

February E-News from Elizabeth Claire: Happy Valentines Day!

Hello All, and welcome, New Readers!

(I hope you have been enjoying these emails, but in case they don't meet your needs, I promise it won't break my heart, you can unsubscribe at any time. Click here: <http://elizabethclaire.us1.list-manage.com/unsubscribe?u=c65c6ca9b67d5cf8db2ae20a4&id=4264841f87&e=&c=ff407c2958>

This month's E-News Contents:

Rote learning

Website Special (February Sale!)

Coming Attractions in February's *Easy English NEWS*

Rote learning

A great deal has been said about what's wrong with rote learning: *Memorizing and learning by repetition doesn't cause deep thinking; it's a waste of time; It bypasses comprehension.*

We know what it can't do: it is not effective for mastering complex subjects. Educators disparage it as "parroting" or "regurgitating." It is strongly discouraged in new curriculum standards.

But it seems to me educators sometimes are too "politically correct" and forget what it CAN do for our English Language Learners. Many of our students come from countries where classes are large, and methods are different. ELLs are used to rote learning, as this is highly regarded in their home countries. They get quite good at it. Finding it absent in American schools is part of their culture shock...and disappointment. It is precisely what they are good at.

So why not tap that skill so they can demonstrate mastery of some key pieces of information and dazzle native English classmates and teachers?

Rote memorization of data can build ways for ELLs to demonstrate effort; it can build their self esteem; it impresses others; gives practice in intonation and pronunciation, as well as serving as a foundation for calling up information later.

Long before students can understand and speak well enough to participate in high level conversations, they can recite poetry, speeches, lists of presidents in order, and the locations of the 50 states and their capitals. Having these memorized "treasures" bonds them to English with pride and usefulness.

And of course, be sure to have active learning opportunities, discussions, and critical thinking in your classes. *Easy English NEWS* will give your students thought provoking content for that.

But don't be inhibited from bringing on the polishing of gems of memorized text worthy of

lasting a lifetime.

To celebrate February, suggest to students (perhaps as an option for extra credit) to choose something to memorize:

- a Valentine's poem such as "Roses are red, etc." "How Do I Love Thee?"
- The story of George Washington and the Cherry Tree
- Lincoln's Gettysburg Address.

The Gettysburg Address is a treasure. Many American students are required to memorize this, so your students can get a start.

The task of memorizing this great work anchors a student in English and boosts his vocabulary, provided he or she understands what the address means. Choose this for high school, adult classes, and college students, at an intermediate level and up. To make it accessible to more students, have those with less English ability memorize just the first and last sentences.

At my website, you'll find a printer-friendly Gettysburg Address, with a complete translation into easy English, plus Word Help!

For the Gettysburg Address and "translation," click here: <http://www.elizabethclaire.com/more-information.html>

Here are some hints to enhance comprehension and retention, and to make memorization an enjoyable activity.

1. Build an understanding of the concepts behind the Gettysburg Address by reading the "translation" and knowing the background and historical significance: 50,000 soldiers died at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania in a battle that lasted three days. They were defending the Union against the Confederate Army's attempt to invade the North. It was the only attempt, as they were defeated. The war continued on, however.
2. Teach students how to "chunk and repeat." i.e. Four score and seven...Four score and seven years ago...Four score and seven years ago, our fathers...Four score and seven years ago, our fathers brought forth...and so on.
3. Have students work with a buddy, listening to each other read. Have the buddy ask questions to keep the content comprehensible. How many years ago? Who brought forth a new nation? What was the nation conceived in? What are we engaged in?
4. Small efforts over many days add up to more enjoyable memorization than a few large efforts over a few days. The results will last longer, too.
5. Don't make it a competition to see who can memorize faster. Rather, for those students who wish to master the selection, have each achieve mastery in their own time frame. All who succeed get an A or a

small prize (four shiny new Lincoln pennies) (yes, they'll probably ask for 5-dollar bills, but with a good sales job, and enough shine (ask at your bank) you can make the pennies valuable)

For the Gettysburg Address and "translation," click here: <http://www.elizabethclaire.com/more-information.html>

Knowing the list of presidents in order is always 1. impressive, and 2. useful for history classes and even the citizenship test.

For List of Presidents, click here: <http://www.elizabethclaire.com/more-information.html>

Website Special - February Sale!

Because it's the month for showing our LOVE, there'll be a 10% discount on all book orders using the website order form placed between January 18 and February 18.

Please print out and then fax or mail website order form.

Click here to save money on books by Elizabeth Claire, click here:
<http://www.elizabethclaire.com/books/booksmain.html>

Preview: *Easy English NEWS* for February 2010

- February's current events feature article is "**Terrorist on Trial**" the story of the Christmas bomber, and the debate over his trial with his rights guaranteed by the Constitution.
- **Earthquake in Haiti** We were just ready to go to press when the earthquake hit Haiti, so we jettisoned Ask Elizabeth to squeeze in this story.
- Life in the U.S.A. **Airport security**-- information on some new measures taken by the government to keep us safe, and what to prepare and expect with the increased screening at airports.
- **Events in February covered in Easy English NEWS are:**
 - African American Month
 - Groundhog Day
 - Chinese New Year
 - Valentine's Day
 - Mardi Gras and Ash Wednesday
 - Presidents' Day
 - Super Bowl Sunday

Ask Elizabeth was postponed to make room for Earthquake in Haiti.

Your Health: Dr. Majid Ali writes about the Human Life Span---why the median age people live to has increased from ancient Roman times (22!) until the 1980's (74) and how obesity may cause the median age to decrease.

America the Beautiful Big Sur, California.

Heroes and History: A Black History feature: The right to vote for black Americans from Reconstruction through Segregation, Ku Klux Klan terror, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the Freedom Riders

Love, love, love: Expressions and idioms with the word "heart."

Plus our regular features: **This Is Your Page** (readers' stories), **Funny Stuff**, **Idioms**, the **Crossword Puzzle**, **Let's Talk about It**, and **Word Help**.

Not a subscriber? The larger your class, the less it costs per student! Yes, you can still start your subscription with February...or January for that matter.

Click here to learn more about Easy English NEWS: <http://www.elizabethclaire.com/een/eenmain.html>

Did you miss our previous E-News? They are archived for your convenience at our website. Click here: <http://www.elizabethclaire.com/e-news.html>.

Subscribers to our 12-page monthly newspaper, **Easy English NEWS** receive a monthly teacher's guide with background information on the stories and three reproducible quizzes.

Click here for this month's Teacher's Guide: <http://www.elizabethclaire.com/een/teacherspages.html>

Also available free at the website is a printable

24-page HOW TO Use Easy English NEWS in your ESL Classroom.

This is a comprehensive guide, showing techniques to use with beginning students, intermediate, and advanced, and with 10 reproducible, generic student activity sheets including self evaluations that you can use each month. Click here for the HOW TO: <http://www.elizabethclaire.com/een/eenmain.html>

Your comments are most welcome. Send a message to ESL@elizabethclaire.com.

Till next time,

Elizabeth Claire

esl@elizabethclaire.com