

Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

October 2013

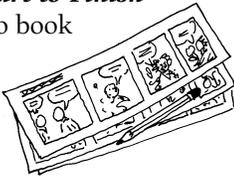
Waller Independent School District

4th Grade, 5th Grade, 6th Grade, 7th Grade, 8th Grade

Book Picks

Comic Strips: Create Your Own Comic Strips from Start to Finish

Art Roche's how-to book teaches kids to make comics. In addition to drawing lessons and design tips, your youngster will get ideas for inventing characters, developing funny plots, and making revisions.



Girls Who Rocked the World

What do Cleopatra, Mother Teresa, and Harriet Tubman have in common? They all accomplished amazing things before age 20! Your child can learn about the lives of these women—and 43 others—in this volume of short biographies by Michelle Roehm McCann and Amelie Welden.



Benny and Omar

Benny Shaw thinks nothing is worse than moving to another country and giving up his favorite sport. It takes his new friend Omar's struggles to make Benny realize how good his own life is. Eoin Colfer's story looks at the power of friendship and family. (Also available in Spanish.)

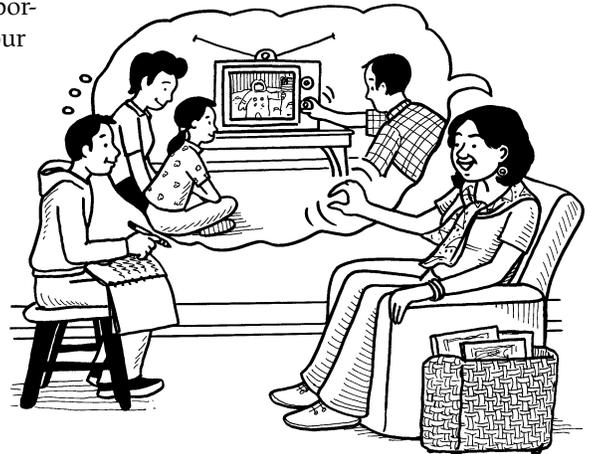


The Birchbark House

Louise Erdrich's classic novel gives readers an insider's view of life in a 19th-century Native American family. The story is told from the point of view of Little Frog, a seven-year-old girl who was adopted by a new family after smallpox wiped out her tribe.

Writing in every subject

Nonfiction writing is an important part of school, whether your child is answering questions in his social studies book, explaining how he solved a math problem, or writing up a science lab. He can keep his skills sharp with these ideas for writing outside the classroom, too.



Social studies

Suggest that he interview a relative or family friend about a historical event he studied in class. A grandparent, an aunt, or an uncle might remember watching the first moon landing or the fall of the Berlin Wall. Encourage him to write about the event through that person's eyes.

Math

Hooray! Your youngster figured out the math problem that had him stumped. Before he moves on to the next one, have him write a step-by-step description of how he did it. He'll practice putting his thoughts in logical order—and he'll have

a handy reminder when he needs to solve similar problems.

Science

Which brand of stain remover or toothpaste works best? Ask your child to do a science experiment using household products. He can write an explanation of his procedure and record the results, just like he does in science class. *Tip:* Let him post the write-up, complete with photos, on the refrigerator so family members can learn which product "won."

Build a home library

Children with their own book collections tend to read more. Help your youngster start or grow a home library with these tips.

1. Get more books for less money. Try second-hand bookstores and library sales. Or take advantage of discounts through school book club catalogs and book fairs. Also, look online. At sites like *amazon.com* and *hpbmarketplace.com*, your child will find used books for as little as \$1, and she can even trade in books for credit.

2. Aim for variety. Include fiction and nonfiction, such as novels, world-record books, poetry, biographies, graphic novels, and joke books. Also, reference books like a dictionary, a thesaurus, and an atlas can help her with homework.



Ready, set, read

Before your youngster dives into a book, have her take a minute to ask herself three questions. She'll learn what to expect from the story, which can make it easier to understand.

What is it about? Suggest that your child look for clues in the title, illustration, and back-cover description. She might think, "I bet this mystery takes place in a spooky house like the one in the picture." Then she can be on the lookout for the foreshadowing of scary events.



What do I already know? If she's somewhat familiar with the book's topic or setting, the story may make more sense to her. Have her look up the topic online or find the setting on a map to see what the area is like.

How is it like books I've read before? Perhaps your youngster has read a book with a similar theme or conflict. For example, she might expect characters in an outdoor adventure story to show strength and courage. Or in a book set in a middle school, she can be prepared to read about friendships and change. ▮

Q&A The language of poetry

Q My son says poetry is hard because he has to "guess what it really means." What can I do to help?

A A poet often doesn't always come right out and say what she means. Instead, she chooses words to create images or feelings—this is part of what makes poetry a joy to read.

Look at a poem your child is reading in school, and ask what the words make him think of. For example, in "Words Free As Confetti" by Pat Mora, words are associated with senses and colors—some words taste "sweet," and others feel "green and soft." Do words "taste" or "feel" a certain way to him?



Connecting personally with a poem can also help him figure out what it means. In "Dust of Snow" by Robert Frost, an unexpected moment turns the narrator's bad day around. Can your son think of a time that his day went from bad to good?

Finally, explain that a poem can mean different things to different people—and sometimes there's no "right answer." ▮

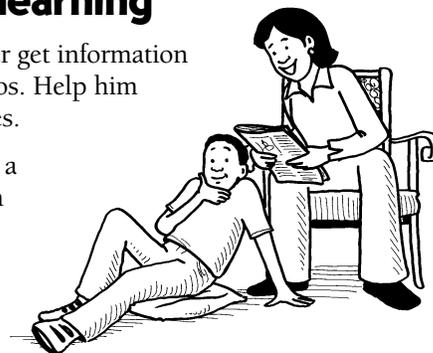


Better listening = better learning

Good listening skills help your youngster get information from lessons, class presentations, and videos. Help him become a better listener with these activities.

● **What's different?** Read a paragraph from a newspaper or magazine to your child. Then read it again, but switch a few details. For example, you might change the name of a person or a city. It's your youngster's job to listen closely and tell you what's different the second time around.

● **Listen and answer.** Together, listen to a podcast or an audio book for five minutes. Each of you can jot down a question the other person should be able to answer—if he listened carefully. Then trade questions, and answer them. Replay the audio to check your answers. ▮



Parent 2 Parent After-school activities

My daughter Maddy wanted to join an after-school activity this year. Since she enjoys reading and writing, I suggested that she look for groups where she could use those skills.

She talked to her language arts teacher, who recommended the school's Reading Buddies group. Now Maddy reads with classmates who

are learning to speak English. She even asked if I could take her to the library to find more books to read with them.

Then, she found a writing workshop at our local Boys & Girls Club. That was a big hit, too. They do exercises to come up with story ideas, and they experiment with different types of writing. For Maddy's latest project, she's working on a screenplay. ▮



OUR PURPOSE

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

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