

To the Teacher

Welcome to *Finding Family*, a reading and vocabulary text for adult learners of English. Each of the 25 chapters contains a story based on the real-life experiences of immigrant students. The activities that follow each story are designed to:

- help students become engaged, thoughtful, and confident readers
- improve reading competency and fluency
- motivate students to want to read more
- increase vocabulary
- promote lively classroom discussions
- provide models for writing
- assist in building a supportive and engaged learning community.

At the core of the book is a cycle of 25 linked journal entries written by six fictional students in a group in an ESL writing class in Yuma, Arizona. Their teacher, Veronica Garcia, is also an immigrant.

During the course of the book, the students and Veronica all share their challenges and successes. They write about leaving home, war, separation from family, adjusting to a new culture, depression, finding jobs, making new friends, falling in love, and finding new family. These are stories of resilience and surprising twists of fate, of working hard and finding help where you least expect it.

Organization

Preview

The preview provides students an opportunity to get acquainted with their classmates and with the characters in the book

Parts 1-4

- Each part contains six or seven chapters.
- Each part opens with a letter from the teacher of the class, Veronica. In Part 1, this letter serves as the reading for Chapter 1. It is Veronica's initial letter to her class.
- Parts 2, 3, and 4 open with a Letter from Veronica, but these letters serve as the introduction to the part, rather than as a core reading within a chapter. Reading these letters aloud as a class will re-orient students to the flow of the entries and will provide clues as to where the stories are going. Use them to help make sure students are following the events in the book.

- Each part includes a final Checklist to help make students aware of their efforts, their approaches to learning, and their progress.
- Each part ends with a review (described on pages x–xi in Connecting the Chapters.)

Appendixes

- Reflecting on the Story
- Note Taking: Remembering the People and the Stories
- Preview of Words by Chapter
- Common Irregular Verbs

Navigating the Chapters

Vocabulary Preview

To begin each chapter, six vocabulary words are previewed. These words are vocabulary that your students may already be familiar with, which increases the chances that students will be successful making connections between words and/or using the words to make a few predictions about the journal entries. Adult Education classes usually involve a range of students. Although most words are “common” or may be perceived as “easy,” a few higher-level words have been included to challenge more advanced students.

Approaches to previewing include:

- **Read and repeat.** Say the words, and ask students to repeat them.
- **Students teach a word.** Ask students to explain any words they know or give examples of the word in a sentence. Call on volunteers, or write the words on the board and invite a few students come up and put their initials by words they know. Ask students who know the words to explain them to students who don’t.
- **Briefly explain.** Explain words the students don’t know. Consider giving examples, sketching, miming, or offering quick translations.
- **Talk about the illustration.** Whenever possible, relate words to the illustration that appears just above them on the page. Either invite students to try to use words to talk about the illustration, or describe the illustration using the words, to build context for both the words and the journal entry.

Before We Read

Encourage students to talk about the illustration and the title. Prompt them to recall and/or predict information, and to link their personal experience with what they will read.

Scanning

Ask students to look for the answer to the question, write an answer, and then compare their answers.

Journal Entry

The journal entry is the core of each chapter. Approaches to reading it include:

- **Read it aloud.** Ask your students to read along silently.
- **Students read it aloud.** Ask individuals to read paragraphs either for the whole class or in groups.
- **Students read it silently.**
- **Students read it at home.** Encourage them to read without a dictionary the first time.

Help students guess the meanings of unfamiliar words from context, whenever possible. Encourage students to ask questions when they do not understand something.

What Happened?

This is a comprehension activity so it's important to give students time to think and write. Guide them back to appropriate places in the journal entries for answers when necessary. Ask students to discuss their answers using one of the interaction routines on page xii.

Think about It

This activity requires students to make and discuss inferences. Allow sufficient time for students to think. Encourage them to write notes, draw pictures, or chat with partners.

My Experiences

In this discussion activity, students recall the story together and relate incidents and themes from the journal entries to their own experiences. Teach the phrase, "I'd rather not talk about that" and the lighter, "I pass," and give them the option to pass if they wish. They should always be able to choose which questions and topics they want to discuss.

After discussion, ask students to choose a topic from My Experiences to write about in their journals. If your students have little time for homework, give them time in class to write—or at least begin—their journal entries.

Vocabulary—Working with Words

Students deepen their understanding of new words and begin using them. Fill in the Blanks, Word Families, Do I Know These Words? and Categories are exercises that allow students to manipulate and recycle the target vocabulary. You may find it beneficial to have volunteers model one or two items and/or to ask pairs to compare their answers.

Making the Words My Own

These activities take vocabulary learning a step further. Students master new words and use them in personal contexts. Exercise types include Vocabulary Cards, Vocabulary House, Vocabulary Challenge, Finish the Sentence and Use and Remember. These activities will “stretch” students. Encourage all attempts, and help students understand that their “mistakes” are chances to identify where they need help.

Connecting the Chapters

A Letter from Veronica

Veronica, the teacher, writes a brief note to her students at the beginning of each new part and at the end of the book. Her letters will re-orient your students to the flow of the stories and will provide a few details about where the stories are going. They serve as mini-reviews, which can help students in open-enrollment classes catch up.

Veronica’s notes are not full chapters; we suggest you simply read them aloud with your students, using them to check to make sure that your students are following the events in the book.

Part Checklist

The final chapter in each part ends with a checklist of some study skills and habits. This is intended to help students become better language learners by making them aware of their efforts, their approaches to learning, and their successes.

Guiding Principles

Finding Family builds a sense of community. Students support each other in their learning and have fun together. When students want to come to class, attendance and student retention improve!

Readings

- are stories because theme, plot, and character engage students, and increase the likelihood that they will remember language they encounter.
- are in journal format to suggest the truth: they are based on the authentic experiences of immigrants to the U.S.—experiences that students can relate to. The journal format also serves as a model for students in their own journal writing.
- are authentic, providing rich opportunities for discussion and writing.

Activities

- are designed to allow students to succeed at their own level of competence in multi-level classes.
- are student-centered, providing the teacher time to observe, coach, think, and breathe while students work.
- provide a context for students to recognize and appreciate the value of their own life experiences
- build community by fostering the sharing of experiences and information among classmates
- create a safe place where students can be active yet need not be in the spotlight.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary is vital for language learning. Students are justly proud when they can remember and use new words. Vocabulary Preview words have been carefully selected with the needs and competencies of Adult Education students in mind. Most are among the most frequently used words in English; some are academic words used across disciplines.

Each chapter of *Finding Family* supports students in three stages of vocabulary learning reflected in Vocabulary Preview, Working with Words, and Making the Words My Own. Our aim is to help students not only learn new words but keep the words they learn. We hope that this sequence of strategies for vocabulary learning will boost your students' success and confidence, increasing their motivation.

Journal Writing

- supports all the other skills: it gives students a head start in thinking about topics they may speak about; it can be used to explore ideas before, during, and after reading; and it's good holistic practice with grammar and vocabulary.
- builds pride and self-confidence because students see their own improvement as writers over time.
- builds classroom community when selected entries are shared in class (as is the case of Veronica's students in the book).
- encourages self-discovery, self-revelation, and self-expression. When people write informally, they often tell more about themselves and in more interesting ways than they do when they speak or engage in more formal types of writing. Teachers who include journaling often find that they are enjoying their students more than ever.

Interaction Routines

When students are actively engaged and interacting, they learn more and remember more. They also have more fun!

Activities work best when you use routines that promote student interaction. Most of the activities in *Finding Family* are pair or group work, but students can also do them on their own. For example, you might try first letting students do an activity on their own, then share ideas with a partner, and finally bring their suggestions to a group or to the whole class. Many activities can also be done as whole-class mingles.

Here are some Interaction Routines that you can use with activities in *Finding Family*.

- **Pair Share.** Before speaking or writing, students in pairs talk and listen to each other. Partners raise their hands together when they have both practiced their answer.
- **Mingle.** Students stand up. They approach one classmate at a time and talk about the assigned topic. After they have talked to a few classmates, they return to their seats.
- **Small Group Work.** Sitting in small groups, students talk and listen to each other.
- **Write Before You Speak.** Students get ready to speak by writing—or drawing—some ideas first. Then they talk with classmates.
- **Exercise Correction Routine.** In pairs or trios, students compare the work they have done. They raise their hands if they can't agree or need help.

Two Final Notes

1. Our students have rich and varied lives. We believe in giving them opportunities to discuss their own experiences **when and if they choose**. Some topics that may be sensitive for some students are the very ones that other students most enjoy discussing. Make clear to your students that in this class they go only as far into their personal lives as they choose to. Always give them the option to pass.
2. In many exercises, more than one good answer is possible. This is by design. Encourage discussion!

Online Resources

Teachers will find additional activities online at www.press.umich.edu/esl/tm/. All can be printed and copied to supplement this book.