

Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

October 2014



Book Picks

■ *Under the Egg* (Laura Marx Fitzgerald)

When 13-year-old Theodora Tenpenny accidentally discovers a hidden painting, she has a mystery to solve. Is it a masterpiece that will bring the money needed to save her home? Or is it proof that her grandfather was an art thief?



■ *The Captain's Dog: My Journey with the Lewis and Clark Tribe* (Roland Smith)

Real-life adventure mixes with fiction to tell the story of the Lewis and Clark expedition from a new point of view—that of their Newfoundland dog, Seaman. This historical fiction details a difficult journey filled with excitement and danger.



■ *Josephine: The Dazzling Life of Josephine Baker* (Patricia Hruby Powell)

This biography, told through nonrhyming verse and colorful drawings, shares the life of singer and dancer Josephine Baker. Born in poverty, Josephine entertained her way to fame and used her celebrity to fight for civil rights.

■ *Blast Off to Space Camp* (Hillary Wolfe)

What does it take to become an astronaut? Get a glimpse of the training through this nonfiction account of Space Camp, a place where kids learn about everything from living in zero gravity to designing space stations. (Also available in Spanish.)



Allan Composite School
Nadia Breckner, Principal Kelly Wandler, Vice Principal

Nonfiction: Reasons to write

Encourage your child to try her hand at “reality writing” —or nonfiction writing. She’ll learn more about the world around her, and she’ll practice the art of writing to inform.



Report the news

Suggest that your youngster write news reports about events that interest her. For example, if you attend a local Renaissance festival, she might write an article on the person who makes armor. She could email her story to the armor maker or submit it to her school newspaper. *Idea:* Record a video of her reporting her news, and let her send the clip to friends and family.

Support a cause

If your child feels strongly about saving endangered animals or ending hunger, creating a fact-filled flyer can be a rewarding reason to write. Have her collect information and design a flyer on a topic like 10 ways to protect honeybees

or nutritious foods to donate to food banks. She might give copies to neighbors and classmates to drum up support for her cause.

Take a survey

Do her family members prefer reading books in print or on e-readers? Are they early birds or night owls? Conducting a survey will let your youngster find out all sorts of fun information about her relatives. Ask her to draw up a list of questions, call or email to get everyone’s answers, and then write up the results to share. 📖

Book buddies

If your former bookworm would rather be with his friends than read, that’s pretty normal behavior for this age. But there is a way to combine your youngster’s social life with books. Here’s how.



1. Suggest that your child get together with a few friends to launch a book club. They may want to focus on a certain type of book, such as fantasy, science fiction, sports, or mystery.
2. Have them take turns picking a book each month. The “host” should search online for discussion questions or write his own.
3. At the meeting, the kids can share their opinions. Then, they might each give the book a paper-plate award (write “Best Character” or “Favorite Plot Twist” on a paper plate). Finally, the club could vote on whether to recommend the book to others. 📖

What is close reading?

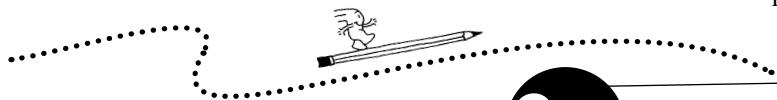
How is a book like an onion? It has layers that you can peel away! Try these ideas to help your child with close reading, or uncovering layers of meaning to understand books more deeply.

Read—and reread. Your youngster may need to read complex material more than once. For example, he might first skim a science chapter on atoms to get a general idea of what atoms are. Then, he can reread to really understand just how tiny an atom actually is or how its parts work together. *Idea:* Let him keep sticky notes on hand so he can jot down important points or questions he has.



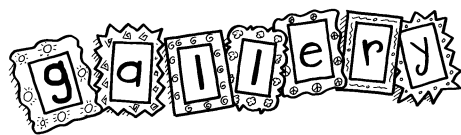
Take your time. When reading closely, your child should slow down and make sure he comprehends every word—if he doesn't, he'll miss shades of meaning in the book. He might pause to think about what *equivalent* means as it's used in a particular sentence or to decide whether a character is being sarcastic when she says something is *fantastic*, for example.

Discover relationships. Your youngster should reflect on how his reading material is related to what he already knows. For instance, if he heard about a modern-day revolution in the news, that may help him figure out the central ideas in his history chapter on the American Revolution. ■



Fun with Words Vocabulary Logos

Just as companies use logos to make their products stick in people's minds, your child can design logos to make vocabulary words stick in *her* mind.



When she brings home vocabulary lists, ask her to brainstorm ideas for logos based on each word's definition. For instance, she might draw a stop sign with the word *cease* in place of *stop*. For *gallery*, she can put each letter of the word in a fancy frame.

Suggest that your youngster hang her logos on her bedroom wall. Once she is confident she knows the words, have her take the logos down and store them in a box or binder. Then, she could design a new set of logos for the next list of science, social studies, math, or other terms she needs to learn. ■

Q&A Reading and writing progress

Q How can I tell if my daughter is on track with reading and writing or if she needs help?

A The best way is to stay involved with what she's doing in school. Go through her backpack with her daily, and look over the work she's doing. Review the teacher's comments on her written reports, and monitor the grades she's receiving.

Also, notice what she's reading for pleasure—or if she's reading for pleasure. Does she choose books that seem too easy for her age? Take turns reading aloud to each other, and when it's her turn, listen for whether she reads smoothly or seems to stumble over words.

If you're concerned, contact your daughter's teacher. He can let you know if your child is on track, and if she's not, he'll work with you to provide help. ■



Parent & Parent Act it out

When my son Steven had trouble following story plots, the reading specialist suggested that we take advantage of the fact that he likes to perform in school plays. She said they were acting out reading material during resource sessions at school, and she thought this strategy would work at home, too.

The funny thing is, it has turned out to be a great activity for our entire family. To “see” the action in the novel he was

reading for class, we used his little brother's action figures as characters from the story. While I read, Steven and Timmy moved the figures around on the table according to the description from the book.

Then, the two boys acted out the chapter themselves. As Steven made up the dialogue, I could tell that he understood what had happened in the story. Now reading time has turned into acting time, and this is one time I'm glad to see drama in our house! ■



OUR PURPOSE

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

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