

# Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

December 2017

Keystone Oaks School District

## Book Picks



### Read-aloud favorites

#### ■ *Alien in My Pocket #1: Blast Off!*

(Nate Ball)

Zack McGee thinks he dreamed that a 4-inch-tall alien crashed into his bedroom. But Amp



is real. Now, Zack must protect his pocket-sized visitor, rebuild a rocket, and send Amp home before more aliens invade. The first book in the *Alien in My Pocket* series.

#### ■ *This Is How We Do It*

(Matt Lamothe)

Curious readers get a sneak peek at the lives of seven kids from seven countries—what they eat for breakfast, how they travel to school, what they do for fun, and more. This fact-based book shows your child the ways in which cultures around the world are similar and different.

#### ■ *I Don't Want Curly Hair*

(Laura Ellen Anderson)

Books, tape, balloons—the curly-haired girl in this rhyming story will try just about anything to tame her unruly locks.

When she makes a friend who is unhappy with her super-straight hair, both children gain a new appreciation for what they have. (Also available in Spanish.)

#### ■ *The Marvelous Thing That Came from a Spring*

(Gilbert Ford)

Richard James was an engineer for the U.S. Navy when he accidentally invented the Slinky. This nonfiction book tells how the spring that could “slink” down stairs

became a toy that generations of children have played with since 1945.



## Get together and write

Turn family time into fun reasons for your youngster to write with these clever projects.

### “Handy” gift guide

Let your child trace around your hand on paper and label it with your name. Next, tell him five things you like (basketball, spaghetti), and help him print one on each finger. He can make a “hand” for each family member—including himself. Staple the pages together into a book, and use this “handy” guide to make or buy holiday and birthday gifts.



### Record book

Which family member will blow the largest soap bubble? Who can hold a single note the longest while singing? Brainstorm a list of challenges, and help your youngster write one per page in a notebook. Hold contests, and have him record the results. (“Mom held the longest note—for 35 seconds!”)

### Quote board

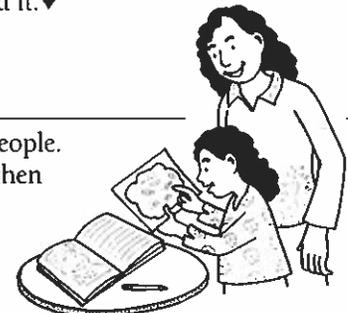
Give each person a different-color marker, and write your favorite sayings on a poster board. Be sure to include who said them, too. You could write funny or inspiring quotes from books, movies, or even relatives. For example, your child might write, “Just keep swimming”—Dory from *Finding Nemo*. Hang the poster where everyone can read it. ♥

## Meet someone famous

Biographies tell fascinating tales about real people. Together, read a few picture-book biographies, then try these ideas.

● **Word cloud.** Encourage your youngster to draw a cloud on paper and fill it with important words from a biography. For Albert Einstein, she might write *genius* and *invention*. Let her use her “word cloud” to tell you all about the person—she’ll practice reading closely for key information.

● **Just like me!** As you read, suggest that your child look for things she has in common with the subject of the biography. Perhaps she’s brave like Amelia Earhart or loves to dance like Martha Graham. Making personal connections will boost her reading comprehension. ♥



# I can read that book!

Your youngster will be excited to pick books at the library that she can read all by herself. Suggest these strategies to help her find books she will feel confident reading.

**Use the “five-finger” rule.** Have your child read the first few pages of a book. For each page, she should hold up one finger every time she comes to a word she can't read. If she holds up two to four fingers per page,



the book is probably a good one to try. One finger may mean it's too easy, while five likely mean it's too hard for her to read on her own right now.

**Find a “yardstick.”** Ask your youngster to show you a book she already reads easily. Then, help her use that book to “measure” a new one. Do both books have about the same number of words per page? Do they both include words that are about the same length? If so, the book may be a good match.

*Note:* Be sure to let your child check out a few books that are a challenge for her—listening to you read them aloud is a great way to stretch her reading ability.♥

## Fun with Words A (word) family of snowmen

Is it a family of snowmen or a family of words? It's both! With this cute snowman activity, your youngster can explore word families, or rhyming words that end with the same letter combination.



Ask your child to choose a word family. Perhaps he'll pick the *-at* family (*cat*, *bat*) or the *-un*

family (*sun*, *fun*). He can write the “family name” at the top of a piece of paper.

Then, take turns saying words that belong in that family. Your youngster can draw and label a snowman for each “member.” The *-ake* family might have a “snowdad” named *Cake*, a “snowmom” named *Lake*, a “snowboy” named *Make*, and a “snowgirl” named *Shake*.

Keep adding words—and “family members”—until you can't think of any more. Then, he can choose a new word family and start again.♥

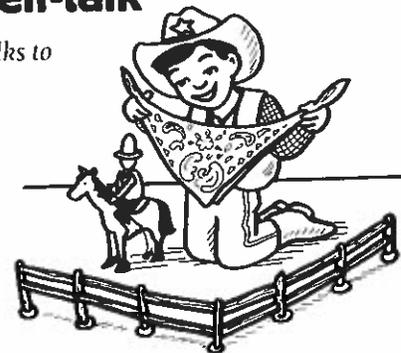


## Q&A Encouraging “self-talk”

**Q** I've noticed that my son talks to himself while he plays. Is this typical?

**A** Yes. In fact, “self-talk” during play is something you could encourage your youngster to do. As he chats with an imaginary friend or narrates what he's doing, he's building speech and language skills.

Try putting interesting items with his toys. You'll give him new words—and activities—to incorporate into his play. You might say, “Here's a *whisk* to put in your kitchen” or “I thought you might like this *bandanna* for your dress-up box.” Don't be surprised to hear him talking about the object as he plays chef or cowboy. (“Howdy, partner. I've got a *bandanna*, too!”)♥



## Parent to Parent

### Homemade audiobooks

At our parent-teacher conference last month, the teacher said my daughter is working on fluency—reading smoothly and at a good pace. The teacher had a fun idea to help her practice at home. She suggested that we make our own audiobooks starring Nicole as the reader!

My daughter picked a book and read it aloud a few times, and then I recorded

her. When she listened to the recording, she immediately wanted to try again—“to make it sound better,” she said. It took a few attempts, but she was pleased with the final result.

Now, making audiobooks has become a hobby, and Nicole is beginning to read more smoothly. Right now, she is recording a story for her little brother to listen to in the car when we travel over winter break.♥



### OUR PURPOSE

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

Resources for Educators, a division of CCH Incorporated  
128 N. Royal Avenue • Front Royal, VA 22630  
800-394-5052 • rfecustomer@wolterskluwer.com  
www.rfconline.com  
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# Reading Connection

INTERMEDIATE EDITION

Working Together for Learning Success

December 2017

Keystone Oaks School District



## Book Picks

### ■ *Life in Motion: An Unlikely Ballerina (Young Readers Edition)*

(Misty Copeland)

In 2015, Misty Copeland became the first African-American principal ballerina in the American Ballet Theatre's history.

This children's version of her autobiography describes how she pursued a ballet career despite the odds.



### ■ *The Neverending Story*

(Michael Ende)

In an antique bookshop, a boy named Bastian finds a mysterious book filled with enchanted creatures. When the world inside the book turns out to be real and he discovers it's in danger, he must go on a quest to save it. (Also available in Spanish.)



### ■ *A Child's Introduction to the Night Sky* (Michael Driscoll)

Your youngster can explore astronomy with this colorful non-fiction book. She'll learn about stars and planets, important scientific achievements, space exploration, and more. Includes a star chart pullout.



### ■ *I Survived the Bombing of Pearl Harbor, 1941* (Lauren Tarshis)

This installment of the popular historical fiction series *I Survived* takes readers back in time to the day of the Pearl Harbor attack. The story is told from the point of view of an 11-year-old boy who had recently moved to Hawaii.

## Motivated to read

Hide a special book for your youngster to find. Hold an indoor reading campout. Encourage family members to "like" each other's book reviews. With these creative ideas, you can inspire your child to use more of his spare time for reading!

### Leave hidden gems

At the library, secretly look for a book you think your youngster would like, such as one you read at his age or a story about the sport he plays. At home, leave the book where he can find it, along with a note about why you chose it for him. *Idea:* Suggest that your child hide a book for you or a younger sibling to discover.

### Hold special events

Ask your youngster to organize a family reading event once a month or so. Perhaps he'll plan an indoor campout or a New Year's Eve read-a-thon. He could find books with a related theme—maybe an outdoor adventure tale for the campout or



a book about New Year traditions around the world for the read-a-thon.

### Post reviews

Have your child find a spot on a wall where he and other family members can display reviews of books they've read. You could "like" each other's reviews by adding star stickers and comments. Let your youngster ask relatives to mail or email reviews that he could post, too. He may be inspired to read a book that his cousin or a favorite uncle enjoyed. 📖

## Storytelling time

Encourage your child to make a "story pole" and use it to tell a tale. She'll practice story planning, a skill that can help with creative writing assignments in school.

First, have her think of something funny or interesting that happened to your family, perhaps getting caught in a downpour during a hike. Then, she can cut a sheet of construction paper into four horizontal strips and, on each, draw a picture of a story event (seeing the first big drops, laughing and holding backpacks over your heads, hurrying to the car, getting cozy at home in pajamas).

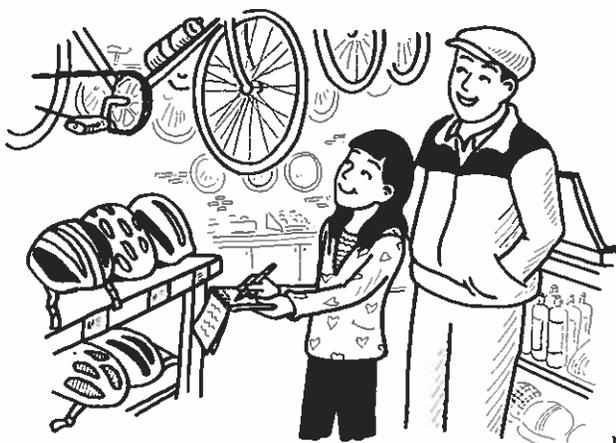
Let your youngster tape the pictures around a paper towel tube in the order the events happened. Now it's time to tell her story! She could point to the pictures on her pole and add details as she talks. 📖



## Research and write

Your youngster may think of research as something she does for a report. But writers do research for stories, too! Share these tips to help your child bring real-life elements into her fiction.

**Go on location.** Authors often visit the places they write about. If the characters in your youngster's story work at a bike shop, she could go to one herself. Encourage her to notice details she might mention in her story, like bikes hanging from the ceiling or an employee fixing a tire.



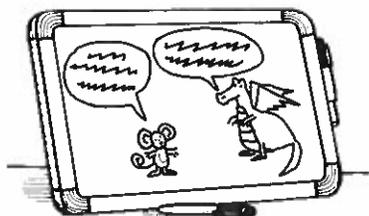
**Consult an expert.** Writers get help from people with firsthand knowledge of their story topics. Say your child is writing about cheerleading. She could talk to a neighbor or a classmate who cheers. The interviewee may describe what it feels like to be tossed in the air or to lead a stadium full of fans rooting for their team.

**Read nonfiction.** Your youngster may not be able to observe crocodiles or kangaroos in real life—but she can read about them in nonfiction library books or online. Encourage her to dig for facts that will bring animal characters to life, such as the way they communicate with each other or the habitat they live in. 📖

### Fun with Words

## Dialogue you can believe

Writing dialogue that reflects how people actually talk is a skill that takes practice. Your child can learn to write believable dialogue with this activity.



On a whiteboard or chalkboard, let your youngster draw two very different characters, such as a dragon and a mouse. Have him add a big speech bubble above each character's head.

He can decide which character each of you will be and write a line of dialogue in his speech bubble. ("I'll try not to breathe the fire in your direction, little mouse.") Now you write a reply in your character's bubble. ("Thanks. You're a good friend!")

Read your dialogue aloud. Does it sound realistic? If not, you could revise it and try again. Then continue the "conversation" by erasing your lines and writing new ones. 📝



### Q&A

## What is close reading?

**Q** My daughter is doing "close reading" in school this year. What does that mean, and how can I help her at home?

**A** You can think of *close reading* as peeling back layers of meaning in a story. For example, your daughter probably doesn't need to read closely to know that a story is about a lost dog. But a closer reading might lead her to understand that the story is about the bond between humans and pets.

Close reading also includes thinking about *how* a story is written, so your child might consider why the author decided to tell it from the point of view of the dog rather than its owner.

At home, suggest that your youngster keep tools like a highlighter, sticky notes, and a pencil nearby when she reads. She could jot down passages from the book that really make her think, words and phrases she likes, or questions she has. Then, she can go back through the book to consider why the author picked a particular word, for instance, or why a character made a certain decision. 📖



### Parent 2 Parent

## Books that comfort

When my husband and I divorced last year, our son Jeremy took it hard. I tried talking with him, but he clammed up. So I turned to the school counselor for help. She told me that reading books about young people facing similar problems would help Jeremy talk about his own situation.

I'm happy to say the counselor was right. The books she suggested made my son realize that he was not alone.

They also gave him a way to ask me questions ("Do you think the divorce was the boy's fault?") and me a way to answer him ("Absolutely not. What happened was only between the parents").

Some days are still rough, but I'm glad we have found a way to talk through our problems. 📖



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