

Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

February 2014



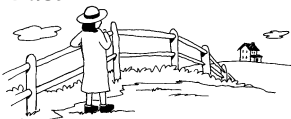
Book Picks

■ *Noah Webster: Weaver of Words*

Noah Webster is most famous for his dictionary, but in this biography by Pegi Shea, readers will discover other ways he shaped our language. He wrote books teaching children to read and spell, and he helped create the American version of English—changing British spellings like *colour* and *traveller* to *color* and *traveler*, for example.

■ *Out of the Dust*

After a tragic accident kills her mother, 14-year-old Billie Jo must decide if she should forgive her father and stay in Oklahoma or leave and seek a better life. Karen Hesse's novel in verse describes the Great Depression in the Oklahoma dust bowl. (Also available in Spanish.)



■ *The United States Constitution: A Graphic Adaptation*

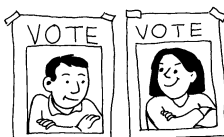
Jonathan Hennessey uses a graphic-novel format to explain the Constitution. The book covers everything from the Founding

Fathers who wrote the document to the articles and amendments that guide our government more than 200 years later.



■ *Bobby vs. Girls (Accidentally)*

In this story by Lisa Yee, fourth-grader Robert Carver Ellis-Chan's campaign for student council starts a "war" between the boys and the girls. To make things worse, if he wins, his best friend (and opponent), Holly, might never speak to him again.



Creative study guides

Reading to gather information from textbooks is a skill every student needs. Suggest that your child create a study guide to use for his next test—in the process, he'll practice reading closely for key ideas and details. Here are formats he could try.

Color coding

Let your youngster choose a different-color pen for each kind of fact. For instance, if he's reading about the Civil War, he could use blue to write notes about people (Ulysses S. Grant, Robert E. Lee), red for dates (1861, 1865), and green for places (Fort Sumter, Appomattox). Color-coding will help him remember the information as he studies.

Details, details

For each section of a textbook chapter, have your child draw a wheel (a circle with lines, or spokes, coming out from the center in all directions). In the hub, he can write the topic (queen bee). On each spoke, he could write a detail



about that topic (one per colony, lays up to 1,500 eggs per day).

Q&A

Ask your youngster to pretend he's an expert on a textbook chapter and that a news reporter has interviewed him. He can write the "interview transcript" and use it as a study guide. First, he should rewrite each chapter subhead as a question. For instance, "The Importance of Protein" might become "Why is protein important?" The questions will give him a clear purpose for reading. Then as he reads, he can fill in the answers. ■

My writing notebook

Encourage regular writing by giving your youngster a blank notebook to use whenever inspiration hits. Share suggestions like these to get her started:

- Write about an ongoing activity. For example, keep a log about a new hobby or give the highlights of your sports games.
- Describe something interesting, unusual, or beautiful that you see.
- Draw T-shirts or bumper stickers, and write slogans on them.
- Glue a photo to a blank page, and make up a story about it.
- Name something you love—a favorite food or a pet—and explain why you feel that way. ■



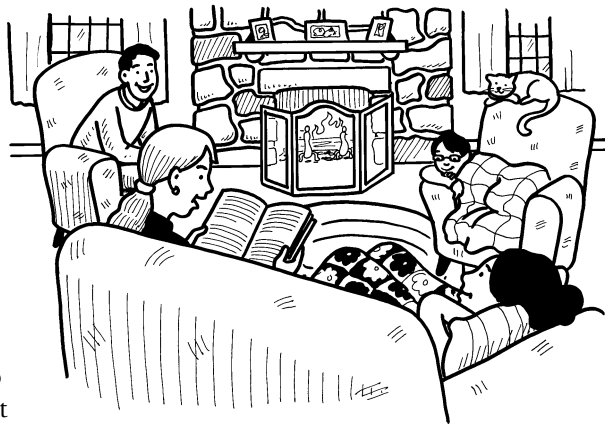
Q&A Don't stop reading aloud

Q My daughter says she's too old for me to read to her anymore. Is reading aloud still important at this age?

A Absolutely! In fact, listening to adults read aloud is one of the best ways to help children of any age become better readers.

Reading to your daughter can expose her to new words, and it lets her share the enjoyment of books with you. Try fiction and nonfiction, including books she picks out and some you select.

Story time also encourages discussions about books. If you make comments or wonder out loud as you read, she's likely to do that, too, and her reading comprehension will improve.



Research even shows that reading aloud increases youngsters' test scores.

In addition to the educational benefits, many families find that reading aloud is a great bonding experience. Since your daughter complains about being too old, try updating your rou-

tine to include the whole family. You might all gather in the living room after dinner for a bedtime story, for example. When everyone is involved, it will feel less like you're reading just to her and more like family time. ■

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 by an author like Tom Angleberger or Jeff Kinney. Suggest that she look in the library or ask cousins and friends for other funny authors.

3. Visit a comic book store together, or find a used-book store that sells comics. Also, when you read a funny comic strip or cartoon in the newspaper, cut it out to share with her, or email her ones that you find online. ■

Fun with Words

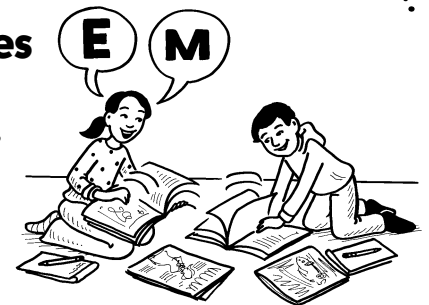
Magazine word games

For quick ways to improve your child's vocabulary and spelling skills, look no further than your nearest stack of magazines! Play these games.

First and last. Call out two letters. Players take a magazine and race to locate a word that begins with one of the letters and ends with the other. For *E* and *M*, your youngster might find *emblem* and *marmalade*.

The longest word. Ask your child to choose a letter. Then, each player opens a magazine to a random page and writes down the longest word he can find that starts with that letter. Read your words out loud. Let the winner pick a new letter, and play again.

Synonyms. One player says any word (*tall*), and everyone searches their magazines for synonyms, or words that mean the same thing. The first person to spot one (*towering*) chooses the next word to find synonyms for. *Tip:* Consult a thesaurus if you're not sure whether a word is a synonym. ■



Parent 2 Parent

Put facts into fiction

Recently, my son John was writing a story about dog sledding. He wanted to add details to make it more realistic, so we went to the library to find books about dogs.

When John mentioned his writing assignment to the librarian, she made a good point. She said authors often talk to experts to get background information. She showed John the acknowledgments page in a novel where the

writer thanked a doctor and an anthropologist for their help.

So John searched the Internet and found a local sled dog breeder. We visited the kennel, and John learned that sled dogs can eat 10,000 calories per day and that they wear special booties to protect their sensitive feet.

These facts and others really gave John's story an authentic feel. For his next story, about a blizzard, he plans to interview our neighbor who is a meteorologist. ■



OUR PURPOSE

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

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