

Abner

By Maria Cerrato

This is a true story about my second son. When he was a baby, he was a strong baby. Also, he was an active baby. He had to sleep with us in our bed. One day we had to make a decision about putting him in a cradle. It was when he was 7 months old. One night he crawled out of the cradle, and he came into my bed, but we were sleeping and didn't know. In the middle of the night my husband felt something moving in the bed. He thought it was a snake because he only saw the head and black hair. He told me not to move. He woke up fast and took a hard tube to kill the supposed snake. But when he was ready to kill the snake, I turned the lights on, and I saw that it was my son. I said, "Don't kill him because that is not a snake, it is Abner". I thank God that I thought about turning the lights on.

Background Information

Talk about babies, how curious they are, how they can get into just about anything. Then talk about what it's like to wake up in the middle of the night; how confused you can be and how you can see things that aren't really there. Finally discuss what it feels like to make a mistake.



Questions

1. What was the baby's name?
2. Do you think the parents should have put the baby into a cradle?
3. Use the word active in a sentence.
4. Who first felt something moving in the bed?
5. What does the word crawl mean?
6. How do you think the father felt when he found out that the "snake" was really Abner?
7. How old was Abner?
8. Define the word middle.
9. When did the parents feel something move in the bed?
10. If Maria hadn't turned on the lights, what do you think might have happened?

Other Activities: After reading the story, retell the story to the tutor in your own words and then write a summary of the story in your own words.

My Family

by Cecilia Burke

Most of our family was raised in a village called Snake River, located about 18 miles down river from Fort Nelson. Some of the houses are still standing. They had dog teams at that time to travel to town and back in the winter which often made it difficult to get the things you needed, like grub and some other supplies. In the summertime, they made canoes out of birch bark or spruce bark to go to town, and they would tell someone to help them pull the canoe up river. Eventually most of the families that lived there moved to Old Fort Nelson, where they settled. Finally, Harry Dickie, chief at the time, told them they could move to the Mile 295 Indian Reserve, so that is how I came to live on the reserve. We haven't moved from the Sikanni Road since then.



Background Information

Talk about your past, memories of childhood and/or any moves you made during that time. Also, talk about what you know about the Reserve system and the Aboriginal way of life.

Questions

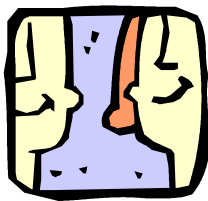
1. What does the word grub mean?
2. How far was Snake River from Fort Nelson?
3. Do you think life in Snake River was hard? Why or why not?
4. What is an Indian Reserve?
5. What is a birch bark canoe made out of?
6. Use the word village in a sentence.
7. What does up river mean?
8. What does the chief do?
9. What do you think it would be like to travel by dog team?
10. These days, do people stay in one place for their whole lives?

Other Activities: After reading the story, write a story about life on a reserve. Maybe the instructor or tutor could bring in some other information about First Nations before beginning this activity.

My Dear Friend

by Ann Brooke

I saw you standing across the room. I wanted to say “Hi”, but my feet wouldn’t move. If only we could remember the good and forget the bad, and if only I could get my feet to move, I would come over and say, “I miss you”.



Background Information

Talk about friendship. What does it mean to be a friend? Have you ever had a fight with a friend? How does it make you feel? Have you ever wanted to apologize but just couldn’t?

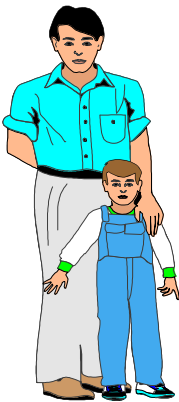
Questions

1. Where did Ann see her friend?
2. What did she want to say?
3. What does the word remember mean?
4. If you had a fight with a friend, how would you remain friends?
5. What is another way to write wouldn’t?
6. Why wouldn’t Ann’s feet move?
7. Why do you think Ann is sorry she fought with her friend?

Message to My Father

by James Aker

It has been a long time since I have thought about you, but going back to a class for the purpose of getting a better understanding about reading and spelling reminds me of the things you used to tell me about getting a better education. I feel that you would be proud of me for trying to improve myself this way; and, who knows where it will go? I may become an engineer of some kind. You always had so much good advice but I did not use it very well. But, lately I have been trying to put more of it in use.



Background Information

Talk about relationships between children and fathers. Talk about your relationship with your father and the instructor or tutor's relationship. Finally, talk about advice and what it's like to get advice when you're a young person.

Questions

1. Who is James talking about in his story?
2. Why does he think of his father?
3. What does engineer mean?
4. What kind of relationship do you think James and his father had?
5. Use the word advice in a sentence.
6. Do you think James' father would be proud of him?
7. What kind of advice do you think his father gave him?
8. Why do you think James didn't use his father's advice?

All About My Life

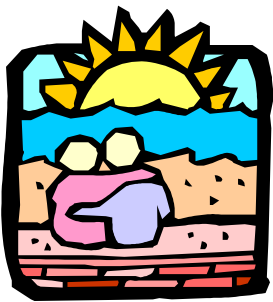
by Sandra Enston

I grew up with my Grandad and Grandma. It was my Grandad's birthday and we bought him lots of presents and he loved it and he was happy. We bought him socks. He loved it.

My Grandad and I went for a walk on the beach. We walked on the docks and we saw a big boat. It was fun. Then we walked back and had a big breakfast.

I miss him very much. He got cancer and died in 1979. It was tough for all of us.

We went out on special occasions like our birthday. We all went to Woodward's for lunch. And we all went to my parent's place and we all had dessert. We relaxed afterwards and we had tea or Coffee. We all had lots of fun.



Background Information

Although many people have lost grandparents early in life, many people have memories of at least one grandparent. Talk about any special memories (or even bad memories). Talk about birthdays and other special occasions and how a loved one might have made them more special. Finally, talk about how you might feel if a special person in your life dies.



Questions

1. Who did Sandra grow up with?
2. Where did she and her grandad go for walks?
3. Use the word dock in a sentence.
4. Did Sandra miss her grandad when he died?
5. Why did her grandad die?
6. Why do you think Sandra's grandad spent time with her?
7. What does the word occasion mean?
8. How did the family celebrate special occasions?
9. What is Woodwards?
10. What else do you do on birthdays besides give presents?

Other Activities: make a list of everything you might find at a child's birthday party (i.e. gifts, cake, etc.) and an adult's party (joke candles, movies, etc.).

Family

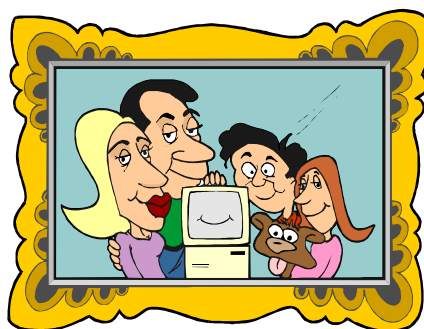
by Harold "Bud" Gaunt

My Parents.

On September, 1944, my mother died of sugar diabetes. She was only 47 and I was only eleven. I didn't know my mother too well, because I was too young to remember her. My Dad said that she was a very strong willed woman. After her death my father brought me up until 1984, when he died of cancer. He was very good to me and I miss him very much. Every so often when I feel depressed I go to the cemetery and talk to him. Then when I get back home I feel better.

Brother.

My brother joined the navy as a leading torpedo man in 1941. He was in many battles but never wounded. After the war he joined B C Hydro as a bus driver. He worked for them for a year, and then he went on the DEW Line for a year. He also laid floor tiles until he got back on Hydro in the punching department in Vancouver. Then he was moved to disposal where he will be until the end of the month when he retires.



My Life.

When I was born in 1933, my mother, father, sister and brother were very happy. I was a very noisy baby. My mother said she would like to throw me away. I lived with my parents for eleven years until my mother died of sugar disease in 1944. My father brought me up for the rest of my life until he died in 1984. Now I live alone.

Dad.

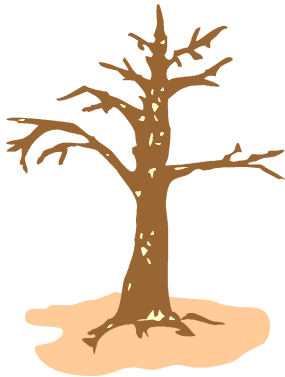
My dad came to Canada in 1925. He landed in Vancouver with nineteen dollars. He came across the country on a freight train. When he got here, he knew no one. He had to count every penny he spent. Finally he got a job with Jack Eckersley as a cement finisher. He worked for him for sixteen years. Then he got a job at MacMillan Bloedel in the boiler room. He worked there from 1941 until 1965 when he had a heart attack and had to quit. He never made it to 25 years. If he had, they would have given him a gold watch.

Sister.

My sister is a very energetic woman. When we first moved here, she worked for Woodward's in the toy department. That was in 1938. Then she worked for C P A during the war as a riveter. After the war she went back to Woodward's part time in the grocery department. Then she became head of special programs until she retired.

Background Information

Everyone's family history is interesting. Discuss your family histories. What type of work do siblings do? Is everyone in the immediate family still living? Also discuss what dreams you had as a child. What type of work did you see yourself doing? How about the rest of your family? Are you proud of your family?



Questions

1. Who raised Bud after his mother died?
2. What does it mean if you are strong willed?
3. Why do you think going to the cemetery and talking to his dead father make Bud feel better?
4. What is a torpedo?
5. How many jobs did Bud's brother work at?
6. Use the word freight in a sentence.
7. Do you think Bud is proud of his family? Why?
8. Why did Bud's sister work as a riveter during the war?
9. What does the word retire mean?
10. Do you think that Bud's life has been easy or hard and why?

Other Activities: write your family story, or make a family tree. A tutor or instructor can help you.

Picnic

by Jill Kristoffersen



Each and every spring and summer my mom, sisters and I would bug my father to take us on a picnic. Every weekend we would hound dad to drive us somewhere, but he wouldn't because he drives a cement truck weekdays and on weekends he just wasn't about to drive anywhere.

One beautiful hot summer morning we were again on Dad's back. "No, No, No," he yelled as he stormed from the room. Feeling rejected we all hung our heads and shuffled to our room. That very afternoon my father's friend, George, came over and the two of them disappeared into the woods at the back of our property. For the next four and a half hours all we heard was hammering, sawing and cracking of wood.

At suppertime, Dad came in with sawdust all over his clothes and face, and a large grin from ear to ear. We asked him, "What are you two doing in the woods"? He replied, "Just cutting us some firewood". All through supper Dad chuckled to himself. The following weekend, Dad and George were out in the woods all day. Hammering and sawing. Sawing and cracking wood.

There were the noises we heard for two days. By the end of Sunday afternoon, we all were getting very suspicious. But no one dared to go out in the woods to see what was going on. Finally, at 4 p m, Dad

came charging out from the woods. He burst into the house with great momentum.

Enthusiastically Dad said, "I want everybody to follow me". Like sheep we followed; out the door, down the stairs and along the path leading to the edge of the woods. We were quite curious by this time as we started walking into the woods. After a short distance we came to a clearing and what a surprise!

The clearing, about fifty feet by fifty feet, now boasted picnic tables, chairs, swings and benches. Dad ran to a nearby tree, jumped in his newly made hammock and roared, "You want a picnic, you got a picnic! Welcome to my park".

Background Information

What did your family like to do for fun? Did you ever go camping or on picnics? Did your dad or mom ever do anything special for you? Talk about surprises. Do you like to be surprised or would you rather do the surprising?

Questions

1. What activity did most of this family like to do together?
2. Do you think dad was mad when he refused to take his family on the picnic?
3. How do you feel if you feel rejected?
4. What makes you think dad enjoyed his surprise?
5. Use the word chuckled in a sentence.
6. Why did dad build the picnic area?
7. What does enthusiastically mean in the story?
8. Who is George?
9. Did the children and mother enjoy their surprise?

Jim Plop

by Jill Kristofferson

My father had always been crazy about crows so one day he decided to get himself one. He went out into the back yard and after some time he found a nest of fledglings. He climbed up a large Douglas Fir to reach the nest where he snatched up a baby crow and stuffed it into his big pocket. When he got home he made this crow a cage which had all the comforts of home: light bulb to keep warm, water to drink and food to eat. After the cage was finished and the crow was in his new home, father called everybody into the laundry room, which was where the cage was kept, to tell everyone that the crow's name was Jim.

As the days and weeks went by, we all watched Jim grow into a large black crow. By this time, he was flying all over the house and outside of the house getting into all kinds of trouble. Jim loved to poke at cigarette packages. If you put your cigarette package down anywhere, Jim would be there in a flash to poke and poke until every cigarette had holes in it. He would also steal everything that was shiny in the house, especially spoons. Then he would hide it outside somewhere, but he always brought back some other piece of junk to replace what he had taken. Sometimes, Jim would dive at you if you had something he wanted. Because Jim had freedom to fly anywhere in the house he would also do his dirty jobs whenever and wherever he liked. That is why we

renamed him Jim Plop.

One Christmas holiday, in the year of 1968, my father had a drink or two too much which we very seldom saw. In the kitchen my father took Jim Plop and put him in the fridge and then put the turkey in the cage. About an hour later we found the bird in the fridge, and boy was he mad. Come spring, Jim flew outside a lot and one day he just didn't come home. We just figured that the call of Mother Nature must have come upon him.

Background Information

Is there one type of animal you really like? Did you have a special pet as a child? Or did you have a very annoying pet as a child? Talk about what pets do for us and what can happen when a pet runs away or dies.



Questions

1. Is it a good idea to take a baby bird out of its nest?
2. How did Father give the crow all the comforts of home?
3. What does the word fledgling mean?
4. Make the word bulb plural.
5. What kind of trouble did Jim get into?
6. Why did father put Jim in the fridge?
7. Would any of Jim's activities make you angry?
8. Why did the children rename Jim?
9. Use the word figured in a sentence.
10. What do you think the call of Mother Nature is?

I Miss You

by Kelly Magnuson

I didn't wake up in that good of a mood this morning; the reason is that I miss my dad a lot. I really need him around right now; I want him to come back but I know that it's not possible. I'll have to solve my problems on my own.

Even though he didn't spend that much time with me, I still miss him, and I love him very much because he'll always be my dad. I realize that he probably did it just because he knew I needed help and he didn't know what to do to help me. I guess he did what he thought he had to do. I want to be mad at him, but I find it very difficult when everyone else says they love their dad, and that makes me wish that I had more time to spend with him.

I know now though that he doesn't have to suffer with it anymore. I just wish that I had more time and that he would have fought it, but as long as he's happy, I guess that's all that matters. It's hard to think that he'll never come back and that I'll never see him anymore. I'm trying to get over it, but it's going to take a little bit more time. I guess that when you lose someone you love, you never get over it. I'll just try to get over it the best I can, but I know I'll never forget him. The end.

Background Information

Talk about how you feel when you lose a loved one. Talk about your own experiences when a special person in your life leaves or passes away. Talk about how hard it can be to do something you know will hurt someone you love even though you know it's for his or her own good.

Questions

1. What do you think happened to Kelly's dad?
2. Does Kelly understand why her dad left?
3. What does the word realize mean?
4. Is Kelly angry with her father?
5. What do you think Kelly means when she says, "he doesn't have to suffer with it anymore."?
6. Use the word suffer in a sentence.
7. Do you think Kelly has accepted the loss of her father?
8. Will Kelly's dad ever come back?
9. What does he's mean?
10. Why won't Kelly forget her father?



Pipeline

by Jack Hutchison

Well, I don't know what to write about tonight, so I'll just put down whatever comes out.

You know I don't understand if a person can't spell well and has a hard time to remember how he can pick up spelling.

From the first day I started school I had problems. I can't even sound out a word.

When I first started school I couldn't speak. It was hard in school because kids and sometimes even my teacher would make fun out of me. I could finally say my last name when I was around 10 or 11 years old. I had seven major operations on my mouth when I was young to try to help me be able to speak and also to help me look better than what I was born like.

When I was young and in school I never was able to get to have friends because we used to move on the average of 35 to 40 times in one year. We used to live by the pipeline and move along with it. It always seemed I would just be starting something in a school and there we would be moved again. I even had a hard time to try to learn my alphabet.

A lot of times my mom would be my teacher, and when she was, all hell would break loose. If I couldn't do something I wouldn't get help, but a real good beating. I remember one time I was about six years old and she left me alone in a log cabin in the bush while she went out



somewhere. When she came back I was hidden under a bed because a bear came in the cabin and it scared me half to death. When she found me she was very angry at me for being under the bed, so she took this butcher knife out and put my hand down and cut all my fingers for being bad and hiding.

I left home when I was 12 years old. I lived on a farm in Ontario and I worked for my room and board. A few times I tried to go to school and learn but I found it very hard to do.

When I was about 14 years old I became very sick and one night I went into a coma; I was in the hospital 3 to 4 months before I came to and I found I lost so much of my memory.

I guess it was just about 8 to 12 months before I could walk again on my own.

The night before this happened I was at my mom's house and I fell to the floor. That's when I went into a coma. My sister was there at the time with her boyfriend and told my mom that she should take me into the hospital, but my mom said, "no", that I would be alright. Finally my sister got mad at my mom and told her that if she wouldn't take me in, that she and her boyfriend would. When I got to the hospital the doctor said I would have died right away if the poison in my brain broke, and he told my family I would have died in about 20 minutes time if I wasn't brought in.

But you know all the hurt and hate to me is water under the bridge. I forgive my family for any reasons they had in the past. I guess I can still say I love my family.

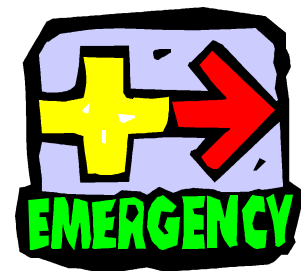
Background Information

Talk about school experiences, good and bad. Was learning easy for you or hard? Also, discuss what it would be like for a family to move around a lot; how it would make family life difficult. Finally, talk about child abuse and how this can affect a child.

Other Activities: Write a descriptive paragraph about the hospital. Include things like smells, sights, feelings.

Questions

1. Why did the children make fun of Jack?
2. How many operations did Jack have on his mouth?
3. What does the word average mean as it is used in the story?
4. Why do you think Jack's mother acted the way she did?
5. How old was Jack when he left home?
6. Change the word left to the present tense.
7. What does the word coma mean?
8. How long was Jack in a coma when he was in the hospital?
9. Why do you think Jack's mother didn't want to take Jack to the hospital?
10. Was Jack able to forgive his family?



My Friend

by Sonia Bartek

Since my husband started his own business he spends all of his time and energy at work. When he comes home, he is very tired. He wants to only eat and watch TV or go to bed and sleep. All of our communication has broken down because he prefers quiet when he is at home. I try to understand him and make the best of it. I make good dinners, but he eats with little appetite. Sometimes, after dinner I ask my husband trick questions. For example: "How did you like the spaghetti today"? He replied "It was very delicious, Sweetheart". We had potatoes for supper.

In the beginning I accepted this kind of response with humour, but when I found out that he was going to continue working without rest I began to get nervous. I started thinking to myself. What would life be like if I didn't have a husband? Because I have only a robot. I wished to explain my feelings to someone. I thought about who would be the right person to tell of my broken heart. I decided that the best person would be my mother in law. She lived very far from us in Europe and I very much wanted to explain to her what life with her son was like. I knew that she thought very highly of her son like most mothers are inclined to do. I felt that she was probably thinking how lucky I was to be married to her son. I wanted to explain my position in Canada in a very delicate way, but I also wanted to make her angry because I was very

angry. I started my stupid letter like this:

Dear Mother:

How are you? What is new at home. I am sorry that we haven't written you in a long time. Your son is working all day and all night like a slave. He doesn't have any time to write. When he comes home, he is so tired that he does not recognize what he has had for supper. I have tried to change him, but I have found out that it is impossible. He is not enough life for me and I have decided to try some other arrangement.

Now I have a friend who cares for me and I no longer feel as lonely. My friend is very gentle and intelligent and he especially appreciates my attention. I wish and hope that you will understand. He loves me very much and gives me more attention than my husband. We are going together to the park or the forest. Without my friend I would be afraid to go. Your son found out about our friendship recently. Now he is jealous. Before this happened my friend was a friend to both of us, but not anymore. One day for some small reason my husband took a two by four and chased after my friend. My friend ran to me for safety. I gave him a hug and said to my husband, "If you want to spank him, spank me too". He didn't come after either of us. After this, there is a big difference between my husband and my friend.

I enjoy watching my friend eat. He has such a good appetite. For me, it is a great satisfaction to know that he loves my kitchen. That's about it for our life. And what do I plan to do about this letter? Nothing. Don't be worried. I don't want to change anything in my life. My husband will be staying at his position and my friend will continue being my friend. He is not working, my friend is younger than me and not of my race. He is black and much too hairy. I am thinking beyond this day. I know that it is not possible to live on love alone regardless of one's feelings of the heart; money is also a part of life. The fact is that my friend is a dog. His name is Adar and he is a German Shepherd.



Background Information

Talk about what it feels like when you do something nice for someone and they're too busy to notice. Then talk about what it feels like to be ignored. You can also discuss what it's like to start a new business - how much time you need to spend. Finally, talk about letter writing - how it can make you feel better if you're upset and how you can write about something and make it sound like something else.



Questions

1. Why is Sonia's husband tired when he comes home?
2. Make the word communication into an action word.
3. What trick question did Sonia ask her husband?
4. Why did Sonia choose to write a letter to her mother-in-law?
5. What does the word inclined mean?
6. What other arrangement does Sonia mean in her letter?
7. Use the word jealous in a sentence.
8. Why do you think Sonia's husband is working so hard?
9. What is another word for money?
10. Who is Sonia's friend?

Other Activities: Write a letter to a friend. You can make it a friendly letter, or try to write about something and make it sound like something else (like Sonia's friend).