything about it.

Cator was a dog Dalmatian race. I was filled with white freckles as de movie “The 10 Dalmatians”, It was a beautiful and loving. When anyone that tried enter of my house, thought twice because Cator was awesome. Personally so it wanted me much. To the point that when I retuned of my work, wise and stood a the window and barking strong, that my mom said: Herminia is coming out there and if was true.

Unfortunately I came up with a very serious accident with because I did not know that the house animals soul be prepared when going to get a new member to the home. I think it gives them jealous and dangerous.

When my first grandchild was born, the dog showed immediate angry and we failed to control of the situation. One night the child was crawling around the floor and the dog opened the door, Cator jumped above the boy and bit down so hard that almost kills him, if I had not come at that time, It was a horrible to see my grandson defaced. I was carried to the hospital for attention medical. The grandchild was recovered slowly but he has lesions’ physicals that necessaries varies plastic surgery for majored us appearance.

When he was grew up I had to pay an expensive surgery, I did with pleasure and love. My grandson now is mayor and always gives me much thanks for my attention him.

I had to give my dog for adoption. Cator through his eyes told me that it would repeat has not hurt, but it was my responsibility to provide

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**The Most Fun Thing I Did As a Child**

When I was a girl, I liked to visit my Aunt Lola at her farm. She was an enormous, tender, and loving woman. I never forgot her.

When I had school vacations, she came to my home and took me to the farm.

At that time in Cuba, everyone on the farm woke up early in the morning, because the work was so hard. The farmers needed to start before the sun rose.

I liked to follow my aunt and help her feed all the animals or pick up the eggs.

Often I went with my cousins to walk around the farm. Sometimes we swam in the river and picked fruits from the trees. But our favorite activity was sliding down the hill on a big palm leaf.

Now I think how fortunate I am to have lived my childhood during this time, when parents weren’t so obsessive about protecting the children so much like they are now.

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**My English Class**

I like go to class every Sunday and learn a little bit. I know how to read a little bit. When I go to the Conversation Corner on Tuesday that teacher helps me too.

Submitted by **Jose Maldonado**
Tutor: Lark Underwood

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**Helping Others**

I think that if I know how to read it will make me a better person. And I can do more in life. I would like to help others learn to read.

Submitted by **Everett Andrews**
Tutor: Claire Knezevic

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**Jesus’ Story**

I am Jesus.
I like to make people laugh.
My name means the color of light
And blue like the sky.

Submitted by **Jesus Holland**
Tutor: Debby Loudin
My Journey from Turkey

I came to the Kennedy International Airport in New York after a long journey of about 13 hours from Turkey. I just thought I would see the Statue of Liberty from the aircraft over New York, but unfortunately I could not see it and was disappointed.

Then I came to Tampa after that from New York in the same day. I had some anxiety and fear like everyone new to a foreign country. Fortunately, I was very lucky. My close friend who had lived in America for fifteen years met me and picked me up from the airport. I stayed at his home for 10 days. We found a suitable house for rent. I rented it. Much key information related to living in America was taught to me by friends, for example shopping, traffic rules, security etc.

My country differs from the USA in many ways. Many environmental and social factors are different in my country. An illustration would be climate, plants, weather conditions, culture, language etc. Americans are not tattooed at all like the movies. America is not attractive but seems regular and calm. I am of the opinion that people are rather individual and alone in America.

Relatives and family ties are very important in my country. Public transport vehicles are much more common in Turkey than here. There are many kinds of personal transportation vehicles in my country. I am challenged by language, interaction and communicating with other people in the USA. These are very difficult circumstances for me. I can not talk to other people about my feelings, desires and thoughts. This is a very compelling and difficult situation for me. As soon as possible, I wish to return to my family and my country.

Submitted by Sefa Arlier
Tutor: Sylvia Covington

My Trip of Vacation

I went to cruise 7 nights in Eastern Caribbean when it was on Christmas season. I have not ever been to there and I have not cruised. So I was so excited and interested in this trip.

I packed baggage for my family before I left on my trip three days ago, took a call someone. He said that he want us to change the cruise ship as the same price. The cruise ship that he said is the biggest one in the world. The ship is named “Allure of the Sea”. In addition to adding one day! Fortunately, we had a good chance. I accepted his suggestion immediately. I could not know why he suggested it. Whatever, I felt that it was a Christmas present for us.

The Allure of the Sea was so huge that I was getting hungry after I walked once around ship inside. There were many theaters even though there was ice link. I saw the musical, “Momma Mia”. There was marry – go – round, park. There were pools, bars, restaurants. It looked like a big city in the ship. Especially, I was impressed the park. Just imagine, what a park with trees, flowers in the ship! I didn’t need to care of my children. They joined programs for kids and youth. There was experts who take care of children. They have enjoyed their vacation with their new friends. I and my husband were free!

I arrived the first destination, Nassau in Bahama. We went to the beach to swim and snorkeling. The sea was clean and assume. Second destination was St. Tommas Island, third destination was Martain Island. All places was not only beautiful but also gorgeous. I haven’t seen to touch my mind such as Caribbean cost.

Traveling to cruise in Caribbean is big memorable experience for our family and I will not forget forever. If I have another chance, I will want to go to Alaska in cruise someday.

Submitted by Soojin Shin
Tutor: Erika Levy

Reasons Why My Parents Moved from Their Homeland

My parents wanted a better life for their children. They worked very hard in the fields to provide for their family.

My siblings and I helped my parents cook and clean. We are all grown up now with our own children and we are happy with our parents’ decision to move from their homeland.

Submitted by Jose Rivera
Tutor: Jessie Bush

Faith

Father is the family.
Any faith he has
Is in the way God loves us.
There is bad in the world, but
His heart is forever Love.

Submitted by Silvia Perales
Tutor: Lark Underwood
The Story of Princess Arabah and Prince Zippor

This is a story about a princess that lived in a castle. The castle was beautiful and big. There were beautiful flowers all around the castle. One day Princess Arabah was walking in the garden and saw a man. He was Prince Zippor. Prince Zippor saw the princess Arabah and fell in love with her and started to visit her in the garden every day.

They played and talked to each other and Arabah liked Zippor very much, but she did not like to live in her castle. So when Zippor asked her to marry him, she said yes, but I will marry you when you make me a special house I want for us and for my children. Zippor said yes, I will put my servants to do that immediately.

Arabah said, I do not want your servants doing that, I want you to do it on your own. I will tell you how and where. Zippor got curious about what she said, but princess Arabah said, you will make a house of love and I will be with you my sweet heart. Zippor said, but but...I don't know how to build houses!

She said it will be a special house: first you go to the field and find a big, big trunk. When you find that, come for me and I will see it. Zippor came back and said to her that he found one trunk. She started to jump and scream and kiss Zippor. Let's go see it! She said and they walked through the forest very happy.

The two were a lovely couple, the sun was shining and forest smelled of plants and flowers. Zippor asked Arabah to see the Jamun trunk. She opened her eyes and her mouth and put her hand on her face. Yes, my love we will have that! Now I want you to make a big tunnel in the trunk and inside the tunnel you will make the house of our love.

Zippor got very nervous, but she gave him a kiss and a hug. With much love he began to carve a big tunnel and make the house for his future family. He worked hard for a very long time and finally one day he called the princess to show the lovely house. He held her in his arms and brought her inside the tunnel to show the rooms. She was very happy and they got married and had their first child.

The boy grew up and became nice looking. They came out of the tunnel to play and watch the nice view of the field. Arabah and Zippor had two boys and two girls. They were very happy inside of that special house of love.

Submitted by Marta Ramirez
Tutor: Angelina Mandanici

Why Tutoring is Important to Me

Tutoring is important to me because there a lot of people out there in this world like me that don't know how to read and write even if they have a diploma. Tutoring has help me pronouns words and spell words. And now I know that there a vowel in ever word. All so how to do math a little.

My tutor Ms. Ave Reagor has also help me to read menus even tho it took me from December to May to finish my first book. I am a little bit more confident with my reading and writing and spelling.

From my experes, my tutor help me more than my high school techers. Ms. Ave has been more pashaunt and more understanding with me and for that I thank Ms. Ave from help me because if it wasn't for her I woold not be able to read to my kids. At last the little bit that I know now. And since I started go to tutoring, my kids and I have read time at home on Saturdays.

So I advice people if you need help in writing and reading please get a tutor. They are out there to help you. It don't matter how old you are. it is never to late.

Submitted by Jenice Connors
Tutor: Ave Reagor

A Journey I Took

My family and I went to Mexico on vacation. I bought tour picking. I wanted to see the Mayan Pyramids. I want to know, who built its. It was very exciting. We were in Mexico 10 days. We stayed in a beautiful hotel. There is a big and modern resort. There were a lot of flowers and exotic trees. It was excellent, but the weather was hot and wet.

I traveled with my son and husband. We traveled by airbus. An airbus is a very big airplane. I get a new one. Finally we landed in Mexico. We met friendly people. They were our guides. We took a few short trips. We visited nature parks, saw the Mayan Pyramids, exotic animals and amazing shows. Also we swam in the light blue sea and sunbathed on the beaches of the Mexican Gulf. We enjoyed and relaxed.

I learned a lot of interesting things about the history that country. There I learned snorkeling. Snorkeling is swimming under water in a sea, river and lake. I saw fish. They were different colors and sizes. It was great. We had a wonderful time.

Submitted by Olesya Podolitskaya
Tutor: Erika Levy
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Diane Grey
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