

Beginning to Learn



DID YOU HEAR ABOUT SAID?

Many verbs are used today to take the place of “said”.
The word is out, you know; they say that “said” is dead.

The verbs are used in many ways depending on their need.
Descriptive words are used to carry out this deed.

Here are some examples to show you what I mean.
These verbs are more expressive; they surely can be seen.

Instead of “said,” he “groaned”
Or is it that he “moaned”?

Replace the “said” with “bragged”
Or would you say he “nagged”?

Do you think he “grumbled”
When he really “mumbled”?

Or do you think he “bickered”
When he really “snickered”?

You can substitute with “shouted”
Or use a word like “pouted.”

“Recommended, refuted, retorted, or joked,
Testified, taunted, mentioned, or spoke.”

“Bantered, bellowed, babbled, or stuttered,
Cackled, giggled, laughed, or muttered.”

Now you know that “said” is dead.
Many words can be used instead.

~ Carol R. Rudder

WINTER CLASSES

My body shivers as I feel the cold
My tightened lips grow chapped and old
My mouth puffs smoke as a dragon will
My bright red cheeks start to glow
My fingers numb from the chill
My feet trudge determinedly through the snow
My mind tells me
To GED class I must go

~ Group of Great Oaks Students:

Victor Ankiambom

Blake Phillips

Melissa Randolph

Kathy Romans

Najia Salmi

Delores Smith

Rouhki Sylla

Rawan Zarour

PEOPLE ON WELFARE ARE LAZY

I'm on welfare.

You say and assume I'm lazy.

Did you know my first job was selling a tray of jewelry door to door at the age of fifteen?

Did you know I worked and paid taxes for almost 20 years before I had the need for assistance?

Did you know I'm the single mom of four?

Did you know I'm a football mom, a 4-H volunteer, a music booster, a children's church leader, and a clothes closet coordinator?

Did you know that I stayed working when my doctor said not to?

Did you know I found employment without a high school diploma?

Did you know I'm currently getting my GED, attending CASA classes, and planning on college?

Did you know my home is clean, my children are fed, and their clothes are clean?

Did you know my children are in church plays, the two oldest are high school grads, and the oldest was the valedictorian?

Did you know I drive 56 miles a day five days a week to give my children a good education and a fighting chance at a good future?

Did you know I receive no child support and work with only \$500 a month, which is going to drop to \$340 a month?

Did you know that with this assistance I pay my bills (including car insurance), have to manage gasoline all month, and still find a way to afford simple basic needs such as toilet paper and soap?

Did you know I've sewn everything from church play costumes to my girls' prom dresses to wedding dresses?

Did you know I make grave blankets for my beloved family members who have passed?

Did you know that I'm disabled and currently unemployable?

You assume I'm lazy because I receive welfare
Only because you don't know.

~ Debora L. Sellers

NO MORE EXCUSES

I was in my senior year of high school when I got pregnant with my first child. So I dropped out of school. I tried going back a couple of times to finish, but there was always some excuse for me to quit.

When I was twenty-six, I met my soul-mate. He tried to encourage me to go back to school and get my GED. Again, I got pregnant. There's my excuse, but I really didn't have one, because he was always there for me. My next excuse was because I had to work. I've been working dead-end jobs for the last twenty plus years.

My soul-mate (now my husband) never let up on me about going back to school. Both my children have graduated from high school. My oldest has an associate degree in business administration, and my youngest has enrolled in college for nursing. Once again, my husband said, "The kids are grown. Now what's your excuse?"

I'm now working two part-time jobs and attending GED classes. I hope to be enrolled in college within the next six to nine months. If you have family support, go for it. I'm so glad my husband didn't give up on me. With God, my family, and prayer, I know I can do it. NO MORE EXCUSES!

~ Althea Mitchem

I AM...

I am a student in the ABLE class.
I wonder how much I'll achieve.
I hear the teacher loud and clear.
I see everybody growing in their education.
I want to be successful.
I am a student in the ABLE class.

I pretend I understand when I don't.
I feel overwhelmed at times.
I touch my pencil; I'm ready to excel.
I worry about running out of time.
I cry out with joy when I get the right answer.
I am a student in the ABLE class.

I understand my teacher because she's passionate with her
work.

I say, "I can do it!"
I dream of my success.
I try something new everyday.
I hope I can be successful.
I am a student in the ABLE class.

~ Group of Students from Live Oaks:
Rose M. Buckner
Michaela Gill
Pankaj Patel

I AM...

I am a teacher in the ABLE program.
I wonder how my students are progressing.
I hear the questions the students ask.
I see various expressions on their faces.
I want to see students succeed.
I am a teacher in the ABLE program.

I pretend that I'm getting the point across to them.
I feel what they are feeling.
I touch their hearts as they touch mine.
I worry if I'm going too fast.
I cry when they are struggling.
I am a teacher in the ABLE program.

I understand the students are doing their best.
I say, "You can do it!"
I dream of them achieving their goals.
I try to do my level best.
I hope I have given them as much as they have given me.
I am a teacher in the ABLE program.

~ Group of Students from Live Oaks:
Rose M. Buckner
Marie Davis
Debra Smith

CONNECT AND PASS IT ON Where Roots Come From

Looking back at my childhood, my spiritual and life experiences molded a human being to draw on innovation and creativity to succeed in spite of the odds. At age 8, I wanted to be a doctor. I received a doctor's kit for Christmas. My mother allowed me to see that I could dream, and I knew that my elders believed in me when I received the Christmas gift. I began to expand my imagination and innovative approach to building and making things like racing carts, skate scooters, and sleds. My perfection and talent allowed me to take pride in building the best pair of skates in the neighborhood.

Even the way I approached my chore of collecting coal and wood for the burning furnace – I came up with yet another idea to create and produce a wooden chute with legs that would go from the window to the coal bin. I learned to “think outside the box” and be efficient with time and skills to benefit not only myself but also the entire family. Once again I shared my idea with my grandfather, an elder, who was pleased with my creative way of thinking and knowing how to implement the plan to make it come to fruition. As I became a teenager, I worked at a Chinese restaurant after school to buy my own clothes. As a male, my elders provided me the direction to take care of myself with pride. By the time I turned 14, it was inevitable that my skills, growth in innovation and creativity, and my elder roots created an opportunity for me to utilize my size to have the railroad supervisors believe that I was not 14 but 21. To guarantee this, I used coal to make a fake mustache. Clearly, I had aspirations to always seize the opportunities presented for personal growth and spiritual growth. When I turned 16, I signed up to go into the Army although the legal age was 18. My parents signed for me to have permission to enter the

Army early. However, my life was about to take an unexpected turn.

The very day I was supposed to leave for the Army, Anna's grandmother found that Anna was pregnant. A Judge told me I could spend 3 years in jail or marry Anna and give the baby a name. I married Anna in September and by December, our son, Curtis, was born. I quit school and got a job at International Harvester. I continued my commitment to complete school and started correspondence school for auto mechanics. Again, I dropped out of school and took on two jobs to support my family. Decades later, in Chicago, I started a General Education Diploma program to continue my aspiration of completing my education. I also worked for the food service industry as I went to Washburn Trade School. My school schedule was late in the day that ended at midnight and work was in the mornings. In hindsight, I think I would have become an engineer if I stayed consistent with completing my education. I loved taking on a variety of jobs.

Currently I look at my life at almost the age of 70, and I still have been creative and innovative in utilizing the ultimate strength that was passed on to me from my elders. My integrity and keeping my word for myself has allowed me to complete my G.E.D. this fall. I believe that my spiritual innovation to think outside the box has been passed down to my granddaughter, who has accomplished 3 college degrees. In her, I see the dreams and aspirations coming full circle of accomplishing the wisdom and knowledge that every person dreams of having in their lifetime. Ironically, I am completing my G.E.D. the very same year this grandchild will complete her third college degree. The connection of passing it on has taught me that elders' spirits and intention live on in all generations. This even allows for a younger generation to inspire me, an elder, to complete and fulfill dreams.

I feel and know I am a blessed man with a beautiful family that is spiritually powerful to transform generations to come. The pride of passing on traditions of the spirit and love to one another allows my spirit and wisdom to feel and say "well done." I am forever grateful to see dreams come full circle and to fruition in my lifetime. Elders, and present and future generations, have a connection to inspire the human spirit.

~ *Curtis E. Davis Sr.*

THE ART OF WRITING A LOVE LETTER

Amor's arrow, the Roman God of Love, finally got you. It hit you right in your heart – you're in love! Nearly everybody knows this feeling, the beautiful and exciting feeling of butterflies that fly around in your stomach. You're in 7th heaven. There's only one problem: how am I going to tell the one I love that I've fallen in love with him or her?

There are many ways to confess your feelings. A very personal, but still distance-keeping way, is writing a love letter. All you have to do is write down your thoughts and feelings and mail the letter to the person you love. But that is easier said than done! Before you send the letter on its journey, you have a lot to do.

Which one of us hasn't sat in front of an empty sheet of paper, trying to fill it with emotional and capturing words? I have to admit not everyone is a "pro" at writing a love letter; not everyone has the last name Shakespeare. You become frightened of sounding stupid or not being taken seriously. There is this fear of being disappointed and embarrassing yourself.

One of the biggest fears is possibly that your feelings won't be reciprocated. Of course, there is the possibility that all the effort you brought into this letter won't bring the wished success. But you shouldn't be discouraged by that. There are no professionals when it comes to feelings and love. The more you try to make it perfect, the more it will sound forced and wrong. Let your heart lead your hand. Don't be afraid to write down what you're feeling. Translating affection into words can often be very difficult. Sometimes you might be frightened seeing your own feelings written down on a sheet of paper. But even if it seems threatening to you to open your heart, it's also important to

take risks to gain security – the security of knowing whether or not the person you love feels the same way about you.

The result of your effort doesn't matter; you relieved yourself. You wrote down your feelings. Nobody can give you a warranty for being successful with your love letter. Also, nobody can force you to send your letter. It's your decision if and when your letter arrives at its destination. You're still in power over the truth about your feelings.

At the end, we come to the conclusion that it's not art to write a love letter; it's art to actually send it to its destination – the person you love!

~ Jasmin Palasz

I AM...

I am a curious woman.
I wonder what is beyond our world.
I hear suspicious noises.
I see things I can't explain.
I want to learn about the unexplainable.
I am a curious woman.

I pretend that I am part of what's "out there."
I feel like I'm in heaven.
I touch the clouds.
I worry that I'm going to fall from space.
I cry out for help.
I am a curious woman.

I understand this might not be believable.
I say, "I wish people would listen to me."
I dream about life in outer space.
I try to do research.
I hope my research will be successful.
I am a curious woman.

~ *Students from Live Oaks:*
Sein Han Cozad
Melissa Jones

IN THE MAKING

What makes a poem?
Is it a sentence with rhyming words?
A set of stanzas?
Then what makes a poem absurd?

What makes a poet?
A person who shows their feelings through their writing?
A person with meaning and depth,
A person whose life they're still fighting?

What makes a judge?
Telling you what's art and what's not,
Making the decision that you're good enough,
When you're doing just what you were taught.

~ Tyeasha Bradford

HOLLYHOOD
(Eclectic Limerick Poetry)

Close your eyes and visualize, journey through my eyes.
Don't be surprised if vivid images leave you
hypnotized.

But in the meantime and in between time, just relax your
mind.
As my sounds of word play leave your thoughts
entwined.

Take a stroll with me, through "HollyHood" U.S.A.
No need to be nervous, it's just another day.

But in the beautiful land of "HollyHood" U.S.A.,
You'll find that we do things a different way.

In "HollyHood" there are entrepreneurs that work 9 to 5,
the *other* 9 to 5.
Up all night, hustling to get their cheese (money) on
a mission to survive.

Instead of country clubs and golf slacks,
We enjoy juke joints and big rims (wheels) on
Cadillacs.

Corporate America may call this life a hypothesis.
They may consider "HollyHood" a philosophy,

But I consider "HollyHood" a vision of reality.....
.....Peace (an interjection meaning goodbye).

~ Reggie Sanders

