

Warren School -  
 Joanne Woodington, Literacy Specialist



**Book Picks**

■ **The Maze of Bones**

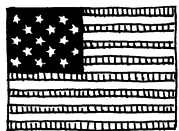
Dan and Amy receive an unusual inheritance from their grandmother: 39 clues scattered around the world. If the siblings find all the clues, they'll learn a secret that will make them the most powerful people on the earth. The first book in Rick Riordan's The 39 Clues series. (Also available in Spanish.)



■ **Who Was Steve Jobs?**

Pam Pollack and Meg Belviso's biography describes the life of Apple co-founder Steve Jobs. Your youngster will learn about Jobs's childhood, products he sold and invented, and companies he worked with. Includes a time line of important events in Jobs's life.

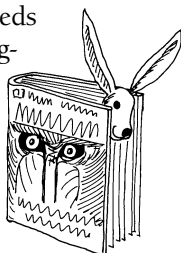
■ **Capture the Flag**



Thieves have stolen the flag that inspired "The Star-Spangled Banner"! That's the news that Anna, José, and Henry hear on TV while they're snowed in at an airport. Sure that the thieves are also in the airport, the children launch a search for the missing flag. A fast-paced mystery by Kate Messner.

■ **Encyclopedia of Animals**

This illustrated reference book by DK Publishing will delight animal lovers. From aardvarks to zebras, it provides information on hundreds of animals. Your youngster can learn how animals are classified and read facts about their habitats, diets, bodies, and behavior.



# A recipe for writing

Many ingredients go into good writing. And as with cooking, a small change can make a big difference in the end result. Your youngster can turn in writing assignments that are clearer and more interesting with winning ingredients like these.



**Active verbs**


Sentences with *active* verbs usually provide more information than those with *passive* verbs. Instead of "I was taught to tie my shoes," your child could write, "My mom taught me to tie my shoes." Encourage her to look for passive verbs in her work. If she finds one, she can reword the sentence to give her reader more details.

**Varied sentences**

Do many sentences in your youngster's story begin with *The* or *I*? Suggest that she start each sentence with a different word. She could try, "Despite the rain, the band marched across the field" instead of "The band marched across the field even though it was raining." *Idea:* Have her circle the first word of each sentence to spot repetition easily. Or if she's


working on a computer, she can use the "find" feature to locate overused words.

**Smooth transitions**

When one paragraph flows smoothly into another, it makes your child's whole story or report work better. One strategy is to start paragraphs with *transition* words like *first*, *next*, or *finally*. Or she might include an introductory phrase ("In the meantime," "On the other side of town"). In a report, she could begin a paragraph by referring to the previous one: "Not only do birds' feathers help them fly, but their bones are important for flight, too." 

## Set new reading goals

Inspire your child to read more this year by making a list of reading goals. Here are some he might try:

- Read books that have been made into movies.
- Finish every book in a series.
- Pick a classic novel to read each month. *Note:* He can ask the school librarian for recommendations or find a list of classics on a library or bookstore website.
- Explore different settings and cultures by reading a book set on each continent.
- Stretch! Try reading a more difficult book than usual. 



# Success with tough words

When your child encounters a new word while reading, how can he figure out what it means? These strategies will make it easier for him to read unfamiliar words.

**Say it.** Sometimes your youngster won't recognize a word in print, but he'll know it if he says it aloud. Suggest that he sound out a tough word—that might jog his memory about how he has heard it used before.



**Use surrounding words.** Have him read the whole sentence or paragraph for clues to the word's meaning. If he sees "The students *convened* in the auditorium to hear the principal speak," he can think about what word could replace *convened*. ("Gathered makes sense there—*convened* must mean *gathered*.")

**Come back to it.** Can your child understand the rest of the page or paragraph without figuring out an unfamiliar word? Encourage him to jot down the word (along with the page number) and keep going. It might appear later in the chapter, and he may realize what it means in that sentence. If not, he can look it up in the glossary or dictionary. Once he knows the meaning, he should re-read the original passage. 📖

## Fun with Words Graphics are everywhere



Your youngster's textbooks include a lot more than just words and pictures. These ideas can help her become comfortable with charts, graphs, and diagrams she'll encounter.

● **Information snapshot.** Encourage your child to collect graphics. *Examples:* a football playoff chart in the newspaper, an electric bill graph showing your family's energy use, a doctor's office brochure with a heart diagram. Then, she can post them on a bulletin board. She'll see that graphics are used for a variety of purposes in real life.

● **Kitchen-table quiz.** While you and your youngster eat breakfast or a snack, keep the cereal box or pretzel bag on the table. Take turns asking each other questions that can be answered by reading the nutrition facts box. ("How many calories would you have if you ate the entire box?" "How many pretzels are in 1 gram?") This can help your child analyze charts and graphs in textbooks and on tests. 📖



## Q&A Talking about school

**Q** It's hard to get my daughter to tell me about what she's reading and writing in school. How can I find out what she's learning?

**A** Looking over your daughter's homework can give you a good idea of what she's doing at school. You might also offer to quiz her on a textbook chapter she is studying or listen to her read a story, poem, or report she wrote.

Also, consider going to the library for a copy of a book your daughter is reading for English class. When you've finished reading it, the two of you can discuss it.

Finally, instead of asking what she did in school, seek her opinion of it. What does she like or dislike about the book she's reading? Does she prefer writing fiction or nonfiction? Inviting her to share her thoughts gives you a glimpse of what she's learning and can lead to more enthusiastic conversations about school. 📖



## Parent 2 Parent Be a better speller

My son Elliott has been struggling with spelling. I shared spelling rules I used at his age, like "i before e, except after c," but he said he'd learned that many words don't follow those rules. So I asked his teacher for better ways to help him at home.

The teacher suggested that Elliott keep a list of words he frequently misspells and post it over his desk. For example, she pointed out that he tends to put *-able* at the end of

words that should have *-ible*. So Elliott made a list that included *collectible*, *edible*, *flexible*, and *visible*.

She also said that while rules can be useful, looking for exceptions might be a fun way to help Elliott remember difficult spellings. Now, I say a rule and encourage him to search for words that don't follow it. So far, Elliott has found *e* before *i* in a "neighborhood meeting" notice on our street and on a "weigh produce here" sign in the grocery store. 📖



### OUR PURPOSE

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

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