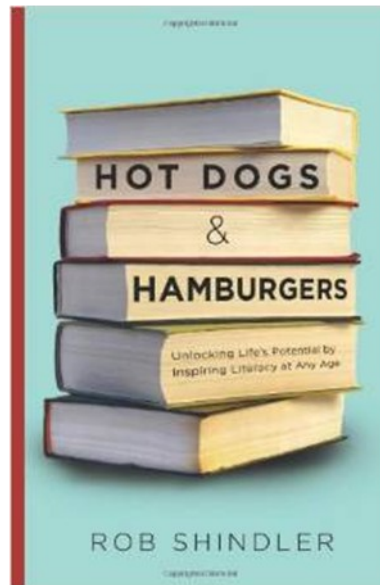




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Wisconsin Literacy's Statewide READ Toolkit



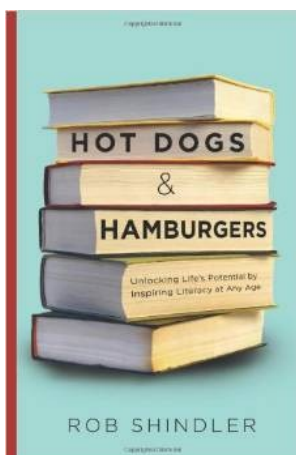
***Hot Dogs and Hamburgers:
Unlocking Life's Potential by Inspiring
Literacy at Any Age***
by Rob Shindler

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This toolkit is provided to Wisconsin Literacy members to enhance the Statewide READ. Whether you are encouraging current tutors or recruiting new, this book, *Hot Dogs and Hamburgers*, will provide a springboard into the world of literacy as only a hands-on tutor can share. Used with learners, this book can help them feel less alone in their journey and can also help them appreciate all that their tutor can provide. Used within your community, this book can help clarify the needs and encourage the work of literacy organizations and it might even help you raise a few donations.

In this toolkit, you will find helpful hints for how you can publicize the Statewide READ along with a sample news release, Facebook and Twitter posts that you can customize for your agency. Also included are ideas for how you can use *Hot Dogs and Hamburgers* to host a reading event or partner with others to help promote your agency. Finally, you will find a Discussion Guide that provides questions that will provide for interesting conversation related to the book along with a Reader's Guide that agencies can use to encourage the use of the book as lessons for learners.



About the Book

Learning to read builds confidence and hope. In this heartwarming story, author Rob Shindler tells how he offered his time, unflagging energy, and unconventional teaching techniques to help a boy with serious learning differences and adults suffering from low literacy levels. A father who wanted to help his son with his reading deficiencies, Rob discovered the way to that goal was through volunteering at Literacy Chicago. There, he learned firsthand how ridiculous the common misconceptions are about learning disabilities and adult illiteracy. The assortment of students he taught were ambitious people who were eloquent, driven, clever, and so funny they made him laugh out loud. Here, Rob shares his students' pain and humiliations, frustrations and hopes. *Hot Dogs & Hamburgers* demonstrates that literacy issues reside in all neighborhoods and that its victims are committed to finding dignity and life's possibilities through learning to read. Rob's teaching experiences are so motivating and rewarding that once you've read his story, you will rejoice in your own journey as a tutor or perhaps become a new literacy tutor.

How can I use the book?

Hot Dogs and Hamburgers—Unlocking Life's Potential by Inspiring Literacy at Any Age is an easy to read book for most good readers and a possible read for new readers. Consider asking your tutors to read the book with their learners as part of their lessons, perhaps as a read aloud. You might also want to form a book club of tutors and learners. The Discussion Guide is in this toolkit and is ready for use. The Reader's Guide will help learners understand some of the more involved words and provides comprehension questions.

Beyond your agency, reach out to book clubs in your area. Your library or local book stores (like Barnes and Noble) may have a listing of book clubs and their contact people. Invite them to adopt *Hot Dogs and Hamburgers* as a book or even as a supplement to what they've already decided to read. It's a very quick read and would be "an easy sell" to most book clubs. Work with your favorite librarian to promote the Statewide READ. They already love books and reading so they will probably be very interested in helping you promote this project.

The most important part is to use this as an opportunity to recruit new tutors for your program. Have sign up forms, training dates and information about your program handy. If you're promoting it at the library, ask them to place your information out where it is easily visible. Make sure you make it as easy as possible for potential new tutors to join you. If you're having a community book discussion, use a sign-in sheet where people can list their phone number and can indicate they'd like more information and then follow up with them. Remember the old adage, "Strike while the iron is hot" ? That's especially true here. Make an "ask" right at your event and then follow up in a day or two with those who indicated an interest.

How do I publicize the Statewide READ?

The easiest way to promote your event to the public is with a news release to your local paper(s). A sample release is included in the Toolkit and can be tweaked for your personalization. Be sure to get it in at least three weeks prior to your kick off. A call to your newspaper will help you determine to whom your release should be sent.

The same release should be sent to local radio stations. Your local National Public Radio stations are particularly helpful when it comes to promoting events such as this. Very often there will be a community affairs person who might agree to have you on for an interview. The same is also true for traditional radio, if they still have a local connection.

Church bulletins, labor newspapers, some cable TV systems and any other local media can also provide you with free promotion. Don't overlook your library as

a partner in promoting your Statewide READ. They will probably be happy to place signage or flyers in their buildings for you. Talk with the head librarian to see if they'd like to do more to partner with you. They will be a great resource in connecting to local book clubs who might participate.

Social media is a good tool to promote your participation in the Statewide READ. If you have a Facebook page for your agency, post every day about the Statewide READ and the book's message. Ask your "friends" to share your posts. Encourage your staff as well as tutors and learners to post to their Facebook pages too. Use Twitter to keep your message in front of people. The key to using social media is to use it consistently and often.

Sample Facebook posts



(Your program name) invites you to join us as we read *Hot Dogs and Hamburgers* by Rob Shindler. Community discussion will be held on (date) at (time) in the (location). We will be discussing chapters (the numbers). For details call (---) -----.

Have you read the book *Hot Dogs and Hamburgers* by Rob Shindler? The (students, learners, volunteers, etc) are reading it now! Join us as we discuss chapters (list those you are covering) on (date) at (time). We'll meet at (fill in the blank). Everyone is welcome!

Have you ever wondered what it is like to be a literacy tutor? Rob Shindler describes it in his book *Hot Dogs and Hamburgers*, part of the Wisconsin Literacy's Statewide READ. If you'd like to know more about the book or becoming a volunteer tutor, call us at (---) -----.

Sample Tweets



READ *Hot Dogs and Hamburgers* by Rob Shindler and learn how he became a literacy tutor. Call us at (---)-----

Hot Dogs and Hamburgers is a great fall read. Join us at (your program name) Friday (or whenever you're having a discussion.)

Where Can You Get the Book?

Wisconsin Literacy has a limited number of copies of *Hot Dogs and Hamburgers* at \$10 per copy. Contact your Regional Literacy Consultant to buy them. The book is also available through Amazon.com.

SAMPLE News Release format

For Immediate Use through (end date)

Contact person: (in your organization who can give more info and phone number)

(Your program name) is READIng *Hot Dogs and Hamburgers*

A part of the Wisconsin Literacy Statewide READ event

(Your city) The students and volunteers (or book club or whoever) of (your program name) are reading the book *Hot Dogs and Hamburgers* by Rob Shindler as part of the Wisconsin Literacy's Statewide READ and the annual 1200 Tutors in 12 Weeks campaign. The Statewide READ is a new program to bring attention to the need for literacy tutors throughout the area. We invite the public to join us.

More than ____ students in the (Your program's name) are participating in a book club style project. They, along with their tutors are meeting (weekly, or whatever schedule you use) to discuss the journey Rob Shindler took on his road to becoming a literacy tutor in Chicago. His very personal story....

The Statewide READ will conclude with a (add what your program is doing to celebrate—a picnic, a community discussion, etc.) The public is invited to.....

The (your program name) purpose is to provide training and educational opportunities to anyone wanting to improve their English reading and writing skills, learn English as a new language or to begin work on a GED. Anyone interested in learning more about the program as a learner or a volunteer tutor can call (____) _____. (Or use whatever sign-off information that tells what people can do to become a part of your program.)

#

Hot Dogs and Hamburger's Discussion Guide

"To Second Chances!"

Rob Shindler autographs his books with this phrase

For Discussion

- What are some "second chances" that learning how to read provides?
- On Page 6, Rob says: "I had judged a book by its cover." He tells of his reactions to riding in an elevator with Melvin. Do you remember riding in an elevator or being in another situation where you stereotyped others? Discuss the impact this may have on adults who struggle to read or communicate. Do they feel judged?
- On Pages 18-19, Rob says: "I never thought much about the word *illiterate* before. Those people lived a billion miles away from me." Do you think that adult learners realize that illiteracy is a hidden issue? Do you think adult learners feel isolated? How can we help make people more aware of the literacy issues in their area?
- On page 29, it says: "...if a child sees that his or her parent is unable to read, why should he or she care to learn? Illiteracy can feasibly serve to mentor complacency." Do you believe that illiteracy mentors complacency? Why or why not? How can we overcome complacency about literacy?
- On page 32, it says: "In the end, individual motivations are irrelevant because hope loves company." We each have our own stories and journeys, but there are some things that connect us all. Do you think that Rob's motivations are selfish? What motivates you to help others?
- On page 37, there is a discussion about the struggles that Charles faced. "Charles wanted more choices." What are some of the choices that are limited due to illiteracy? What are some of the choices that a literate person has that can change a life? What choices that you hold most dear to your heart would you lose if you were not able to read?
- On page 48, it says: "If you weren't able to keep up, you became lost. And soon forgotten." What does it mean to be lost in today's society? Is it different for those who can keep up and those who cannot? How does being "forgotten" impact adult learners? How do past experiences in school affect those who struggle?

- On page 88, it says: "...I stress how they need to concentrate on the things in life they know, not on the things they don't know." Does this philosophy go against the idea of life long learning? Why would this idea be important for adult learners? Is this important for all learners?
- On page 108, Melvin says: "...I'm not as smart as a fourth grader or third grade or second grader." Do you think Melvin is smart? How do you define smart? What are all the aspects that go into being smart?
- On page 109, there is the following information: "...on the first day of the tutoring seminar, one of the speakers specifically advised us to maintain a safe and professional distance from our students." Do you agree with this statement? Is it OK to develop a personal relationship with your learner? What are the pros and cons of developing such a relationship?
- On page 175, Rob says this about Michael: "It must have been hard wearing that mask all these years, alone." What mask does Michael wear? Do you wear masks sometimes? What masks do literacy learners wear that others do not?
- On page 190, Rob finishes the book with: "...we're all here to teach each other something. Sometimes, we just have to get our heads out of the clouds." How does this differ from the idea that we all can learn from each other? Why does he think we have our heads in the clouds? What do you think you can teach to someone else?

For General Discussion

- Do you think that Oliver enjoyed his sessions with his Dad?
- Usually, literacy councils do not allow children to teach adults. Was it acceptable for Oliver and Isabella to teach Rob's learners?
- Do you think that the learners in Rob's class are typical adult literacy learners? What other challenges do adult literacy learners face besides the ones presented by those in Rob's class?
- What incident or character in the book made the most lasting impression on you?

Hotdogs & Hamburgers: A Reader's Guide

Introduction

1) Look at the front cover of the book – what do you think the book might be about from the picture and the title *Hotdogs and Hamburgers*? Read the full title. What ages of people are meant by “inspiring literacy at any age?” Do you think being able to read is important to unlocking life’s potential? Read the heading in red letters on the top of the back cover. Do you agree?

2) Where do you find the name of the author (writer) of this book? Read the paragraph at the bottom of the back cover. What does it tell you about the author?

3) Look on the bottom right corner of the back cover, between the barcode and the price. What genre (type) of book is this? “Biography & Autobiography” mean that this book is the true story of someone’s life, written by the person who’s story it is. Rob is writing about his own life. *Hotdogs and Hamburgers* is an example of non-fiction because the story is true. Do you usually read true books (non-fiction), or do you usually read invented stories (fiction)?

4) Open the book and turn to the back of the first page. This is called the title page. What year was this book written? List 3 subjects of the book.

5) Look at the next page. Who did Rob write this book for? Is there someone in your life who makes you feel what Rob described? Do you do that for someone else?

6) Read the poem that begins, “I only have an hour...” Read it again aloud. What do you notice about it? Why do you think Rob wants to start his book with this poem?

7) A prologue opens a story, provides more background information, and captures our interest. Read the Prologue on pages 1 and 2. What new information did you learn about Rob’s family? The last sentence in the prologue on page 2 tells us about Rob’s goal in writing the book. Try to say it in your own words.

Suggestions for reading:

- This reader’s guide will divide the book into six sections, each about 30 pages long, but you decide what reading pace feels right for you. This is not a school book or a textbook. This is a chapter book you are reading for fun. If it gets exciting and you want to read ahead, go for it!

- Before you read a section, you may want to look over the questions in this guide to focus your attention on what to look for in that part of the plot (story). Then, after you read that section of the book, review what you read by trying to answer the questions.
- If this is your copy of the book, use a pencil to lightly circle words you don't know. Look up the meaning and write a short definition in the book next to the new word. If this is NOT your book, write new words in a notebook. I'll list some suggested vocabulary in the order they appear in each section. You may want to look at these words or others that you think are hard.
- While you read, pause between chapters and think about your life experiences. Can you find examples in your own life that relate to what Rob is writing about?

Section 1: Chapters 1-5, pages 3-32

Suggested vocabulary in Chapters 1-5: infertility specialist, cease, verdict, articulator/phonological/neurological, loquacious, uncharacteristically, complacency, levity, misconception, horrendous, acronym, consecutive, irrelevant

- 1) What words would you use to describe how Melvin looked? (Chapter 1)
- 2) How did Rob handle finding out from Miss Jennifer that Oliver had a "situation"? Page 12, first full paragraph gives a hard technical definition of Oliver's "situation". What is an easier way to describe the problem?
- 3) Who does Rob call to learn how to teach people to read? Why would it have been tempting to give up? (Chapter 3)
- 4) Why did Rob feel comfortable enough to call Ms. Porter, Aunt June Porter? (Chapter 4)
- 5) Why do they make *everyone* at Literacy Chicago attend three Wednesdays in a row for orientation? (Chapter 5)
- 6) Was there anything in the first five chapters that reminded you of your experiences?

Section 2: Chapters 6-11, pages 33-63

Suggested vocabulary in Chapters 6-11: fornicator, collective, hypermotivated, unorthodox, eloquent, impeccably, agility, forewarning, dignified, hygiene, paralyzing, impressionable, demeanors, ferocious, itinerary, super sleuths, tussling, analogies, sage, pleasantries, equivalent, triggers

- 1) What's the difference between a visual and an auditory learner (page 36)? Which one are you, or do you learn a different way?
- 2) Tell Charles' story and explain how it gave Rob the title of this book. (Chapter 6)
- 3) The timeline of this book jumps from Chapter 1 to Chapter 7. What are the names of the three students in Rob's first group?
- 4) Read the paragraph on the bottom of page 41 through the middle of page 42. Do you agree with what the tutor said about adult students? Why or why not? (Chapter 7)
- 5) What is Rob's "elephant theory?" (Chapter 8)
- 6) What's the difference between "renting" and "owning" words? (Chapter 10)
- 7) Think about the letters in the alphabet and assign a trigger word that's important to you for each letter. (Chapter 11)

Section 3: Inside O's Mind – Chapter 16, pages 64-93

Suggested vocabulary in Chapters 12-16: discretion, miniature, catchphrases, spicier, zanier, follicle, contortionist, fiasco, diabolical, interrogates, profanity, approximately, summoned, pertinent, schlepper, delusional

- 1) Pages 66-70 give us the experience of being in Oliver's mind. Can you remember similar thoughts when you were a 5th grader?
- 2) According to Rob, if letter sounds are like people in a family, then the consonant pairs (blends) are the _____. (Chapter 12)
- 3) Oliver's mom, Andi, created flashcards of all the Dolch words in Chapter 13. Remind yourself what the Dolch List is by re-reading the note at the bottom of page 35. How many Dolch words are there?
- 4) What deal does Rob offer Oliver for every word he reads and every letter he sounds out in words he doesn't know in *Black Beauty*? What is Oliver saving up for? (Chapter 14)
- 5) In addition to the Dolch words, how many more sight words are there? (Chapter 15)
- 6) How does Harold remind Rob of his Poppie? What is your pet name for your grandfather? (Chapter 16)

Section 4: Chapters 17-22, pages 94-124

Suggested vocabulary in Chapters 17-22: dissected, coincidence, damsel, impersonation, obstacles, suburban, quartet, endowed, propriety, negotiate, ceremoniously, premises, apprehension, organically, dilemma, tutelage, troupe, contradiction, anemia, infatuation, stratosphere, transcript, impeachment, potpourri, accessory, irrelevant

- 1) Why does Anne Marie get concerned when Rob starts talking about tricks and shortcuts? (Chapter 17)
- 2) Now Oliver's problem isn't identifying the individual sounds inside words, it's putting them back together and stretching them out to make complete words again. What does Rob have Oliver do at Flick Park to fix this? (Chapter 18)
- 3) Which of the four students' story on why they came to Literacy Chicago do you find the most touching? (Chapter 19)
- 4) Explain "Michael's Lemonade Stand." (Chapter 20)
- 5) Why is GEMS the perfect name for Rob's class? (Chapter 20)
- 6) Does the same teaching approach work for the after school program as the GEMS class? Why or why not? (Chapter 21)
- 7) Rob describes a party at Literacy Chicago complete with a cake that has ten candles. What are they celebrating? (Chapter 22)

Section 5: Chapters 23-30, pages 125-154

Suggested vocabulary in Chapters 23-30: astrologymania, reallocations, circumstances, immeasurable, shebang, litigation, intimidating, continuances, cologne, sensational, palpable, conquest, fraternity, poised, serenades, finale, triumphant, ovations, fluke, sacrilegious, goatee, mourn, scrumptious, exaggerated, meticulously, inaugural, sentiments

- 1) What brave thing does Anne Marie do at work? How is she going to surprise her father that evening? (Chapter 23)
- 2) What does Oliver do before finishing the last page in *Black Beauty*? (Chapter 25)
- 3) Why is Elvira's childhood copy of *Black Beauty* all dented up? (Chapter 26)

4) Who does Rob take an emergency trip to Florida to see? (Chapter 27)

5) At the bottom of page 144, Rob says, “I think everyone should mourn someone they love before it is too late. During life. It’s important to be sad about losing something while it’s still here.” Can you think of someone you will mourn during life?

6) What two things does Rob tell Oliver on the phone that turn out to be completely wrong?

7) Rob and his brothers sign the DNR (do not resuscitate) directive for their mother. What are the last words he says to her? (Chapter 29)

Section 6: Chapters 31-41, pages 155-190

Suggested vocabulary in Chapters 31-41: shivah, ritualistic, recuperation, majestic, incomprehensible, realm, poetic justice, zaniest, dynamic, phraseologies, obscene, blathering, tinkling, stanza, admonished, invalid, lucrative, dwindle, knuckles, bittersweet, caroming, accessorized, bestowed, magnitude, curtsies, suppress, smirk, sanctuary, perpetual, protocol

1) What two things does Oliver offer to do while Rob is taking care of his father in Florida? (Chapter 31)

2) What steps do Oliver and Isabella have to take to become substitute reading tutors? (Chapter 33) Would you be comfortable being tutored by a child?

3) Isabella introduced the class to a different approach to reading. What was her plan? (Chapter 33)

4) Why did the class sweep imaginary brooms at Michael? (Chapter 34)

5) Where did Rob need to pay a final visit before heading home to Chicago? (Chapter 38)

6) What amazing surprise did Rob’s class have for him on the evening he returned to Literacy Chicago? (Chapter 40)

Conclusion

1) An epilogue is a piece of writing at the end of a book that provides closure. Read the epilogue on pages 191-193. Rob gives us a call to action. What next step would he like readers to take?

2) Read the Acknowledgements on pages 194-196. How many literary agents did Rob need to contact to push this project into a published book? Do you think it was worth all the effort?

3) Would you recommend this book to someone else to read? If yes, who?

4) Turn the book over and see the website on the back cover highlighted in red. From Rob's site you can access video clips of his class in action and see Oliver and Isabella.