

Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

November 2014

Title I / Learning Assistance Programs

Book Picks



■ *Ophelia and the Marvelous Boy*

(Karen Foxlee)

Eleven-year-old Ophelia is a practical girl who doesn't believe in fantasy.



So she's not quite sure what to do when she discovers a boy who claims to be a prisoner of the Snow Queen. Should she try to rescue him?

■ *Thunder on the Plains:*

The Story of the American Buffalo

(Ken Robbins)

How did a population of 50 million buffalo nearly disappear in just 25 years? This non-fiction book tells the story of the American buffalo in words and pictures—including how they escaped extinction.



■ *Stars of the World Cup*

(Illuigi Jökulsson)

Soccer fans will enjoy reading these 28 short biographies of 2014 World Cup players. They include facts about each athlete's training and accomplishments. And since the players come from all over the world, your youngster will learn about other countries, too.

■ *The Way of the Warrior (Young Samurai I)*

(Chris Bradford)

Shipwrecked and alone, 12-year-old Jack Fletcher finds a new life when he's adopted by a great samurai and sent to samurai school. Now he must use those lessons to defeat the ninja behind the pirate attack on his father's ship. (Also available in Spanish.)



Reading out loud—together!

When you think of ways to spend family time, do you think of reading aloud? Enjoying read-alouds together builds bonds, and it encourages your youngster to read for information or just for fun. Try these “novel” ideas.

Popcorn and a (silent) movie

Pop some popcorn, put on a movie—and mute the television. Then, turn on the closed-captioning, and take turns reading the screens aloud. *Variation:* Choose an English-subtitled movie in another language, and leave the volume on. Your child will hear snippets of a different language in between the English you read out loud.

Poetry roll

It's fun to read poetry to each other, and it will give your youngster practice in reading smoothly and with expression. Get a book of poetry, and have him roll one or two dice to determine which page number you'll read from. *Example:*



If he rolls a 3 and a 7, you'd read the poem on page 37. Next, you roll the dice, and he reads.

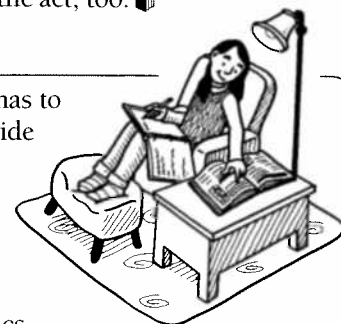
Read-a-thon

See how long your family can keep reading in one evening. Pick a novel, and have a round robin where each person reads a chapter aloud. It's okay if you don't finish the book. Just pick up where you left off the next night. *Idea:* Ahead of time, ask out-of-town relatives to get copies of the novel. Put them on speakerphone or a video call so they can get in on the act, too.

Make a note

Taking good notes from a textbook is a skill that has to be learned. These reminders can help your child decide what to jot in her notebook.

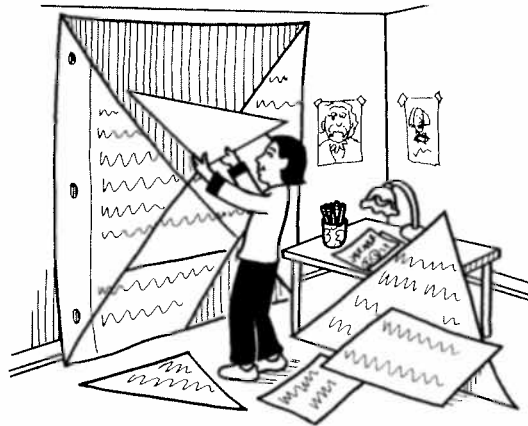
- **Spot signals.** Have her make a list of words that tell her important information is coming (*first, second, next, because*).
- **Know what matters.** Bold words, sidebars, graphics, and photo captions often contain material that your youngster should write down.
- **Be concise.** Suggest that your child write words and phrases instead of whole sentences. She could also use math symbols (House + Senate = Congress) and abbreviations (“leg.” for legislative). Or she might make a sketch (say, a tree labeled with the three branches of government).



Select just the right word

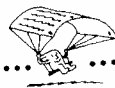
Author Mark Twain once said, “The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and a lightning bug.” When your youngster writes, encourage her to zero in on the best word with these techniques.

Listen closely. Simply reading her paper aloud can often be enough to let your youngster hear where she could use more interesting words. For example, “I had fun in the rain” may change to “I danced in the rain” or “I frolicked in the rain.”



Pick a better fit. Have her read each sentence and ask herself if it says exactly what she meant. If not, suggest that she try substituting synonyms from a thesaurus. She might replace *pain* with *pinch* to indicate a specific type of discomfort: “She felt a *pinch* in her side when she ran.”

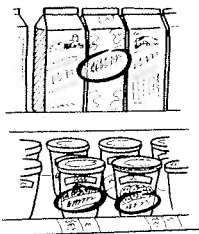
Simplify. Challenge your child to trim words and use one precise word wherever possible. For example, she could edit “Charlie took a walk in the woods” to “Charlie hiked in the woods.” As she tightens her writing, she may choose words that paint a clearer picture. 📖



Grocery word grab

From signs to product labels, the grocery store is jam-packed with words for your child to read. Here’s how to turn your next shopping trip into a reading expedition.

1. Beforehand, suggest that you plan a scavenger hunt together. You might write down 10 kinds of words for him to spot at the store.



Examples: A compound word in the dairy case (*buttermilk, blueberry*), a pasta with three syllables (*linguine, pappardelle*), the longest word with the fewest different letters in the produce section (*banana, alfalfa*).

2. As you shop, he can search for the words. How many will he collect before your shopping trip is over? *Idea:* If you’re not too rushed, you might do the scavenger hunt, too. When you get home, cross off the words that are the same on your lists, and the person with the most unique ones wins. 📖



Writing: Peer feedback

Q In my son’s class, students give each other feedback on their creative writing assignments. Cole feels uncomfortable criticizing others’ writing and getting negative comments on his own work. What should I tell him?

A Encourage your son to think of feedback not as criticism, but as making the writing the best it can be. When he gives feedback, he might start by saying something nice about his classmate’s paper, such as, “I really like this plot twist.” Then, if he sees something that could be improved, he might begin by saying, “I got confused here” or “I’m not sure what you meant when you said...”

Meanwhile, getting feedback on his own work will show your son how other people view his writing, and that can help him make it better. If a classmate says, “I don’t understand why your character would do that,” Cole may decide to change the character’s action.

With time, your son will get used to giving and getting feedback. And this experience will serve him well in the future, since giving and receiving criticism is often part of a job. 📖



Attending school events

Recently, my daughter brought home a notice about a literacy night at school. Our evenings are pretty busy, but we decided to go, and I’m glad we did.

First, a teacher read aloud to everyone in the cafeteria. Then, we rotated through different stations to play word games. When we finished, we headed to the library to choose books and find a comfortable place to sit and read with our children.

At the end of the night, the librarian mentioned the upcoming book fair. She said it’s a great place to find inexpensive books and build a home library. Even if we don’t buy any, she said, browsing through the books will give us ideas for what to look for during our next library trip.

I’ve already put the date on my calendar, and I’m looking forward to another book-related event at our school. 📖



OUR PURPOSE

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

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www.rfeonline.com
ISSN 1540-5583