

Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

September 2020



Book Picks

■ *Crazy About Cats* (Owen Davey)

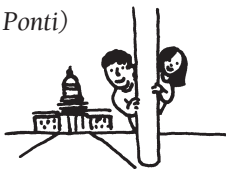
From wild cats like ocelots and pumas to house cats, this nonfiction book from the About Animals series teaches readers all about cats. Your child will discover where cats live, what they eat, and the special features they have.

(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 *Bunnacula* (Deborah and James Howe), she might write, "Will Bunnacula 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:

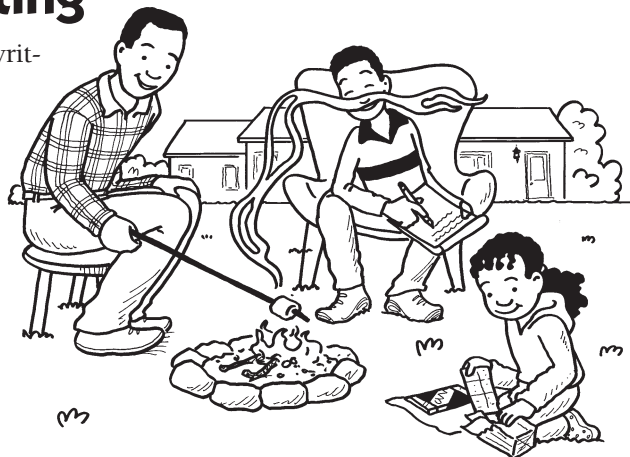
- "Would most people agree?" A fact is true regardless of who wrote it ("Trees are plants"), while an opinion reflects the writer's feelings or beliefs ("Trees shouldn't be cut down").
- "Does it rely on adjectives?" Descriptive words ("Apple pie with ice cream is the perfect dessert") frequently indicate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

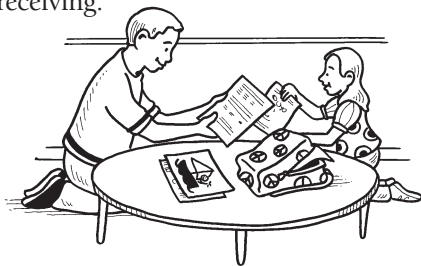
My five senses. Have your youngster use at least one of his senses (sight, hearing, taste, smell, touch) in his description. If he's writing about making s'mores, you could toast marshmallows together so he can notice how

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. 📖



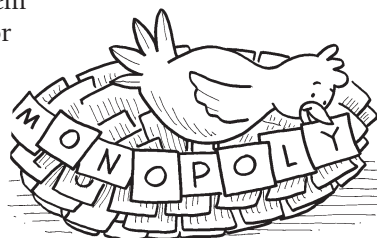
Fun with Words Build a word

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. 📖



OUR PURPOSE

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

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Reading Connection

INTERMEDIATE EDITION

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October 2020



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:

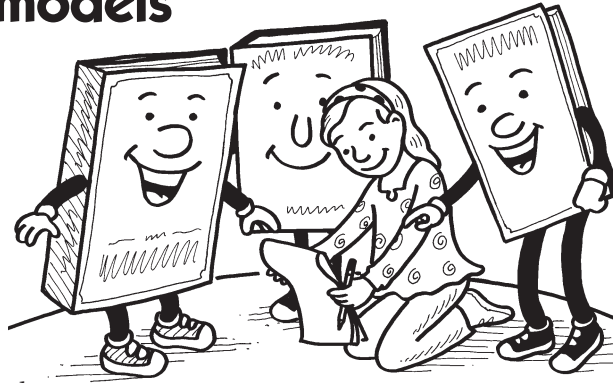
- Reread the sentence, and try to substitute a different word that would make sense. The context might make the unfamiliar word clear.
- Study the word for clues. Does she recognize any part of the word, such as a *prefix* (beginning), *suffix* (ending), or *root* (base word)?
- Write down the word. 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?

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



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. 📖

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