

Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

December 2008

Dahlgren School
Mrs. Alice Herring, Principal

Book Picks

Read-aloud favorites

■ *How I Became a Pirate*

When pirates ask for help burying treasure, Jeremy jumps at the chance. Life at sea is great—he teaches the pirates to play soccer and has no bed-time. But he misses reading stories and being tucked in at night. Can the pirates bury the treasure and get Jeremy home in time for soccer practice?



■ *My Name Is Gabito*

This biography of Gabriel García Márquez tells how an imaginative little boy grew up to become a famous author. Using both English and Spanish words, Monica Brown explains how Márquez's childhood in Colombia, South America, inspired his writing today.

■ *Charlie Anderson*

Elizabeth and Sarah adopt a wandering cat and name him Charlie. When he doesn't show up one evening, the sisters learn that he splits his time between two houses. They understand, because they spend weekends with their father and weekdays with their mother. A reassuring story by Barbara Abercrombie.



■ *Degas and the Little Dancer*

This is the true story of Edgar Degas's famous ballerina sculpture. Marie's parents can't afford dance lessons, so she earns money modeling for artists. After she poses for Degas, he invites her family to see the sculpture Marie inspired. A nice introduction to art history by Laurence Anholt.



Ask, answer...and understand

"What's your book about?" Asking your child questions about what she is reading is a great way to build her comprehension. Here are three ideas to help her think about stories in different ways.

- 1** Ask questions that encourage your youngster to pay attention to details. After you read to her or she finishes a story herself, ask where it took place or what the characters' names are. Let her check her reading skills by placing her finger on the answer. *Example:* "Where did Curious George go?" "To a pizza restaurant."
- 2** Come up with questions that help your child think about what happened. Instead of being able to touch the answer, she'll need to use clues from the book. For instance, ask, "What's the main idea?" ("George is curious, and he always gets in trouble.") Have her show you words or



pictures that helped her find the answer. ("On this page, George is making a mess with pizza dough. But here, the baker is happy because George helped deliver the pizza.")

- 3** Finally, ask questions that help your youngster connect personally with a story. *Examples:* "Can you think of a time when you got in trouble like George did?" "Imagine that you are eating pizza with George—what would you talk about?" Relating a book to her own life can help your youngster understand the story and enjoy it more.♥

Literacy gifts to make

Encourage your child to put his reading and writing skills to work by making gifts.

▲ **Words-of-wisdom book.** What does your child wish he had known when he was younger? Staple several sheets of paper together. On each, help him write and illustrate one piece of advice for a little cousin or sibling. *Example:* "Try new foods so you don't miss something yummy, like kiwi."

▲ **Reading coupons.** Have your youngster think of 10 reading-related activities he can do for a family member. *Example:* "I will read you a story at bedtime." Ask him to write each one on an index card and put them all in an envelope.♥

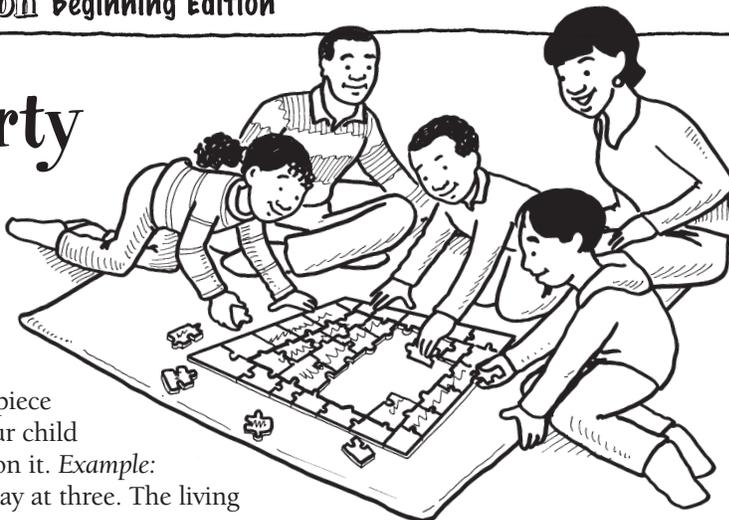


Poetry party

Plan a family bash to celebrate poetry. You'll improve your youngster's writing and speaking skills while helping him fall in love with poems.

Create an invitation. Fold a piece of paper in half and help your child write a short rhyming verse on it. *Example:* "Let's read poems on Saturday at three. The living room is the place to be."

Find poems. Check out a few poetry books from the library to use for the party. Try *Poem Stew* (William Cole),



Words with Wings: A Treasury of African American Poetry and Art (Belinda Rochelle), or *A Giraffe and a Half* (Shel Silverstein).

Make a party game. Have your youngster copy a poem on the back of an old puzzle. At the party, let everyone help take it apart and put it back together. Then, read the poem aloud.

Hold a contest. Give each person a short poem and a few minutes to memorize it. Take turns reciting them. Award small door prizes to everyone (a sparkly pen, a special bookmark).♥

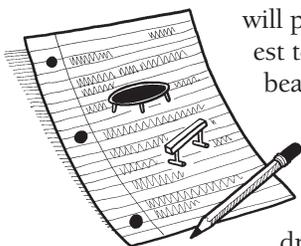


Fun with Words

Rebus story

Here's a new way for your child to write a story. It's called a *rebus*, and it lets her use both words and pictures to express her ideas.

First, help your youngster think of a topic. For instance, she might write about gymnastics class. In each sentence, have her replace at least one word with a picture. Nouns will probably be easiest to draw (balance beam, trampoline).



Every time she repeats a word in her story, she should

draw the same picture. *Tip:* Suggest that she skip lines on the paper so she'll have enough room for her pictures.

Finally, have her create a key that tells what each picture stands for. It can be a simple list of pictures with a word next to each one. When she has finished, she can read her story to you.♥

Q&A Vocabulary games

Q My child tends to use the same words over and over. How can I expand her vocabulary?

A Help your youngster build her vocabulary by playing word games together.

You might make letter dice by covering four regular dice with plain stickers or pieces of masking tape. Write a different letter of the alphabet on each side, leaving out Q and X. Take turns tossing one die. All the players write down five words beginning with the letter rolled. Read your lists to each other, and score a point for each word that no one else thought of.

Or take turns naming categories (sports, pets, furniture). Have everyone write five words that fit into the group. Compare lists, and earn one point for each unique word.♥



Parent to Parent

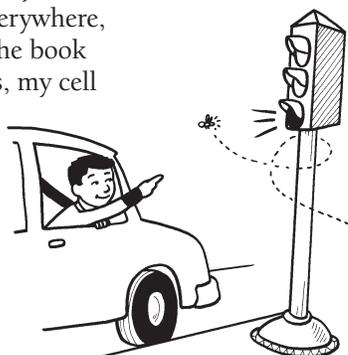
Books and activities

One night before bed, I read Eric Carle's *The Very Lonely Firefly* to my son. The next day, Nick wanted to look for lights everywhere, just like the little firefly in the book does. He pointed out lamps, my cell phone screen, and the microwave clock. Then, he wanted to read the story again that night.

I started looking for activities that he could do with other books. We read *Snowballs* by Lois

Ehlert and collected buttons, plastic forks, and twigs for a snowman-building kit. On the first snowy day, our snowman will look just like one in Ehlert's story.

This idea has inspired Nick to read more books and come up with fun things to do. I wonder what we'll do next!♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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