

Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

January 2008

Eagle Ridge Middle School
Candy Kuhlman, Counselor

Book Picks

■ *The Million Dollar Kick*

Whisper once humiliated herself while playing soccer. Now she can't stand the game. Faced with a contest to win a million dollars with a single kick, can she regain her self-confidence and win the cash? Readers will find out in this tale by Dan Gutman.



■ *Granny Torrelli Makes Soup*

Granny Torrelli does more than make soup. When Rosie and her best friend, Bailey, have an argument, Granny shares stories of her own life to help Rosie learn how to solve her problems. A heartwarming tale of family by Sharon Creech. (Also available in Spanish.)

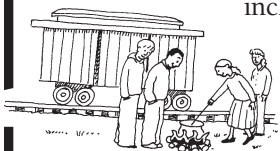
■ *A Collection of Rudyard Kipling's Just So Stories*

How did the camel get its hump? Why do kangaroos hop? Where did the rhinoceros get his skin? Readers can explore the fanciful answers to these and other questions in eight classic fables by Rudyard Kipling. Beautiful illustrations by Christopher Corr and others make this volume a delight to look at as well as to read.



■ *The Boxcar Children Cookbook*

Fans of the Boxcar Children series will eat up this title by Diane Blain. The book gives simple recipes for foods eaten by the Alden children during their adventures. Most recipes



include an excerpt from one of the Boxcar Children books.

Writing to communicate

What do e-mail, newsletters, and thank-you notes have in common? They all give your child an everyday reason to write. Plus, they build communication skills and show her that writing can be both easy and fun.

A click away

Become an e-pal with your youngster. You can write reminder notes ("You have basketball practice at 5:00"), discuss family plans ("What should we do on Saturday?"), or ask about school ("How did the vocabulary quiz go?"). Your child will get practical writing experience as she responds. Try to make it a habit to exchange e-mails regularly.

Extra, extra!

Put your youngster in charge of writing a family newsletter, and she'll get to practice taking notes and writing nonfiction accounts. Give her a notebook to keep track of things that happen (a trip to the zoo, birthday parties, books read). At the end of the month, she can compile her notes into a newsy letter to send to relatives.

Thanks again

Make thank-you notes a part of daily life. Keep a pad of sticky notes handy so your child can write quick notes to family members ("Thanks for helping me clean my



room—the job went a lot faster"). Let her use note cards to write longer notes when she gets gifts. She'll practice writing—and also learn to show appreciation to others. ■

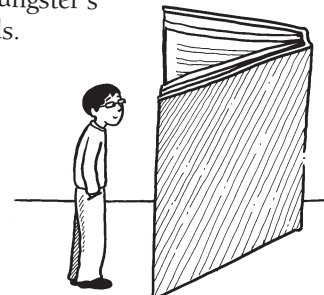
Values 101

Help your youngster develop critical-thinking skills by discussing ethical issues raised in books. You can start with these ideas.

How would you feel? Story events make great tools for teaching empathy. Have your child read a book like *Framed!* by Malcom Rose, and talk about how it would feel to be accused of a crime you didn't commit—or to get away with one that you did.

What would you do? Talking about consequences will improve your youngster's decision-making skills.

Example: Would he choose to drink from the magical spring in *Tuck Everlasting* (Natalie Babbitt) if it would allow him to live forever? ■



You are there!

Books take readers on journeys to fabulous places both real and imagined. Your youngster can enjoy the journey even more by “reading on location.”

It works like this: Your child reads a book in a place that is similar to the setting in the story. Try these ideas to help your youngster feel a real connection to the books he’s reading:

■ Take books on weekend outings. Try *The Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* by E. L. Konigsburg for a day at the museum, or a nonfiction volume on sea creatures while at the aquarium.



and a Very Interesting Boy (Jeanne Birdsall) when visiting the mountains. ■

■ Tie stories to activities. After a Little League game, lounge on the grass and read *Heat* by Mike Lupica. Try *Jazz* by Walter Dean Myers while waiting for a music lesson or going to a concert.

■ Look for books set in your vacation spot. For instance, take *Dave at Night* (Gail Carson Levine) on a trip to New York City or *The Penderwicks: A Summer Tale of Four Sisters, Two Rabbits,*



Parent ² Parent

Improving comprehension

When my son Nick scored poorly on reading comprehension tests, I met with the reading resource teacher to learn what we could do.

In addition to providing extra help at school, Mr. Stephens suggested some “Hi-Lo Books” that Nick could read at home. He said these “high interest—low vocabulary” books have stories children enjoy and are written at a lower reading level.



The teacher also suggested that we play vocabulary games, such as the Same Game. I say a word like “house,” and Nick names synonyms (“home,” “apartment”).

Mr. Stephens’s ideas worked! Now that Nick understands more of what he reads, he reads more often for fun. And his grades are improving—not only in reading, but in social studies and science, too. ■

Q&A

Remember that

Q I need an easy way to help my child remember what she has studied. Any ideas?

A Encourage your child to be creative and invent ways to remember the facts she’s learning. For example, she can use visual devices, like picturing a girl named Georgia swimming in the Atlantic to remember that Georgia’s capital is Atlanta.



Have your youngster try acronyms, such as PEMDAS for the order of math operations (parentheses, exponents, multiplication, division, addition, subtraction). Or she can associate each word she needs to remember with a familiar item, such as a favorite drink. For the presidents on Mt. Rushmore (Washington, Jefferson, Roosevelt, Lincoln), she might come up with **W**ater, **J**uice, **R**oot Beer, and **L**emonade. ■

Other Picks

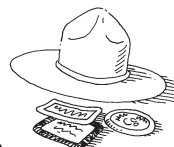
WEB SITES

■ Earthquakes

Children will learn all about earthquakes on this site from the U.S. Geological Survey. They can find information on the latest quakes, learn “cool earthquake facts,” and even report a quake. The site also includes earthquake puzzles and games and ideas for science fair projects. <http://earthquake.usgs.gov/learning/kids>

■ Web Rangers

This National Parks Service site lets kids sign up to join the Web Rangers. Then, they can solve puzzles, play games, and earn badges as they learn about history, science, nature, and more. Available in Spanish, too. <http://76.12.47.246/webangers/Index.cfmhttp://65>



GAMES

■ Great States

Race the clock to find answers to questions about landmarks, capitals, and other facts in this fun game that teaches U.S. geography. Includes a timer, a colorful map, and 400 question cards to read and answer. For two to six players. *International Playthings, Inc.*



■ Nerdy Wordy

In this game for two players, opponents take turns choosing letters to build words in a crossword-style grid. Score points by creating new words or by finding words inside words. The playing boards snap closed for easy travel. *Briarpatch, Inc.*

OUR PURPOSE

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

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