

The Impossible Is Possible!

Carmen Chu

BEFORE YOU READ:

1. Read the title and the headings in the essay. What do you think this essay will be about?
2. What does “ecstatic” mean? Share a time you felt ecstatic.

I Took a Chance and Became a Volunteer

We moved to this country because we wanted our three children to have a better education. While my children studied at school every morning, I went to an adult school to learn to speak English. I hoped to improve my English so I could communicate with my children’s teachers and assist them with their homework.

My school was near the library. One day after school, I took a chance and became a volunteer at the library. I needed to practice my English with a confident attitude in a friendly environment. I was responsible for sorting the books. I was pleased to have this incredible chance.

And Then I Got Hired!

After ten months, my supervisor advised me that the library had a job opening for a part-time library aide. He encouraged me to apply. I was eager to have a job, so I could help out with our family’s finances. Luckily, I got the job and became a part-time library aide at the Alameda Free Library in October 2009. My supervisor gave me on-the-job training and a manual for how to sort and shelve books.



Many Challenges and Many Strategies for Dealing with Them

I had a lot of challenges. First, I didn’t have any related experience. I had not even had a job for twelve years! I had a strong desire to prove myself useful, so I arrived on time every day, worked very hard, and seldom took sick days.

Second, the language barrier made it hard for me to communicate with my supervisor and coworkers. I tried to speak in simple and specific sentences. Sometimes, I wrote my question down on paper and showed it to them. They were very

patient and willing to help me out. They made small talk with me and made me feel at ease.

Third, I had some difficulties with patrons' questions. They asked where they could find books or what books were good for their reading levels. I could give them some information, but sometimes my mind was frozen. I had to politely suggest that they ask the librarians. I felt embarrassed and unhappy at that moment. I made a vow to myself that learning English was my lifelong goal.

Feeling Ecstatic

I am ecstatic about this chapter in my life. I have a fantastic job in the library. I am surrounded by well-written books and kind people. Also, I have the perfect opportunity to study English at Alameda Reads. Their adult literacy programs provide reading, writing, and conversation

classes. My favorite is their book club. I attend all of their classes. I have built up more confidence in my English-speaking skills. I am more relaxed about connecting with others at work. I am enjoying my ability to do my job well. This is a real *milestone* in my life.

AFTER YOU READ:

1. Describe the sequence of events that led to Carmen feeling ecstatic about her life. Use phrases like: first, then, subsequently, etc.
2. Think about the word *milestone*. What are the two words in this compound word? Can you tell from the context what it means? If not, look it up and learn about the word's origins.

Carmen Chu is a student at Alameda Reads in Alameda, CA. She is from Hong Kong. She likes working at the Alameda Free Library. She is married and has grown children. She would like to thank Alameda Reads and her teacher, Cecile, who encouraged her.

Organize the Information

In her essay, Carmen mentions three challenges and what strategies she used to respond to those challenges. Use the grid below to list her challenges and strategies. Write down your own challenges and strategies as well. Write an essay based on your notes in this grid.

Carmen's Challenge	Carmen's Strategy
Your Challenge	Your Strategy