

Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

February 2010

Peoria Unified School District

Book Picks



■ *Babymouse: Queen of the World!*

Babymouse has one hilarious adventure after another as she tries to get invited to a popular mouse's slumber party. Along the way, she learns a few lessons about life in middle school. A graphic novel by Jennifer Holm and Matthew Holm. (Also available in Spanish.)



■ *The Twenty-One Balloons*

While flying his hot-air balloon, Professor Sherman lands unexpectedly on a volcanic island. It's full of diamonds and spectacular inventions. But once the professor learns the wealthy residents' secrets, he finds himself stranded. A Newbery Medal winner by William Pène du Bois.

■ *Children Just Like Me*

What do children in the Philippines eat? What games do kids play in China? Barnabas and Anabel Kindersley traveled to more than 30 countries to interview youngsters about their lives. The book includes facts about each nation, photographs, and excerpts from the authors' travel diary.



■ *The True Meaning of Smekday*

In this science fiction story by Adam Rex, aliens have taken over Earth. Eighth-grader Gratuity Tucci teams up with an outcast alien who agrees to help her find her mother. Soon they discover another race of aliens is planning an invasion. Can they stop the new attackers?



Smooth reading

Reading aloud is fun for all ages. Plus, it's a great way for your child to practice using expression and reading smoothly. These activities can help.

Read to you

Have your youngster treat you to story time. He can pace himself by thinking of punctuation marks as traffic signs. He needs to "yield," or pause slightly, for a comma. And he should come to a complete stop for a period, a question mark, or an exclamation point.

Idea: Point out that when he asks you a question, his voice goes up at the end. When he's excited, his voice is enthusiastic. Remind him to use a questioning voice when he sees a question mark and an excited voice for an exclamation point.

Make a recording

Let your child record himself reading a book as a gift for a younger cousin. Suggest that he make the story interesting by changing his voice for each character. He might use a booming voice for a lion or a



deep voice for a father's lines. He should also change the pace—reading slowly during a mysterious part, for example.

Put on plays

Check out a book of plays to read as a family (try *Folktales on Stage* by Aaron Shepard or *Childsplay: A Collection of Scenes and Monologues for Children* by Kerry Muir). Encourage your youngster to think about how a character is feeling and to try to feel that way as he reads the lines. If his character is happy, he might think of something that makes him smile. ■

Note taking: Short and simple

Taking good classroom notes today can mean better grades tomorrow. Here are ways to help your youngster have the facts she needs to study for tests and quizzes.

Focus. Suggest that she write down her teacher's main points rather than every word she says. Your child should watch and listen for clues that something needs to go in her notes. For instance, the teacher might write a definition on the board, repeat a point, or spell a famous person's name.

Abbreviate. Using symbols and shortened words will save time and space. *Example:* Instead of "Louisiana was purchased from France on April 30, 1803," your youngster can write, "LA \$ fr France 4/30/1803".

Tip: Encourage your child to write clearly so she can read her notes later. ■



Favorite authors

Leigh loves Eve Bunting's books. Cody will read anything by Rick Riordan. Discovering a favorite author can motivate your youngster to read, too. Try these suggestions:

- An author may write several books with a similar theme. Have your child read two stories by the same writer, and ask her how they are alike and different. For example, maybe both are about kids' relationships with their parents, but one character has a single-parent family.
- Encourage your youngster to pay attention to an author's writing style. Does the writer use a lot of dialogue? Does he usually write in the first person ("I") or the third person



("he," "she," "they")? Does he write in the present tense ("She says") or past tense ("She said")? Have your child try one of the author's techniques in her own stories.

- Your youngster can learn how an author's life may have influenced his writing. Suggest that she read his biography or

Web site. Perhaps his stories take place in the country because he grew up on a farm.

Tip: Have your child choose an "Author of the Month" and read a book or two by the same person. After a year, she'll be familiar with 12 authors! 📖



All about me

Your youngster can practice writing and thinking by choosing a topic that he's an expert on—himself! Share these ideas for creative autobiographies.

Poem. Have him write open-ended phrases like these: *I am, I like, I think, I dream, I hope, I will.* He can create an autobiographical poem by completing each sentence ("I dream of becoming a pilot").

Picture book.

Help your child find a photograph from each year of his life. Have him glue them in a notebook and write a paragraph telling the story behind each one.



Poster. Divide a poster board into "Then" and "Now" columns. Under "Then," your youngster can write facts about his life five years ago ("I lived in Ohio"). On the "Now" side, have him describe his current life ("I live in Texas"). 📄

Other Picks

GAMES

■ Elephants or Ants

Which is faster—a sneeze or a baseball pitch? Answer correctly (a sneeze), and keep the trivia card. The first player to collect a card from each category wins. Includes 300 questions about food, people, fun and games, entertainment, nature, and odds and ends.

International Playthings, LLC



■ Syl-la-bles

Practice spelling and strategy skills with this board game. Spell a word for every letter you land on. Earn 50 points per syllable—but zero points if you misspell the word. Spelling bee and thesaurus squares offer chances to score bonus points. *Cadaco*

SOFTWARE

■ Bookworm Adventures

Help Lex the bookworm build words to defeat fictional enemies in this part word game and part role-playing fantasy game. You can download the free demo or buy the full version.

PopCap Games



■ Reader's Digest Super Word Power

Based on the magazine's vocabulary quiz, this game has two ways to play. Choose the definition for each word from a list, or start with the definition and unscramble the word. Match enough words to their definitions to unlock the bonus round.

Gamehouse, Inc.

Fun with Words

Words and more words

Stretch your child's vocabulary with these two activities you can do together:

1. **Fill the letter.** Ask your youngster to choose a letter and draw its outline large enough to fill her paper. Take turns writing words inside the letter. The catch? Each word has to begin with the letter and have more than two syllables. For example,

you might put "alligator," "aggravate," and "asteroid" in the letter A.



2. **Play a word association game.** Choose a word, such as *cereal*. Your child says the first word she thinks of (*milk*). Then, you say a word that pops into your mind (*cow*). Continue for three minutes. Then, start over with a new word. 📖

OUR PURPOSE

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

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