

Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

October 2011

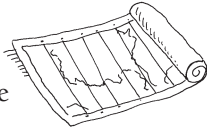
Cypress-Fairbanks Independent School District

Book Picks

■ *The Man Who Made Time Travel*

Kathryn

Lasky blends history, science, and biography to tell the true story of clock maker John Harrison. After a shipwreck killed 2,000 men, Harrison dedicated his life to solving the mystery of measuring longitude to keep sailors from becoming lost at sea.



■ *Trauma Queen*

Thirteen-year-old Marigold wants to go to school, make friends and, most of all, avoid embarrassment. That's hard to do with the unusual way her mother teaches the drama class at her new school. A hilarious look at mother-daughter relationships by Barbara Dee.

■ *The Batboy*



In this novel by sportswriter Mike Lupica, Brian loves baseball and is thrilled with his summer job as a major league batboy. But he must deal with disappointment both on and off the field—his favorite player is rude to him, and his father has disappeared from his life.

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■ *Black Star, Bright Dawn*

Girls don't usually compete in the Iditarod, a world-famous dog-sled race in Alaska. But when Bright Dawn's father is injured, she takes his place. She'll have to face wild animals, extreme weather, and her own fear to complete the race. A survival tale by Scott O'Dell. (Also available in Spanish.)



Reading fluently

There is more to fluency than just reading aloud smoothly. A youngster who is fluent understands the story or information he's reading. He knows when he needs to slow down or when he should go back to clear up confusion. Try these strategies to build your child's reading skills.

Read like a newscaster.

Help your youngster practice reading aloud at a steady, comfortable pace. To see what this sounds like, watch a newscast together. Then, suggest that he pretend to be a TV news anchor. He can choose something (story, joke, comic strip) to read at the dinner table in his best reporter's voice. To be sure that he understands what he's reading, have him comment on it, just like a news anchor might. For example, he might say, "Wow! That ending sure was a surprise."

Read like a bike racer. How is silent reading like racing? The rider speeds along



while the road is smooth but slows down for bumps and curves. The same is true when your child reads to himself. Encourage him to go quickly when everything makes sense but to put on the brakes when it doesn't.

Read like a scientist. Scientists take time to look closely at their data. When your youngster reads challenging material, he can act like he's a scientist in search of answers. He might need to spend extra time on a difficult section or read it several times. Let him know that it's okay to put a paragraph "under the microscope" and examine difficult words or new concepts until he understands them. ■

A writer's notebook

How can a simple notebook help your child become more creative? It can offer her a special place to collect story ideas. Here are some entries she might try:

● List treasured possessions (ice-skating medal, family quilt) or favorite places (local waterfall, Grandmother's house) to build stories around.

● Write descriptions of friends, family members, and other people you admire (celebrities, historical figures). You can use them as characters in future stories.

● Choose a few favorite books and briefly jot down ideas for prequels or sequels.

● Record notes about vivid or interesting dreams you have. If you don't remember details, fill in the gaps with your imagination. ■



The art of revision

Editing makes good writing great! The “four Rs” of revision can help your child polish her work.

1. Reread. Before your youngster edits a report or a story, she should take a break. A fresh eye will help her see what she did well and what she could improve. Have her wait at least a few hours—preferably overnight—and then reread the whole thing.

2. Remove. Deleting unnecessary sentences makes writing stronger. Encourage your child to remove any ideas that are unrelated to her topic. For example, a factual paper on thoroughbred horses probably wouldn't include a list of her favorite breeds.



3. Rearrange. Are your youngster's ideas in a logical order? Would moving them around make her work clearer or more interesting? If she's writing about dream-catchers, for instance, directions for making one might come before ideas for displaying it.

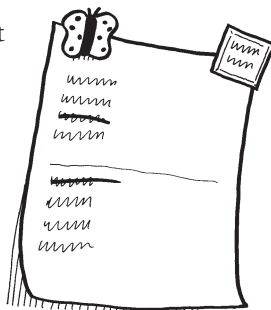
4. Replace. Encourage your child to check for words or phrases that she used too often. She can reword similar sentences and substitute overused words with new ones from a thesaurus. For example, she might replace *pretty* with *beautiful*, *attractive*, or *pleasant looking*. *Note:* If your child does her writing on a computer, suggest that she use the search-and-replace feature in her word processing program. ■

Fun with Words What doesn't belong?

Comment, mummy, recommend, aluminum... 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 him look closely at words and learn their spellings or parts of speech.

Ask him to bring home a list of vocabulary or spelling words. Secretly choose three or more of the words that have something in common (vowel sound, prefix, suffix, part of speech, number of syllables).



Write the words down, along with a word from your youngster's list that doesn't meet the criteria. Then, he tries to name your sorting rule.

Trade roles, and let him give you a set of words to figure out. ■

OUR PURPOSE

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

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www.rfeonline.com
ISSN 1540-5583

Q&A Learning to study

Q My son doesn't seem to know how to study. He just reads his textbook and says he's done. How can I help him?

A To study well, your son needs to be an active reader. Doing things like taking notes while he reads a textbook and talking about the information can help him learn and remember it. If the book has a practice test, he can write down the answers as he reads. At dinner, ask him to tell you what he learned, and have a family discussion about the subject.

Also, recommend that your son study a little at a time instead of cramming the night before a test. He can start each session by reviewing what he read the previous evening and then move on to that day's material. ■



Short and sweet

Is your child looking for something different to read? Or maybe she wants a book she can pick up when she has a few minutes. Here are some ideas for “quick reads”:

- A book of short stories can show your youngster different ways authors develop characters, introduce settings, and resolve conflicts. Suggest that she try collections like *Twelve Impossible Things Before Breakfast* (Jane Yolen) or *Past Perfect, Present Tense* (Richard Peck).

- Coffee-table picture books are oversized, colorful volumes that usually focus on one topic like baseball stadiums or a famous painter. Through words and pictures, your child can explore an interesting subject.

- Travel brochures let your youngster read descriptions of real places. She can learn facts about a city or country (population, languages spoken, weather) and spots to visit (monuments, parks, restaurants). ■

