

Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

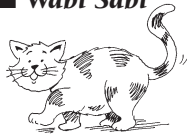
December 2009

Literacy Support Team

Book Picks

Read-aloud favorites

■ Wabi Sabi



What does “Wabi Sabi” mean? The cat in Mark Reibstein’s book asks

other animals to explain the Japanese phrase that is her name. Each animal answers with a haiku, or a 17-syllable Japanese poem. When the cat puts the clues together, she realizes that she is both ordinary *and* special.

■ The Snow Show

Carolyn Fisher’s story takes place on the stage of a pretend cooking show. “Hosts” Snow White, Jack Frost, and Chef Kelvin whip up a batch of snow while explaining the science behind the process. Readers will learn how a flake gets its shape, the role of evaporation, and more.



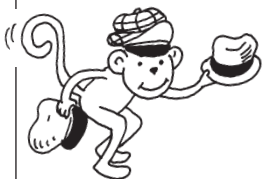
■ Boxes for Katje

Katje’s family is struggling after World War II. So she is thrilled to receive a surprise package from Rosie, an American girl her age. When she writes to thank Rosie, she gets more boxes and shares them with others in her Dutch town. A story of generosity and friendship by Candace Fleming.

■ Caps for Sale

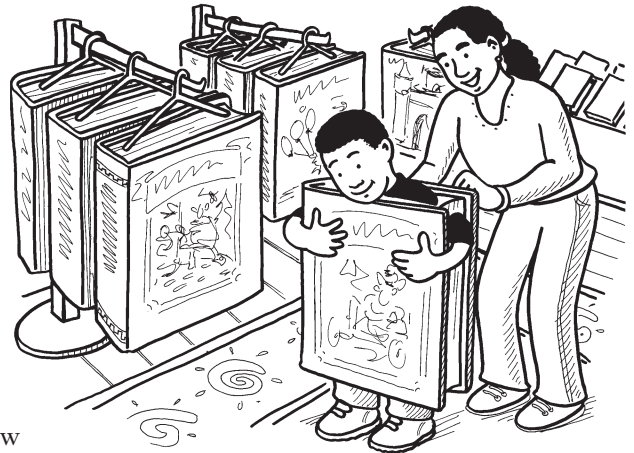
In this classic tale by Esphyr Slobodkina, a traveling salesman stops for a nap, his caps stacked high on his head. He awakes to find a tree full of monkeys all wearing the caps! Youngsters will enjoy the salesman’s

humorous efforts to get the hats back. (Also available in Spanish.)



Books that fit

Like your youngster’s clothes and shoes, the books he chooses should be a good fit. As he learns to read, the right books will make him feel confident and want to read more. Use these tips to help him find books that match his reading ability.



1. Look it over. If your child is just starting to read, look for books that have a few words and colorful pictures on each page. A more experienced reader might be ready for a book with two or three lines of text per page and some new words. Most young readers enjoy books with repeating words or phrases that they can recognize and read.

2. Try it out. Let your youngster try to read the first page or two. If he doesn’t hesitate over any words, the book is probably too easy for him. If he struggles with several of the words, it may be too hard. Let his comfort level guide you—if he’s

happy with the book, encourage him to keep going.

3. Check the level. Some beginning reader books come in series, such as “I Can Read Book” or “Step into Reading.” These books often have a reading level (say, 1, 2, 3, 4) on the cover. If your child isn’t reading yet, start with books at the lowest level. If he’s reading a little, choose a higher one. *Note:* Each series is different, so one publisher’s level 2, for instance, may be easier or harder than another’s. ♥

Parent volunteers

Being involved at school helps the teacher—and shows your child that you care about learning. Here’s how you can become a parent volunteer:

- Let the teacher know that you want to help. You can call or e-mail her or send a note listing days and times you’re available. She might ask you to read with children, play word games, escort groups to the library, or cut out bulletin board letters.

- When you’re in the classroom, focus on volunteering. If you have a question about your youngster’s progress, contact the teacher after school hours. Also, arrange babysitting for siblings so you’re not distracted while you’re volunteering. *Tip:* Exchange child-care time with another volunteer. ♥



Building blocks of writing

Whether your youngster is just starting to print letters or beginning to write complete sentences, you can build her skills by having her practice at home. Try these ideas.

Trace letters

To help your child get started, write letters lightly in pencil for her to trace. She can go over them with brightly colored crayons or markers. Then, give her words to trace (names of her family and friends, her favorite foods, or zoo animals). *Tip:* Use uppercase and lowercase letters so she will learn to form both.



Spell words

Encourage your youngster to spell words by herself. When she first begins writing, let her invent her own spellings (“prk” for “park”). If she asks you to help her spell a word, ask her to say it slowly, listen for each sound, and write the letters that match those sounds. Help her fill in any letters she has missed.

Write sentences

Explain that a sentence is a complete thought that includes a noun (person, place, or thing) and a verb (an action word). Help your child make a list of nouns and a list of verbs. Then, have her write sentences using one of each. If she chooses *Dad* and *runs*, she might write, “Dad runs every morning.” ♥

Fun with Words Awesome adjectives

Teach your child to use descriptive words with this game.

First, ask him to think of as many colors, shapes, and sizes as possible. Write each word (green, square, short) on an index card. Explain that these words are called adjectives. They make books more interesting, and people use them to give details during conversations (“I live in the *gray* house” or “Please wear *long* sleeves”).



To play, have your youngster draw a card. Without saying the adjective, he should look around for items it could describe and say them out loud. Then, everyone else tries to guess the word. If the word is “red,” his clues could include a toy fire truck and an apple. Whoever guesses the adjective draws the next card. *Idea:* Take the cards with you to play in the car. ♥

OUR PURPOSE

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

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Parent to Parent

Look-up list

My daughter Zoe is full of questions, like “Where does the sun go at night?” or “When are the next Olympics?” I don’t always have time to help her figure out the answers. One day when I was busy paying bills, I said, “Let’s write that down, and we’ll look it up later.”

Then, I had an idea. We decided to keep a running list of Zoe’s questions. Once a week, we would look them up at the library or online.

The first week, Zoe wrote three questions. Together, we found several books at the library, including *The Sun Is My Favorite Star* by Frank Asch. Then, we typed each question into Google. We really learned a lot. For example, we discovered that the 2010 Winter Olympics will be in Vancouver, and we saw the adorable animal mascots they will have. Best of all, Zoe is learning how to do research! ♥



Q&A Family book club

Q *Our neighbors started a book club with their teens where they all read and discuss the same book. I’d like to try it with my son. How can we get started?*

A A family book club is a great idea for any age. Your son will benefit from a regular reading time with you, and talking about books will help boost his reading comprehension.

First, choose a children’s book with chapters, like *Mr. Popper’s Penguins*

by Richard and Florence Atwater or *My Father’s Dragon* by Ruth Stiles Gannett. Then, get together and read one or two chapters aloud each night.

When you finish the book, choose a time to talk about it. Have each person bring at least two questions, such as “Who is your favorite character?” or “What surprised you the most?” Give everyone a chance to offer an opinion and ask follow-up questions. Finally, decide what book to read next. ♥

