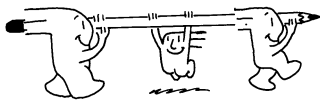


# Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

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



## Book Picks

### ■ *Sebastian Darke: Prince of Fools* (Philip Caveney)

In this humorous fantasy story, half-elf Sebastian Darke might not be funny, but his adventures are. When he begins his quest to become a court jester, he meets a tiny warrior, rescues a princess, and winds up as an enemy of the king.

### ■ *Appleblossom the Possum* (Holly Goldberg Sloan)

Appleblossom's mama warned her about dangers like cars, dogs, and humans. But when the little possum falls down a chimney, she discovers that not all humans are monsters. As her brothers try to rescue her, Appleblossom must decide whether she'll go with her family or stay with her new friend.



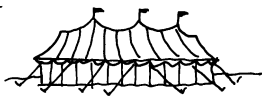
### ■ *Amazon Rainforest* (William B. Rice)

Take an expedition through the world's largest jungle—the Amazon. Full-color photographs help readers explore the region from the forest floor to the canopy of trees overhead and learn about the plants, animals, and people living there. (Also available in Spanish.)



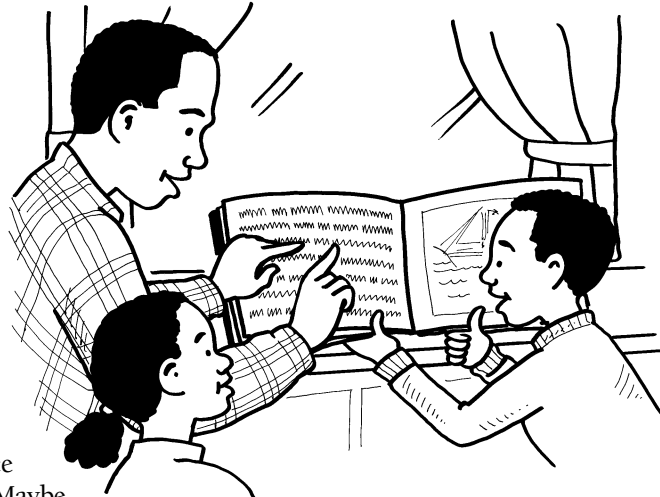
### ■ *Big Top Burning: The True Story of an Arsonist, a Missing Girl, and The Greatest Show On Earth* (Laura A. Woollett)

In 1944, a Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus tent burned to the ground in 10 minutes. One girl vanished, and 167 people died. What happened to the missing girl? Young sleuths are invited to examine witness reports, photos, and other evidence about this real-life mystery.



## Using context clues

Your child might not understand a challenging word when he sees it all by itself. But when it's in a book, surrounded by other words, sentences, and paragraphs, he can use the *context* to figure it out. Suggest these strategies.



### Look for definitions

A new word might be defined right in the sentence your youngster is reading. Maybe he stumbles on *peasants* (“The king taxed the *peasants*...”). Encourage him to finish the sentence and perhaps it'll lead him to the word's meaning (“but the *poor farmers* couldn't pay the king”).

deadly kind, he might figure out that *venomous* means *poisonous*.

### Come back to it

Information in the rest of a chapter or book can explain an unknown word. Say your youngster reads “The company sells *generic* products.” He could jot down *generic*, then be on the lookout for more information as he keeps reading. The next section may provide the explanation, for example saying that “generics are similar to brand-name products but less expensive.”

### Fill in the blank

Have your child read a sentence without the unfamiliar word (say, *venomous*). He could read, “The bites of \_\_\_\_\_ snakes can be deadly” and think, “What would make sense in that spot?” If he knows that poisonous snakebites are the

## Organized essays

Your youngster's essays will be better if she begins with a strong statement and supports that statement with evidence. This method could help her plan.

1. Suggest that your child write a draft opening sentence for her essay and use it to make up questions that her research should answer. *Example*: “Recycling reduces pollution, preserves natural resources, and saves energy.”
2. Have her turn each part of the statement into a question and write it at the top of a separate note card: “How does recycling reduce pollution?”
3. As your youngster researches, she can add each answer to the correct card. (“Recycling helps reduce manufacturing waste and trash going into landfills.”) Then, when she writes her essay, the information on each card might go into a separate paragraph.



## Write the unexpected

*“I thought the ring was lost, but that’s not what happened!”*

Surprises woven into your child’s creative writing pieces will keep her readers guessing and wanting more. Share these ideas for her to try.

✓ Create a **plot twist** to take the story in an unpredictable direction. For instance, if your young author’s story includes a missing ring, she could brainstorm reasons why the ring is gone. Perhaps it’s lost, hidden, or stolen by time travelers. Her goal is to lead readers in one direction and then yank them off course before eventually giving them the real answer. Being surprised keeps the reading—and the writing—fun.



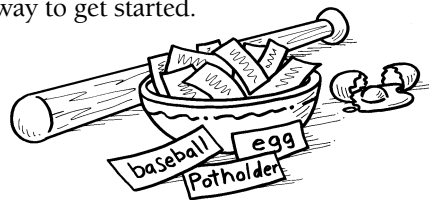
✓ Equally entertaining is to end a chapter or scene with a **cliffhanger**—a break in the story that makes people eager to know what happens next. Your child can write “teasers” to leave her audience hanging at the end of a section or

chapter. Maybe her main character is in a tight spot or makes an important discovery. Your youngster might end the chapter with her character gasping as she opens the door and enters the spooky mansion! 📖



### Tell a tale

Family storytelling encourages your youngster to practice speaking and listening—plus it’s fun to be creative together. Here’s one way to get started.



Each person writes the names of five objects on separate slips of paper (examples: *baseball*, *potholder*, *egg*). Mix up the slips in a bowl.

Your child picks one slip, reads it, and starts telling a story that includes the object named. (“It was a beautiful day for a *baseball* game.”) Now keep the story going. You take a slip and add your object: “Sam forgot his glove and had to use a *potholder* instead.” The next storyteller draws a slip and continues, “Things were going well until the pitcher exchanged the ball for an egg.”

Take turns telling the tale until all the slips are gone. The person who picks the last slip wraps up the story. 📖



### We’re a reading family!

My son Raul loved reading when he was younger, but lately, he didn’t seem as interested. Then one day, he saw me adding the title of a book to a list. He asked what I was doing, and I explained that I like keeping a record of all the books I’ve read.

A few days later I was surprised when Raul showed me a list he had started. His goal, he said, was to write the title of every book he could remember reading. He even had a star system for ranking them. I told him that was a great idea and said I’d start doing the same.

Raul’s list is reminding him of some of the good books he’s read. And we like how looking at each other’s lists gives us a glimpse into what kinds of readers we are. For example, I read mostly realistic fiction while Raul prefers nonfiction and graphic novels. Now he’s excited to start a new book so he can add it to his list. 📖



### Standardized test success

**Q** My daughter will take a standardized test soon that includes a reading portion. What strategies will help her do well?

**A** Here’s a clever approach: Suggest that your child remember the “three Ls.”

**Leap ahead.** Reading with a purpose makes finding answers easier.

When your youngster has to read passages and answer questions about them, she could skip to the questions and read them first. With the

questions in mind, she’ll be able to find the answers more easily as she reads.

**Linger longer.** Reading too fast may lead to missed information. Remind your child to read at a pace that allows her to understand the material. If she gets confused, taking a deep breath and slowing down will help her refocus.

**Look back.** Before marking her answers, your youngster might reread selections rather than answering from memory. That way, her answers are more likely to be accurate. 📖



**OUR PURPOSE**

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

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