

The category of Third Chapter is the title of Sara Lawrence Lightfoot's book and refers to people between the ages of 50 and 75 who have found new challenges and greater meaning in their lives at a time when often the expectation is quite different.

Mary has found such a project--The World We Live In: A Peace Initiative With A Twist. It is a reading project which encourages positive attitudes toward people of different cultures. Currently a group of about thirty volunteers read carefully selected picture books to children in the elementary schools.

Readers meet several times a year to share experiences and to promote their own understanding of diversity. A recent workshop led them to review new books for their accuracy and unbiased approach to people of other cultures.

The idea for this project probably had its roots in the elementary school Mary attended in the Chicago, Illinois area where she grew up.

She attended a school with a very diverse population. She has always been grateful for this experience because, at an early age, Mary learned that skin colors may differ and home situations may differ but at heart people are all more alike than different. After graduation from Hope College, she taught first grade in Homewood, Illinois. She and her husband then had the opportunity to work in a tuberculosis sanitarium in Seward, Alaska. There she taught native children in grades K-8 and also taught reading to adults.

After her four children were grown, Mary earned a Master's degree at UW-L in the field of reading and accepted a teaching position in the Education Department of Viterbo University. She taught the Reading Methods courses and Children's Literature and learned to value the wisdom and depth of well written children's books.

These interests converged in 2001 when her grandchildren visited. Concerned about the world they were inheriting, she read picture books to them which emphasized the common bonds shared by all. Their thoughtful responses to these books led to the formation of The World We Live In.

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