

Cypress-Fairbanks Independent School District

Book Picks



■ *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*

Greg Heffley has lots of goals for middle school: become class treasurer, survive a PE wrestling unit, and get out of playing a tree in *The Wizard of Oz*. Unfortunately, his plans always go haywire in this humorous look at growing up by Jeff Kinney. (Also available in Spanish.)



■ *365 Ways to Live Green for Kids*

In this book by Sheri Amsel, kids will learn to reduce waste, protect plants and animals, and fight pollution. It has projects like making your own compost and planting a butterfly garden. Youngsters will also find ideas for involving their friends, such as starting a tree-planting club.



■ *Shredderman: Secret Identity*

Fifth-grader Nolan Byrd invents a secret identity and starts a Web site to get back at the school bully. As "Shredderman," can Nolan triumph over the bully, or will his secret identity be discovered? The first book in the Shredderman series by Wendelin Van Draanen.

■ *The Silent Storm*

Three years ago, Alyssa lost her parents in a hurricane, and she hasn't spoken since. Now another storm is coming. Will she break her silence to save the rest of her family?

A tale of adventure
by Sherry
Garland.



Vocabulary games

A good 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 games.



Dictionary charades

Take turns flipping to a random page in the dictionary and choosing one word to act out. For example, if your youngster picks *relax*, she might stretch out on the sofa. The first family member to guess the word gets to act out the next one.

Definition bingo

Use your child's vocabulary list to play bingo. Have each player make a bingo board with a vocabulary word in each box. Your youngster can write each word's definition on a separate slip of paper. To play, take turns picking a definition and reading it aloud. Players put a penny on the word that matches the meaning. Cover five in a row to call "Bingo!" *Tip:* Read out the words and check the definitions.

Synonym sense

Each person chooses a theme, such as autumn, for the other players to guess. Players jot down several words that fit their themes. Then, they get one minute to browse through a thesaurus for synonyms. For example, if a player writes down *chilly*, he might add *brisk* and *crisp* to his list. For *gourds*, he might include *pumpkin* and *squash*. When the last person finishes, take turns reading the synonyms from your lists and trying to guess each other's themes. ■

Let's agree!

When subjects and verbs agree, sentences work properly. Help your middle grader learn to choose the correct verb.

First, have him pick a sentence from a book: "John *skates*." Explain that the subject (*John*) is singular, so the verb (*skates*) must be singular, too. If the subject is plural (*John and Mary*), then the verb must be plural (*skate*): "John and Mary *skate*."

If your child gets confused, suggest that he underline the subject and the verb: "The boy with the dogs walks by our house every day." Although the subject (*boy*) and the verb (*walks*) are separated by other words, they still have to agree. Let your youngster know that many singular verbs end with *s*.

Tip: Words like *each*, *either*, and *everyone* are singular and require singular verbs. ("Everyone loves pizza.") ■



Learning with poetry

Poems can tickle your child's funny bone, stretch his imagination, and improve his reading comprehension. Check out poetry books from the library, and enjoy them together with these activities:

- Take turns reading verses of a rhyming poem that tells a story, such as "Casey at the Bat" by Ernest Thayer. Reading poems that rhyme will help your youngster read smoothly and with expression. *Tip:* Try having him clap the rhythm as he reads. ("Ten thousand eyes were on him as he rubbed his hands with dirt...")



- Poems usually contain *imagery*, or words and phrases that paint pictures for readers. Suggest that your middle grader read a poem carefully and then illustrate it. For instance, after reading *Where the Sidewalk Ends* by Shel Silverstein, he might draw a bright red sun, swirls of wind striped like peppermint, and flowers growing from the pavement. Drawing what is happening can help your youngster understand and enjoy poems. ■

Parent 2 Parent

Math stories

When my son Kieran was struggling with math homework the other night, I remembered a trick my fifth-grade math teacher taught me. She had me turn equations into stories, and this really helped me understand the math concepts.

I mentioned this idea to Kieran and helped him make up a story to go with the first problem, 6×24 . We wrote, "Six buses went to the museum. Each bus held 24 students. In all, 144 students



went on the trip." Then, my son decided to connect all the problems into one story. For 8×45 , he added, "The museum had 8 exhibits. Each had 45 artifacts. There were 360 artifacts altogether."

When Kieran finished, he read his story to me. He agreed that the project made him more comfortable with the math problems. I think it also strengthened his storytelling skills! ■

OUR PURPOSE

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

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Q&A Parent-teacher teamwork

Q Our parent-teacher conference is coming up. We have questions about our daughter's progress in reading, but we have only 20 minutes to discuss all her subjects. What should we do?

A You can prepare ahead of time by jotting down questions so you'll remember everything you want to ask. Let the teacher know about any concerns you have about reading. You might ask if your daughter is reading at the expected level and if she's making progress. Does she complete reading assignments on time and contribute to discussions?

Listen to what the teacher has to say about all your daughter's subjects, and take notes so you can share her comments with your child. If the conference ends and you still have questions, ask for another meeting, or follow up by phone or e-mail. Either way, be sure to stay in touch with the teacher to discuss any further concerns. ■



Other Picks WEB SITES

■ Felix the Cat

Youngsters

will enjoy online reading with comics and a trivia quiz on Felix the Cat's Web site. They can also paint pictures of the mischievous cat, solve a jigsaw puzzle, and listen to music.



www.felixthecat.com/multimedia.htm

■ Kidsreads

Find book suggestions and get to know famous authors on this book lovers' site. It includes reviews of new releases and old favorites, plus author interviews and biographies. Visitors can also find discussion questions for popular titles and learn how to start a book club. www.kidsreads.com

MAGAZINES

■ Sports Illustrated Kids

This junior version of *Sports Illustrated* has articles about young athletes as well as professional and college players. Your child will stay up-to-date on sports news and learn about fitness and nutrition, too. Every issue includes a poster and trading cards. 800-992-0196

■ Zamoof!

Through entertaining articles and fun activities, this bimonthly magazine encourages kids to stay healthy and safe. It also promotes character traits like kindness, respect, and tolerance. 877-762-9624

