

# Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

March 2015

Title I / Learning Assistance Programs

## Book Picks



### ■ *The Actual & Truthful Adventures of Becky Thatcher* (Jessica Lawson)

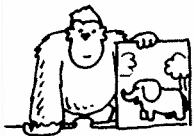
In this twist on Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, 11-year-old Becky Thatcher wants to win a bet against Tom and Huck Finn.



But when things go wrong, her plan gets a woman accused of grave robbing. Becky knows she can fix the mess if only Tom will quit spying on her!

### ■ *The One and Only Ivan* (Katherine Applegate)

Ivan the gorilla is content living and painting in his glassed-in habitat—until a baby elephant named Ruby is mistreated. To save her, Ivan uses his art to make people care. This fictional tale was inspired



by a real gorilla's story. (Also available in Spanish.)

### ■ *Shooting Kabul* (N. H. Senzai)

In the chaos of fleeing to the United States from Afghanistan, 12-year-old Fadi loses his little sister, and she gets left behind. Filled with guilt, Fadi vows to return to find her. Now, he must win a photography contest to pay for the trip.

### ■ *10 Plants that Shook the World* (Gillian Richardson)

How much trouble can a simple plant cause? Plenty. This book gets to the roots of 10 plants that started wars, changed medicine, and altered history. Fun facts, history, and anecdotes illustrate the way something as small as a plant can change the world.



## Building background knowledge

Experience is a great teacher. Every time your child is exposed to something new, he adds to his knowledge bank—and that helps him relate to what he reads and discover new things to write about.

### Errands

Think of everyday errands as chances to learn. For example, at a farmer's market, have your youngster talk to a beekeeper and find out how to get honey from a beehive. Or at a furniture store, he could see what an armoire or a Queen Anne table looks like. Later, if these things are mentioned in a book, he'll have first-hand experience.

### Tours

Exploring interesting "settings" around town will help your child understand book settings and give him a variety of places to use in his stories. See if you may go backstage at the local theater before or after a dress rehearsal, or stop by a historic home that is open to the public.



### Events

At fairs and festivals, your youngster will discover other cultures that he might read or write about. Watch your newspaper for upcoming events where he can hear music, see arts and crafts, and sample food.

### Books, videos, and podcasts

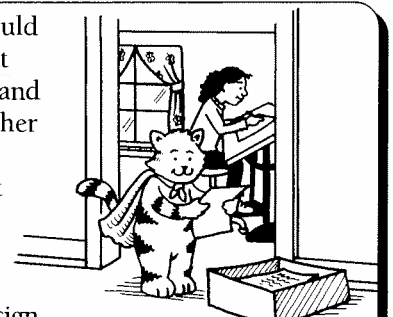
Whatever your child is curious about, encourage him to learn more. If he likes skateboarding, for instance, he could read novels and nonfiction about the sport, watch a documentary about skateboarders, or listen to an interview of a local skate park manager. 📺

## Take my advice

What's the best way to pack a suitcase? How could you tell if your cat is secretly a superhero? Appoint your youngster as your family's advice columnist, and send her serious or silly questions so she can give her opinion—and practice writing.

Have her get a box for advice seekers to deposit questions in. As she replies, she should keep in mind who she's writing to (her "audience").

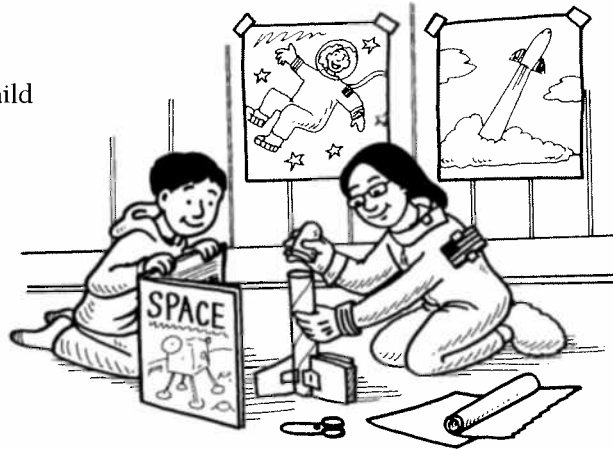
For her little sister, she'd use simple language. ("If you don't see your cat for a while, that may be a sign he's outside being Superkitty.") To tell an adult how to pack a suitcase, she would write clear instructions. ("Step one: Fold or tightly roll each article of clothing.") 📧



# Read and create

Creative activities can encourage your child to think more deeply about the books she reads—and make reading more enjoyable. Spark her imagination with ideas like these.

**Design graffiti boards.** Have your youngster decorate poster boards with drawings and words related to a book. For example, if she’s reading a mystery, she could draw a part of the setting, write clues from the story on a giant question mark, and fill the margins of the poster with her favorite quotes from the book.



She’ll have to read carefully to decide what to include.

**Build models.** Let your child use household materials to make 3-D creations that match a book. If she’s reading about space exploration, she might create a rocket with tissue tubes and aluminum foil and gather information from the book to label each part. Or for a tale about sea animals, she could sculpt creatures out of

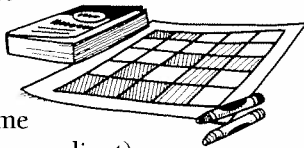
clay. Have her dig for details in the text and examine the illustrations so she can make accurate models. 📖



## Synonym or antonym?

This tic-tac-toe–style game lets your youngster build vocabulary by playing with synonyms and antonyms.

1. Have your child draw a 5 x 5 grid on paper.
2. Each person chooses a different color crayon.
3. Select any word from a print or online thesaurus (say, luminous).
4. Your youngster flips a coin—if it’s heads he must say a synonym, or a word that means the same thing (gleaming, radiant). For tails, he would give an antonym, or opposite (dull, dim).



5. He should check his answer in a thesaurus. If he’s right, he colors in a square.
6. Then, it’s his turn to give you a word.

The winner is the first person to claim five boxes in a row—up and down, across, or diagonally. 📖



## Tips for writing dialogue

**Q** My son is learning to add dialogue to his stories. What advice can I give him?

**A** It’s fun to make characters “talk.” And writing dialogue will help your son develop a plot and show how his characters respond to situations.

Suggest that he think about who the character is, what the situation is, and what his tone would be. For instance, a child would speak more formally to a teacher (“Good morning, how are you?”) than to a friend (“Hey, what’s up?”).

When he finishes his story, he should read it aloud. Does the dialogue sound realistic—like something a person would actually say? He may realize he should change “You cannot go in there” to “You can’t go in there,” since people often use contractions when they speak.

*Tip:* Paying attention to dialogue in books, plays, and movies is a great way for your youngster to learn how different characters speak. 📖



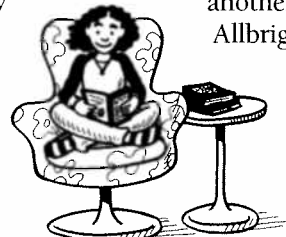
## It begins with one book

My daughter Riley had trouble finding books she liked. One day, her friend recommended a series to her—Redwall by Brian Jacques. Since the girls have the same taste in clothes and music, I told Riley there was a good chance they’d enjoy the same books, too.

We checked out the first Redwall book from the library. Riley read it pretty quickly and, as I hoped, she wanted to read the rest of the series. Then,

she asked the librarian for similar books. The librarian recommended a few and also gave Riley this easy suggestion: Google the title of a book you like, and add the phrase “read-alike.”

Now, Riley is halfway through another series—Bruce Coville’s Rod Allbright and the Galactic Patrol collection—and has recommended it to her friend. I’m glad book recommendations have become a two-way street for them! 📖



**OUR PURPOSE**

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

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