
Work

by Art Pellikan.

I don't have any fun. Just work, straight work, from morning to night. My work is construction. My upbringing is that, if you're occupied day and night, you don't get into any trouble. I usually don't get home until 11 pm or two in the morning. I like my work. Then I met Arlene, and she sort of put things in the right perspective. It's on account of her I'm here tonight, otherwise, I'd still be working. We go to church on Sunday, and then we just drive around. We drove up to Merritt and had a chocolate milkshake. Kind of a long way to go for a milkshake, but that's what we did.



Other activities: imagine a conversation between Art and Arlene. How do you think Arlene might have convinced Art to stop working so much? Write a pretend conversation between the two of them.

Background Information

Talk about how you grew up. Was it strict? What kind of morals and ideas about work did your parents give you? Then talk about whether or not you think that working all the time is a good thing or not.

Questions

1. What kind of work does Art do?
2. When does he get home?
3. What does the word upbringing mean?
4. Do you think Art needs to work so much?
5. Use the word perspective in a sentence.
6. Where do they go on Sunday?
7. What do you think Arlene is doing for Art?
8. Where did they drive up to?
9. Whose idea do you think it was to go for a milkshake?
10. Do you think Art is used to having fun?



Cleaning the Barn

by Joe Beatty.

Walk to the barn,
open the door,
close your nose,
look at the floor.

Pick up the fork,
push the crap,
to the door.
Throw it out and hope there is
no more.

Pick up the broom,
sweep the floor,
everything has to go,
as before,
out the door.

Walk to the water trough,
wash yourself off,

so you won't be so smelly,



when you
go in the
house.

Background Information

Working on a farm can be difficult, smelly work. Have you ever lived on a farm or visited one? Talk about why taking care of animals can be so dirty and smelly.



Questions

1. What is a barn?
2. What's another way to say close your nose?
3. What kind of fork does Joe mean?
4. What else might be on the floor?
5. What is a trough?
6. Why might you be smelly?
7. What are the four action words in the first paragraph?
8. What's another word for smelly?
9. Do you think Joe enjoys cleaning out the barn? Why or why not?

Other Activities: Write a poem like the one you just read, only write about something you know a lot about or remember very clearly. Try to rhyme the lines like Joe did.

Dark to Dark

by Ray Bernard.

Here I am writing again. This is going to be hard I know. But I must do it anyway. I've been working from dark to dark. I am too tired to write anything. Today I worked near Lynn Valley Road. I was there no more than ten minutes and fell down three times. And if I fell down one more time I was going home. The roof was very slippery. The boss hit his finger several times. He said, "If I hit my finger one more time, I am going home". When I started school, I couldn't read a book. But now I can read a book but I get stuck on some words.

Background Information

Sometimes you don't feel like doing something you know you have to do. What can make a person discouraged? What do you do when this happens to you?



Questions

1. Why is Ray tired?
2. What do you think Ray does for a living?
3. Where did Ray work near?
4. How many times did Ray fall?
5. What's another word for slippery?
6. Use the word several in a sentence?
7. Do you think Ray and his boss really went home? Why?
8. How do you think Ray's boss hit his finger?
9. Could Ray read when he started school?
10. What does stuck mean in the last sentence?

Job Hunting

by Evelyn Ballard.

Let me tell you, it is hard looking for a job. I have been so many places. And I know I can do the job. But there is one thing that stops me from getting hired. It is because I am 42 years old. So once they see me, that's it. They throw me away and go down the list to the next one.

I know there is a job out there for me.



Background Information

Talk about getting a job. What types of things can stop you from being hired even if you have the skills? What is this called? Talk about experiences you might have had in the work force.

Questions

1. What is Evelyn looking for?
2. How many places has she looked for a job?
3. Why does she think no one will hire her?
4. What word do you use when someone doesn't get a job because of their age, sex, ethnic background or disability?
5. What does the word hire mean?
6. How old is Evelyn?
7. Do you think they really throw her away? What does this mean?
8. Why does Evelyn think she will get a job?

She's a Smooth Operator.

Elaine Mills is a telephone operator for BC Tel. She helps more than 700 people every day. Most calls are for directory assistance. Mills looks up the telephone numbers for callers. Sometimes people call her in an emergency. She says most emergency calls are from children or seniors.

Mills says some calls are funny. Not long ago a man called her from New York. He wanted the number of a family in Vogimo, BC. Mills told him there was no such place. "Of course there is," he said. "I've got the address right here". He read the name and street address including "Kaslo, BC". Then he added "Vogimo". "The postal code there is VOG 1M0," Mills laughs.

Background Information

Talk about what telephone operators do. What kinds of things would you ask an operator? Also, think about misunderstandings. Have you ever misunderstood something you read?

Questions

1. What does Elaine Mills do?
2. What is directory assistance?
3. Use the word emergency in a sentence.
4. Why do you think most emergency calls are from children or seniors?
5. Where is New York?
6. What mistake did the man on the phone make?
7. What is the American name for postal code?
8. What did he read to Elaine?
9. What does operator mean in this story?
10. What's another word for laugh?



Retirement

by Ron
Goddard.



Retirement is what you work all your life for. When you're young you work and save, hoping to have the money to enjoy your old age. So when you're young you should spend the money you make by trying to better yourself. For when you're old, you're scared to spend the money you have. When you're trying to raise a family you live payday to payday. And when you're old you live day by day. What I am looking forward to is to not have to get up at 5:30 in the morning and go to work. Instead, I could get up and go fishing for the day and not have to worry about the kids, if they are home yet or not. So if I went up North with my wife, we would not have to pack up and go as soon as we do. Yes, to have that kind of time would be nice for you may not have too many years like that left. You must always remember you're a long time dead.

Background Information

Retirement is something that working people look forward to. It is the day they won't have to get up so early. The day they can do what they want instead of what someone tells them to do. But will retirement make a person really happy? Talk about what might happen when a person retires. Talk about people you know who have retired, or yourself (if you're retired).

Questions

1. What does Ron say that you work all your life for?
2. Do you think it's a good idea to save all your money for your old age?
3. What does living payday to payday mean?
4. What do you think Ron means by old people living day by day?
5. What time does Ron have to get up to go to work?
6. What does Ron like to do?
7. Where do Ron and his wife go fishing?
8. What's another word for scared?
9. What's the opposite of worry?
10. What do you think the last line of the story means?



Seeds for City Gardeners

Leslie Scrimshaw lives in an apartment in Vancouver. Several years ago she started to grow herbs and small vegetables in her kitchen. She gave the seeds from her plants to friends. Soon she started to sell the seeds. Now she has a small business. She sells packages of seeds to city gardeners. Herbs are the most popular seeds. Scrimshaw says herbs are easy to grow in most kitchens. The leaves of fresh herbs add a special flavor to soups, salad dressing, and pasta dishes.



Background Information

Many people have gardens in their backyards, but some people don't have room for a full garden. Talk about where people can grow things if they live in an apartment. Also talk about herbs, what they are and what they're used for. Finally, talk about home-based businesses, how they can get started and how they are started.

Questions

1. Where does Leslie live?
2. Where did she start to grow things?
3. What is an herb?
4. How do you think her small business started?
5. What does she sell?
6. Use the word popular in a sentence.
7. What part of the herb do you use?
8. What herbs do you like?
9. What do herbs do?
10. Why do you think herbs make food taste better?

Pleasing Customer is Key

Tony Zeilinger is a tailor. He makes robes for British Columbia judges. He makes about 25 to 30 judges' robes a year. He also makes robes for lawyers.

Zeilinger was born in Austria in 1930. He started working when he was 14 years old. How much did his first job pay? "Pay? Hoh! They didn't pay back then. You worked to get experience," he says. Zeilinger moved to Australia in 1954. He worked as a tailor there for 13 years. In 1967 he decided to move to Vancouver. Zeilinger worked as a tailor in one shop for 19 years. Now he owns the shop.

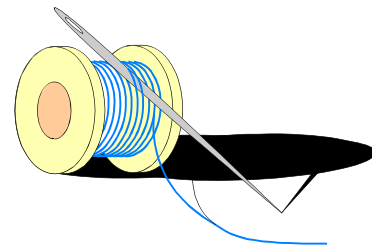
What does he like best about his job? "When you see the customer is pleased with the work, that's the best," he says.

Background Information

Canada is made up partly by people who came to this country trying to make a better life for themselves. What was life like 60 years ago? Have you heard stories about what life was like back then? Share these stories if you have.

Questions

1. What is Tony's job?
2. Where was Tony born?
3. How much did his first job pay?
4. Describe a judge's robe.
5. What is a tailor?
6. When did Tony move to Vancouver?
7. What is another word for shop?
8. Why do you think Tony decided to move to Canada?
9. Do you think Tony takes pride in his job? Why?
10. What is another word for job?



Tina Does Not Want To Retire.

Tina Sharshon works in the kitchen of a hotel. She has worked there for 23 years. Her friends say, "Tina loves to work. She is a workaholic".

Tina was born in the Ukraine in 1904. She says, "I worked all my life. At eight I was chopping wood and sawing it up". In 1927, she came to Canada. She lived in Saskatchewan and Alberta. In the nineteen fifties, she moved to British Columbia.

Tina had her 91st birthday in February. She does not want to retire from her job. "If I stop working now, I'll die," she says.

Background Information

Many people, especially older people work very hard for their whole lives. It is hard for them to retire because they really wouldn't know what to do with their time. Talk about this. Do you think a person who can still do the job, should be forced to leave a job just because of his or her age? Why or why not? What could be done if the person still wanted to work?



Questions

1. Where does Tina work?
2. What is a workaholic?
3. Where was Tina born?
4. What was she doing at eight years old?
5. When did she come to Canada?
6. Why do you think she came to Canada?
7. What three provinces in Canada has she lived in?
8. When is Tina's birthday?
9. How old is she?
10. Why does she think she'll die if she stops working?

Women and Work.

A study of women in Canada shows that in 1994:

1. 45 per cent of full-time workers were women.
2. 52 per cent of university students were women.
3. 63 per cent of women with children under 16 years old were employed.
4. Women workers earned 72 cents for every dollar men earned.



Background Information

Talk about women's traditional jobs and men's. Then talk about how women are changing those roles. What kinds of jobs are women in now that they wouldn't have been working at 30 years ago? Why do you think women don't earn as much money as men?

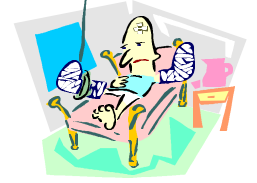
Questions

1. What percentage of workers are women?
2. Why do you think percentages of working women with young children and women attending university are so high?
3. Why do you think women only earn 72 cents for every dollar earned by men?
4. What does the word feminist mean to you?
5. What do you think the percentage of working women was 40 years ago?

Working Underground by Anthony K.

Can you imagine living all your life underground because you had no schooling? It's hard to explain. But I can remember always staying by myself. Because that way I didn't have to worry about someone asking me something. I could remember parties. I always drove. It made me feel good because then nobody asked me anything. They really relied on me to get them to the party and back home. That made me feel good. I could remember working for nine and a half years underground on one job because I couldn't write. My friend was the same. I remember I wanted to post on a job but it's hard when you can't read, so I would wait until everybody would leave and then I would go to the board and look at the posting on the board. I would mark the same letters down on my posting. Then I would tell the shift boss I didn't understand that part so he would fill it out for me. I started taking little pamphlets home with me and getting my wife to help me learn to read them. I would study the words. When I got my first posting, I had to know how to write. I would study a lot at home. One whole summer, I studied all I could about the job underground. That way, it would make me feel good about myself because I knew that other people could see me write. Not really good but they didn't know that. After 18 and a half years underground I got hurt.

That ended my mining days. After a few years on compensation they gave me a chance in school and I'm doing really good. I feel good about myself. We really have an understanding teacher; she really knows people like us and knows how to teach us. We had other teachers and I couldn't understand really what they were saying or doing.



Some days I would go to school and I feel I never learned anything. But I would go home and make up for lost time.

For the first time in my life I really feel good about myself because I know I can write a lot better. It doesn't really take that much to feel good about yourself. I find with the right teacher you can really learn a lot. But I work hard at home, thanks to my wife and some others.

Background Information

It's hard for an adult to learn to read and write. Talk about your experiences learning to read and write. How did you feel? Did you hide your problem?

Questions

1. What did Anthony do to hide his low reading skills?
2. What could he remember?
3. What do you think Anthony did underground?
4. How long did he work at his job underground?
5. What does the word letters mean in this story?
6. Use the word pamphlet in a sentence.
7. Who helped Anthony at home?
8. Why did Anthony stop working underground?
9. What is compensation?
10. Why do you think Anthony had trouble with the other teachers?

Surf Inlet

By George Moody.

For two years I drove as a motor man in a mine. Ore and waste out, steel and powder-tie in. An old cat lived in the mine; his eyes shone in the headlights of the motor. We worked hard because jobs were hard to get. Safe working rules were unheard of. My good friend was sent in alone and his head was crushed. We were sent in to clean it up before the police came. I was sick. We worked in the rubble from the blasts. A man had his leg smashed and they took him out of the mine on the top of a pile of ore. The pay was poor but jobs were hard to find. There were about 150 men on the crew and not one grey head.



The mine was on an island and faced the west. The wind blew off the open Pacific Ocean and you would have to see it to believe the rain and wind. We lived in a house that the former owner used as a guest house. We lived two to a room. I roomed with a man that was so tough, he was short but very strong. He had been a wrestler. One night when I came in I couldn't believe it, he was crying like a small boy. He had a letter from his wife in Vancouver telling him she was going to live with another man.

I was moved from the beach camp to the mine, the men were

discontented and the camp was full of rumours. The war had started and the men were wondering what was coming next. We had a bull cook that was a German. Of course that was right down Jack's alley. He got his friend Bob and started looking for the bull cook. It was evening and of course raining, when they started looking. Someone told the bull cook and he ran out in the bush, no hat, no coat—he just ran. Jack went up and down the camp; he and Bob found some vanilla and they went through the camp, up one side and down the next. There was not much sleeping in the camp that night. They looked in every room, sometimes two and three times. Next day to work with a thick head.

We were on the West Coast with all of its wind and rain. There were two animals I had never seen before. One was a white deer that lived only on the West Coast. He is small and looks very much like a white-tailed deer. One of them came right into camp one evening. He didn't seem to be too afraid as he was with several other deer. I couldn't get a picture of him. There was also a small white bear in the area.

Three of the men saw one and caught it without hurting it. They wanted to sell him to a park. The men had him on a chain. He would pretend to be asleep until he thought you were close, then he would jump and try to grab you. The Government made them let it go.

The valley was narrow and the walls steep. The wall so steep that you never saw much light. We lived at the fish camp where we could load and unload the boats. A fisherman came and stayed a few days. This was unusual but he had his wife with him, there were no other women in the camp. I thought it was funny that some of the men admired the fisherman's wife for going for a row each morning. Their boat was too small to have a bathroom and she was trying to get out of sight. We had a big dog at the camp; some of the men thought it was funny to give him a steel mill ball. He would push it around until his mouth and nose were bleeding. I used to take the ball away from him, much to his displeasure.

Background Information

What would it be like to work at a dangerous job for little pay? Why would someone work like that? Talk about the mining business and working in isolation. Has the mining business gotten worse or better?



Questions

1. What was George's job?
2. What lived in the mine?
3. Why do you think there wasn't one grey head on the crew?
4. What is rubble?
5. Why do you think working conditions were so bad?
6. What kind of weather was around the mine?
7. Use the word rumour in a sentence.
8. Which war is George talking about? How do you know this?
9. What does George mean by a thick head?
10. Do you think the men should have kept the animal? Why?
11. Why did the fisherman's wife row the boat every morning?

Other Activities: write a story about a war that you know something about. If you don't know a lot about any war, do some reading or talk to someone about war before you begin.

First Job

by Jill Kristofferson.

At the age of sixteen and after I had just passed grade ten I decided to get a job for the summer. All dressed up in my best wool suit and good shoes, I was set to take the world on. I asked my mom if she would drive me to Whalley but she shook her head: no. We had very lousy bus services, so it was walking or nothing. I walked all the way to Whalley, about six miles, to put in a couple of applications. It was a hot day for June and walking was very difficult. I was getting very tired and frustrated from the heat, walking too much, and from the turn-downs from employers. The last place I went to was Panco Poultry.

I stood outside the office door for a few minutes to get my nerves together, as I had butterflies in my stomach. I walked to the closest desk and said that I was looking for a job for the summer. A short, half bald man of 50 looked at me with cold blue eyes. He asked me one question which threw me off guard. The question was, "Are you right handed"? I said, "Yes". He then said, "You start Monday morning at 7:30 a m".

I couldn't believe my ears. I got a job! My heart skipped a beat

as I skipped out the door.

Monday morning I was up bright and early with my lunch in hand and my spirits high, to go to work. My Dad drove me that first day but he also said that I would have to make arrangements to get a ride to and from work thereafter. Through the back door I walked, proud as can be, down the hallway like everybody else to the laundry room. There stood the man who hired me with his piercing eyes. He looked me up and down with interest, grumbling under his breath. He threw me a very starched uniform. I put the stiff uniform on, placed my lunch on the table like everybody else and followed them into the factory. I was extremely nervous with sweaty hands and happy with heart. A huge muscular lady stopped in front of me and asked if I was the new girl. I said, "Yes," thinking that this person must be from the army because she was built like a tank with a very authoritative voice to match. This lady's name was Lila and she was going to be my supervisor. We marched down to the end of the building where all the assembly lines were. As she handed me a hook knife I noticed how much larger her hands were than mine. She stepped up and pushed herself between two other ladies on the assembly line and told me to watch her as this would be what I would be doing. A quick 60 seconds went by and then she stepped down and told me to go ahead and give it a try.

So with the hook knife in hand I started to cut the breast off the chicken. Like all assembly lines everybody does one thing and only one thing and the next person is doing her thing. I cut chicken breasts for eight long tiring hours. My legs were stiff and sore, my back ached, and my head hurt, but my arms and hands got the worst treatment of all. After eight hours we quit, at least I thought it was the end of the day and we walked into the lunchroom for a ten minute coffee break. I was sure surprised to find out it was not the end of the day. The bell went off and back to work we went for



another two hours. Finally, we came to the end of the day. I was so relieved. A kind lady drove me home. I dragged my sore body to the front door. When I stood in front of the door, I reached for the knob but my hand could not go around the knob. My hands were so swollen I had to kick at the door so someone would let me in as I couldn't knock on the door. My father opened the door and asked me how was my day. I started to cry.

I cried, "I'll never go back there again". Dad said to me that I would change my mind tomorrow. I couldn't eat. All I wanted to do was go to bed. Dad creamed my hands with Deep Heat and put gloves on them. He then made up a hot medicinal drink with dark rum in it. I cried myself to sleep. Next morning Dad woke me up at 5:30 am and he asked me if I was going to work. I didn't answer him, but I got up to get ready for work again. I worked at Panco for 7 years.

Background Information

It can be exciting and very scary to look for a job. Young people especially get very excited about having their own money. Talk about what it's like to look for a job: what you have to do, who you have to talk to and where you might go. Then talk about getting a job that's harder than you thought. What would you do about it? Would you quit?

Questions

1. How old was Jill when she decided to get a summer job?
2. Why do you think Jill's mother wouldn't drive her?
3. What is an application?
4. What was the last place she went to?
5. What does Jill mean when she says "butterflies in my stomach"?
6. Why do you think the man asked her if she was right-handed?
7. Who drove her to work on Monday?
8. Use the word arrangement in a sentence.
9. What do piercing eyes look like?
10. What was Jill's supervisor's name?
11. Why did Jill want to quit her job?

