

Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

December 2010

Literacy Support Team

Book Picks



■ *Clementine's Letter*

If Clementine's favorite teacher

wins a contest, he gets to go to Egypt for the year. But she will do anything to keep him at school—even if it means writing a phony recommendation letter. Part of the Clementine series by Sara Pennypacker. (Also available in Spanish.)



■ *Greetings from Nowhere*

Aggie is a lonely widow who owns a run-down motel in North Carolina's Great Smoky Mountains. Her guests have struggles of their own, but they are all pleasantly surprised to find friendship at her motel. Barbara O'Connor's novel can be a great conversation starter for your family.

■ *Duke Ellington: His Life in Jazz with 21 Activities*



Stephanie Stein Crease's biography of the jazz musician includes a timeline of his life and activities like dancing the Lindy Hop and designing an album jacket. A list of resources suggests books, films, recordings, and Web sites to explore.

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■ *The Strange Case of Origami Yoda*

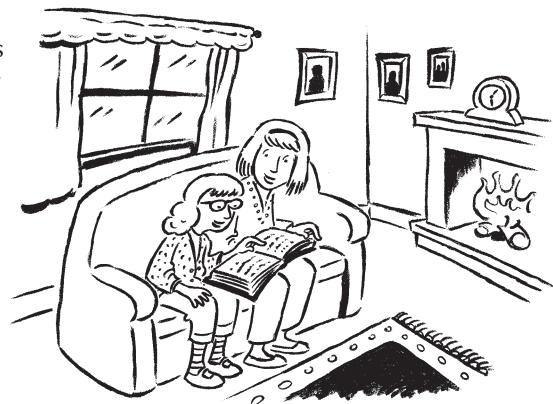
Can Yoda the paper puppet predict the future, or is sixth-grader Dwight a lucky guesser? His classmate Tommy intends to find out by interviewing everyone who has followed Yoda's advice. Tom Angleberger's mystery includes directions for making Origami Yoda.



Reading aloud

When your child listens to you read, good things happen. She uses her imagination, adds words to her vocabulary, and increases her comprehension.

Even though your youngster is probably reading on her own now, enjoying books together can help her develop a love of reading that will last a lifetime. Here are answers to questions that you might have about reading aloud.



What should I read?

Novels, short stories, and nonfiction books all make good read-alouds. Boost your child's interest in listening by having her help you decide what to read. Together, look at lists of books that have received awards such as the Caldecott Medal. (The lists are available at your library or online at www.abfc.com/live.) Or ask her teacher, a librarian, or a bookseller for ideas.

How often should I read?

Try to read to your youngster a little every day. When you're reading a long

book, a few pages a day can help her remember what's happening. *Tip:* If she has reading to do for class, you might suggest that she finish it first and then take a break before she settles down to listen to you.

How can I involve the whole family?

Invite everyone to listen when you read to your child. Create a relaxed atmosphere by stopping to laugh at funny parts or asking for opinions about a character's decision. At the end of story time, build excitement for the next installment by letting each family member predict what will happen. ■

Tools for poetry

Poets use different techniques to make their words and ideas come alive. You and your child can explore two—metaphors and similes—with these ideas.

First, talk about the meanings of each one. *Metaphors* compare objects that are different yet similar in some way. For example, "The cotton-candy clouds floated through the sky" compares clouds to cotton candy. *Similes* also make comparisons, but they use the words "like" or "as" ("The clouds were like cotton candy").

Then, hold a contest to help your youngster come up with metaphors and similes. Give awards for the most beautiful ("The baby's eyes sparkled like jewels") or the funniest ("He is as slow as syrup"). *Tip:* Read through poetry together, and look for metaphors and similes. ■



A world of discovery

Books with unfamiliar people and places can spark your child's curiosity about other cultures. Follow these steps to encourage him to learn more about the world:

1. Combine nonfiction and fiction. Nonfiction can help your youngster better understand the culture of characters in a fictional story. And fiction can make facts and ideas from nonfiction come to life. For example, perhaps your child plans to read *The Lotus Seed* by Sherry Garland, the story of a Vietnamese woman who carries a symbol of her homeland through difficult times. He might familiarize himself with the country's



history and culture by looking up facts in *Vietnam: Enchantment of the World* by Terri Willis.

2. Connect with other cultures. Your child can make a personal connection to a book by comparing

the characters' culture with his own. Encourage him to tell you about the language, food, houses, and activities in a story. If a book is set in Australia, for instance, he might notice that the people speak English like he does, but that they eat vegemite sandwiches instead of peanut butter and jelly. ■



Fun with Words

Word chains

Play this game anywhere to build your child's vocabulary.

Have your youngster think of a category that's related to something he's learning in school (government). To start the game, he says a word that fits his category (Constitution). The next player says another word that goes along with the category. But there's a catch! Each new word has to begin with the last letter of the one before it.



A word chain for government, for example, could be: "Constitution, national, law." Continue calling out words until someone can't think of a new one. The last player to come up with a word picks the next category. ■

Other Picks

WEB SITES

■ World Almanac for Kids

This companion site to the popular reference book is packed with information, games, and quizzes.



Excerpts from the almanac's print version cover topics like sports and technology. Your child can also learn what happened on the current date in history. www.worldalmanacforkids.com

■ Enlighten Me

This children's edition of www.superpages.com will help your youngster learn about his community. The site also offers online activities for solving mysteries, making movies, writing books, and designing puzzles. www.superpages.com/enlightenme

GAMES

■ Be-Rhymed!

Roll a die to determine whether you'll use words, gestures, or drawings to give clues in this guessing game. Your goal is to get your teammates to figure out pairs of rhyming words. Score points for each pair you guess.

Discovery Bay Games

■ AmuseAmaze

Players race across a game board, moving from one letter to another to spell words and find their way through a maze. Reach the end of the maze first to win. You can rearrange the letters and create a different maze every time.



HL Games

Q&A

Reading and writing gifts

Q I'd like to give my daughter gifts that will keep her reading and writing during winter break—and when it's over. My budget is tight. Any suggestions?

A Visit a craft shop or dollar store, and fill a gift bag with a variety of inexpensive writing treats. You can find notepads in different shapes and sizes, colorful pens, and pencils with fun erasers. Also consider a diary,

as well as books of crossword puzzles, word searches, or Mad Libs.

To encourage reading, you might give your daughter a magazine on a topic she likes or even a subscription. Other ideas include trivia books. Or make homemade coupons good for library visits together—these make great gifts, and they're free! ■



OUR PURPOSE

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

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