

The Reader

People, Words & Change



Adult literacy,
one-on-one.



September 2026

The Reader is the quarterly newsletter of People, Words & Change. We welcome stories and articles by our learners.

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Feedback on the manner in which PWC provides its services to people with disabilities, and any other services, is encouraged and appreciated.

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Power of Words Breakfast

Every year, on September 8, PWC celebrates its wonderful learners and International Literacy Day. This year, we came together for the 17th time to honour learning, hard work, and success. Around 70 learners, tutors, community partners, supporters, elected officials, and friends of PWC attended this year's event, engaged in meaningful conversations, enjoyed a hot breakfast catered by Chef Ric's, and checked out over 65 books that are to be won in our annual Book Draw.

The always-entertaining and full-of-energy Jeff Larocque returned as our emcee. We were fortunate to have Claude Munson performing his original song *Sweet Love* to open the event. Next, we heard from four of our learners. For a lot of attendees, this is the highlight of the event as we are able to put faces, names, and personal stories to what PWC does.

Eric, Miriam, Waheda, and Sarah spoke about the circumstances surrounding them coming to PWC and their experiences in the program. We heard stories of failures, facing challenges with resilience, and successes; we heard stories about gaining confidence to find employment after working on writing and computer skills at PWC; and we heard stories of the personal touch and impact our tutors had on our learners.



Then we listened to the keynote speaker, Sonia Bebbington, Chief Executive Officer and Chief Librarian of the Ottawa Public Library (OPL), who shared her own personal connection with the OPL. She highlighted the importance of literacy, equal access to literacy resources and reading, and touched upon some important services OPL provides Ottawa residents.

Following this wonderful speech, Board President, Catherine Newell, talked about some of PWC's impacts and successes over the past year.



A special thank you to PWC Executive Director, Karen Hilderman, the staff at PWC (Mahtab and Marenda), and all the volunteers who helped out before, during, and after the event to make this year's Breakfast a memorable event!

Our Breakfast would not be possible without the generosity of our Sponsors; their commitment to PWC and literacy in Ottawa is greatly appreciated.

Our annual book draw is also made possible by the generosity of many publishers who donated the books. Hats off and "thank you" to you all!

Sponsors and Donors

We would like to thank our donors and sponsors for their generous support of this year's Power of Words Breakfast

LiUNA, ROVLN

Books on Beechwood, Character Creative, Dencs Team CIBC
Private Wealth Management, Eastern Ontario Training Board,
Paterson & Company, Perfect Books
ABFK, Cooperator's Insurance Josée Brisson, McCay Duff LLP,
Natalie Karam Innovation Realty Ltd

And a special thank-you to the publishers who donated to our Book Draw!

Browntrout Publishers, Inc.

Cormorant Books

Douglas & McIntyre

ECW Press

Firefly Books

Greystone Books

Hachette Book Group

HarperCollins Canada

Nimbus Publishing

Penguin Random House Canada

Raincoast Books

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PoW Breakfast Learner Speeches

Did you know that a tree grows in two directions?

When a seed is planted, its roots grow into the ground while the shoot grows upward towards the light. As the roots grow in darkness, they meet a lot of resistance but continue to push through the soil, around stones and other obstacles. The health and the strength of the root system influence the health and vigour of the shoot system, other factors held constant.



My name is Eric. I came to Canada from Uganda in 2022. When I arrived, I realized that in order to get meaningful employment and become useful to my new community, I had to upgrade my computer skills. That is how I came to PWC to learn and strengthen those skills.

Just as the roots of a tree grow in darkness and meet resistance, I also encountered challenges as I learned these new computer skills. There were things that were unfamiliar to me, and I often had to practice them repeatedly before I could grasp them well. But with the support, guidance and opportunities provided at PWC, I kept growing.

Just as a strong root system gives a tree the foundation to thrive, the effort of our computer instructors, Shaniece, Marenda, and Karen, as well as the opportunity given to us by PWC will help us to grow, become stronger and contribute meaningfully to our community.

For that, I am truly grateful.

– Eric



PoW Breakfast Learner Speeches

Throughout my education, I experienced challenges with communicating my ideas and expressing myself effectively in English. These difficulties affected my confidence and my ability to demonstrate my knowledge, but for many years I did not know where to find the support I needed.

Let's begin with my childhood: my family primarily spoke Arabic at home, and my parents were dealing with their own challenges, and this limited their ability to advocate for me. As a result, I did not always have the academic support and guidance I needed.

My education was also affected by frequently changing schools and languages. Between the ages of four and fourteen, I attended three different French elementary schools. During my teenage years, I continued changing between three different high schools in English. Moving between schools and languages made it difficult for me to develop a consistent academic foundation. At the elementary level, I felt that I had not developed strong foundations. Although I graduated from high school with good grades, I did not feel adequately prepared for university or college.

In post-secondary education, the increased expectations for academic writing, critical thinking, and communication made these challenges more apparent. I often understood the material, but struggled to organize my ideas and express them clearly. For example, in a communications course at Algonquin College, I had difficulty expressing my thoughts and analyzing works such as those of Tchaikovsky, despite understanding the material.

Similarly, at Carleton University, I struggled to write an eight-page opinion essay on Rudyard Kipling's *The Man Who Would Be King*. These difficulties were not due to a lack of interest or effort, but rather to challenges organizing and developing my ideas into a sustained written argument. I eventually realized that I needed strategies to help me communicate my understanding more effectively, so I began seeking support and found PWC. There, I received valuable guidance from volunteer tutors, particularly Inta and Martha.

Through their guidance, I learned practical skills such as brainstorming, summarizing articles, and creating essay outlines. I learned to break larger assignments into smaller, manageable steps and to organize my ideas before beginning to write. These strategies have made academic work more manageable and helped me communicate my understanding more clearly.

Most importantly, I have developed a better understanding of how I learn. I now recognize that taking time to organize my thoughts before communicating them helps me express my ideas more effectively. I have also become more comfortable seeking support when I need it.

I continue to work on my communication skills, but I now approach academic challenges with greater confidence and practical strategies. My experience has taught me that difficulty expressing an idea does not mean that I do not understand it. With the right support and tools, I can develop my ideas and communicate what I know.

-Miriam



PoW Breakfast Learner Speeches

Good day everyone,

My name is Waheda. I came to Canada in 2022 from Afghanistan. Even though I graduated from high school in June 2026 here in Canada, and from my home country as well, my English still was not strong enough. My computer skills needed improvement, as well. That is why I decided to join PWC.

Before PWC, I did not even know basic things like what the desktop is. So I decided to learn three powerful programs: Word, Excel and PowerPoint. I wanted to know how to use them properly, and how they are better than other tools like Google Docs and Slides.

When I found PWC, I felt very happy. It helped me improve both my English and my computer skills. This was so useful for me because as I am starting university soon, almost everything is going to be based on Word documents and PowerPoint.

Every week, I meet with my tutor. We work on my reading and writing skills together, and I go to the computer lab to build my digital skills. Slowly, I get better and better.

Since I started at PWC, I have become a Canadian citizen. I finished my Medical Office Admin certificate at Herzing College. Now, I am about to start studying psychology at the University of Ottawa. My dream is to become a doctor one day.

PWC helped me build a better future. I want to thank my tutors and everyone at PWC for helping me.

I encourage all the people to join PWC.

Thank you,
Waheda



PoW Breakfast Learner Speeches

Good morning,

Thank you for the invitation. It's an honour for me to be here and I'm grateful.

My name is Sarah. When I look back thirteen months ago, I'm proud of the person I have become. I'm able to answer the phone with confidence, leave a voicemail in English, make an announcement to a whole school and work with people speaking only English. These accomplishments are great milestones for me.

Thirteen months ago, I lived in Senegal. I'm a citizen of Cote d'Ivoire. Both Senegal and Cote d'Ivoire are located in West Africa. The language spoken in these countries is French. We learn English during secondary school. I have extensive experience in administration and HR, more often using French. My family and I decided to immigrate, and I chose Ottawa because of this city's bilingualism. But what I had imagined about a bilingual city was totally different. Most people speak English here. I realized then that I had to improve my English.

During this learning journey, I had different feelings, and some of them are still present. Imagine failed interviews, and thinking that in your language, you would have had better chance to succeed.

Or being in a group, and everybody is speaking and you're just sitting and smiling without a word because you don't know how express yourself. Or somebody talks to you, and you don't understand anything from the conversation; and again, a stupid smile.

I was navigating through this feeling of being useless and questioning the choice I'd made about immigrating.

During that time, I discovered PWC: People Words & Change. During one conversation, my sister-in-law told me that she was a client of PWC, and she enjoyed the program even though she hadn't spent a long time in it. One afternoon, I did some Googling and I found the number of PWC; I called and talked with Dee. She's retired now. I was stressed and uncomfortable on the phone. But she was warm and spoke slowly to allow me to understand. A week later, I was in the PWC office. I met Dee. We discussed my goals, background and upbringing. She explained to me the focus of PWC: literacy, reading and writing. She established my Learner Plan and told me that PWC would be looking for a tutor for me. But during this time, she taught me. After she retired, Mahtab did and finally, Kristen became my tutor. PWC provided me with learning sessions and opportunities before I was matched with a tutor. They could have told me to wait until they had a tutor for me, but they did not want me to miss out while they were looking for a tutor. With my tutor, I got to choose the library. These accommodations make my learning easier.

But my challenge was the time. I'm a mom of four; I was studying, looking for a job, taking care of the house, managing appointments, winter, and so on.

But it was important for me to find time for my English learning. These 4 hours for English were mandatory. My goal is to be fluent to take advantage of the opportunities that this beautiful country has to offer.

I'm very grateful to PWC. My tutor uses her time during the weekend. She has young children, but she is willing to help, whatever the distance from her house. Teaching needs a lot of patience, and the PWC team really wants you to be successful. They use their personal skills to help you in multiple ways. I remember that Mahtab told me to change a sentence in my writing, not because there was a mistake in it, but because it would make the flow of the text better.

Or Kristen may use an image, or even French when I don't understand something, or wrongly use a word. And she just amazingly supports the weird stories I write sometimes, without judgement.

It's not just about language; it's supporting the learners in their paths, through failure and success. One thing that I really love too is our vocabulary lessons, especially the book *504 Absolutely Essential Words in English*. I also enjoy grammar. I learn a lot about using the right tense. Now I pay attention to the tense I use when speaking or even writing. My professional communication has improved.

Now, I am working in an English environment. I'm able to understand, to communicate and to give information in English. I'm still making mistakes when talking or writing. But now, I'm able to write directly in English, without writing or thinking in French first.

I have succeeded in 3 interviews in English. Two of them were for casual positions and the other was for the permanent position that I occupy now.

Were the interviews fluent? No.

Did I find amazing hiring managers who looked beyond the language, the mistakes, the fluency? Yes, I did.

I'm grateful for these people who trusted me, these people who have helped me and continue to support me.

I'm not here just by my own efforts. I'm here thanks to our beautiful community. Will I continue to learn English? I will. My goal is fluency.

My advice for you today is to keep going. A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. If you feel discouraged, look beyond what is in the mirror now; imagine who you'll become in one, two, thirteen months from now and celebrate your accomplishments.

PWC, thank you for making our dreams a reality. We can't afford a personal tutor in English. You give it to us for free. I hope that many learners find you and take advantage of the amazing work you are doing. I will never forget it.

- Sarah



PWC News

Goodbye and Hello!

Having worked at PWC since November 2022, Shaniece accepted a new role at a different nonprofit organization. We thank Shaniece for all her wonderful contributions to PWC and our learners. She will be missed greatly, but we wish her all the best in her new role.

We would also like to welcome Marenda Douglas to our team! Marenda started working as the new Computer Instructor in August. Over the past 12 years, she has worked with diverse adult learners in Japan and Canada, supporting individuals from more than 25 countries with varied learning needs, abilities, and life experiences.

Whether teaching English, facilitating orientations, supporting newcomers, or coaching volunteer tutors, she has learned that meaningful learning begins by meeting people where they are at. Every learner brings a unique story, and Marenda enjoys creating supportive, engaging environments where all learners feel encouraged to learn, ask questions, and grow.

Welcome Marenda!

Save the Date!



Support literacy and get a chance to win a book from a large collection of recent titles donated by Canadian publishers.

PWC's Annual Book Draw takes place on September 28, 2026. **Tickets are on sale between September 8 and 27, 2026.**

To see the available books and to purchase your ticket, please visit our website at:

<https://pwc-ottawa.ca/book-draw/>



Attend an incredible art show on **Saturday, Nov. 21, 2026 between 1:00 and 4:00 p.m. and on Sunday, Nov. 22, 2026, between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.** at The Studio, Manor Park, 1805 Gaspé Ave. Ottawa, ON K1K 0A4.

Enjoy the work of many talented Ottawa-based artists and purchase art pieces to support the artists and PWC. 10% of the sales will be donated to PWC.

PWC Learners Write...

The views expressed in the learners' sections are those of individual learners. Their work is a demonstration of the progress they have made. PWC does not endorse any of the views that may be expressed.



East Side Mario's Restaurant

I went to Linda's birthday party on March 9. All of her friends came to the party. Her niece came, too and surprised her. Linda was so happy that they came. Linda got a lot of gifts and everyone had a great time.

The menu had a lot of different choices. I had pasta. After the party, Linda's niece went back to Belleville.

-Mary

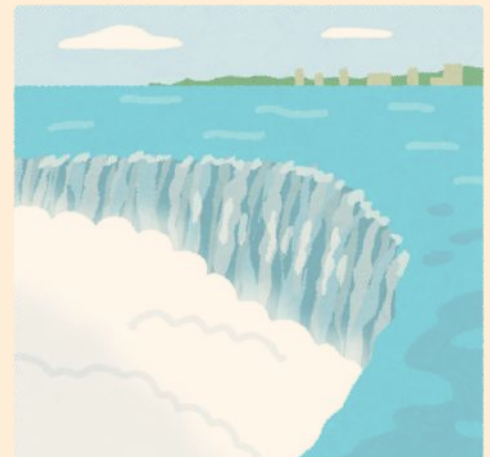


A Memorable Day Outside

Last summer, I went to Niagara Falls with my kids because we wanted to enjoy our vacation together. First, we walked around the falls and took many pictures. Then we rode the boat to get closer to the waterfall. I saw the beautiful water, heard the loud sound of the falls, and felt the cool water drops on my face. The fresh air smelled clean and the weather was really hot and sunny.

We decided to go to Niagara Falls because my children had never seen such a beautiful place before. We wanted to spend quality time together, relax, and make happy family memories. It was also a great chance to enjoy nature and take a break from our daily routine.

After that we had lunch at a nearby restaurant and visited some fun places. My children enjoyed the trip very much and they were very happy. Finally, we drove back home feeling happy and relaxed. It was one of the best days of my life because I made wonderful memories with my family.



-NW



PWC Learners Write...

Review of Books about Helen Keller

I read five books telling the story of Helen Keller's life. She had contracted a high fever when she was about 2 years old. The fever left her deaf, mute, and blind. It was the late 1800s, so knowledge of diseases was not that high. After this incident, as she grew into a toddler, she lived in darkness and acted quite wild and out of control.

The family had another baby, and Helen would be rough with her. Not being able to hear or see that she was a little baby, she tried to tip her crib.

One day, her father wanted to send her away. However, one of her aunts could see that she had potential. Also, her mother had faith in her. So, they hired Anne Sullivan as a teacher for Helen.

Helen was very strong-willed and had a temper and needed discipline before Anne could teach her. Ann taught Helen how to read, write, and speak.

Later in life, Helen went to college. She wanted to convince them that she could do it, as at first the professors did not want her to go. She was determined to get her degree.

Later, she and Ann travelled the world. Helen proved to the world that she was a brilliant woman.

- **Carole**



COMPUTER CORNER

Think Before You Click!

One small tip to help you feel safer and more confident with technology.

Not every email or message you receive is safe. Some are designed to trick you into sharing personal information, sending money, or clicking on a harmful link.

Be careful if a message

- tells you to “act now” or creates a sense of urgency.
- asks for your password, banking information, or other personal details.
- asks you to click a link to “verify,” “update,” or “confirm” your account.
- includes a link or attachment you were not expecting.
- says you have won a prize or received a reward you did not submit an entry for or expect.
- comes from an unfamiliar address or looks unusual, even if you recognize the sender’s name.

What should you do?

STOP → CHECK → ASK

If something does not feel right, stop and do not click the link or open the attachment.

Instead, contact the organization directly using a phone number or website you already know is genuine. If you are unsure, ask someone you trust for help.



Mental Health Corner

A Fresh Start This Fall

After a busy and energetic summer full of outdoor activities, fall is a great time to slow down, reflect, and set a few goals for the months ahead. These goals do not have to be big. Small and realistic steps can help you feel more focused and positive.

Take time to enjoy the beautiful season.

Pay attention to colourful leaves, the cool air, and the changes around you. You can write a few sentences about what you see. Writing can help you focus on the present and enjoy the moment.

As the days get shorter and temperatures drop, it is important to keep a healthy routine.

- Go for a walk and enjoy the fresh air.
- Bring a few plants indoors. Spending time caring for plants can be a good way to stay positive during the colder months of the year.
- Eat healthy food. You can try a new recipe every week.
- Stay connected with family, friends, neighbours, or your community.
- Make time for activities that help you relax, like reading, listening to music, or enjoying a warm cup of tea.

Remember, taking care of yourself does not have to be complicated. Small, positive habits can make a big difference over time.



Did you know that PWC has many books for all reading levels that you can borrow?

Ask your tutor or Education Counsellor for more information.

Writing Challenge

Go to a park and sit on a bench.

Breathe in, hold for 3 seconds, and breathe out. You can close your eyes or keep them open.

Repeat 5 times.

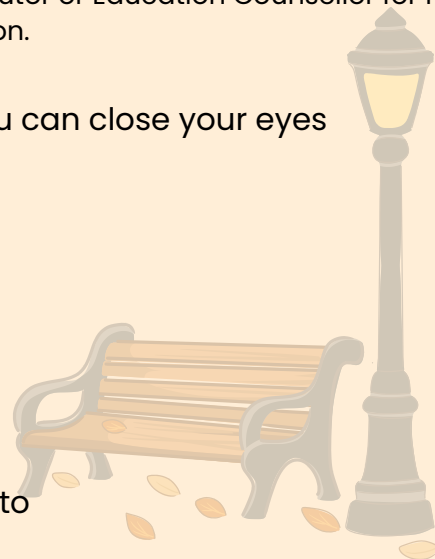
Now look around for a couple of minutes.

What colours do you see?

What does the scene remind you of?

How does the weather make you feel?

Write three to five sentences or a short paragraph to describe what you see and your feelings.



Write It Down: A Simple Way to Remember What You Read

Reading is a wonderful way to gain a deep understanding on a certain topic. But our brains only remembers a small portion of what we read. Taking notes and writing a summary are effective things to do to improve comprehension and to remember what we learned from the text.

Taking notes helps us stay focused and notice important points and ideas better. Good notes can also save us a lot of time when we want to review the text in the future.

To take good notes, you need to focus on one paragraph at a time. Read the entire paragraph once. This helps you figure out the message. Now read it again and underline or highlight only important pieces of information. When you're done, write phrases or a very short sentence about what you read. Don't copy the text; use your own words. If you read any surprising facts or had a new idea or a question because of reading this paragraph, write that down, too.

Repeat this process for all the paragraphs.

After you're done reading the entire text, go back to your notes. Put them together and write a clear paragraph to summarize what you read. You can add your reflections and questions in a separate paragraph.

Remember that the goal is not perfect writing, it's understanding the reading better and remembering it. So don't let the writing process intimidate you. And always remember that your tutor and Education Counsellor are there to help you!



Steps to Remember

- 1- Read the whole paragraph to get the main idea.
- 2- Read it again and mark the most important ideas.
- 3- Write a short note (a phrase or sentence) using your own words.
- 4- Add your thoughts or questions.
- 5- Repeat for each paragraph.
- 6- Write a summary using your notes.

Focus on the main ideas, not every detail.

Free Fun Family Activities



Live from the Booth

Every Saturday, June 6–October 10, 2026 8–10 p.m.

“The Booth” located on Sparks Street

Enjoy free outdoor DJ sets featuring Ottawa’s electronic music scene. Meet new people, discover local DJs and artists, and enjoy live music in the heart of downtown.



Ottawa 200 Tour

September 20 & 27, 2026 10:30 a.m.

Major’s Hill Park, Ottawa

Explore Ottawa’s history on a free 90-minute walking tour. Learn about the city’s past, hear stories about Bytown and Ottawa, and discover some of the people and places that helped shape the city.



Ottawa 200 Block Party

September 26, 2026 10 a.m.–10 p.m.

Marion Dewar Plaza, Ottawa City Hall, 110 Laurier Avenue West, Ottawa, Ontario

Celebrate Ottawa’s 200th birthday! Enjoy live music, cultural activities, local food and drinks, and more.



Fall Rhapsody

September 22–October 26, 2026

Gatineau Park and other NCC parks and natural spaces in Ottawa–Gatineau

Take the free NCC shuttles to popular spots in Gatineau Park and enjoy the beautiful colours of autumn across the National Capital Region.

Gaming Corner

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

**Find the following words in the puzzle. Words are
hidden ↑ ↓ → ← ↘**

**APPLE
AUTUMN
BLANKET
BONFIRE
BREEZY
CIDER
CHILLY
CRISP**

**EQUINOX
FALL
FIREPLACE
FOOTBALL
FROST
HARVEST
HAYRIDE
LEAVES**

**MIGRATION
OCTOBER
ORANGE
PUMPKIN
RAKE
SCARECROW
SWEATER
THANKSGIVING**

Gaming Corner– Reading

The Maple Grove Fall Festival is open from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Here are some of the activities:

Apple Picking: 10:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m.

Hayride: 11:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

Pumpkin Patch: 10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

Bonfire: 3:00 p.m.–5:00 p.m.

Cider & Snacks: 11:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

Football Game: 1:00 p.m.–3:00 p.m.



Choose the Best Plan

1. You arrive at 11:00 a.m. You want to pick apples and go on a hayride. Can you do both?

☐ Yes ☐ No

2. You arrive at 2:30 p.m. You want to go apple picking. Can you still go?

☐ Yes ☐ No

3. It is a chilly afternoon. You want to sit by a fire and have a warm drink. What should you do?

4. You have one hour before the festival closes. You want to choose a pumpkin and have some cider. What could you do?

5. You don't like football, but you enjoy outdoor activities. Name two activities you could choose.

Your Autumn Day

You arrive at 12:00 p.m. You have three hours at the festival.

Choose three activities you would like to do.

First: _____

Next: _____

Last: _____

Why did you choose these activities?

Gaming Corner- Reading

The leaves are starting to turn orange, and the mornings are becoming chilly. At Green Valley Farm, the fall harvest is underway. Workers are picking apples and filling baskets with pumpkins.

The farm is hosting its annual Fall Day in October 21. Visitors can enjoy a hayride, walk through the fields, and choose a pumpkin to take home. There will also be a bonfire in the evening. Guests can warm up beside the fire and enjoy hot cider.

The farm owners say they love this time of year: "Fall is crisp, colourful, and full of wonderful activities."

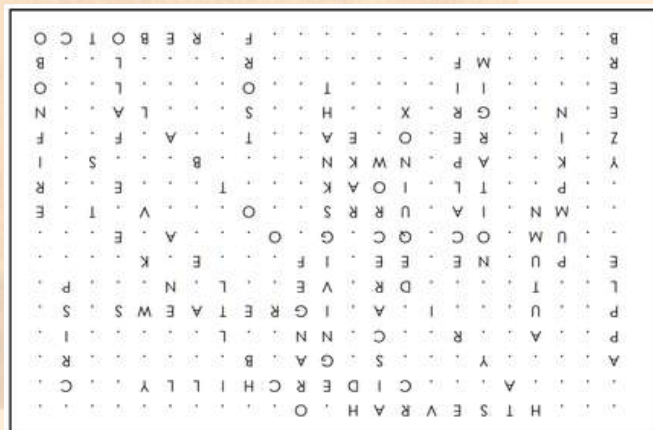
*This is not a
real event!*

Read and Answer

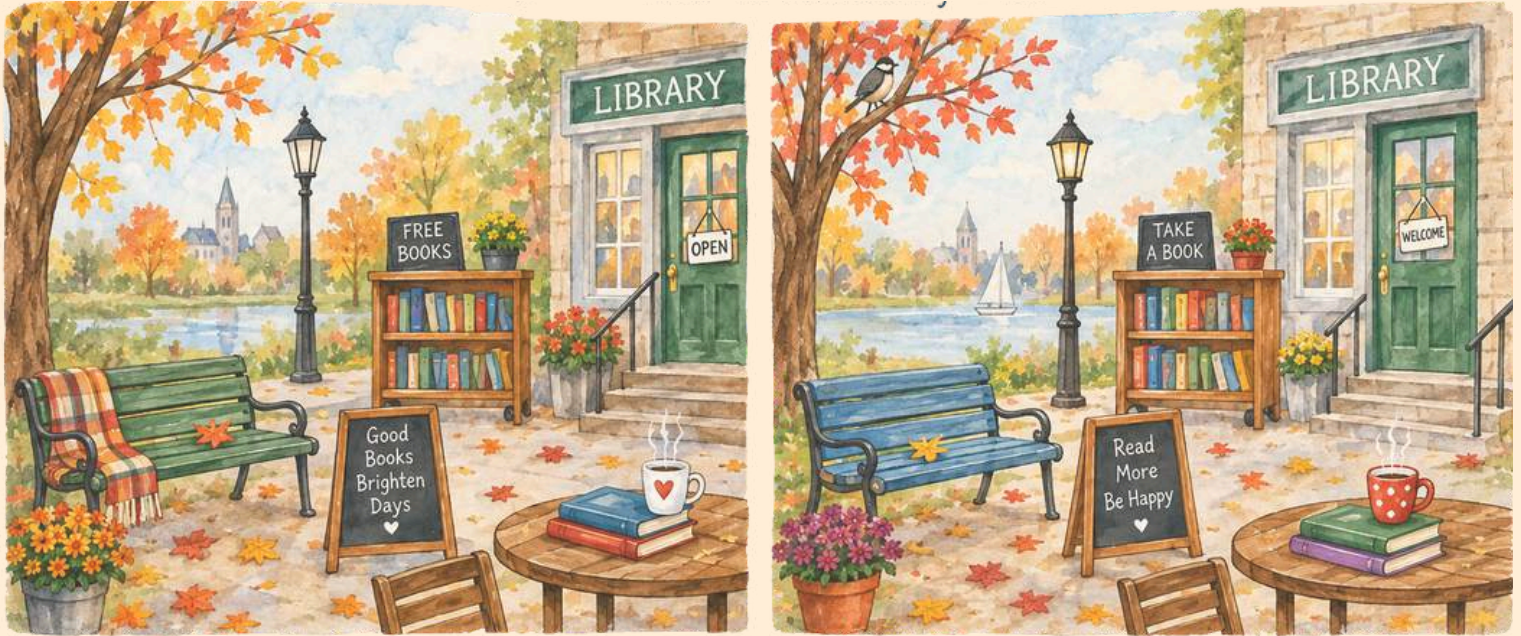
1. What is happening at Green Valley Farm?
2. What are the workers picking?
3. When will the farm's Fall Day take place?
4. Name two activities visitors can enjoy.
5. What can visitors drink beside the bonfire?
6. Why do the farm owners like fall?

Think About It and Write:

Which activity would you like to try at the farm? Why?



Gaming Corner– Spot the Differences



Spot 20 of the differences in the images above then write at least 15 sentences to describe the differences that you could find.