

**“I can’t read.”**  
**a project on illiteracy**

**process book**

Jennifer Judd

# research: illiteracy

## impacts

Low levels of literacy influence gross national income as well as income inequality. According to the Department of Education, 54% of U.S. adults read below a sixth-grade level. This is a significant number because literacy is correlated with personal income, employment levels, health, and overall economic growth. Literacy is just one of the aspects of education that have decreased across the population.

The result is a lack of active and informed members of society, large-scale political disengagement, aggregated economic loss in the form of suppressed GDP, greater dependency on social welfare programs, and higher incarceration costs.

## causes

Environmental factors such as low exposure to literature or language barriers can also limit reading success.

Teachers may not receive explicit instruction on how to teach reading skills, and existing reading curricula often do not align with the current science on how students learn.

## recognition

Illiteracy is recognized around the world as a significant social issue with programs targeted to specific populations

around the world receiving funding through USAID and UNESCO. Within the United States, the Department of Education has the lead in terms of standardization and development, but private organizations bring resources to the table for specific programming targeted to regions and age groups.

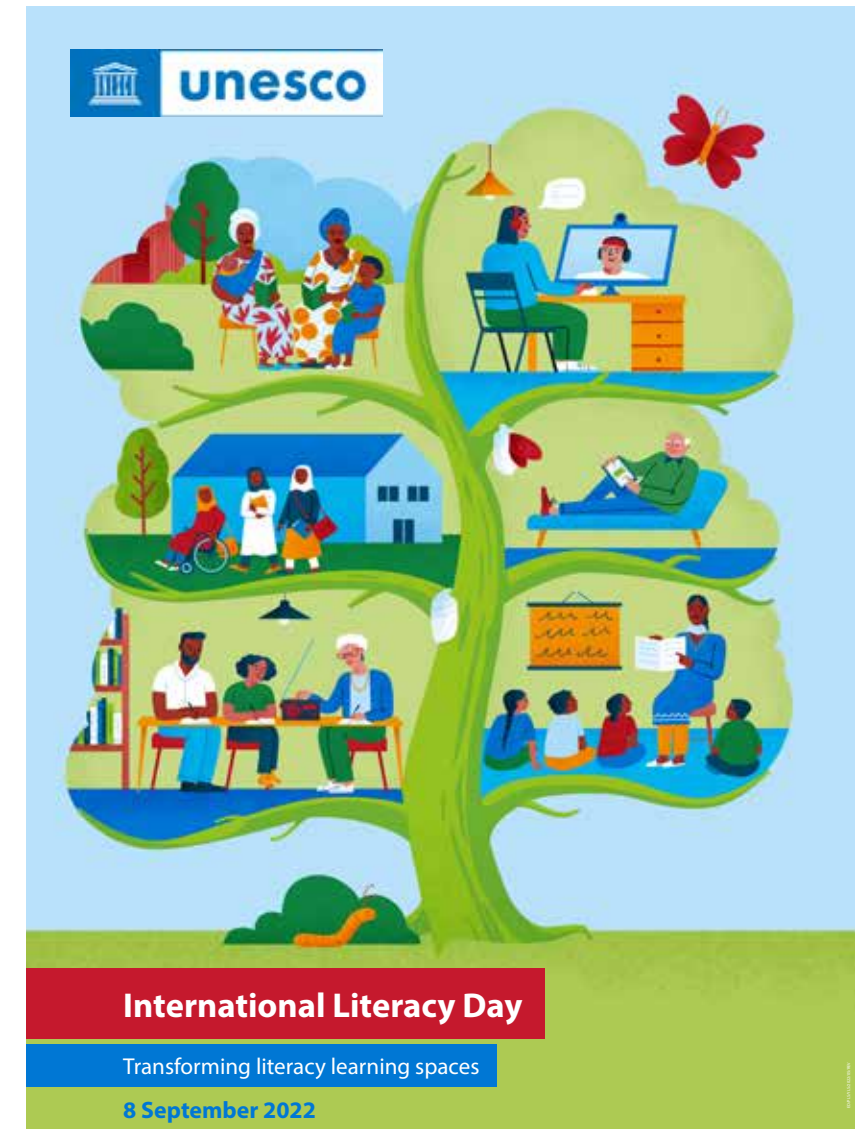
## Barbara Bush Foundation

“Literacy is the key to solving everything.” is the tagline on the homepage of the Barbara Bush Foundation. This speaks to literacy as a foundation for issues such as healthcare, poverty, incarceration, political divisiveness, and weakened communities.

## approaches

The two main approaches to relieving illiteracy in the U.S. can be simplified to child-focused or adult-focused. While both are critical to success, many of the Bush Foundation’s work is done looking at overall communities with an emphasis on adult literacy.

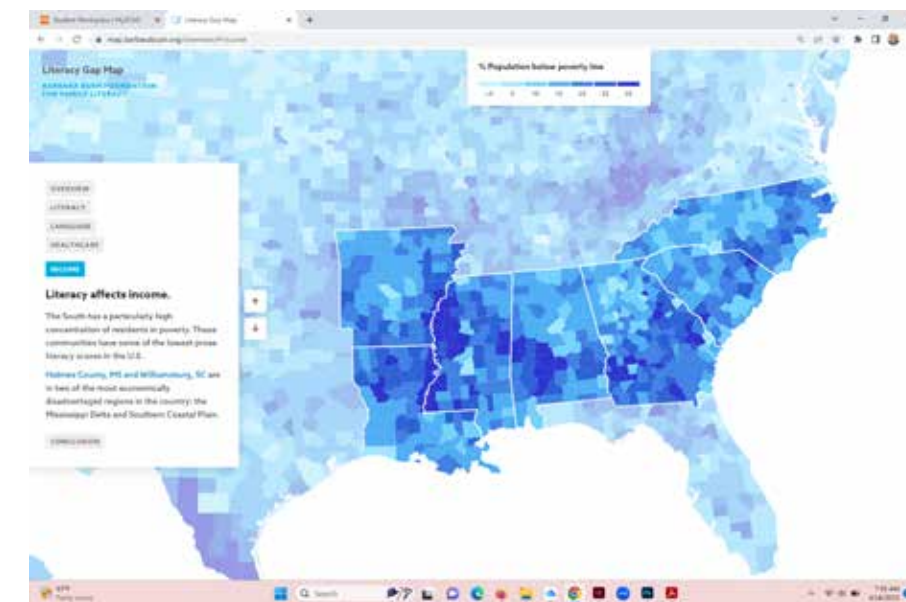
School age curriculum development and teacher training is critical, but there are more barriers in terms of educational bureaucracy.



# research: Barbara Bush Foundation

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Barbara Bush Foundation. The header includes the 'Bb' logo and navigation links for 'ABOUT US', 'CONTACT US', 'PODCAST', and 'NEWS'. A prominent headline reads 'Literacy\* is the key to solving *everything*.' Below this, a statistic states '130 million adults in the U.S. struggle to read basic sentences.' The footer features three news snippets: 'The Honorable Barbara Bush' and 'Find a Literacy'.

This page is titled 'The reality of literacy in America'. It features a sub-headline 'Literacy affects everyone, everywhere' and a large statistic: '1 in 5 adults in the U.S. struggle to read basic sentences.' The text explains that low literacy impacts every aspect of life and is often associated with unemployment, low education, and lack of healthcare access. A blue call-to-action box at the bottom encourages exploring the literacy gap map.





# project brief: literacy

“This study translates into dollars and cents what the literacy field has known for decades: **low literacy prevents millions of Americans from fully participating in our society and our economy as parents, workers and citizens,**” said Robinson. “It lies at the core of multigenerational cycles of poverty, poor health, and low educational attainment, contributing to the enormous equity gap that exists in our country.”

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/michaelnietzel/2020/09/09/low-literacy-levels-among-us-adults-could-be-costing-the-economy-22-trillion-a->

## topic

Low levels of literacy influence gross national income as well as income inequality. According to the Department of Education, 54% of U.S. adults read below a sixth-grade level. This is a significant number because literacy is correlated with personal income, employment levels, health, and overall economic growth. Literacy is just one of the aspects of education that have decreased across the population.

## objective

Our objective is to create a campaign in support of the mission of the Barbara Bush Foundation that will engage viewers to contribute to a cause that helps spread literacy through engagement. We are not targeting the non-reading public, but those who can support programs that address illiteracy. The call to action will be more personal than financial, even though the cost of illiteracy to the U.S. GDP is significant.

## audience

The primary audience for this project will be people who can successfully read and want to help others achieve greater equity through literacy. They want to influence literacy in their communities through the support of more robust library programs, higher academic and school funding, and adult education programs.

## deliverables

Poster set  
Magazine ad spread

## schedule

Thu Class 2:  
Project Brief

Tue Class 3:  
Continue research  
Develop vision board

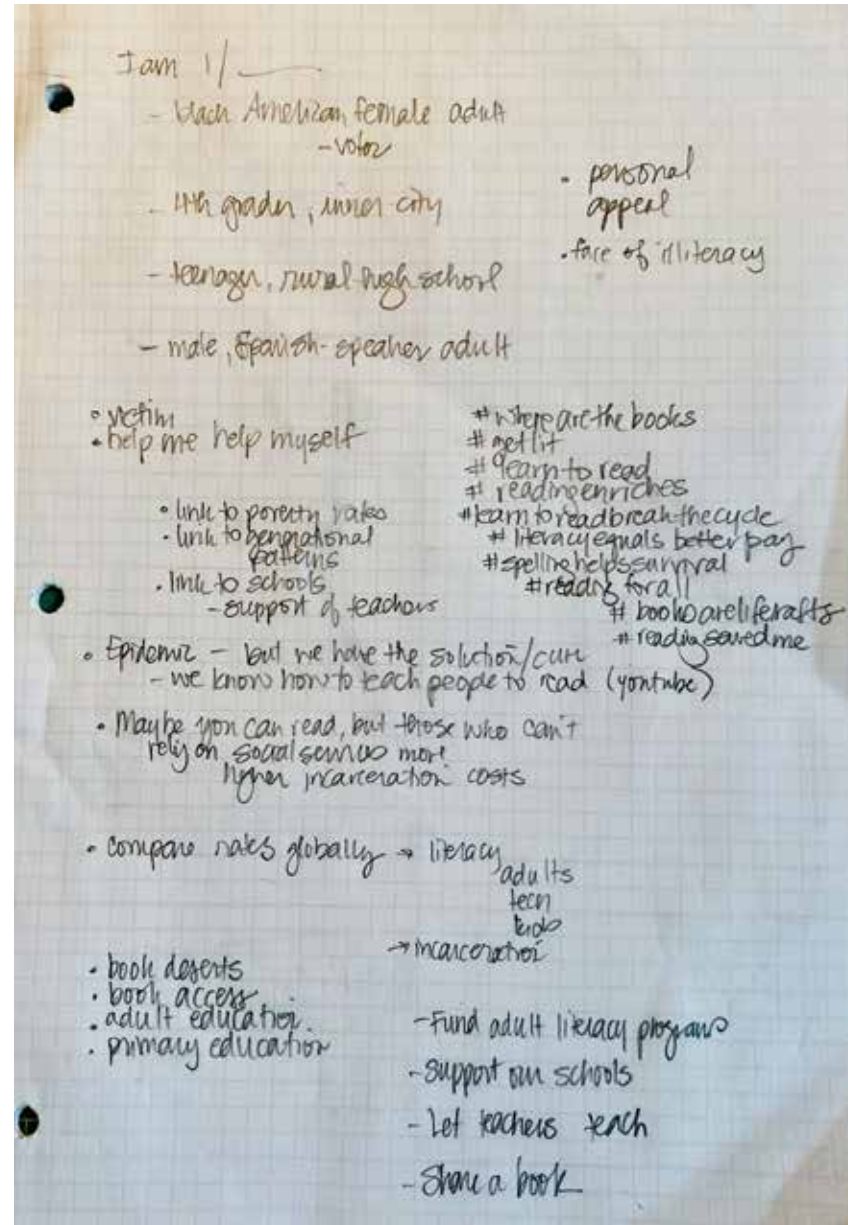
Thu Class 4:  
Develop design approaches  
Pamphlet Thumbnails

Tue Class 5:  
Pamphlet comps  
Poster Thumbnails

Thu Class 6:  
Finalize designs

Tue Class 7:  
Final deliverables due  
Final process book due

# brainstorming



While brainstorming on the topic, it became clear that I wanted the message to be more hopeful and positive than shaming those who can't read.

When I initially thought about the topic, we talked about how dumb Americans have gotten. Through the research, I realized that much of this stupidity is not the fault of the individual, but the result of a failing system.

The links to cyclical poverty and broken communities was new to me, so I imagine that it might be new to other readers who might initially judge people who can't read.

## help me help myself

Looking at the issue of literacy at a personal level, while highlighting the significant numbers affected. We'll put a face on some of the statistics and then make a call to action for help.

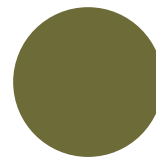
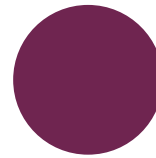
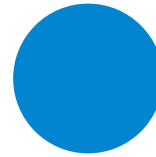
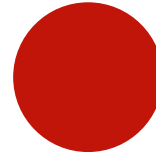
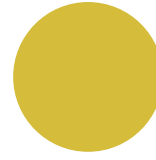
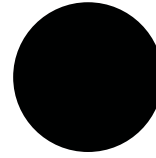
- A Black female adult
- A fourth grader in a crowded classroom
- A teenager in a rural high school
- A man in jail
- A young adult working multiple jobs
- A struggling parent

All are in high-risk groups when it comes to the epidemic of illiteracy and can lead to a discussion of book deserts, access to adult education, the link to poverty cycles, the impact on national GDP, the relationship to incarceration rates and primary school education.

Deliverables:

- Set of posters
- Printed two-page magazine ad

#breakawayfrompoverty  
#spellingforsurvival  
#wherearethebooks  
#nevertoolatetolearn  
#readingequalsopportunity  
#wedesevbetbetterthanafourthgradelevel  
#iamnotdumbiwantttolearn



# color & typography systems



Hex: #dcd731  
RGB: 220/215/49  
CMYK: 16.84/5.24/94.85/0



Hex: #7b8d1a  
RGB: 123/141/26  
CMYK: 28/0/100/42



Hex: #816c59  
RGB: 129/108/89  
CMYK: 45/50/83/15



Hex: #c59650  
RGB: 197/150/80  
CMYK: 22.6/40.7/79/2.15



Hex: #1b9d9d  
RGB: 27/157/157  
CMYK: 79/78/40/.5

CHAINPRINTER

Aglet Slab Light

Brandon Grotesque Medium



# poster comps v1

I CAN'T READ.  
THERE ARE 130,000,000  
ADULTS IN AMERICA  
WHO ARE ILLITERATE.

I WANT TO GET MY HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA.  
I WANT TO READ THE NEWSPAPER.  
I WANT TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN LIFE.  
HELP ME HELP MYSELF.

FUND ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMS.



#breakawayfrompoverty  
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#wherearethebooks  
#nevertoolatetolearn  
#readingequalsoportunity  
#wedeservebetterthanafourthgradelevel  
#iamnotdumbiwanttolearn  
#advocateforadulthoodeducation

I CAN'T READ.  
THERE ARE 130,000,000  
OF US IN AMERICA  
WHO ARE ILLITERATE.

I WANT TO BE AN INFORMED VOTER.  
I WANT TO READ BOOKS TO MY KIDS.  
I WANT TO MAKE MORE MONEY AT A BETTER JOB.  
HELP ME HELP MYSELF.

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#iamnotdumbiwanttolearn  
#advocateforadulthoodeducation

I CAN'T READ.  
THERE ARE 130,000,000  
ADULTS IN AMERICA  
WHO ARE ILLITERATE LIKE ME.

I DON'T WANT TO LIVE IN POVERTY.  
I WANT MY CHILDREN TO HAVE A BETTER LIFE.  
I WANT TO CONTRIBUTE TO SOCIETY.  
HELP ME HELP MYSELF.

FUND ADULT LITERACY PROGRAMS.



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# poster comps exploration

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**Bb** BARBARA BUSH  
FOUNDATION FOR  
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**Bb** BARBARA BUSH  
FOUNDATION FOR  
LITERACY

EMPLOYMENT APPLICATION

PLEASE NOTE: It is important that you complete all parts of the application. If your application is incomplete or blank, we will not be able to process it. To enter on a section, please write N/A.

Name (Last, M.I., First) \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City, State, and Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail \_\_\_\_\_  
Job Type \_\_\_\_\_  
Days/hours available to work \_\_\_\_\_  
Can you work nights?  Yes  No  
Can you work irregular hours?  Yes  No  
Formal education \_\_\_\_\_  
Personal with \_\_\_\_\_

I can't read.

I want to get a job,  
but it's all a blank to me.

**Fight for literacy.**

**Bb** BARBARA BUSH  
FOUNDATION FOR  
LITERACY


# poster revisions


There are 130,000,000 adults in America who are illiterate like me.

I want to get my high school diploma.  
I want to read stories to my children.  
I want to contribute to society.  
Help me help myself.

**Fight for literacy.**

I CAN'T READ.



**Bb** | BARBARA BUSH FOUNDATION FOR EARLY LITERACY 

I'm just one of 130,000,000 adults in America who are illiterate.

I want to be an informed voter.  
I want to be less of a burden on our economy.  
I want to make more money at a better job.  
Help me help myself.

**Fight for literacy.**

I CAN'T READ.




**Bb** | BARBARA BUSH FOUNDATION FOR EARLY LITERACY 


I'm one of the 1,200,000 prisoners in America who is functionally illiterate

I don't want to spend my life incarcerated.  
I am ready to work.  
I can give back to society.  
Help me help myself.

**Fight for literacy.**

I CAN'T READ.



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**Bb** 

There are 130,000,000  
adults in America  
who are illiterate like me.

I want to get my high school diploma.  
I want to read stories to my children.  
I want to contribute to society.  
Help me help myself.

**Fight for literacy.**

**I CAN'T READ.**



**Bb** 

There are 130,000,000  
adults in America  
who are illiterate like Rene.

She can't read stories to her kids.  
She wants to get her high school diploma.  
She's ready to contribute more to society.  
Help her help herself.

**Fight for literacy.**

**I CAN'T READ.**



**Bb** 

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#readtogether  
#readingmatters  
#adulteducation  
#illiteraterate  
#readingispower  
#adulteducationmatters  
#adulteducationworks  
#adulteducationforall

**Bb** 

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130,000,000  
adults in America  
who are illiterate.

I want to be an informed voter.  
I want to be less of a burden on our economy.  
I want to make more money at a better job.  
Help me help myself.

**Fight for literacy.**

**I CAN'T READ.**



**Bb** 

Anthony is one of  
130,000,000 adults in  
America who are illiterate.

He wants to be an informed voter.  
He can be less of a burden on our economy.  
He could make more money at a better job.  
Help him help himself.

**Fight for literacy.**

**I CAN'T READ.**




**Bb** 

# poster revisions

I'm one of the 1,200, 000 prisoners in America who is functionally illiterate

I don't want to spend my life incarcerated. I am ready to work. I can give back to society. Help me help myself.

**Fight for literacy.**



I CAN'T READ.

**Bb** 

James is one of the 1,200,000 prisoners in America who is functionally illiterate

He can't read a job application. He wants to work. He can give back to society. Help him help himself.

**Fight for literacy.**




I CAN'T READ.

**Bb** 


**I CAN'T READ.**  
THERE ARE 130,000,000 ADULTS IN AMERICA WHO ARE ILLITERATE LIKE ME.

I DON'T WANT TO LIVE IN POVERTY. I WANT MY CHILDREN TO HAVE A BETTER LIFE. I WANT TO CONTRIBUTE TO SOCIETY. HELP ME HELP MYSELF.

FUND ADULT LITERACY PROGRAMS.




#breakawayfrompoverty  
#gettingonschool  
#educationforall  
#readingisapower  
#weknowwhatitfeelslike  
#itsnotthatdifficult  
#educationforall

**Bb** 


There are 130,000,000 adults in America who are illiterate like Serena.

She wants to make healthy food for her family. She can't read the labels at the grocery store. She is afraid of getting lost on the bus. Help her help herself.

**Fight for literacy.**



I CAN'T READ.

**Bb** 

# final posters

There are 130,000,000 adults in America who are illiterate like Rene.

She can't read stories to her kids.  
She wants to get her high school diploma.  
She's ready to contribute more to society.  
Help her help herself.

**Fight for literacy.**

I CAN'T READ.



**Bb** Billboard Literacy 

Anthony is one of 130,000,000 adults in America who are illiterate.

He wants to be an informed voter.  
He can be less of a burden on our economy.  
He could make more money at a better job.  
Help him help himself.

**Fight for literacy.**

I CAN'T READ.




**Bb** Billboard Literacy 

James is one of the 1,200,000 prisoners in America who is functionally illiterate

He can't read a job application.  
He wants to work.  
He can give back to society.  
Help him help himself.

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I CAN'T READ.



**Bb** Billboard Literacy 


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She can't read the labels at the grocery store.  
She is afraid of getting lost on the bus.  
Help her help herself.

**Fight for literacy.**

I CAN'T READ.



**Bb** Billboard Literacy 

# magazine spread revisions

WE CAN'T READ.

James, Rene, Anthony, and Serena are just four of the 130 million adults in America who are illiterate.

Illiteracy costs the U.S. \$2.2 trillion per year.

Helping them helps us all.

**Fight for literacy.**



**Bb** | BARBARA BUSH  
FOUNDATION for  
FAMILY LITERACY



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# magazine spread revisions

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**Bb** BARBARA BUSH FOUNDATION for FAMILY LITERACY



**WE CAN'T READ.**

James, Rene, Anthony, and Serena are just four of the **130 million adults** in America who are illiterate.

They can't read signs, books, magazines, articles, food labels, advertisements, job applications, medication bottles, government forms, schoolwork, bus schedules, rental agreements, service contracts, emails, bank statements, or legal documents.

Help them help themselves.

**Fight for literacy.**

That is James  
He can't read a sign at the store.  
He can't read a job application.  
He can't read a contract.  
He can't read a bill.

That is Rene  
She can't read a sign at the store.  
She can't read a job application.  
She can't read a contract.  
She can't read a bill.

That is Anthony  
He can't read a sign at the store.  
He can't read a job application.  
He can't read a contract.  
He can't read a bill.

That is Serena  
She can't read a sign at the store.  
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**Bb** BARBARA BUSH FOUNDATION for FAMILY LITERACY

