

Story by Story

Introducing a new resource for adults learning to read

Story by Story, a contextual phonics model and curriculum for adults learning to read, was developed for Beginning Literacy/Beginning ABE or ESL levels. This population, with high needs but low skills, often presents great challenges to ABE and ESL teachers and tutors. In addition, students are often greatly challenged by our print-based world and tend to be unemployed or under-employed and lacking in self-esteem, self-confidence, and persistence.

Instructors at LDA Minnesota have spent years serving this population and searching for the right curriculum that blends diagnostic assessment, sequential and systematic phonics instruction, and controlled stories about life and work that adults *want to read*.

Unable to find just the right curriculum, Marn Frank, LDA's Adult Specialist, began to develop stories aligned with a phonetic sequence and a prescriptive, balanced model for reading and spelling instruction. Although her original intended audience was American-born adults, many ESL/ELL teachers and tutors have used *Story by Story* successfully with their foreign-born adults. All users are encouraged to select carefully and/or modify the stories for special populations. ∞



- Includes 118 stories at approximately 0.5-2.5 Grade Equivalent (GE).
- Offers “adult-authentic” contextual practice for the English sound/letter system.
- Aligns with Sylvia Greene’s Informal Word Analysis Inventory (included as Appendix A).
- Provides a prescriptive model where sound/letter knowledge is assessed before placement in the curriculum and during/after instruction to measure progress.
- Combines word study (phonics) with fluency/comprehension activities for balanced literacy instruction.

Research and Practitioner Background

The *Story by Story* model is based on the following research findings from the Adult Reading Components Study (ARCS; 2003). The ARCS is available at www.nifl.gov/readingprofiles:

1. Many low-literacy ABE students have reading skills similar to those of children at risk for reading difficulties.
2. Low-literacy/beginning ABE students need direct, systematic, sequential instruction in phonemic awareness and word recognition skills.
3. All levels of ABE students need to acquire vocabulary and background knowledge.

The curriculum and model also incorporate experience-based, practitioner findings:

1. Word analysis assessment is crucial prior to reading instruction or tutoring.
2. Low-literacy adults often prefer to begin phonics instruction with “real reading.”
3. Low-literacy adults need to both *read and spell* unknown word lists to mastery (90%) in order to truly improve phonological processing.
4. All adults need reading instruction that is a balanced combination of word study and fluency/comprehension of contextual material. ∞

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The Structure of Story by Story

The 118 stories are grouped into phonetic categories with Progress Forms at the beginning of each section for tracking dates of completion.

Level I

Short vowel sounds

Consonant endings/di/trigraphs

Consonant blends

Long vowel-silent e

Level II

Vowel pairs 1

Vowel pairs 2

Silent letters/infrequent spellings

Vowel r and l, soft c and g

Each story has multiple components:

Side One

1. Title
2. Sound pattern
3. Adult-appropriate story for fluency and comprehension activities

Side Two

1. A decodable word list for word study (reading and spelling practice)
2. A sight/survival word list for reading practice only
3. Lines for sentence writing using either decodable or sight/survival words

The 118 stories are followed by three Appendices:

Appendix A: *Sylvia Greene's Informal Word Analysis Inventory*

Appendix B: Spell Check Form for tracking progress (0-100%) in spelling

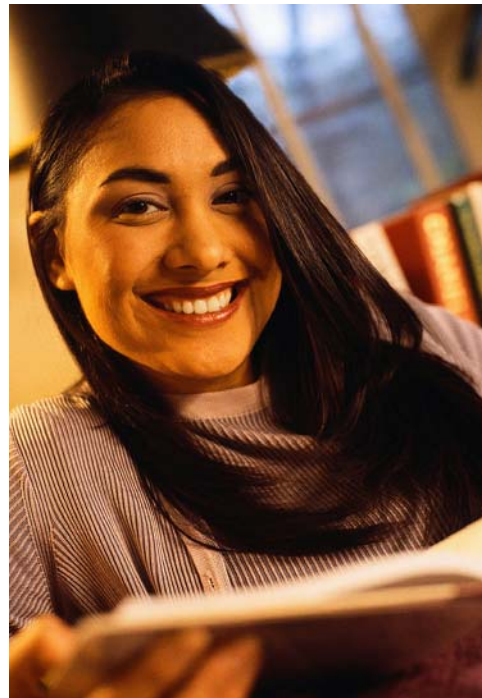
Appendix C: Oral Fluency Score for tracking progress (1-4) in rate, accuracy, and expression

The readability of the stories is between 0.5-2.5 GE.

Level I stories (in accordance with Level I of *Sylvia Greene's Informal Word Analysis Inventory*) are between 50-60 words and at about 0.5-1.5 GE.

Level II stories are between 100-120 words and at about 1.5-2.5 GE.

The readability is an estimate because the stories include controlled word patterns combined with survival/sight words that tend to be longer, but are typically known through repeated exposure (such as Minnesota, family, children, newspaper, etc.). ∞



Sample Stories: Level I

The following four stories provide an example from each Level I phonetic category. The blank is for the student to place a name to make the story more personal.

The Clinic - Short vowel i (as in itch)

If you get sick, you can go to a clinic or hospital. This is what will happen:

- (1) You will fill out papers.
- (2) You will sit in a big room.
- (3) You will sit in a small room.
- (4) A doctor or nurse will check you.
- (5) You may get pills.
- (6) You will get a bill!

A Computer - Digraph ch

_____ and his roommate want a computer. They need to get the right computer. They want to check on their banking. They want to chat with their friends. They want to play chess or checkers online. They go to Best Buy and look at computers. Each has to chip in money to buy the best computer.

Doing the Dishes - Consonant ending nk

_____ looks in the kitchen sink. She looks at the kitchen counter. There are dirty, stinky dishes everywhere! She thinks, "Am I the only one who washes the dishes?" She fills the sink with soap and water. Then she dunks the dirty dishes. She can hear them clink in the sink. One by one, she washes and rinses the dishes. She sets them in the rack to dry. Now there will be clean dishes for food and drink.

Memorial Day - Long a, silent e

In the United States (US), the last Monday in May is Memorial Day. It is a holiday and most people take the day off. It is a time for everyone to remember family and friends who have died. We don't want our memories of them to fade. We visit their graves. We put flowers in vases by their graves. We also take time to honor people who fought in wars. We fly and wave the US flag. We want to remember all they have done for us and our country.

Sample Stories: Level II

The following four stories provide an example from each Level II phonetic category.

A Volcano - Vowel pair ow (as in blow)

What is a volcano? A volcano is tall like a mountain, but much hotter inside. When a volcano gets very hot deep down in the earth, steam and gas will rise from a hole at the top. Then the volcano may blow up. Lava, or melted rock, flows from inside of the volcano down the steep sides. The lava is so hot that it glows red, orange, and yellow. It can move very fast and burn everything in its way. As it cools, it slows down and becomes black and hard. Nothing and no one is safe in the path of hot lava from a volcano.

Teenagers - Vowel pair oo (as in too)

Teenagers or "teens" are young people 13-19 years old. The teen years are a time of big change in a young person's body and brain. All of these changes can be hard to take. Most teens show many moods. Some teens seem sad or gloomy. Some choose to act cool. Other teens choose to act like fools. The teen years can also be hard on parents and the family. What are good tools for Moms and Dads of teens?

- (1) Give teens room to grow and change.
- (2) Know that teens will soon be adults.

Fear of Flying - Silent igh/t

_____ is afraid of flying in airplanes. When she travels, she tries to be brave, but feels a lot of fright during flights. She feels afraid when the plane takes off. She holds tight to the arm rests as the plane goes high in the sky. When the plane is up in the air, slight movements make her feel afraid. She thinks the plane might be going down. She knows this is not right – few planes go down - but she still feels afraid. When _____ flies during the day, she tries to enjoy the sights from the window. When she flies at night, she tries to sleep. She is always glad when the flight is over and the plane is back on the ground!

A Night Walk - Ar

Sometimes _____ can't sleep at night. He is thinking too much about his family, job, money, and all the things he needs to do at work or in his life. When he can't sleep, he gets up and walks to the park. It is not far from his apartment. He walks along the tar path in the dark night. It is very quiet and he feels safe from harm. He looks up at the bright stars twinkling in the black sky. He knows they shine from far away. He stops to think: "I am a small part of a large, wonderful world. Everything will be OK." He walks back home to his apartment, has a glass of milk, and goes right to sleep.

The Contextual Phonics Model of Instruction

The following three steps make up the prescriptive and contextual phonics model developed for the *Story by Story* curriculum

STEP 1

Determine sound/letter knowledge using word analysis assessments (prior to instruction).

Sylvia Greene's Informal Word Analysis Inventory can be administered individually as a reading test or as a group spelling test. Student responses are tracked on a Teacher's Copy for scoring and interpretation. Level I assesses knowledge of short vowel sounds, consonant endings, digraphs (sh, ch, th, wh), trigraphs (tch, dge), consonant blends, and long vowel-silent e; Level II assesses knowledge of vowel combinations, silent consonants, r-controlled vowels, and special or irregular patterns.



STEP 2

Select contextual stories to teach unknown sound patterns (prior to instruction).

According to word analysis assessment, select contextual phonics stories of need and interest from *Story by Story* (not all have to be used). Prepare individual or small group "readers" that include progress forms, selected phonics stories and decodable/sight/survival word lists, additional word lists from *The Adult Reading Toolkit (ART)* – Appendix 2 (as needed), and Spell Check forms (See Appendix B) as another measure of progress.

STEP 3

Provide "balanced" reading instruction/tutoring (60-75 minutes total). Provide a balanced combination of sound/word study and contextual reading/fluency practice. The student may choose to begin each story with word study OR fluency training and comprehension.



A. Sound and/or word study – 30+ minutes: includes direct, systematic, sequential, and multi-sensory practice (hear, see, read, trace, spell, and write) of unknown sound patterns. The teacher or tutor:

1. Describes and pronounces the sound/letter pattern.
2. Models correct pronunciation of the corresponding word list(s).
3. Provides enough oral reading practice until mastery is achieved.
4. Dictates the same list(s) for spelling practice.
5. If necessary, provides additional reading and spelling review with mixed lists.
6. If appropriate, provides extended word study with simple two-syllable forms such as compound words or words with high frequency prefixes and/or suffixes (un-, re-, in-, dis-, -s/es, -ed, -ing, -ly, -er/or).

B. Fluency training and comprehension – 30+ minutes: includes modeling and repeated oral reading of authentic text at or just below the student's reading level. (See Appendix C for an Oral Fluency rubric to determine an Oral Fluency Score as another measure of progress.) The teacher or tutor:

1. Models the use of pre-reading comprehension strategies, such as asking yourself: "What do I already know about _____?" or "What would I like to know about _____?"
2. Models fluent oral reading (reading text with appropriate rate, accuracy, and expression).
3. Provides enough oral reading practice (typically 3-5 times) until automaticity (90%) is achieved.
4. Develops vocabulary knowledge for unknown words.



How to Order

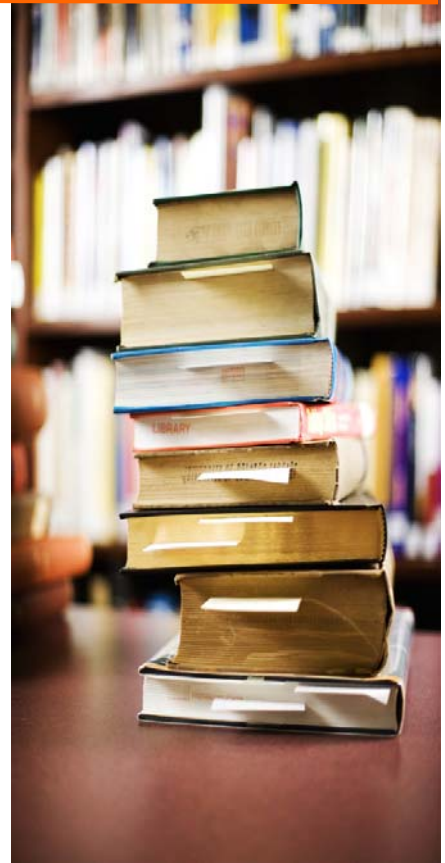
Story by Story is available free of charge to Minnesota ABE Instructors. Please send the following to Larisa Kartyn at lk@ldaminnesota.org

- 1. Your full name**
- 2. Your Minnesota ABE program**
- 3. Your preferred mailing address**

For questions or comments about *Story by Story*, please contact the author, Marn Frank, at mf@ldaminnesota.org. She would enjoy hearing from you.

In addition to print copies, 12 multimedia versions of Level I stories are available online at www.mcedservices.com/phonics/phonics.html. These stories provide illustrated listening/fluency activities along with interactive writing/typing exercises for short vowel and consonant digraph sounds.

Test Bank Available at LDA. The Test Bank contains a variety of informal reading, spelling, and writing assessments available for Minnesota ABE providers. To borrow an assessment or receive a reproducible copy, please contact Larisa at lk@ldaminnesota.org to request an order form.



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Learning Disabilities Association of Minnesota (LDA), Inc. is the state's leading educational non-profit agency helping children, youth, and adults with or at risk for learning disabilities, attention deficits, or other learning difficulties. For more than 40 years, LDA has served people of all ages with learning difficulties so they may lead more productive and fulfilled lives.

Services include diagnostic assessments, consultations, family literacy activities, intensive in-school instruction, transition to post-secondary programming for ages 14-21, parent and professional training, public education, and high-quality educational products. LDA has special expertise in Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and provides workshops, support groups, and free phone consultations for parents of children with ADHD, adults with ADHD, and professionals. ∞

LDA is a supplemental service provider for ABE offering:

- Free assessments for learning disabilities and/or ADHD for ABE students referred by their instructors
- Trainings and consultations for ABE instructors
- Development of resources for ABE instruction

For more information about LDA Assessment Services, contact Wendy Sweeney ws@ldaminnesota.org or call 952.582.6020.

For more information about ABE training and resources, contact Marj Cuthbert mc@ldaminnesota.org or call 952.582.6003.

