NEWS LESSON

The Reading Problem He Hid for Years



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. What skill would make everyday life easier for you?
2. Why can asking for help feel harder than learning something?
3. Would you rather learn alone or with one patient teacher?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**resourceful**	☐	A	an organisation that helps people and does not work to make money
2	**helpless**	☐	B	when your body reacts badly to a food or other thing
3	**allergies**	☐	C	exams or certificates that show what you have learnt
4	**qualifications**	☐	D	times when people must stay at home to stop a disease spreading
5	**ambitious**	☐	E	not able to do anything to help yourself
6	**literacy**	☐	F	the ability to read and write
7	**charity**	☐	G	good at finding ways to solve problems
8	**lockdowns**	☐	H	wanting very much to succeed or achieve something

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

Peter Lloyd built a career and raised a family while hiding the fact that he could not read. A supermarket shelf finally changed that.

1 For years, Peter Lloyd found ways to avoid reading in public. As a lorry driver, he could remember complicated routes and recognise road signs, but a letter arriving through the post could leave him feeling helpless. He had built a working life and raised a family while hiding a difficulty that many people assume only children face. Then, aged 46, he found himself unable to complete a simple supermarket shop.

2 Peter was born partially deaf in Lancashire and struggled to follow lessons in noisy classrooms. Moving schools did little to help. He left at 16 without qualifications and with very limited reading skills. Yet he was resourceful. His strong visual memory helped him navigate Britain's roads, and later a talking satnav made driving easier. His wife stepped in when he needed to understand documents or fill in forms. From the outside, there was little to suggest how much effort ordinary tasks required.

3 The turning point came during the Covid lockdowns. Peter was shopping for milk that would be safe for his wife and son, who have food allergies. Unable to read the labels properly, he became frightened of making a dangerous mistake. At home, he finally explained how much he was struggling. His wife suggested Read Easy, a charity offering individual reading support to adults. Peter was hesitant because earlier attempts to learn had ended badly, but he decided to give it another go.

4 He was matched with volunteer coach Alison, and they began meeting twice a week. The early lessons involved going back to basics, practising sounds and building words before moving on to longer texts. Progress was gradual. There were difficult days, but Alison helped him see that mistakes were part of learning rather than proof that he could never succeed. Peter set himself a goal that was both ambitious and personal: finishing the first Harry Potter novel.

5 Three years later, he reached the final page. What mattered was not only the achievement itself but also the freedom it represented. Peter could now choose a book, follow a recipe and help his son with everyday tasks that had previously been out of reach. He became an ambassador for Read Easy, encouraging people in similar situations to take the first step.

6 Low literacy does not mean a lack of intelligence, yet some adults wait years before asking for help. Peter's experience reveals how easily reading difficulties can remain hidden in a society built around written information. He hopes to earn an English GCSE and eventually help others. A trip to the supermarket exposed a problem he had spent decades concealing. It also gave him the reason to change his life.

Sources: LiverpoolWorld. Picture: AI illustration.

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. Peter wants to gain a qualification in English. T F NG
2. A volunteer helped Peter to learn to read. T F NG
3. Peter had never tried to learn to read before contacting Read Easy. T F NG
4. Read Easy has coaches in every part of Britain. T F NG
5. Alison told Peter that making mistakes means a learner will never succeed. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

achievement	ambassador	assume	concealing	frightened	hesitant	navigate	reveal

1. The waiter noticed that the customer was _____ and kept changing his mind about what to order.
2. Employers often _____ that every adult can complete an online form without help.
3. The company was accused of _____ the true cost of the project from its customers.
4. As the charity's _____, she gives talks in schools and encourages young people to volunteer.
5. Finishing the marathon after a serious injury was a remarkable personal _____.
6. Tourists often find it hard to _____ the old town because the streets have no signs.

6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. By the time he contacted Read Easy, Peter _____ his problem for decades. (HIDE)
2. Peter _____ with a volunteer coach called Alison. (MATCH)
3. While Peter _____ for milk, he realised he could not read the labels. (SHOP)
4. Peter almost did not try again, because earlier attempts to learn _____ badly. (END)
5. Peter hopes _____ an English GCSE one day. (EARN)

7 Language focus: linking words

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. Choose by what follows the gap: a noun, a clause, or a new sentence. Despite needs a noun, and whereas compares two things.

despite	provided	since	therefore	unless	whereas	yet

1. _____ his reading difficulty, he built a career as a lorry driver.
2. Some adults learn best in one-to-one sessions, _____ others prefer a class.
3. Many adults will not admit they have a problem _____ they feel nobody will judge them.
4. The course was cancelled. _____ , the students had to study alone.
5. Many people believe reading is simple. _____ some adults need years to learn it.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. What would make it easier for an adult to admit they cannot read well?
2. Which everyday task do people underestimate until they struggle with it?
3. What should a good teacher do when a learner feels embarrassed?

9 Role-play: an invitation to volunteer

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the friend who volunteers

You help at a local reading group for adults. You need one more helper on Thursday evenings and you think your friend would be good at it. Persuade your friend to try one evening.

Student B · the friend who is not sure

Your friend has asked you to help adults who are learning to read. You like the idea, but you're busy and you're worried you won't know what to say. Ask questions and agree what you can offer.

Useful phrases

I'd love to help, but I'm not sure I'm the right person.

What if I say the wrong thing?

You don't need to be an expert, you just need to be patient.

I can't do Tuesdays, but I could manage Thursdays.

That's fair, let's try one session and see.

Would it help if we went together the first time?

Afterwards, tell the class what you agreed, and whether you both felt it was a fair deal.

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 G · 2 E · 3 B · 4 C · 5 H · 6 F · 7 A · 8 D

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 T · 3 F · 4 NG · 5 F

5 Vocabulary

1 hesitant · 2 assume · 3 concealing · 4 ambassador · 5 achievement · 6 navigate

6 Verb forms

1 had hidden or had been hiding · 2 was matched · 3 was shopping · 4 had ended or ended · 5 to earn

7 Language focus

1 Despite · 2 whereas · 3 unless · 4 Therefore · 5 Yet

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