

Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

September 2018

Book Picks

■ *Grand Canyon* (Jason Chin)

Follow a father and daughter as they hike the Grand Canyon. This illustrated story presents facts about the spectacular landform's geology, plant and animal life, and more. A detailed map shows an overhead view of the canyon.



■ *Taking Sides* (Gary Soto)

Lincoln Mendoza loves playing on his school basketball team with his best friends. But when his family moves to the suburbs, he has to change teams. Can Lincoln compete against his old team without losing friends? (Also available in Spanish.)



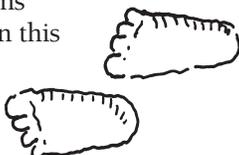
■ *Out of Wonder*

(Kwame Alexander with Chris Colderley and Marjory Wentworth)

In this poetry collection, three poets come together to celebrate their favorite poets. They pay homage to those who inspired them to begin writing poetry—Langston Hughes, Emily Dickinson, and Gwendolyn Brooks, to name a few.

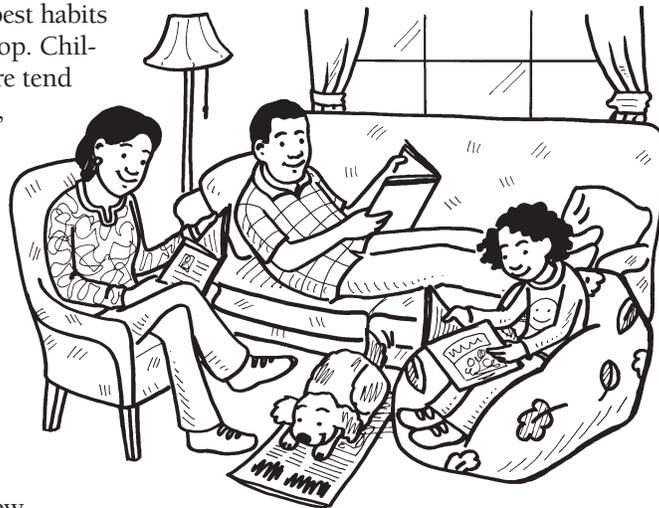
■ *Lemons* (Melissa Savage)

Lemonade Liberty Witt's life is turned upside down when she has to move in with her grandpa. Her new town is the Bigfoot Capital of the World, and Lem befriends Tobin Sky, who is obsessed with finding Bigfoot. Find out how Lem turns lemons into lemonade in this story about overcoming struggles.



A love of reading

Reading is one of the best habits your youngster can develop. Children who read for pleasure tend to have higher test scores, bigger vocabularies, and better reading comprehension. Steer your child toward a lifetime of reading with these ideas.



Choose books wisely

Suggest that your youngster find books that will hold her interest. Have her read the back cover and the first few pages to see if the book grabs her. It often helps if she has something in common with a story's main character. For instance, a child fascinated by machines may enjoy Roz the robot in *The Wild Robot* (Peter Brown).

Make time for reading

Between homework, friends, and activities, it's not always easy to fit in reading. Try setting aside a time when the entire family reads (after dinner, before bed). Also, encourage your

youngster to put books in the car so she can read during errands or while waiting in a dentist's office.

Meet other readers

Reading is contagious! If your child finds friends who like to read, they may share books and enjoy discussing them. Perhaps she'll notice kids who read after they finish a class assignment, or she could pay attention to which books her classmates choose in the library. She can strike up a conversation later: "Do you have a series to recommend?"

A prewriting toolbox

Before writing a report or an essay, your child needs to organize his information. A graphic organizer is just the ticket! Consider these formats.

● **Flowcharts** work well for book reports or history essays where one event follows another. Encourage your youngster to write each event in a separate box ("found stray dog," "made flyers") and draw an arrow from one box to the next.

● **Venn diagrams** compare and contrast two things. Say your child's report is about things that fly. He would first draw two overlapping circles. Then, he could list facts specific to hot-air balloons ("carry people") in the outer part of one circle. Facts exclusive to kites ("steered by string") go in the other circle's outer section. And shared traits ("made of nylon") belong in the overlapping space.



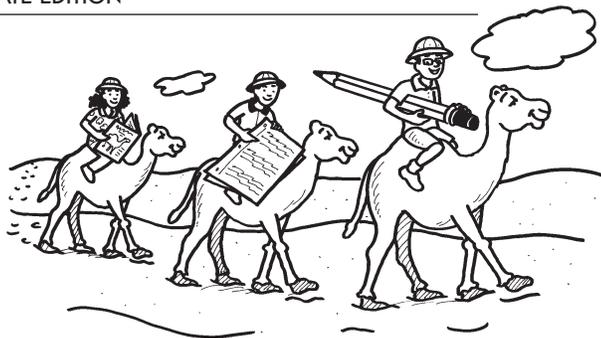
Beginnings and endings

The way your child starts and ends a writing assignment can make a big difference in his finished product. Help him create a good first—and last—impression with these suggestions.

Attention-grabbing introductions

A powerful beginning pulls the reader in. Your youngster might:

- **Kick off with a question.** “Did you ever wonder why camels have humps?”
- **Use an interesting fact.** “Camels have three eyelids and two rows of eyelashes per eye.”



- **Set a scene.** “A line of camels marches across the desert. The air is dry and hot, and there’s no water in sight.”

Memorable conclusions

The ending should wrap things up in a way the reader will remember. A good conclusion shows how all the information in a paper fits together. Here are some possibilities:

- **Summarize the main points.** “Its large hump, unusual eyes, and big feet make the camel the best form of transportation in the desert.”
- **Echo the introduction.** “A camel isn’t just interesting to look at. Its unique features help people travel in a hot, dry climate.”
- **Close with instructions.** “If you visit the desert, take a ride on a camel. His hump, eyes, and feet will get you where you need to go.”



Fun with Words

What doesn't belong?

Hammock, swimming, hammer, aluminum, summer... which word doesn't belong? (*Aluminum*, because it's the only one without a double *m* in the middle.)

Play this game with your child to help her look closely at words and learn their spellings or parts of speech.



1. Ask her to bring home a list of vocabulary or spelling words. Or she could make a list of words from the dictionary.
2. Choose three or more of the words that have something in common (vowel sound, prefix, suffix, part of speech, number of syllables).
3. Write the words down, along with a word from your youngster's list that doesn't fit your sorting rule. Then, she tries to name your rule.
4. Trade roles, and let her give you a set of words to figure out.

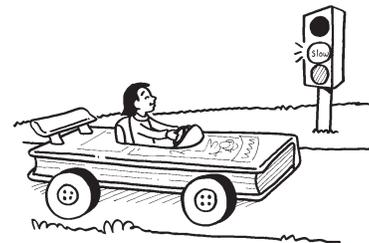
Q&A Slow down

Q My daughter reads so fast that she sometimes misses important facts. How can I help her slow down?

A Start by showing your child that reading too fast causes her to skip information. Try having her read a section, and then you read it aloud to her. Ask your youngster to hold up a finger each time she hears something that she doesn't remember reading.

Next, help your child find a way to focus while she's reading. When she has a textbook assignment, encourage her to break it up. If she has three science chapters to read in a week, she might read one a night for three nights instead of doing them all in one evening. She will slow down and concentrate better if she doesn't feel overwhelmed.

Finally, suggest that your youngster skim the text once and then carefully read it a second time. The second reading will help her catch things she missed the first time and let her see how reading more slowly helps.



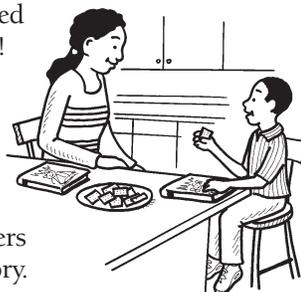
Parent 2 Parent Speaking of reading

Last year my son started reading more advanced books in school. I recognized some of the titles from when I was a child, and others were new to me. I leafed through one that he was finished with. I got hooked and ended up reading the whole thing!

What I didn't realize was that reading the same book as Jonas did would give us something new to talk about. We discussed our favorite characters and the best parts of the story.

Now we try to read a book together about once a month. We take turns picking a title, and then we check out two copies from the library.

When we've both finished, we sit at the kitchen table with a snack and talk about the story. Sometimes we find discussion questions online, usually on the book publisher's website. Since we started this tradition, we're both enjoying reading new books—and talking about them together!



OUR PURPOSE

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

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Book Picks

■ **Brand New School, Brave New Ruby** (Derrick Barnes)

The youngest of four kids, Ruby sets out to prove she can keep up with her smart (and sometimes mischievous) older brothers. She has just started at a new school, and she's ready to make a name for herself. The first book in the Ruby and the Booker Boys series.

■ **Get Coding!** (*Young Rewired State*)

Your child can learn and use coding skills to complete the “missions” in this how-to book. She'll read about how to build a web page, design an app, create a game, and more—all in a guide designed for beginners.



■ **Word of Mouse** (James Patterson and Chris Grabenstein)

Isaiah is a little blue mouse who can read, write, and talk. It's hard for a talking mouse to fit in, but when he meets Hailey, a girl who knows what it's like to feel lonely, they both learn how valuable friendship can be.



■ **Behind the Canvas: An Artist's Life**

(Blanca Apodaca and Michael Serwich) Explore what it's like to be a real artist in this *Time for Kids* nonfiction book. Young readers will learn about various types of art and get an inside look at an artist's studio. Includes an interview with an artist and a glossary of art terms. (Also available in Spanish.)



Books boost critical thinking

Did you know that reading is a great way to help your child think critically? Sharpen his thinking by encouraging him to imagine these twists as he reads.

Imagine where

Ask your youngster to pretend the story he's reading takes place somewhere different. What would change or stay the same if the characters lived in outer space instead of on a farm? The kids might still go to school, but maybe they ride there on a “rocket bus” or wear spacesuit uniforms.



Imagine when

How about if a story were set in another era? Perhaps your child is reading a novel about a wagon train journey in pioneer days. He might move it to the present day—with computers, cell phones, and other modern technology. How does he think the plot would

develop if the characters could communicate with distant relatives by Skype, navigate their journey with GPS, or film funny videos along the way?

Imagine who

What if a different character told the story? Your youngster might change the narrator from a sloth to a cheetah, for example. Then, instead of hanging out in a tree all day, the main character would speed through the jungle and discover exciting new adventures. ■

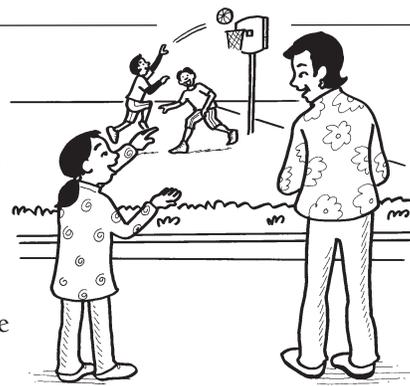
On-the-go conversations

When you're out and about with your youngster, build her speaking skills with these everyday conversation starters.

● **Jobs.** Pay attention to businesses you pass, like a yoga studio, newspaper office, or day-care center. Talk to her about what jobs people might be doing inside.

● **Nature.** Wonder aloud about plants and animals you spot, such as why leaves change color or what horses grazing in a field are thinking about.

● **Sports.** Look for people being active—walking their dogs, playing basketball, or riding bikes. What are your favorite physical activities, and what do you like best about them? ■



The best word for the job

Ran or dashed? Small or miniature?

There are so many words out there for your youngster to choose from when she writes. Try these activities to help her use precise words—the ones that really get across her meaning.

Find new verbs. Encourage your child to go through her writing and circle all the verbs (action words). Then, suggest that she replace general ones with more targeted options. For instance, “She ran through



the forest” might become “She dashed through the forest.” Or “I put cinnamon on my toast” could change to “I sprinkled cinnamon on my toast.”

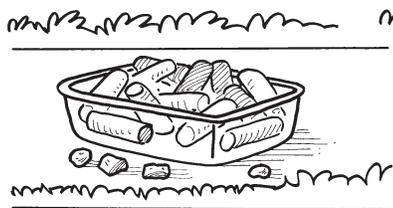
Discover adjectives. This game will help your youngster think of interesting adjectives (descriptive words). Have her pick an object (say, an orange). Set a timer for 3 minutes while each of you lists as many words as possible to describe it (*round, bumpy, tasty, delicious, sweet, juicy*). When



Sidewalk spelling bee

Play this outdoor spelling game to motivate your youngster to study his words each week.

1. Have your child use sidewalk chalk to write his spelling words randomly on a sidewalk or playground blacktop.



- Let one player toss a pebble and announce the word it lands on or nearest to.
- The other person, without looking, has to spell the word. If he gets it right, he writes his initials beside it. Then, it's his turn to toss the pebble and say a word for his opponent to spell.
- When all the words have been claimed, the player who spelled the most words correctly wins.

Variation: Write words with markers on large sheets of paper, and toss a penny toward them.

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time's up, take turns reading your lists aloud, and cross off any duplicates. The person with the most remaining words selects the next item to describe.



Better book reports

Q My son has to present a book report, and it's up to him to choose the book and the format. How can I support him?

A Begin by helping him find a great book to read. You might go to the library together, or share titles of books you loved when you were his age. Then, suggest that he get an early start so he has plenty of time to read before writing his report.

Next, encourage him to explore various formats. Does he have a flair for the dramatic? He might want to reenact a scene from the book. If he likes to draw, he could design a book jacket with key quotes from the story and a summary on the back. Or he might create a scene in a shoebox and tape his report to the side.

Finally, invite him to practice reading his report to you. He'll feel more prepared and confident presenting it in class.



Learning with biographies

Reading biographies is a fun way to explore subjects like science, history, music, and art through the eyes of real people. Here are ideas:

- Help your child make connections to what she's learning in school by reading a biography of a person she's studying. Ask her to share facts from the biography that she remembers

from class—as well as new information she discovers.

- Suggest that your youngster look for similarities to her own life. Maybe she's reading about a ballet dancer who came back from an injury. That could remind her of when she sprained her ankle and couldn't dance in her recital. She'll better understand the person's feelings and actions if she can relate to them.

