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# LIFE'S LITERACY LESSONS

*Stories and Poems for Teachers*

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## Foundation Year 2.0

Follow responsibility list:

Hang up backpack

Put take-home folder on top shelf

Put on name badge

Take name card out of pocket chart and put in blue box

Put any mail on Mrs Feffenhoffer's desk

Make lunch choice

Answer the Question of the Day by using the graph

Put stop-light on green

Shop for ten books

Look at books with book buddy

Have Circle Time/Morning Meeting

Check on stop-light – still green

Do alphabet aerobics

Check on stop-light – still green

Discover Letter of the Day – *K*

Listen to a story about the letter *K*

Check on stop-light – still green

Find something in the book that starts with the letter *K*

Circle *K* pictures on the smartboard

Create a four-page brochure on the letter *K*

Check on stop-light – still green

Draw *K* pictures on each page of brochure

Try to write *K* words under each *K* picture

Double-check that cover of brochure has a big *K* on it

If finished with brochure early, complete letter search page

hunting for large and small letter *Ks* amongst many other

letters that are *not* large and small letter *Ks*

Eat snack

A Poem Written Exclusively for  
the Immense Pleasure of Those  
(Proud but Few) Who, 25 to 30  
Years Ago, Had a Reading Exercise  
in Their Year-One Classrooms  
and Were Overachievers

Life's crowning moment:  
Arrival at *aqua*.



*I loved year one. My teacher, Mrs Porter, has always been a favourite – she even came to my wedding! My fondest memory is of our reading exercise and of being the first one in the class to make it all the way to aqua, which was the final colour. I've since befriended several other "aquas".*

## “I’ve Got a Semicolon, and I’m Not Afraid to Use It!”

My wife, my mother and a handful of very close friends could all attest that I am rarely heard to utter the sentence, “I am impressed.” It’s not that I’m some kind of pessimist; quite the contrary, hope springs eternal with me. The world at large, however, dashes my hopes more often than I’d like to admit. I have all kinds of wild expectations that keep me from being impressed. I want politicians to tell the truth the first time, I want the drive-through people to put the food I paid for in the bag they hand me, I want the person who said, “I’ll call you back with that information this afternoon,” to call me back with that information – before my death! I suppose, if I am honest, I think the bar is “set a little low” just about everywhere, making it terribly hard for me to feel impressed. And when I’m not impressed, I never pretend to be. It’s a rule I adhere to without exception.

A good friend asked the other day, “What impresses you, Steven, really?” And without blinking I responded, “People who use semicolons correctly.” I hadn’t even realised that was going to come out of my mouth, but there it was. Sometimes it’s great fun when you surprise yourself. Upon reflection, I’m not one bit sorry I said it. In fact, I will now add to that statement that if you know what a conjunctive adverb is and how to use it correctly (hint: a semicolon *is* involved), I might remove someone from my Five Favourite Friends list and use you as a replacement. Of course, at the crux of this entire matter is my deep concern that we may have an entire generation of young people who don’t know how to write; in other words, (guess what grammatical construct I *just used back there?*) they don’t have any decent command of written English. I realise that it is entirely unfair to lump an entire generation together; it could be that there are a great many who will go on to

## Literature Circles

Circles of literature  
Literature loops  
Just pass out the books  
And we'll get into groups

'Cause once my group's seated  
We start to converse  
And in no time we're quoting  
Both chapter and verse

From a book we *enjoy*  
And we *get it* no less!  
We're in charge of our reading –  
No need to get stressed

Let's keep the lit circles  
And try them once more  
These types of discussions  
Are what reading's for!



*My primary and middle-years students always loved the chance to talk about books. Having “jobs” to do was a drag, they'd tell me, but when we tried lit circles without any tasks the students generally came back and asked for some “roles” and paperwork to help guide their discussion. Perhaps they were a bit young, in some cases, to manage the discussion with no framework at all. Still, when they wanted to try it without the jobs and the paperwork, I always said, “Go for it!”*