

Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

September 2013

Waller Independent School District

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

Book Picks

Just Joking

Humor and learning go hand in hand in this volume from National Geographic Kids. Your child can laugh at 300 jokes and tongue twisters. Plus, he'll find interesting facts explaining the book's animal photographs.



Zita the Spacegirl

Oops! Zita finds out—too late—that pressing a mysterious button is a bad idea. Instantly, her best friend is abducted by aliens, and Zita has to travel the galaxy and battle intergalactic creatures to rescue him. The first book in Ben Hatke's graphic novel series.



What Are Food Chains and Webs?

Bobbie Kalman's book explains how animals depend on other living things for



food. Your youngster will learn about the members of a food chain and discover food webs in a variety of places, including coral reefs and the Arctic tundra. (Also available in Spanish.)

Twerp

When Julian Twerski and his friends are suspended for bullying, Julian's English teacher suggests that he write about it in a journal. Through his writing, Julian learns a lot about himself and the role he played in the incident. A coming-of-age story by Mark Goldblatt.



Fall for nonfiction

Reading about the real world is fascinating! Whether your child is already a nonfiction reader or is new to the genre, you can help her fall in love with "reality reading." Try these tips.

Discover interesting people

Biographies, autobiographies, memoirs, and diaries are often popular with youngsters. Encourage your child to find books about athletes, inventors, or presidents. Just one good story can get her hooked on nonfiction.



Use fiction as inspiration

Sometimes the setting or subject of a novel can lead to new nonfiction reading. Talk to your youngster about fiction she reads, and suggest topics she might look into. Was she fascinated by New York City or the Roaring Twenties in a recent story or novel? She could ask a librarian to recommend nonfiction books that give her the real scoop.

Keep up with the news

The newspaper is a regular source of nonfiction. Hand your child a section,

and invite her to read alongside you. She can try different parts to find a favorite—and to discover various kinds of nonfiction. For instance, she could read factual accounts in the news section and persuasive pieces on the opinion page. *Tip:* Share news websites, too.

Explore a school subject

Perhaps your youngster is studying the solar system in science or medieval castles in social studies. When you're at the library, have her type that topic into the database and look for nonfiction books. They can deepen her knowledge and offer new insights that will help her in school.

More reading time

A new school year means new routines. Why not add some that promote family togetherness and encourage more reading? Consider these suggestions:

- *Announce a TV time-out.* Replace an hour of TV each night with reading time. Snuggle up on the couch while one person reads aloud to the rest of the family or while you read your own books silently. The best part? No commercials!
- *Start a family game night.* Who said all reading had to come from books? Play trivia board games like *Wise Alec* or *Beat the Parents*. As your child is reading the trivia cards, he might learn facts that spark new interests to read about.



Fun places to write

A change of scenery can boost a young writer's imagination. Here are spots your youngster might try when he writes for a school assignment or just for fun.

Tent. Camp in the backyard or in the living room, and encourage your child to write a spooky tale by lantern or flashlight. Or he might pick a night creature (owl, raccoon) to be the main character in a story.



Park. Your youngster could sit at a picnic table or on a big rock and write an outdoor adventure story or a nature poem.

Bleachers. While waiting for a game to start or during breaks, he can jot down ideas for a sports tale.

Car. Suggest that your child look out the window to choose a setting. He may see an abandoned house or a passing train, for instance.

Fun with Words Word builders

Race to make words using prefixes, suffixes, and roots! This game can build your youngster's vocabulary and spelling skills.

Materials: 30 index cards, pencils, paper, timer, dictionary

1. On separate index cards, write 10 prefixes (*re-*, *mis-*, *ex-*), 10 suffixes (*-less*, *-able*, *-ful*), and 10 word roots (*graph*, *tele*, *struct*). *Tip:* Find lists at monet.k12.ca.us/curriculum/englishla/words.htm or in some dictionaries.



2. Shuffle the cards, and place them facedown in one stack. Set a timer for three minutes, and flip over the top card.

3. Each player writes all the words she can think of with that prefix, suffix, or root word. (For *graph*, your child's list could include *autograph*, *graphic*, and *biography*.)

4. When time runs out, read your lists aloud. Cross off duplicates or misspelled words. (Check spellings with a dictionary.)

5. Score one point for each remaining word. The player with the most points after five rounds wins. ■



Waiting room. What is it like to be a doctor or a dentist? Have your youngster write from the point of view of a person he sees. Or he could find a magazine photo and imagine the lives of the people pictured. ■

Q&A Homework planning

Q My daughter will have more reading and writing homework this year. How can I help her?

A It's great that you want to take an active role in helping your youngster succeed. And though it's her job to do homework, she'll do better with your support.

If she's reading a tough textbook chapter, you might listen to her read parts that she finds confusing. Or when she has a writing assignment, let her brainstorm ideas with you, or offer to read a rough draft.

Also, she may need a ride to the library to get books and do research for papers. Ask her to let you know in advance so you can find a time that works for both of you. And have her tell you about supplies (index cards, poster boards) she needs for projects and presentations. ■



Digging up a story

In 1,000 years, what will archaeologists think of the inventions we use today? Your child's imagination and language skills can grow with this fun storytelling activity.

Give each family member a brown paper lunch bag, and have him put a household object inside. *Examples:* TV remote, can opener, cell phone charger.

Swap bags. Now, take turns pretending to be an archaeologist from the future.



Start a story about your item that begins with "Once upon a time."

The catch? You must make up a completely new use for the object! For a TV remote, your youngster might say, "Once upon a time, children learned to count using this laser wand."

Each family member can add a line to the story—continue until someone's idea ends the tale.

Let each person have a turn to start a story. Then, choose new objects, and play again. ■

OUR PURPOSE

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

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