Goal
To experience a condition similar to what some people with learning disabilities deal with regularly.

Time
15–20 minutes

Materials
One Reading Sheet for each student

Procedure—Part I
Hand out one Reading Sheet to each student. Ask for volunteers to read the sheet aloud in small sections. After students have struggled with this, read the passages from the answer sheet.

Discussion
Ask students how trying to read this felt. Tell students that this is an example of what reading might be like for people who have learning disabilities. People who have learning disabilities might have similar feelings to the ones you experienced.

Inform students that experts estimate that 6 to 10 percent of school-aged people in this country have learning disabilities. For people with learning disabilities, reading can be especially difficult, but that does not affect their intelligence. People with learning disabilities have average or above-average intelligence.

Procedure—Part II
Ask students which of the following people has/had a learning disability:

- Tom Cruise
- Walt Disney
- Albert Einstein
- George Patton

After they guess, read the description of each of these people. Emphasize that all of these people were very successful despite their learning disabilities.

Celebrities with Disabilities

**Tom Cruise**
He is a famous movie star. He learns his lines by listening to a tape because he suffers from dyslexia.

**Walt Disney**
He was slow in school work and did not have a successful school experience but later became a well-known movie producer and cartoonist.

**Albert Einstein**
As a child, he could not talk until the age of three. He did not learn to read until he was nine. His teachers considered him to be mentally slow, unsociable, and a dreamer. He failed the entrance examination for college. Ultimately, he developed the Theory of Relativity.

**George Patton**
When he was twelve years old he could not read, and he remained deficient in reading throughout his life. However, he could memorize entire lectures—this was how he got through school. He became a famous general during World War II.


Discussion
1. Should we judge people based on their learning disabilities?
2. Can people with learning disabilities make important contributions to society?
3. Can you think of other famous people who have disabilities?
Reading

It is difficult to learn to read when the words don’t stand still. Can you imagine what it is like to read when the words and letters move up and down on the page? Reading is not my favorite school activity. It helps to use my finger or a ruler to keep my place so I can read.

Changes

Changes are all around us.
Changes are a part of life.
Changes are a part of growing.

Just look how a sapling becomes a tree. And in the fall, the leaves turn all different colors.

Red, gold, amber, brown, orange, and yellow.

Even though they’re different colors, They are all part of one tree, And beautiful together.

And so, too, it is with people.

We are born, and we grow into adults Who are different, but we are all part of the same family.

If only we could just blend harmoniously Like the leaves on the tree. Well, there’s still time for change.

—Jane Brucker
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Personal Information</th>
<th>Accomplishments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ludwig Van Beethoven, 1770–1827</td>
<td>Famous German composer and considered one of the greatest musicians of all times</td>
<td>The last 30 years of his life were shaped by a series of personal crises, the first of which was the onset of deafness.</td>
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<td>Cher, 1946–</td>
<td>American singer and Academy Award–winning actress and director.</td>
<td>Dyslexic</td>
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<td>Albert Einstein, 1879–1955</td>
<td>Mathematician and physicist; he developed the Theory of Relativity</td>
<td>He had a learning disability and did not speak until the age of three. He had a difficult time doing math in school and expressing himself through writing.</td>
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<td>Whoopee Goldberg, 1949–</td>
<td>Oscar- and Golden Globe Award–winning actress</td>
<td>Dyslexic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bruce Jenner, 1949–</td>
<td>1976 Olympic Gold Metal Decathlon Champion</td>
<td>Dyslexic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen Keller, 1880–1968</td>
<td>Blind and deaf</td>
<td>First U.S. President</td>
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<tr>
<td>Juliette Gordon Law, 1860–1927</td>
<td>She had severe hearing loss and was deaf by the time she founded the Girl Scouts of America.</td>
<td>Abolitionist and rescuer of hundreds of slaves on the Underground Railroad. As a child, she was struck by an overseer. The blow fractured her skull and resulted in narcolepsy.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marlee Matlin, 1965–</td>
<td>1987 Academy Award winner—Best Actress for role in <em>Children of a Lesser God</em></td>
<td>She was the first hearing-impaired actress to win an Oscar.</td>
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<tr>
<td>John Milton, 1608–1674</td>
<td>English author and poet who wrote some of the greatest and longest poems—“Paradise Lost,” “Paradise Regained,” and “Samson Agonistes”—in his head and dictated them to his daughter.</td>
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<td>George Patton, 1885–1945</td>
<td>U.S. General</td>
<td>Learning disabled. Did not learn to read until he was twelve years old; yet, he had learned to read military topographic maps by age seven.</td>
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<td>Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1882–1945</td>
<td>U.S. President four times</td>
<td>Paralyzed by polio</td>
</tr>
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<td>Harriet Tubman, 1820(?–1913</td>
<td>Abolitionist and rescuer of hundreds of slaves on the Underground Railroad. As a child, she was struck by an overseer. The blow fractured her skull and resulted in narcolepsy.</td>
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<td>George Washington, 1732–1799</td>
<td>First U.S. President</td>
<td>He had a learning disability and could barely write; also had very poor grammar skills.</td>
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<td>Woodrow Wilson, 1856–1924</td>
<td>U.S. President from 1913 to 1921; also governor, author, professor, and world statesman</td>
<td>Severe dyslexic</td>
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He went completely blind in 1641.

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