

***BC Reads: Adult Literacy Fundamental English -  
Reader 1***

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Shantel Ivits

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# About the Book

*BC Reads: Adult Literacy Fundamental English – Reader 1* was created by Shantel Ivits. This creation is a part of the [B.C. Open Textbook project](#).

The B.C. Open Textbook project began in 2012 with the goal of making post-secondary education in British Columbia more accessible by reducing student cost through the use of openly licensed textbooks. The B.C. Open Textbook project is administered by BCcampus and funded by the British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education.

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If you are an instructor who is using this book for a course, [please let us know](#).

## Acknowledgments

These books were developed on the unceded territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations. Huy tseep q'u! Chen kw'enmántumiyap! Kw'as hoy!

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A special thank you to my partner, Marria, for always lending my words an eager ear, and for keeping the world around me turning even though my head was perpetually stuck in these books.

# Notes to the Instructor

I have often struggled to find reading materials that rise to the wisdom that Level 1 learners so often bring to the classroom, while still drawing on plain language. So I sought to write texts about things that really matter: healing, discovery, survival, relationships, justice, and connection to the land. I explored these themes through the lens of the plant world.

This reader contains nine original stories written specifically for adults and is designed to accompany the *BC Reads: Adult Literacy Fundamental English – Course Pack 1*. This level 1 reader, one of a series of six readers, is roughly equivalent to beginner to Grade 1.5 in the K-12 system.

Font size and line spacing can be adjusted in the online view and have been enhanced for the print and PDF versions for easier reading. This reader has been reviewed by subject experts from colleges and universities.

I hope these pages help ignite in your students a lifelong love of reading and discovery.

-Shantel Ivits

# Sweetgrass



Max used to live on the street. Now he lives in a house for other kids from the street.





One of the workers at the house is named Dan. Dan is Cree like Max.



One day, Dan takes Max to pick sweetgrass. They walk out onto the wetland. The sweetgrass is very tall. It bends when they step on it. But it does not break. Dan says, “The sweetgrass tells us to be kind when we are hurt.”



Dan asks the sweetgrass if he can pick it. Then Dan and Max pick what they need. They leave the roots in the land. This way, the sweetgrass will grow again next year.



After that, they make the sweetgrass into a braid. Dan tells Max that sweetgrass takes away bad feelings. It makes room for happy feelings. So Max keeps the sweetgrass close.

## A New Flower



My grandma has never been on a plane. But she gets on a plane when she is 82 years old. She gets on a plane to see me.



One day, we go for a walk. She likes the flowers on my street.



Back home, she has many garden beds. She is in three flower clubs. She puts her plants in flower shows. She knows a lot about flowers.



But today she sees a flower she has not seen before. “What is this?” Grandma asks.





My friend Dave knows. He tells her what the flower is. She looks at Dave for a long time.



Back home, men hunt.



Back home, men fish.



Back home, men farm.



But back home, men do not know about flowers.



She takes this in. She smiles. Then we go on.



She hopes to see more flowers she has never seen before.

# The Sack Garden



This is Meg. Meg lives in South Africa. She has three kids.





It is hard to feed her kids. White people own most of the farmland in South Africa. Meg does not have land for a garden. Food costs a lot of money.



But Meg has a very good way to grow food. She finds a big sack. She puts rocks in the middle of the sack. She fills the rest of the sack with dirt. She makes little holes in the side of the sack. She puts a tomato plant in one hole. She puts a bean plant in one hole. She puts a green pepper plant in one hole. She puts eggplant in the top of the sack. She waters the sack garden from the top.



Her garden does not need much water. Her garden does not need much room. Her garden does not cost much money to make. Her garden does not have many weeds.



Now Meg can feed her kids.

## Val's Garden



I am new to the city. I do not know anyone. But an old woman lives next door. Her name is Val. She gives me a big box of vegetables.



She grows them in a garden by the sidewalk. There are carrots, tomatoes, beans, and peas. They are the best vegetables I ever ate. Val lives alone, too. But she seems happy in her garden. She loves those plants. Sometimes, I can hear her talking to them. Maybe that is why they grow so big.



One day, I stop seeing Val in the garden. I see people take many boxes from her home. Weeds grow in her garden. The dirt is dry. The plants look sad. Val must have passed on.



So I pull the weeds. I water the garden. I even talk to the plants.





Then a family moves next door. They are new to the city. They do not know anyone. And I give them a big box of vegetables from Val's garden.

# GM Food



It is hard to be a farmer. Cold weather can kill your crops. Bugs can eat your crops. Weeds can hurt your crops. Your crops may need more rain than they get. Fruits and vegetables can go bad before they are sold. Some people say farmers can fix all this with GM food.



What is GM food? All living things have DNA. DNA tells living things how to grow. These days, people can change the DNA that tells food how to grow. When people change the DNA of food, it is called GM food.



Some GM food can grow in cold weather. GM food can stop bugs from eating it. GM fruits and vegetables can stay good longer. One day, GM food may be able to grow in dry land in Africa. It will feed people who do not have much food.



But there is a lot we do not know about GM food. Will GM companies help poor people grow food? Or do GM companies just want to get rich? Does GM food kill bugs we need, like butterflies? Does GM food make birds sick? Does GM food make people sick? We do not know. There have not been many tests on GM food.



Do you think farmers should grow GM food?

# Tomatoes



The tomato is from South America. When the tomato came to Europe, people did not eat it. Doctors said it would make them sick. So people just grew tomatoes because they looked nice.



Now people from all over the world eat tomatoes. Tomatoes are used in sauce, soup, juice, salsa, and ketchup. The tomato is very good for you. Only a tomato leaf or stem will make you sick.





People do odd things with tomatoes. People grow tomatoes in space. There is a big tomato fight every year in Spain. A long time ago, people would toss a bad tomato when they saw a show they did not like.



In Canada, many tomatoes are grown on big farms. The farms bring in poor people from far away to help grow tomatoes. Without these workers, the farms could not run. But the workers do not get much money. Canada does not let the workers stay here. Many people say this is not fair.



Most farms pick tomatoes before they are ripe. They last longer this way. But these tomatoes do not taste as good. So lots of people grow their own tomatoes.

# Grow Your Own Tomatoes



Tomatoes that you grow are better than tomatoes that you buy. You can grow tomatoes inside if you do not have a garden.

You need:

- Tomato seeds
- A big pot (50 cm deep)
- Potting soil (many big food shops sell this)
- A window



Fill the pot with potting soil. Pack the soil down a little bit. Put a seed on top of the soil. Add a bit more soil on top.



Add water. The soil must always be a bit wet. Seeds like to be warm. Put your pot in a warm place. It does not need sun yet.



The plant will grow above the soil. Put the plant by a window. The plant needs four hours of sun a day. You can tie the stem to a stick to help the plant stay up. Always keep the soil a bit wet.



Pick the tomatoes when they are the same red colour top to bottom. Enjoy!



## Canada's Tallest Tree



A man named Randy liked to hunt trees. He looked for big trees and old trees. He made maps to show where these trees were. He did not want to cut them down. He wanted people to take care of them.



Randy was told of a very tall tree on Vancouver Island. The tree was said to be 314 feet tall. That would make it the tallest tree in Canada. Randy set out to find the tree.



But someone else found it first. It was found by a logger. Loggers wanted to cut down Canada's tallest tree and all the trees around it.



Randy made a path in the forest so people could see the tall tree. The tree was so big and beautiful it would fill them with awe. More and more people wanted to save that forest. Thanks to these people, that forest is now a park. Canada's tallest tree is still there.



There may still be a bigger tree out there. Maybe you will find it. But there are only a few old forests left in BC. Many are still at risk of being cut down.

## Arctic Plants



Some plants grow in land that is rich. Some plants grow where there is a lot of sun. These plants do very well. But there is something beautiful about plants that grow against the odds.



Way up in the arctic, the land is cold and hard. The winter is long and dark. But the arctic plants find a way to get by.



Summer comes for just a few weeks. The ice turns to water. Plants begin to grow.





Arctic moss grows on the land. It adds a bit of heat so that other plants can grow, too.



Arctic plants stay together. When they stay together, the cold winds are not so bad.



In other places, trees try to grow to the sky. But they would not last in the arctic. So the arctic willow is not like the other trees. The arctic willow grows on its side. It grows along the land. This may be odd, but it works.



The sun is out all day and all night. But the sun will go away soon. So the arctic poppy always looks on the bright side. The arctic poppy always faces the sun.



Yes, there is something beautiful about plants that grow against the odds.

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## About the Author



Shantel Ivits is an instructor in the Basic Education Department at Vancouver Community College, on the unceded territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations.

Shantel has designed curricula for the National Film Board of Canada, the British Columbia Teachers' Federation, and many community-based projects.

Over the past decade, they have taught in literacy programs, university bridging programs, an ESL academy, and K-12 public schools.

They hold a Bachelor of Arts in English Literature from Trent University, as well as a Bachelor of Education and a Master of Arts in Educational Studies from the University of British Columbia.

Shantel identifies as a queer and trans person with white settler privilege. Their goal as an educator is to help people build their capacity to reach their goals and create more socially just communities.

Shantel also enjoys raising awareness that “they” can be used as a singular pronoun!