

# We Ask Our Own Questions

Activity Booklet

(Moving Beyond the International Adult  
Literacy & Skills Survey - I.A.L.S.S.)



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear learners, volunteers and practitioners:

This booklet of activities has been put together to help people understand the new International Adult Literacy Skills Survey (IALSS) and the many different ways we can make sense of our work in literacy.

Learners on their own can do some of the activities, but most of the activities should be done in a group or with a tutor. The discussion activities can be used to spark discussion. However, you may want to read the information out loud in a group setting and then discuss the questions and write down your thoughts.

We hope that you may use this booklet as a way to reflect on how answers to questions are gathered and used to make policy decisions. We hope the booklet will also help people ask questions in different ways, such as through art. Through this project we are asking people in literacy to create visual or written images, about their questions or thoughts on literacy. Any of the images submitted (see submission information below) will be used in a display in May when the IALSS is released. We hope this display will be an alternative view of the literacy situation in Canada.

Please enjoy this booklet. Make any changes or additions that will increase your enjoyment of the activities. And pass the booklet on to other interested people.

Art Asks Collective  
Festival of Literacies, OISE/UT

March 2005

Please send your art to:

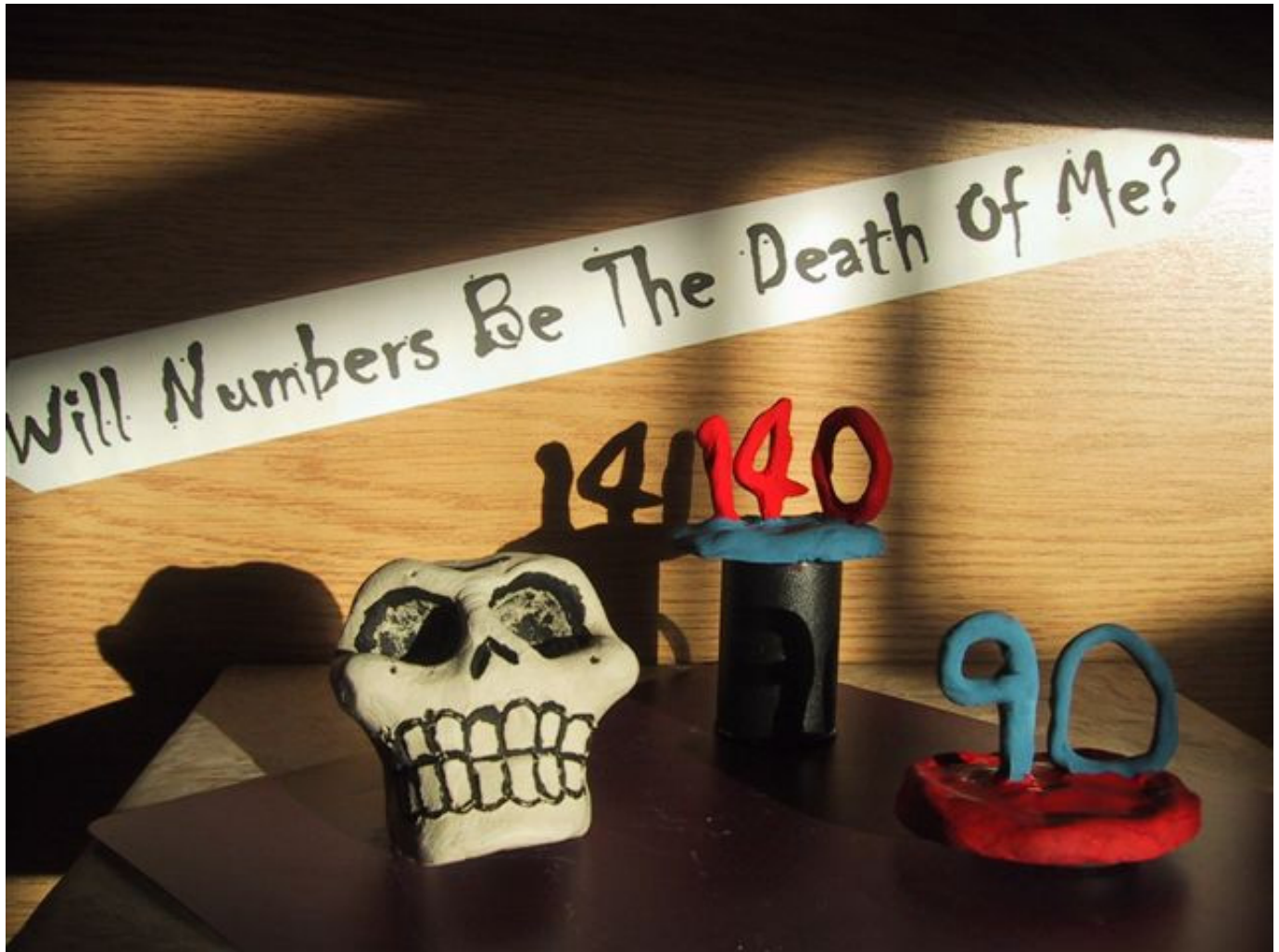
**Festival of Literacies**

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This photograph collage was made by literacy worker Bonnie Soroce, when we emailed her about this art IALSS project. Bonnie uses art in her work with learners and in her research (<http://www.soroce.com>).

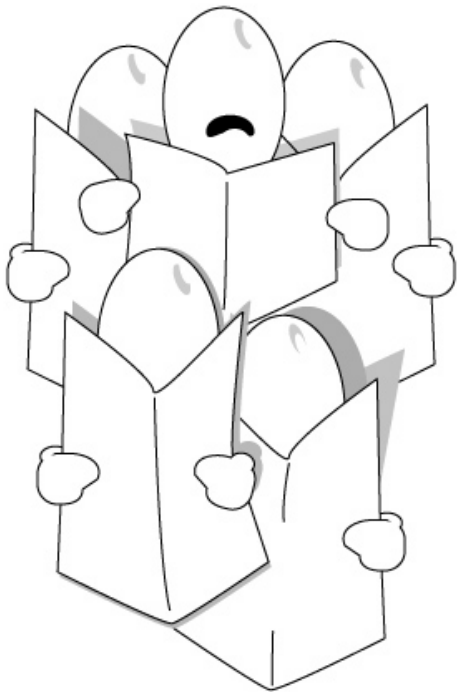
- What does the photograph say to you?
- What kind of role do numbers play in your life?
- Do you sometimes feel "numbers will be the death of you?" Please explain.
- Do you sometimes find that numbers are helpful and important in your life? Please explain.
- How can a photograph tell a story?

## What is I.A.L.S.S. ?

IALS, the International Adult Literacy Survey, tested people on their reading and writing in Canada and six other countries in the 1990's.

Here are two “findings” from the survey. These “findings” are what the people who did the survey say that the survey “found”. What do think about these “findings”? Do they make sense to you? Do you have questions about them?

Under each finding, there are some questions to get discussion started.



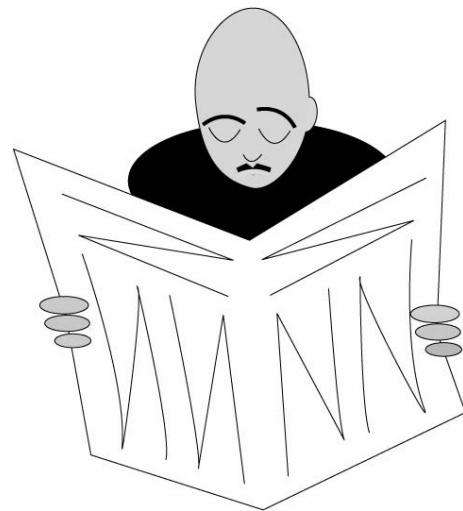
### **“Finding” 1:**

About half of Canadians should improve their reading and writing. If they don't, our country won't move forward.

- What would happen if half of Canadians improved their reading and writing?
- Would the country move forward?
- Are there other ways of moving the country forward?

**“Finding” 2:** Many people who have difficulty with reading don’t know that they have difficulty with reading. This is because they don’t read difficult things. But, as time goes on, everyone will have to do more difficult reading at work. The world is changing, and people are going to have to catch up.

- Do you know anyone who has difficulty with reading but doesn’t know it?



- How do you know that this person has difficulty with reading?

- Should people have to do more and more difficult reading at work?

## Reading the News about Literacy

Recently, Peter Calamai, a newspaper reporter who writes about adult literacy, made a speech to literacy and health workers. According to Mr. Calamai, adult learners working at levels 1 and 2 are not improving their skills. He also said that in 1988, of the 10 million adults with literacy needs, less than 200,000 were getting help from a program, and only 5% were getting help in 1998.



Calamai also made suggestions to literacy programs to improve their work: to return phone calls from learners, to create better reporting systems, and to make stronger ties with other organizations.

(For the full speech go to: [www.abcmediaroom.ca](http://www.abcmediaroom.ca) and look in the *What's New in Literacy?* section)

1. Do you think people working at levels 1 and 2 are not improving their skills?
2. Why do people not attend classes?
3. Who should literacy programs be responsible to for their work? How should they be responsible?

### **Crunching the Numbers:**

4) If the population of Canada is about 30,000,000 people, what percent of this total is 10,000,000?

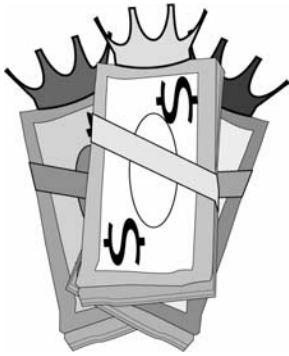
5) What is 5% of 10,000,000?

- a) 50 b) 50,000 c) 500,000 d) 5,000,000.

6) If 10 million is 100% of the people who might benefit from literacy programs and 5% is the number of people attending classes in 1998, what percent were not attending classes?

## Human and social capital

Governments talk about increasing human and social capital. The IALSS is designed to measure human capital.



**Capital:** Wealth in goods, property or cash. Capital, like a house, can be used to make more wealth because you can borrow money to use elsewhere.

**Human Capital:** The knowledge, skills, and abilities possessed by people. Human capital can be gathered in many ways, including education, on-the-job training and experience, investments in health and education programs, encouraging people to move to your country, etc.



**Social Capital:** The value of social networks that people can draw on to solve common problems. Social capital is created through trust, sharing values, sharing information and education, and cooperation among members of a community.

### Discussion Questions:

1. What images come to mind when you think of human capital? What images come to mind when you think of social capital?
2. Give your own examples of human and social capital. How might we get more human and social capital?
3. How might a government build up human capital? Build up social capital? Should government expect something in return for their investment?
4. Do governments own human or social capital?
5. Does this discussion have any connection to your life? Explain.

## Let's create some statistics of our own...

Statistics are numbers used to present information about groups. Statistics are used to make general conclusions about a whole group. Statistics are gathered by testing or surveying a part of the population.

The International Adult Literacy Skills Survey will test about 25,000 people across Canada.\* The results of the testing, the statistics, will affect how literacy needs are presented to people across Canada. And this will affect people's attitudes toward literacy and funding for programs.

To understand statistics better, let's conduct a quick survey to gather statistics on how the people in our program traveled here today.

The number of people we will survey is \_\_\_\_\_.  
Sample Question: "How did you travel to school today?"

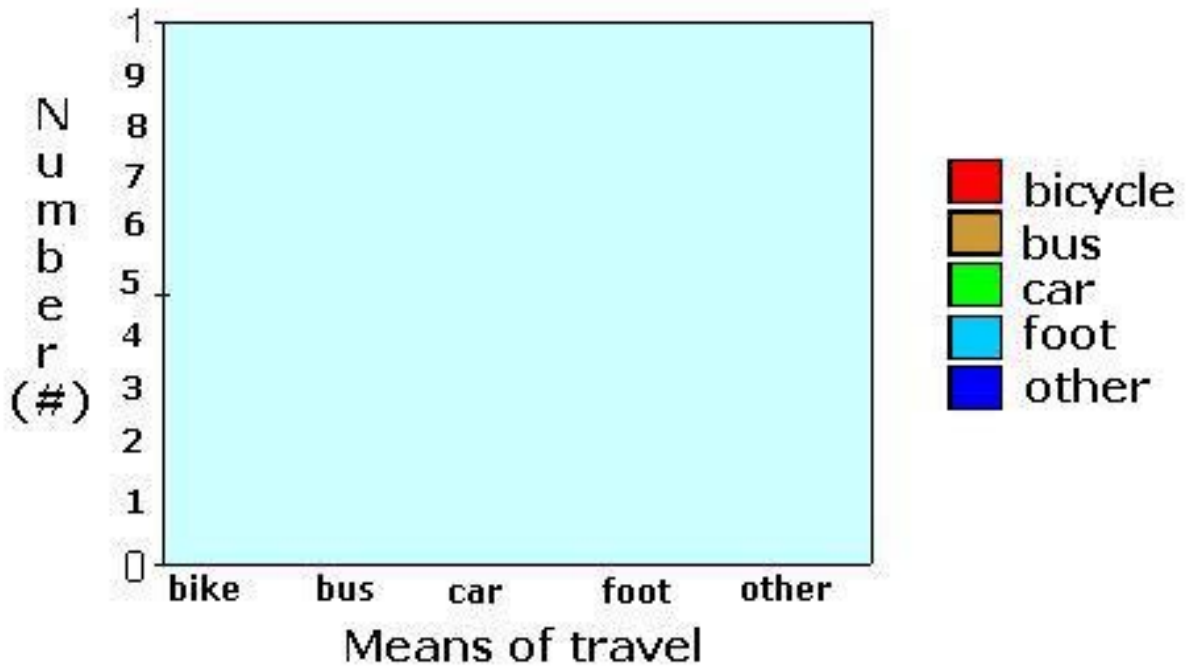
Means of Travel	Number of people
bicycle	
bus	
car	
foot	
other	

\* Taken from **Moving the Markers** report page 37 by Susan Sussman



The numbers of people are the statistics we have to work with. Presenting statistics using graphs and charts is helpful because they communicate information visually.

## Bar Graph



Go to <http://nces.ed.gov/nceskids/graphing/bar.asp> or use the blank one above to create a bar graph showing our statistics.

What do these statistics tell us about each other?

What conclusions can we draw from these statistics?

## Reading and Writing Habits

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The IALSS gathered statistics on reading and writing abilities. Here is another way to gather statistics on reading and writing.

We read and write for many different reasons.

Questions to ask others:

- 1) Why do you read?
  
- 2) What do you like to read about?
  
- 3) What do you like to write about?
  
- 4) Who do you write to?

Fill in the tally sheet and bar graph on the following pages.

First you put names of the people you interview under 'Person', and then you put the possible answers for questions at the top of the columns. The names of things to read could be the answer for question number one. Family or friends could be column heading for number four.

Totals are then put in the bar graph. Response numbers are already on the vertical axis. What were column headings in the chart become the horizontal axis in the bar graph. Just color in the number of responses (for example, 5 people read newspapers). When you have coloured in all the number of responses you have a bar graph!

This idea was borrowed from:

<http://www.ocdsb.edu.on.ca/Continuweb/ESL/adultn.htm#report>

*Tally Sheet for Survey*

Question: \_\_\_\_\_

Person's Name	Possible Answers						
1.							
2.							
3.							
4.							
5.							
6.							
7.							
8.							
9.							
10.							
11.							
12.							

*Table to collect information*

*Bar Graph of Survey Results*

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<b>12.</b>									
<b>11.</b>									
<b>10.</b>									
<b>9.</b>									
<b>8.</b>									
<b>7.</b>									
<b>6.</b>									
<b>5.</b>									
<b>4.</b>									
<b>3.</b>									
<b>2.</b>									
<b>1.</b>									

# You can be a political cartoonist!

By Jerry Lee Miller

Political cartoonists draw the world as they see it. The cartoon shows a meaning and can provoke a response from the viewer.

<http://www.indiana.edu/~liblilly/cartoon/about.html>

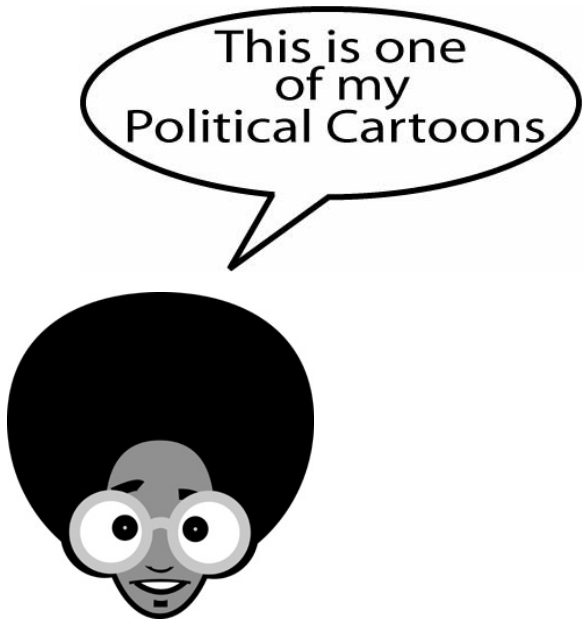
The great American political cartoonist, Thomas Nast (1840-1902), is most often remembered for his cartoon campaign in the 1870s against Boss Tweed and New York's corrupt Tammany Hall political machine. After Nast portrayed Tweed and the Tammany Ring pointing at each other in answer to the question,

**“Who stole the people’s money?”**  
Tweed is reported to have demanded,  
**“Stop them damned pictures. I don’t care what the papers write about me. My constituents can’t read. But, damn it, they can see pictures.”**



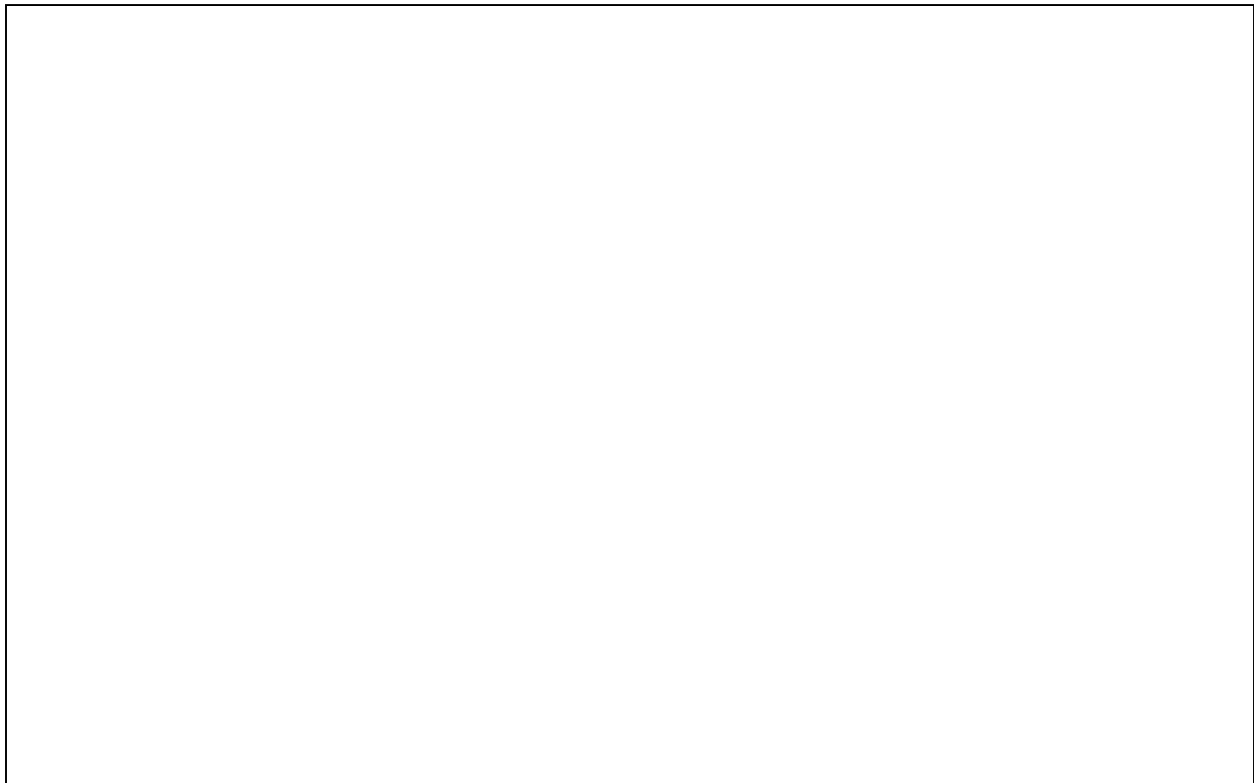
Nast was offered a half-million dollars to leave New York to study art in Europe but that only increased his determination. Five years later, in 1876, another cartoon by Nast would be used by Spanish authorities to identify Tweed after his escape from New York City.

<http://www.indiana.edu/~liblilly/cartoon/about.html>



To see cartoons from other Canadian political cartoonists go to your nearest public library or online at [www.union-art.com](http://www.union-art.com)

**Now it is your turn.  
Draw something from the world as you see it.**



**Punch Line:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Learning Word Search Puzzle

L I S T E N V R B C J O B A S A E H E P  
R P V Q K I C E S X R D E E Q V U R V U  
O R M P E O Z M E M K E Z O A P A R U O  
U Z K F P L Q E T R H T A L T P C U L R  
O R R D K C X M P B J S U T M M U D R G  
B V A Y Y N X B M D K A M O E O G N T C  
M E G O R E D E I H T N C T N B R I E Q  
R Z P Q Y G D R C E O S O M J E V A B Z  
T R D I N K N I H T E I U W C X I L P P  
T R C V F G R K U Y U U Q L L H H P P P  
E Z C L L P C F T C E N N O C E E X R L  
Y T W S X Q S T Y U C T K Y D X D E O V  
U K I Y S M U S J I H V E U G L Q G Y X  
Y U F R E U D L T I O K O Y E L M K E I  
U E F O W L C I A R O O Z A E E M B L Z  
R C X C Z E W S K F S C R P U N F L W N  
L E U W N V K O I Y E N E K O L N C M P  
I A T W Q I S S E D Q F F G F I N M F M  
A B E Q O Z D S Q W K P K S Z Y J A G M  
W K S P H Z Z D V I I F N S B S J K K Q

Find these words in the Word Search puzzle:

- |                                   |                                    |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> choose   | <input type="checkbox"/> group     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> compare  | <input type="checkbox"/> knowledge |
| <input type="checkbox"/> connect  | <input type="checkbox"/> learn     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> create   | <input type="checkbox"/> listen    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> discuss  | <input type="checkbox"/> read      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> evaluate | <input type="checkbox"/> remember  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> explain  | <input type="checkbox"/> think     |
|                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> write     |

To make your own Word Search puzzle, go to:

<http://puzzlemaker.school.discovery.com/WordSearchSetupForm.html>

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**Illustrations by:** Jerry Lee Miller and Bonnie Soroke.

**This booklet is available at the Festival of Literacies website:**

[www.literaciesOISE.ca](http://www.literaciesOISE.ca)

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Festival de l'Alpha

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