

Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

February 2018

Book Picks

■ *A Dog's Life: The Autobiography of a Stray* (Ann M. Martin)

What does a stray dog think about? This story is told from the view-point of a dog named Squirrel. As a puppy, he became separated from his mother. Now he must search for a permanent home—while avoiding dangers along the way.



■ *Eye of the Storm: NASA, Drones, and the Race to Crack the Hurricane Code* (Amy Cherrix)

Young weather buffs can follow hurricane hunters and NASA scientists doing the difficult work of predicting when and how hard a hurricane will hit. Also explains how smartphones and social media have saved lives and improved emergency preparedness.



■ *Smile* (Raina Telgemeier)
Sixth grade isn't off to a great start for Raina, especially since she lost her two front teeth when she tripped and fell. This funny and colorful graphic memoir is based on the author's middle school dilemmas. (Also available in Spanish.)

■ *Lives of the Presidents: Fame, Shame (and What the Neighbors Thought)* (Kathleen Krull)
Celebrate Presidents' Day with these profiles that focus on fun facts. Kids will enjoy discovering how one president got stuck in the bathtub, another had a beard that was so long it dipped into his soup, and much more.



Background knowledge builds comprehension

"I saw a shark just like that at the aquarium."

"I camped out under the stars once."

"I always want to win big prizes at carnivals, too."

When your child connects what he already knows to something he's reading, his comprehension can soar. Try these ideas to activate his background knowledge.



Brainstorm word associations

Before your youngster starts reading a book, ask him to scan the cover for an interesting word or picture—and use it to trigger associations with words he knows. For *Treasury of Greek Mythology* (Donna Jo Napoli), he might target *mythology* and come up with a string of words like *stories*, *legends*, *heroes*, and *old*. This kind of brainstorming gives him a general idea of what to expect from the book.

Visualize the setting

Having an image in his head increases your child's understanding. As he reads, he could jot down places mentioned in

the text (examples: castle, island). Every time he adds a setting to the list, he can ask himself: Does this place remind me of any place I have visited or that I've seen in a TV show or movie?

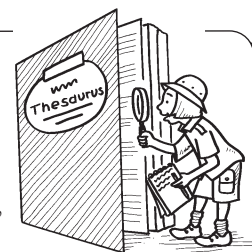
Think about other books

When your youngster starts a new book, encourage him to look back on similar books he has read. For example, if he's reading historical fiction, he might relate it to a textbook chapter he read about the same time period. Before reading the second book in a series, he can skim through the first installment to recall details about the characters' personalities and the plot. ■

Just-right words

Encourage your child to stretch her vocabulary by going on a "word quest." She'll see how papers and other written assignments can be more interesting when she uses a variety of words.

1. Ask your child to write three sentences and underline at least one word in each. Examples: "The ugly monster roared." "The little rabbit ate." "The leaves blew in the dark forest."
2. How many synonyms can she list for each underlined word? Perhaps the rabbit *nibbled* and the leaves *rustled*. (Hint: If she's stuck, suggest that she use a thesaurus.)
3. Now she can try the new words in her sentences. Which ones sound best? ■



Picture this! Write that!

Looking for a way to inspire your youngster's creative writing abilities? Photos can do the trick. Here are ways to get started.

Photo walk. Go for a walk together, and let your child take pictures of scenes that might lead to a story. She could snap a photo of a fire truck speeding past with its lights flashing or of a frozen lake shimmering in the sun. At home, she



can look at the pictures and write a story about a courageous rescue or an ice hockey game.

Magazine clippings. Have your youngster cut out pictures of people, places, animals, and objects from old magazines. Next, suggest that she put the pictures in a paper bag, reach in, and pull out three at random. She can challenge herself to write a story to go with all three pictures. If she pulls out a photo of a cat, a backpack, and a little girl sitting in a classroom, your youngster may write about a cat who sneaks into his owner's backpack so he can go to school, too. ■

Q&A Never too old for read-alouds

Q Now that my daughter can read by herself, should we still read aloud?

A Reading aloud—at any age—is great for parent-child bonding and for boosting your child's reading and listening skills.



Let her choose books she might not read on her own, perhaps ones with more complex stories or longer chapters. Mix

things up by having her read a page or section to you, too. Or choose characters for you each to “play,” and read their lines in different voices.

Another way to liven up read-alouds for this age is to read in various places and at different times. Reading before bed is great, but you could also read to her in the kitchen over snacks, on the front steps on an unexpectedly warm day, or while waiting for a relative at the bus station. ■

OUR PURPOSE

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

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Parent 2 Parent

Watch out for spell-check

For the longest time, I couldn't get my son Max to understand the importance of proofreading his writing. He would roll his eyes and insist that spell-check and autocorrect were there to do the job for him.

Then one day, he read a story he had written to our family. He kept tripping over sloppy mistakes—and he couldn't believe how much they changed the meaning of his story. The first one was kind of funny: “I didn't know he was a police officer because he wasn't wearing his *unicorn*.” It was obviously supposed to be *uniform*. We laughed about what autocorrect had done to his story, but he quickly realized that proofreading wasn't a laughing matter.

Now when Max writes, he likes to share funny examples from autocorrect. But I'm glad to hear them, because finding the mistakes means he is proofreading his work carefully. ■



Fun with Words

A new kind of word puzzle

What in the world is a *ditloid*?

It's actually a rather funny name for a clever kind of word puzzle. Simply put, you combine numbers and letters to represent a familiar phrase, date, or fact. For example, *24 H in a D* is a ditloid for *24 hours in a day*. (Note: Common words like *the*, *in*, *a*, *an*, *of*, and *to* usually aren't abbreviated.)

You and your youngster can take turns making up ditloids for each other to solve. He'll practice creative thinking, and you'll enjoy a fun game together. Score one point for each one you get right.

Idea: If you need hints, sketch pictures to go along with the clues. ■



Try these!

- 50 S on the F
- 27 A in the C
- 52 W in a Y
- 101 D
- 1 F 2 F RF BF
- A the W in 80 D

- Around the World in 80 Days
- Blue Fish
- One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish,
- 101 Dalmations
- 52 weeks in a year
- Constitution
- 27 amendments in the
- 50 stars on the flag

Answers