

Reading Connection

INTERMEDIATE EDITION

Working Together for Learning Success

September 2020

Calvin A. Hunsinger School



Book Picks

■ *Crazy About Cats* (Owen Davey)

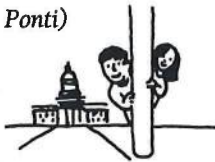
From wild cats like ocelots and pumas to house cats, this nonfiction book from the About Animals series teaches readers all about cats. Your child will discover where cats live, what they eat, and the special features they have.



(Also available in Spanish.)

■ *Framed!* (James Ponti)

Twelve-year-old Florian Bates is no ordinary middle schooler. When his family moves to Washington, DC, he starts his own spy agency with the help of his new friend Margaret. Follow along in this spy adventure as the young sleuths help the FBI solve a big case.



■ *The House That Lou Built* (Mae Respicio)

Lou loves her woodshop class, and for a school project, she's planning to build her own tiny house on a piece of land she's inherited. But she quickly realizes that building a new structure isn't as simple as it seems. Determined, Lou finds creative solutions to the many roadblocks she faces along the way.



■ *Go Figure! Big Questions About Numbers* (Johnny Ball)

Your youngster can learn about ancient numbers, explore "magic" numbers, and imagine a newspaper with no numbers in this nonfiction book. He'll also see how numbers are used in all aspects of life. Includes quiz questions and answers.

Strategies for a new year

As your youngster reads more complex stories and textbooks, she'll need new strategies for understanding and remembering new material. Help her start the year off right with these activities.

Fill a "thinking cap"

When your child needs to tackle a challenging chapter, have her get a baseball cap. Each time she finds a new fact or unfamiliar word, she can write it on a slip of paper and put the slip in the hat. After she finishes reading, she should reread everything in her thinking cap and look up definitions of words she doesn't know. Writing and reviewing the information will help her learn it.

Draw a comic strip

Suggest that your youngster create a comic strip about what she's studying (stick figures are okay!). Say she's reading about the water cycle in her science book. She could draw one panel with a character boiling a pot of water and explaining evaporation, and another panel with someone walking in the rain



and talking about precipitation. This is a fun way for her to visualize the material.

Take a "commercial break"

Your child can pretend there's a commercial break at the end of each chapter in a novel she's reading. Her job is to write a "teaser"—a question to encourage the audience to stay tuned. If she's reading *Bunnicula* (Deborah and James Howe), she might write, "Will Bunnicula get caught in the vegetable garden?" Then, have her predict the answer. Asking questions and checking predictions let her monitor how well she understands a story. ■

Fact or opinion?

"It's the best toothpaste for your family!" When your child reads a sentence like this in an advertisement, does he understand that it's an opinion? Distinguishing fact from opinion is an important reading skill. Suggest that he ask himself these questions to tell the difference:

- "Would most people agree?" A fact is true regardless of who wrote it ("Trees are plants"), while an opinion reflects the writer's feelings or beliefs ("Trees shouldn't be cut down").
- "Does it rely on adjectives?" Descriptive words ("Apple pie with ice cream is the perfect dessert") frequently indicate opinions, while facts are more likely to stand alone ("Apples are harvested in autumn"). ■



Add details to writing

Vivid details make your youngster's writing come alive. And getting a firsthand look at something he's describing can help him be more specific. Share these ideas to use when he writes stories.

Specific verbs. Suggest that your child think of active verbs that illustrate what he sees rather than using bland verbs like *was* or *went*. When he's outside, he might notice how a tractor moves along a road. Later, he can incorporate the details



into a story about a boy living on a farm: "The tractor crept slowly along the dirt road" (instead of "The tractor went down the road").

My five senses. Have your youngster use at least one of his senses (sight, hearing, taste, smell, touch) in his description. If he's writing about making s'mores, you could toast marshmallows together so he can notice how

they smell and look. That may lead him to write, "A sweet, toasty scent filled the air as my marshmallow turned golden brown." ■

Q&A Is my child on track?

Q As the school year gets underway, how can I tell if my daughter is on track with reading and writing or if she needs help?

A The best way is to stay involved with what your child is doing in school. Go through her backpack with her daily, and look over her work. Review the teacher's comments on her assignments or tests, and monitor the grades she's receiving.



Also, notice what she's reading for pleasure—or if she's reading for pleasure. Take turns reading aloud to each other, and when it's her turn, listen for whether she reads smoothly or seems to stumble over words.

If you're concerned, contact your daughter's teacher. He can let you know if your child is on track, and if she's not, he'll work with you to provide help. ■



Better listening = better learning

Good listening skills help your child learn information from lessons, class presentations, and videos. Encourage him to become a better listener with these challenges.

● **What's different?** Read a paragraph from a newspaper or magazine to your youngster. Then read it again, but switch a few details. For example, you might change the name of a person or a city. It's your child's job to listen closely and tell you what's different the second time around.

● **Listen and answer.** Together, listen to a podcast or an audiobook for five minutes. Each of you can jot down a question the other person should be able to answer—if you listened carefully. Then trade questions, and answer them. Replay the audio to check if you heard right. ■



Fun with Words Build a word

The word-making possibilities are almost endless in this vocabulary game.

Have your youngster write each letter, A–Z, on separate slips of paper and scatter them in a bowl. For each round, draw three letters, lay them faceup, and set a timer for three minutes. Each person writes words that contain all three letters in any order. The goal is for players to come up with

the most words that no one else thought of *and* the longest possible word they can define. For M, L, and P, a player might write *monopoly* or *planetarium*.

When time's up, read your words aloud to each other. Earn one point for every word that no one else wrote—and a bonus point for giving the correct definition of your longest word. *Tip:* Keep a dictionary on hand to check answers. ■



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Book Picks

■ *Joey Fly Private Eye in Creepy Crawly Crime* (Aaron Reynolds)

In the first book of the Joey Fly, Private Eye series, this graphic novel mystery stars an all-bug cast. Joey Fly is a detective who wants to protect Bug City. His latest case: Find Delilah the butterfly's missing diamond pencil case.

■ *The Thrifty Guide to Ancient Rome* (Jonathan W. Stokes)

Your child will become a "time traveler" in this guidebook that transports readers to Ancient Rome. A humorous book from the Thrifty Guide series, it weaves in historical information and introduces young readers to an important period in history. Includes maps and illustrations, and advises travelers on where to stay, what to wear, and more.



■ *Sarai and the Meaning of Awesome (Sarai #1)* (Sarai Gonzalez and Monica Brown)

Sarai has always lived close to her cousins and grandparents. When their rented home goes up for sale, her mission is to raise money so they don't have to move. She sells cupcakes and lemonade, and even enters a dance contest. Book 1 in the Sarai series. (Also available in Spanish.)



■ *10 Plants that Shook the World* (Gillian Richardson)

How much trouble can a simple plant cause? Plenty! This book gets to the roots of 10 plants that started wars, helped medicine, and altered history. Fun facts, history, and anecdotes show how something as small as a plant can change the world.



Fall for nonfiction

Reading about the real world is fascinating! Whether your child is already a nonfiction reader or is new to these books, you can help him fall in love with "reality reading." Try these tips.

Discover interesting people

Biographies, autobiographies, memoirs, and diaries are often popular with youngsters. Encourage your child to find books about athletes, inventors, or presidents. Just one good story can get him hooked on nonfiction.

Use fiction as inspiration

Sometimes the setting or subject of a novel can lead to new nonfiction reading. Talk to your youngster about fiction he reads, and suggest topics he might look into. Was he fascinated by New York City or the Roaring Twenties in a recent story? He could ask a librarian to recommend nonfiction books that give him the real scoop.

Keep up with the news

The newspaper is a regular source of nonfiction. Hand your child a section,



and invite him to read alongside you. He can try different parts to find a favorite—and to discover various kinds of nonfiction. For instance, he could read factual accounts in the news section and persuasive pieces on the opinion page. *Tip:* Share news websites, too.

Explore a school subject

Perhaps your youngster is studying the solar system in science class or Greek mythology in social studies. Have him type that topic into the library database and look for nonfiction books. They can deepen his knowledge and offer new insights that will help him in school. ■

Unraveling words

Your youngster is reading and comes to a word she doesn't know the meaning of. What does she do? These strategies can help her figure it out:

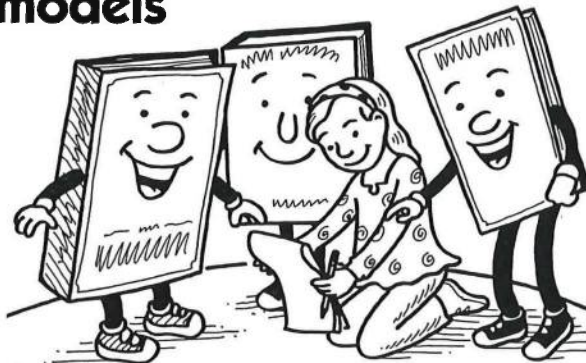
- Reread the sentence, and try to substitute a different word that would make sense. The context might make the unfamiliar word clear.
- Study the word for clues. Does she recognize any part of the word, such as a *prefix* (beginning), *suffix* (ending), or *root* (base word)?
- Write down the word. Then, look up its meaning and synonyms in a dictionary or a thesaurus. Seeing synonyms for the word can help her remember its definition in the future. ■



Authors as role models

The pages of your child's favorite book hold more than a good tale. They contain examples of writing techniques she can use in her own stories. Encourage her to watch for these.

Transitions. Good writing flows smoothly from one event to another, and transition words and phrases make that happen. Suggest that your youngster look closely at how an author switches the action to a different place ("Meanwhile, back at the villain's lair ...") or time ("Later, while Mom fixed dinner ..."). Ask her why clear transitions are important (they lead the reader through the story).



When she writes a story, suggest that she circle places where the action changes. Then she can come up with interesting transitions.

Tense. An author may choose to write in the past or present tense. Have your child look for books with examples of each and try reading a sentence or two in the opposite tense. *Example:* "The leaves are falling from the tree" (present) vs. "The leaves fell from the tree" (past). Which does she prefer? What effect does each have? The present tense may make her feel like the story is happening right now, for instance. Encourage her to experiment with each technique in her own stories. ▣

Make reading fun(ny)

Psst! Want your youngster to spend more time reading? Tickle her funny bone! Consider these three hints.

1. Keep joke books and volumes of silly poems on the coffee table, in the bathroom, and in the car for quick reading any time.
2. Help your child find humorous stories at the library. She could ask her teacher, the librarian, or cousins and friends for funny authors they like. (Two to try: Tom Angleberger and Jeff Kinney.)



3. Look up comic books at the library. Also, when you read a funny comic strip or cartoon in the newspaper, cut it out to share with her, or email your youngster ones that you find online. ▣



Parent & Parent

Act it out

When my son Steven had trouble following story plots, the reading specialist suggested that we take advantage of the fact that he likes to perform in school plays. She said they were acting out reading material during resource sessions at school, and she thought this approach would work at home, too.

The funny thing is, it has turned out to be a great activity for our entire family. To "see" the action in the novel he was reading for class, we used his little brother's action figures as characters from the story.

While I read, Steven and Timmy moved the figures around on the table according to the description from the book. Then, the two boys acted out the chapter themselves. As Steven made up the dialogue, I could tell that he understood what had happened in the story. Now reading time has turned into acting time! ▣



Fun with Words

What's in a contraction?

Contractions such as *it's*, *she'll*, and *wouldn't* add variety to our language and help to make writing flow smoothly. These activities will show your youngster how language sounds without contractions and help him learn to spell them.

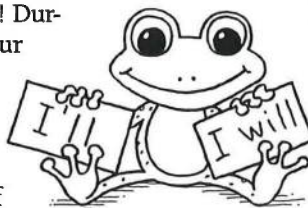
"I'll have some peas." Everyone must listen closely to see if anyone uses a contraction. Who can go the longest without saying one?

Read and write

Ask your youngster to read a short newspaper article out loud, replacing each contraction with the two words that form it. For example, if he sees *you're*, he would say *you are*. Then, have him write each contraction on one side of an index card and the two words that form it on the other side. This will help him remember the correct spelling. ▣

Talk and listen

Announce that no contractions are allowed at dinner! During conversations, your child will need to choose his words carefully. He might say, "I will have some peas" instead of



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Book Picks

■ *Liberty Porter, First Daughter* (Julia DeVillers)

Liberty's life changes when her dad is elected president of the United States. Follow along as she gets used to living in the White House, attending a new school, and following all the rules that come with being the president's child. Book 1 in the First Daughter series.



■ *Ostriches* (Rachel Poliquin)

From the Superpower Field Guide series, this nonfiction book is filled with fascinating facts about ostriches. Your child will meet an ostrich named Eno and learn how this grumpy two-toed animal survives in the African savanna,



what special features he has, and much more. Includes illustrations and a glossary with science terms.

■ *Poetry for Young People: Langston Hughes* (David Roessel and Arnold Rampersad)

Young readers are introduced to a famous African American poet in this illustrated collection. The compilation contains Hughes's poems about hopes and dreams, plus an introduction and a biography of his life.

■ *The Vanishing Coin* (Kate Egan)

When fourth-grader Mike and his new friend Nora discover the local magic shop, owner Mr. Zerlin teaches Mike his first magic trick. From that point on, Mike is hooked! Find out how Mike's life changes—and learn magic tricks—in this first book in the Magic Shop series.



Subject-area writing

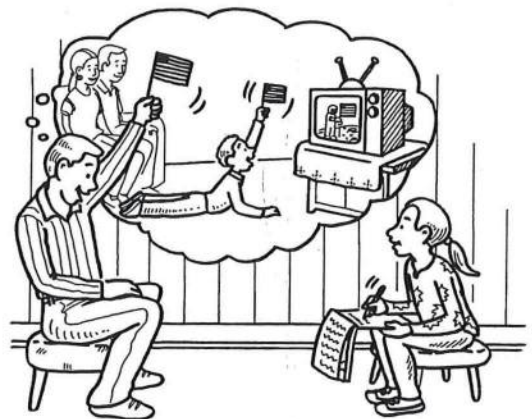
When your youngster answers questions in her social studies book, explains how she solved a math problem, or completes a science lab report, she needs strong writing skills. Encourage her to practice writing with these at-home activities for each subject.

Social studies

Suggest that your child interview a relative or family friend about a historical event she studied in class. A grandparent, an aunt, or an uncle might remember watching the first moon landing or the fall of the Berlin Wall. Your youngster could write about the event through that person's eyes and include details like names, dates, and places.

Math

Hooray! Your child figured out the math problem that had her stumped. Before she moves on to the next one, have her write a step-by-step description of how she did it. She'll practice explaining her math thinking and putting her



thoughts in logical order. Plus, she'll have a handy reference when she needs to solve similar math problems.

Science

Which brand of stain remover or lint roller works best? Ask your youngster to do a science experiment using household products. She can write an explanation of her procedure and record the results, just like she does in science class. *Tip:* Let her post the write-up, complete with photos, on the refrigerator so family members can learn which product "won." ■

Hooked on classic fiction

Spark your child's interest in fiction by steering him toward tales you enjoyed at his age or ones he liked listening to when he was younger. Here are two ideas.

1. Read classics. Suggest books from your childhood. He might like Michael Ende's *The Neverending Story* or Fred Gipson's *Old Yeller*, for instance. Perhaps he'll be inspired to read more classics and find his own favorites.



2. Rediscover fairy tales. Different cultures have their own versions of various fairy tales. Have your youngster type a familiar title (*Cinderella*) into a library database. He may be surprised by the differences in *Yeh-Shen: A Cinderella Story from China* by Ai-Ling Louie or *The Rough-Face Girl*, an Algonquin Indian version by Rafe Martin. ■

A reading checklist

Good readers use many different strategies to help them understand books. Share this checklist with your child. He can monitor his comprehension—and get back on track if things don't make sense.

Before I begin reading, I ask myself what I already know about the topic. I use this knowledge to help me learn new information in the text.

When I read difficult material, I stop and think after each paragraph or section to make sure I understand it. I might summarize it in my head or on paper.



I reread parts that are confusing. If I'm still stuck, I ask a teacher or parent for help.

I read between the lines to figure out events or information that the author didn't come right out and explain.

I jot down questions when I read nonfiction. I check to see whether my questions are answered later in the text.

I predict what's going to happen next in a novel. Then I read on to see whether my prediction was accurate.

Mark it, flag it

A bookmark that's also a tracking tool? We have just the thing! Your youngster can make this simple bookmark and use it to learn and get ideas from what he reads.

First, have him cut a bookmark-size strip from cardboard and decorate it with crayons or markers. Then he could glue a small pad of sticky notes to the top. As he reads, he can use the sticky notes to:



- Write down unfamiliar words to look up later.
- Flag passages to share in class.
- Think of character names or details for a story of his own.
- Mark names of cities or countries he'd like to visit.
- Note a new sport or hobby to try.
- Jot down a personal experience, a movie, or another book that he's reminded of.

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Q&A How to give—and get—feedback

Q During “writing workshop,” my daughter's classmates give each other feedback on their stories. Nicole feels uncomfortable giving and receiving criticism. How can I help?

A Encourage your daughter to think of feedback not as criticism but as making the writing the best it can be. It's a good idea to start by saying something nice about her classmate's story, such as, “I really like this plot twist.” Then, if she sees something that could be improved, she might try, “I got confused here” or “I'm not sure what you meant when you said ...”



Meanwhile, *getting* feedback will show your child how others view her writing. If a classmate says, “I don't understand why your character would do that,” Nicole may decide to change the character's action. With time, she'll get more comfortable giving and getting feedback—and see its value. And this experience will serve her well in the future, since giving and receiving criticism is often part of a job.

Fun with Words Don't make a word!

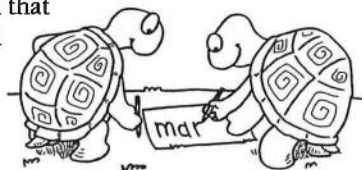
Force your opponent to add the last letter to a word in this game that boosts spelling and vocabulary skills.

To start, think of a word (*moment*), and write the first letter (*m*) on a sheet of paper. Your child should come up with a word that begins with *m* (it will probably be different from yours) and write the second letter of her

word (add *a* to *m* for *match*). On your turn, think of a word that starts with *ma* and add the next letter (*r* for *marble*).

Continue until a player is forced to complete a word that has four or more letters. For example, if your youngster adds *e* to *mar*, she spells *mare* and loses.

Note: A player must have a real word in mind when adding a letter. If someone is challenged, she has to say the word she's thinking.



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Book Picks

■ *The Dragon with a Chocolate Heart* (Stephanie Burgis)

In this magical tale, Aventurine the dragon breaks her family's rules and sneaks away from her cave. When she's offered a sip of hot chocolate, the brave dragon is turned into a human girl. With no dragon powers left, she has to figure out how to survive as a human.



■ *Earth Verse: Haiku from the Ground Up* (Sally M. Walker)

Science and poetry come together in this beautiful book of haiku. Readers will learn

about Earth, minerals, rocks, fossils, volcanoes, and more with haiku, illustrations, and a fact-filled section at the end.



■ *The Extraordinary Mark Twain (According to Susy)* (Barbara Kerley)

This biography of author Mark Twain is based on the journal entries of someone who knew him well: his 13-year-old daughter, Susy. The author weaves together Susy's original writings with information about the lives of both father and daughter.

■ *Comeback Catcher* (Jake Maddox)

Meet Eddie Jackson from the Jake Maddox Graphic Novels series. He's in a band and also plays baseball. But baseball becomes tricky for Eddie when he gets nervous every time he's up to bat. Find out how Eddie overcomes his fears. Includes a glossary with baseball terms. (Also available in Spanish.)



Winter reading traditions

Short days and chilly weather make reading a great indoor winter activity. Use these suggestions to encourage your child to snuggle up with good books.

Pajama party

On a weekend night, put pillows and sleeping bags in the living room and share a book of short stories. Pass the book around and take turns reading to each other by flashlight. Or use the cozy time for everyone to read their own books. *Tip:* Ask a librarian or your child's teacher for book recommendations based on your family's interests.



have each person try to recite the poem from memory. The family member who comes closest to the original chooses the next poem.

Comedy fest

Read jokes for an evening of laughter. Have each family member find a book of jokes or riddles from the library, browse through them, and mark favorites to share. Everyone can vote for the funniest jokes. *Idea:* Your youngster could write his own jokes and do a stand-up comedy set. 📖

Story ideas: Look here!

Does your family's junk drawer tell a tale? Is there a story behind a lost-and-found notice or a song on the radio? When your youngster has a creative writing assignment or writes just for fun, suggest that she find inspiration in one of these places.

- **The junk drawer.** Let her pick a few random items, such as an old key and a business card. Maybe she'll imagine that the key unlocks a secret room at the address on the card.
- **Online posts.** Show your child posts on neighborhood forums. She might write about a lost dog being reunited with his owner or a girl who starts a successful snow-shoveling business.
- **The radio.** Your youngster can use a line or a verse from a song to make up her own story. For instance, a song about traveling on a plane may prompt a tale of a trip to a desert island. 📖



A guide to taking notes

Being able to take notes quickly and accurately is a skill your child needs now. Plus, it'll come in handy in later grades as well as in college and on the job. Share these strategies for your youngster to become a first-rate note taker.

Before. Have your child prepare to take notes on new material by reading the previous day's notes. At the beginning of class, she should label her notes with the date and topic (12/11/20, American Revolution) so it's easier to put them in order for studying.



During. Suggest that your youngster use abbreviations and symbols for faster note taking. *Examples:* T for *the*, V for *every*, > for *more*. Point out that she should always write down dates, formulas, and definitions exactly as they're given. When the teacher says, "This is an important point," your child could highlight that section in her notes. Finally, she might leave extra lines so she has room to add comments or questions later.

After. Encourage your youngster to go over her notes and underline main points. If the notes are hard to read, it's a good idea to rewrite or type them. Copying them not only makes the notes more legible, it will help her remember the information better. ▮

Parent ² Parent Editing out loud

My son Lucas used to rush through writing assignments and make a lot of careless mistakes. When I asked his teacher what to do, she suggested that we have Lucas edit his work by reading it aloud. She said hearing his words out loud would help him hear his mistakes.



We started by having Lucas read his writing to me. I pointed out what I liked about it and asked questions about parts I didn't quite understand. And Lucas noticed that he used some of the same words over and over and caught a couple of grammatical errors. Then, he used our feedback to edit his paper.

Now Lucas regularly reads his papers aloud to himself. He seems to be catching more mistakes—and he's getting better grades on his written assignments. ▮



An occasion for reading

Turn gift giving into an opportunity for your child to read. Here are some ideas:

- Book reviews will help her choose novels as gifts for others. Your youngster can look at library book lists or newspaper reviews. Encourage her to check for words and phrases such as "a must-read" or "action-packed."
- Suggest that your child make a craft for someone. She might create finger puppets, a mosaic, or a bracelet. To find possibilities, she could look through craft books (*The Best Craft Book Ever* by Jane Bull) or check online (craftsforkids.com) and then read them as she follows the instructions.
- Young bakers can use cookbooks to prepare homemade treats like cookies and muffins. Let your child select recipes and write a grocery list. Then, remind her to carefully read recipes again before she starts baking. ▮



Fun with Words

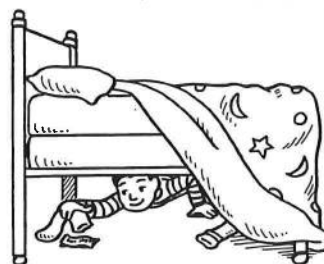
Read the clues, find the treasure

Treasure hunts are fun for all ages. And figuring out the clues will help your youngster learn to infer, or read between the lines.

First, hide a treasure (a new book, a small toy). Then, hide a set of clues that will lead your child to it. The first clue should give instructions for finding the second clue, which should lead to the third, and so on, until your youngster discovers the treasure.

Try to come up with clues that give hints—but make your youngster think. For example, if you want him to look under his bed, you might write, "Find the next clue in a place socks like to hide." Or get him to open an end-table drawer with "Look under the lamp and coasters."

Once your child tracks down the treasure, have him create a treasure hunt for you or a sibling. ▮



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■ *Voyage of the Dogs* (Greg van Eekhout)

Lopside, Champion, Bug, and Daisy are barkonauts—dog astronauts. When their human crew abandons their spaceship, the pack must work together to figure out how to get back to Earth. Each dog brings a special strength and talent to the mission in this sci-fi adventure.



■ *Spilling Ink: A Young Writer's Handbook* (Anne Mazer and Ellen Potter)

This nonfiction guide is chock-full of tips and stories to inspire young writers. Written in a friendly question-and-answer format, the book includes advice about writing “ugly” first drafts, bringing characters to life, creating suspense, and keeping a journal.

■ *Cosmic Commandos* (Christopher Eliopoulos)

This exciting graphic novel tells the tale of identical twins Jeremy and Justin. When Jeremy finds a charm in a cereal box, his favorite video game comes to life! The twins may look alike, but they are total opposites, and they have to join forces to win the game.



■ *Smart About the Fifty States: A Class Report* (Jon Buller and others)

Discover facts about every state in the USA, from Alabama to Wyoming. Your child will learn state nicknames, capitals, historical facts, and much more. Each state's section contains an illustrated map that highlights important places. What will your child learn about your state?



Vocabulary games

A rich vocabulary can help your youngster get her point across during a conversation or find the right word when she's writing. Strengthen her word power with these fun games.

Dictionary charades

Take turns flipping to a random page in the dictionary and choosing one word to act out. If your child picks *mountainous*, for example, she might pretend to climb mountains. The first family member to identify the word gets to act out the next one.

Definition bingo

Together, choose 25 vocabulary words from a dictionary or your youngster's textbooks, write each definition on a separate slip of paper, and put the slips in a bowl. Each player draws a bingo board and writes the words randomly in the squares. Now a caller reads the definitions, and players put a penny on the

matching word. Cover five in a row to call “Bingo!” *Tip:* Have the winner read out the words and check the definitions.

Synonym sense

Each person secretly chooses a theme, such as winter, for the other players to figure out. Players jot down five words that fit their themes. Then, they each get one minute to browse through a thesaurus (or *thesaurus.com*) for synonyms. If your child's list includes *cold*, she might add *brisk* and *shivering*. Take turns reading the synonyms from your lists and trying to name each other's themes. 📖



Think outside the book

The world is full of things to read. Share some with your youngster each day, and watch him become a well-rounded reader. Here are a few suggestions:

- Turn your refrigerator door into a reading center. Encourage everyone to post reviews of books, movies, restaurants, and gadgets. You could also hang up comics or fortune cookie slips.
- Email each other. You might send schedule reminders, news about your day, poems, or inspirational quotes.
- Share cards and letters that come in the mail. Use takeout menus and catalogs for reading practice, too—ask your child to find coupons or to tell you about foods or products that interest him. 📖



“Just right” books

Most of the time, reading shouldn't be too easy or too hard for your youngster. Ask him to read aloud to you, and then help him find books he'll enjoy—and that stretch his reading ability—with these tips.

Too easy? Does your youngster read the book quickly? Can he recognize each word and easily understand the plot? The book may be too easy. Although it's perfectly fine for him to read books like that, more challenging material will offer new vocabulary and more complicated plots. And that will prepare him for the increasingly complex texts he'll read in school.



Too hard? Is your child's reading slow and choppy? Does he stumble over several unfamiliar words per page? Is he confused about what's happening? These are clues that a book is too difficult for now. Offer to read it aloud to him or read it together.

Note: If he struggles with assigned reading, talk to his

teacher to see if he needs extra help.

Just right! Can your child read most of the text smoothly? Did he find a few new words? Can he understand what's going on with a little thought? His book sounds like a good fit—it provides enough of a challenge without frustrating him. ■

Fun with Words Name that phrase!

Here's a word game that will stretch your child's thinking skills. All you need are pencil and paper.

First, show your youngster these examples of how arranging words in a particular way can turn a phrase into a brainteaser.

million = one in a million

eiln pu = line up in alphabetical order

MIND = mind over matter
matter

Once your child has the idea, take turns making up brainteasers for one another to work out. *Hint:* To find phrases to use, suggest that she look for them when she's reading or listen for them during conversations. It helps to choose phrases that use prepositions, such as *in*, *on*, *over*, and *under*.

She can also find examples online by searching “frame games.” Or she could look in library books like *The Big Book of Frame Games* by Terry Stickels. ■

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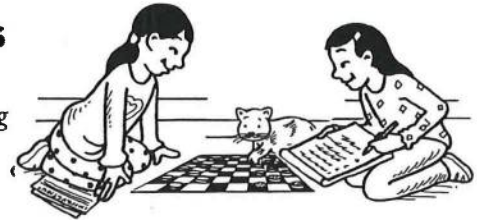
Q&A In my own words

Q My daughter knows she can't copy from sources when she's writing reports, but she says it's hard to think of new ways to say the same thing. Is there a way I can help her with this?

A Your daughter is right—copying others' words is known as plagiarism. Not only is it dishonest, but it can cause her to lose credit for an assignment. Help her practice paraphrasing, or putting material in her own words, with this activity.

Ask her to read a short item, such as board game rules or a recipe. Put it away, and have her rewrite it to be as different as possible from the original. Instead of “Checkers is a two-player strategy game,” she might write, “You need two people to play checkers. Use strategic thinking to win.”

Encourage her to use the same method when she does research for a school report. She can read a page or section, then look away and write about it in her own words. She should check her writing against the source to make sure it's not too similar. ■



Tips for writing dialogue

It's fun to make characters “talk”! Inspire your youngster to write his own stories with dialogue for each character. He'll learn to develop a plot and show how his characters respond to various situations.

To start, suggest that he think about who the character is, what the situation is, and what his tone would be. For instance, a child would speak more formally to a teacher (“Good morning, how are you?”) than to a friend (“Hey, what's up?”).

When your youngster finishes his story, he should read it aloud. Does the dialogue sound realistic—like something a person would actually say? He may realize he should change “You cannot go in there” to “You can't go in there,” since people often use contractions when they speak.

Tip: Paying attention to dialogue in books, plays, and movies is a great way for your youngster to recognize how different characters speak. ■



Reading Connection

INTERMEDIATE EDITION

Working Together for Learning Success

February 2021

Calvin A. Hunsinger School

Book Picks

■ **Maker Lab: 28 Super Cool Projects** (Jack Challoner)

Get your STEM on with this book of science and engineering projects. Using things found around the house, your child can create a DNA model, make monster marshmallows, build a soap-powered boat, and much more. (Also available in Spanish.)



■ **Coo** (Kaela Noel)
A unique 10-year-old girl named Coo was raised by pigeons, and a rooftop is the only home she's ever known. But now she must enter the human world to get help for her flock. Follow along as Coo learns about friendship and family in this heartwarming tale.

■ **Noah Webster: Weaver of Words** (Pegi Deitz Shea)

Noah Webster is most famous for his dictionary, but in this biography, readers will discover other ways he shaped our language. He wrote books teaching children to read and spell, and he influenced American English—changing British spellings like *colour* and *traveler* to *color* and *traveler*.

■ **Poptropica: Mystery of the Map** (Jack Chabert)

Three friends take a ride in a hot-air balloon that crashes on a mystery island, and their adventure begins! Welcome to Poptropica, filled with Vikings, extinct animals, and other surprising discoveries. The first book in the Poptropica graphic novel series.



What's it about?

Students who think about what they're reading tend to understand and remember the material. Encourage your youngster to put on his thinking cap when he reads with these tips.

Discuss

Talk with your child about books. For example, you could have him tell you why he thinks a book is interesting (the main character lives in Africa) or how it makes him feel (happy, curious). When he's finished reading, ask him if he would recommend the book to a friend. Why or why not? Discussing what he reads will help him understand the plot and characters better.

Visualize

Picturing the plot or a concept in a book can strengthen your youngster's comprehension. He may want to sketch a scene or character from a chapter book. If he's reading a textbook, he might draw a plant or an atom and label its parts.



He'll learn to visualize when he reads, even if he doesn't draw every time.

Summarize

Suggest that your child write in response to books. He can practice summarizing a plot by writing a book review to share with the whole family. He could even submit it to a magazine like *Stone Soup* (stonesoup.com) or an online bookstore. Or he can show how he feels about a book by writing a poem about it. 📖

A shortcut to reading fun

What kind of book has many plots and dozens of characters? A short-story collection! Consider these reasons for your child to try this type of fiction:

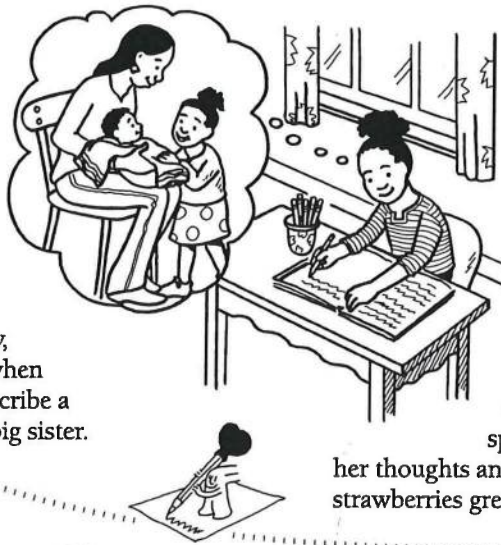
- Action usually moves quickly in short stories. A fast-paced tale can motivate a reluctant or struggling reader.
- Some collections allow children to sample different authors. After your youngster reads one, visit the library for titles by the writers she liked best.
- A book with various topics is bound to have something for everyone. If your child doesn't like one story, she might enjoy another. 📖



Memories of me

Inspire your youngster to enjoy writing nonfiction by focusing on a topic she's an expert on: herself! Here are suggestions to help her turn her memories into a memoir.

Narrow the focus. A memoir often zeroes in on one slice of the writer's life. For example, your child might write about the first thing she remembers clearly, such as making pierogies with Grandma when she was little. Or perhaps she wants to describe a turning point in her life, like becoming a big sister.



Choose a format. Memoirs can take different forms. If your youngster likes poetry, suggest that she write a series of poems. Or she could create a picture book memoir with text and drawings. Another idea is to tell her tale in graphic novel format.

Dig deeper. An interesting memoir goes beyond simply stating what happened. As your child writes about an event ("We went strawberry picking on a beautiful spring day"), remind her to weave in her thoughts and feelings ("I was surprised that the strawberries grew so close to the ground").

Let's debate

With this family debate, you'll actually encourage your child to argue with you. She'll get better at making logical arguments and backing them up with evidence—skills she needs for school assignments.

1. Pick a topic. You might debate about whether people should make their beds every day or about which way to put toilet paper into the holder.

2. Prepare notes. Have each person jot down her opinion ("Making your bed seems pointless") and supporting evidence ("You just unmake it every night"). Family members should also write ways to rebut—or argue



against—the opposite view. How will your youngster respond if someone says an unmade bed looks messy? *Example:* "Yes, but you can close your door so no one sees it."

3. Debate. Take turns making your cases and rebutting opposing arguments. Then, try to decide who made the most convincing case—whether you agree with that person or not.

Fun with Words

Fill in the part of speech

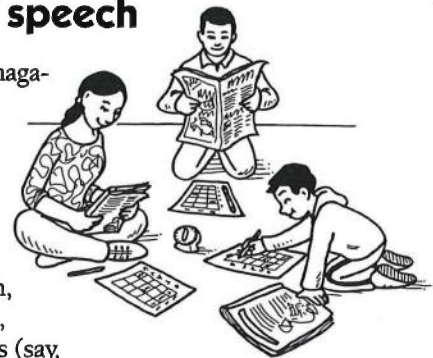
Dive into a newspaper or magazine, and race to find parts of speech in this game.

Materials: pencils, paper, newspaper or magazines, timer

Have each player draw a 3 x 5 grid on his paper and write a part of speech (noun, verb, adjective) above each column. Then, let your youngster pick five random letters (say, S, T, A, V, and G), and write one to the left of each row. Give each person a section of the newspaper or a magazine, and set a timer for three minutes.

Players race to fill their grids with words from the newspaper or magazine. For example, your child might fill his S row with *sunshine* (noun), *sell* (verb), and *superior* (adjective).

When time is up, check the grids, and cross out any words that are in the wrong column (use a dictionary if you're not sure). The player with the most words remaining wins.



Parent 2 Parent

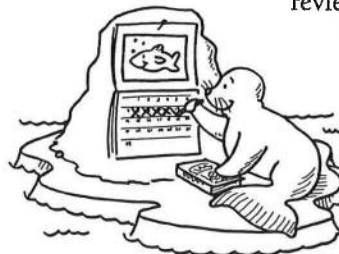
Manage reading assignments

My son Oliver likes to read, but only when he gets to choose the book. He has always struggled to finish assigned reading that he thinks is "boring."

I remembered having the same problem at his age. What helped was reading a few pages each day rather than leaving the whole assignment until the last minute. So I suggested that Oliver divide the number of assigned pages by the

number of days. He writes each day's page numbers on his calendar and crosses them off as he finishes.

Also, I encouraged Oliver to learn as much as possible about a book before he opens it. He enjoys online reviews, and reading goes more smoothly once he has an idea of what a story is about. To his surprise, he has even discovered a few new favorites along the way!



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