

Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

January 2011

Literacy Support Team

Book Picks



Trickster: Native American Tales

Editor Matt

Dembicki's collection of Native American folk tales is told in graphic-novel format. Read stories about how things in nature came to be—how the fox tricked the rabbit into losing its tail, why alligators have scaly skin, and more.



The Magician's Elephant

When a fortune teller says an elephant will lead Peter to his missing sister, he doesn't believe her. Then, an elephant falls from the sky, and Peter decides she's telling the truth. A tale of hope by Kate DiCamillo.



The Young Writer's Companion

Budding authors looking for inspiration can find it in this book by Sarah Ellis. Each section explores the writing habits of a famous author and offers writing tips and activities such as keeping a dream journal, starting a story file, and doodling an island.

Matilda

All Matilda wants to do is learn. But the headmistress of Crunchem Hall has it in for the students. When Matilda discovers special powers, she turns the tables on the unkind adults in this classic fantasy by Roald Dahl. (Also available in Spanish.)



Tackling reading challenges

As your youngster reads more advanced books, he will face new challenges. Reading at the right speed, understanding complicated plots, and tackling new vocabulary can be hurdles for some children.

Here are suggestions for handling two common reading problems.

Reading too fast

Youngsters who read too quickly may not understand the material. Suggest that your child take time to imagine what characters look like or to picture the action. The mental images will improve his reading comprehension.

Also, encourage your youngster to ask himself questions and predict what will happen in a story. Looking for answers and checking his predictions will help him understand the plot and the character development as he goes along.

Word-by-word reading

When children stumble over vocabulary, they may be concentrating on one word at a time and lose track of what a story is about. Ask the school librarian



to help your child find Hi-Lo Books, which combine plots for older readers with simpler vocabulary.

Then, have him work on gradually increasing his speed. After reading a paragraph at a pace that's comfortable, he can repeat it a little faster. With practice, he'll shift his focus from individual words to phrases, sentences, and whole passages.

Note: If you suspect your child has a reading disability, talk to his teacher. ■

Be involved

Show your child you care about her education by volunteering at her school. Here are some reading-related ways that you might offer to help:

- Read aloud to the class.
- Listen to English-language learners read aloud.
- Decorate a bulletin board with vocabulary words or book reports.
- Supervise a homework club or study group.
- Reshelve and repair books in the library.
- Help students with online research in the computer lab.
- Record yourself reading textbook chapters to help struggling readers.
- Be an adviser for the school magazine. ■



Writing with purpose

Writers use different styles depending on what kind of information they want to share and who will read it. Encourage your youngster to try writing with these three purposes in mind.

1. To entertain

Stories, poems, plays, and jokes are a few examples of writing that are for readers' enjoyment. Suggest that your child write down jokes she hears and funny things that happen during the day. Or she might write dialogue to turn a frequently told family story into a short play.

2. To persuade

Sometimes writers try to convince people to change their minds about something. Your youngster can express her views



(school administrators) and to write logically and respectfully.

3. To inform

Encourage your child to share what she knows by writing instructions. She might write a step-by-step guide to teach a grandparent how to record a movie or jot down directions for a sibling who wants to make paper-bag puppets.

in a letter to the editor of a school newspaper. For example, she might explain why she thinks students should choose their own cafeteria seats.

Remind her to keep her audience in mind



Guess the phrase

Here's a guessing game that will stretch your child's thinking skills and build her word skills. All you need are pencil and paper.

Show your youngster how arranging words in a particular way can turn a phrase into a brainteaser. *Examples:*

- million** = one in a million
- eiln pu** = line up in alphabetical order
- MIND matter** = mind over matter

Once your child has the idea, take turns making up brainteasers for one another to guess. *Hint:* To find phrases to use, suggest that she look for them when she's reading or listen for them during conversations. It helps to choose phrases that use prepositions such as "in," "on," "over," and "under."

She can also find examples online at <http://kids.niehs.nih.gov/braintpics.htm>. Or she could look in library books like *The Pocket Book of Frame Games* by Terry Stickels.



Oral reports

Q My son gets nervous when he gives an oral report. How can I help him be more confident?

A First, let your son know that many people feel anxious when they speak in front of a group. Then, explain that he can gain confidence by rehearsing his report.

Have him start with a couple of practice runs while standing in front of a mirror. Once he is comfortable with that, encourage him to deliver his report to a live audience of family members or friends. Remind him to relax and take a deep breath before he starts.

Suggest that your son do several rehearsals before his presentation, and give him constructive feedback (speak louder, slow down). The more he practices, the more confident he will be in front of the class.



MAGAZINES

Youngzine

This free online publication for ages 8–15 covers current events in science, entertainment, sports, the arts, and more. *Youngzine* also accepts reader submissions, so your child could send in book reviews, short stories, poems, and even school reports for publication. www.youngzine.com

Kiki

Help your youngster learn to take pride in her own sense of style with this fashion magazine. Article topics range from keeping a fashion journal to designing your own hat. Readers can also discover trends around the world and get advice about friends, homework, and other topics. www.kikimag.com



GAMES

Scrabble Slam!

Think fast in this letter-switching card game. To begin, one player arranges four cards to spell any word (*book*). Then, everyone races to slam down cards that make a new word. *Example:* You play "c" to make *cook*, and your child plays "l" to spell *cool*. The first player to get rid of his cards wins. *Hasbro*



The Family Dinner Box of Questions

Where is the coziest spot in your home? Which TV family is most like your own? Find out how family members answer these questions and more with this dinner-table game. Pull cards from the box to spark interesting discussions and improve your child's conversation skills. *The Box Girls*

OUR PURPOSE

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

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