

Reading Connection

INTERMEDIATE EDITION

Working Together for Learning Success

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Mary Ethel Costello School
William J. O'Kane, Principal

Book Picks

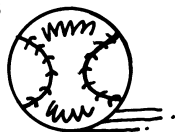


■ *Laugh-Out-Loud Jokes for Kids* (Rob Elliot)

Aspiring comedians can find hundreds of jokes packed into this volume. Youngsters will get plenty of giggles while sharing funny stories, silly poems, knock-knock jokes, and tongue twisters. The first book in the Laugh-Out-Loud series.

■ *Tortilla Sun* (Jennifer Cervantes)

All Izzy knows about her father is that he died before she was born. While spending the summer with her nana in New Mexico, Izzy is determined to learn more—especially why he wrote the words *because* and *magic* on a baseball.



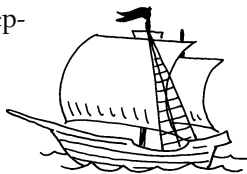
■ *Science on the Loose: Amazing Activities and Science Facts You'll Never Believe* (Helaine Becker)

Fooling the brain, making ice cream, and testing reflexes are just a few of the experiments your child can do using common household items. Interesting explanations, along with facts and trivia, add to the fun of exploring real-world science.



■ *Infinity Ring: Mutiny in Time* (James Dashner)

Fifth-grader Dak Smyth gets to see history firsthand after he and his friend Sera discover a time-traveling device. When Dak's parents are lost in time, the friends must travel back to 1492, while keeping the device a secret. Book 1 in the Infinity Ring series.



Be a word collector

Your child might collect stickers or coins, but how about collecting words? Starting a word collection will increase her vocabulary and make her a stronger reader and writer. Share these ideas.

Get artsy

When your youngster draws a picture, ask her to think of a creative way to add words to it. For instance, after drawing an elephant, she could read an article about the huge mammals. Then, she might write words she learned (*pachyderm*, *herbivore*, *endangered*) as a spray of water coming from the elephant's trunk.

Sprinkle on "spice"

Let your child turn empty spice containers (or any empty jars) into a collection of "zesty" words to use when she writes. Have her label each container with a common word like *pretty*, *great*, or *went*. She can hunt in books, a thesaurus, or a dictionary for replacements (*gorgeous*, *astounding*, *scurred*). Have her write each one on a slip of paper and



add them to the matching container. Encourage her to use these words to spice up her writing!

Play games

Suggest that your youngster write interesting words on index cards and play word games with them. She might play War where the longest word, or the word with the most vowels, wins. Or try this: Flip Scrabble tiles upside down. Each player picks a word card. Take turns drawing tiles—the first person to spell the word on her card is the winner. *Tip:* Have your child keep blank cards on hand for adding to her collection. ■

In a nutshell

Writing summaries helps your youngster remember and describe key ideas in a story. Foster this skill at home with these everyday activities:

- Suggest that your child keep a two-sentence diary. Every night he could think of details about his day that stand out and then summarize them in two sentences. "I finally saved enough money to buy a fish tank. Mom bought me my first two fish."
- Have your youngster secretly pick a movie and think about the plot by asking himself the questions *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, and *why*. His challenge? To summarize the answers in one paragraph. *Your challenge?* To guess his movie! ■



Family winter reading fun

Winter break means a vacation from school—not a vacation from reading. Keep your youngster turning pages with family-friendly activities like these.

Season's readings. Hold family read-alouds with books that have a winter theme. Ask your child to bring home a selection from the school library, or check out books from your public library. Then, take turns reading chapters from fiction like



Snow Treasure (Marie McSwigan) or nonfiction about winter weather or animal habits, such as *DK Eyewitness Books: Arctic & Antarctic* (Barbara Taylor).

Silent party. Help everyone unwind with a silent reading party. Family members can each bring a book and a blanket and gather in the living room. Snuggling and reading is the best feeling!

Stories in motion. Turn a favorite tale into an evening's entertainment. As one person reads aloud, another acts out the story. At the end of each chapter, let a new reader and actor take over. ■

Fun with Words

Ready, set, punctuate

This editing game will strengthen your child's punctuation powers.

Materials: newspapers or books, paper, pencils

Have each player write a random sentence from a newspaper or book, leaving out the punctuation marks. Count the number of deleted punctuation marks and jot it down at the end of the sentence. For this sentence—*Sally ate apples, bananas, and oatmeal.*—your child would remove the two commas and the period and then write 3.

Trade papers, and add the missing punctuation. Compare your corrected sentences with the originals. Score one point for each mark you missed. At the end of five rounds, the low score wins. ■



Q&A

Developing digital literacy

Q My son's teacher says he needs to be more thorough when he does online research. How can I help?

A It's common for kids—and adults—to do simple Google searches and rely on the first links that pop up. Show your son how digging deeper leads to better results.

Have him search online for something he is interested in, perhaps “most popular sport.” Then, brainstorm ways to change the search to get more targeted results. For example, he might type “most popular sport in Minnesota” or “most popular winter sport.” He'll see the difference a few words can make.

Also, help him evaluate which sites are more trustworthy. For instance, a site from a company that sells winter sports gear might be less reliable for the information he seeks than a site from a university or a government agency. ■



Parent 2 Parent

Bring characters to life

Our older daughter, Chloe, loves making up characters for stories she writes. So when our younger daughter, Emma, needed help dreaming up characters for a creative writing assignment, I asked Chloe for ideas. She invented a fun activity to do with her sister.

They each found a picture of a person in a magazine. Then, they imagined 10 things about that person. Is she funny? Does she like to dance? What kind of pet does she have?

Using their lists, they wrote a letter from their character introducing herself to them. Chloe showed Emma how she makes a character's language reflect that person's background. For instance, her cowgirl opened her letter with “Howdy” instead of “Hello.” Emma decided that her character would be

French and begin with “Bonjour.” Emma really enjoyed doing this. Now I'm looking forward to seeing what characters she comes up with for her stories. ■



OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ways to promote their children's reading, writing, and language skills.

Resources for Educators,
a division of CCH Incorporated
128 N. Royal Avenue • Front Royal, VA 22630
540-636-4280 • rfeustomer@wolterskluwer.com
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