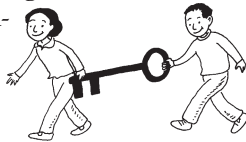


Book Picks



■ *The Sixty-Eight Rooms*

What if you could shrink yourself to fit inside the magnificent miniature Thorne Rooms at Chicago's Art Institute? In Marianne Malone's fantasy tale, sixth-graders Ruthie and Jack find a magical key that lets them do just that.



■ *My Life as a Fifth-Grade Comedian*

When Bobby, the class clown, starts having family problems, his jokes go too far. Luckily, a caring teacher gives him one last chance to stay at the school—he must create and stage a comedy contest between teachers and students. Elizabeth Levy's book also includes jokes and advice for the budding comedian.

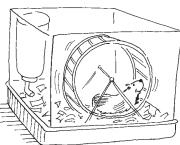
■ *Sacagawea*

This biography by Judith St. George tells the exciting tale of Sacagawea's 5,000-mile journey with Lewis and Clark. The Native American young woman is famous for helping the explorers build relationships with tribes and find food on their way to the Pacific Ocean. (Also available in Spanish.)



■ *Ten True Animal Rescues*

Animals are the heroes in these stories by Jeanne Betancourt. Your child may have heard about dogs saving people's lives, but she'll be amazed to read about a dolphin who stops a shark attack, a cow who protects a man from an angry bull, and more.



Vocabulary power

Using new words will help your youngster remember what they mean—and help make them a part of his regular vocabulary. Encourage him to try these strategies for learning words he doesn't know.

Define it

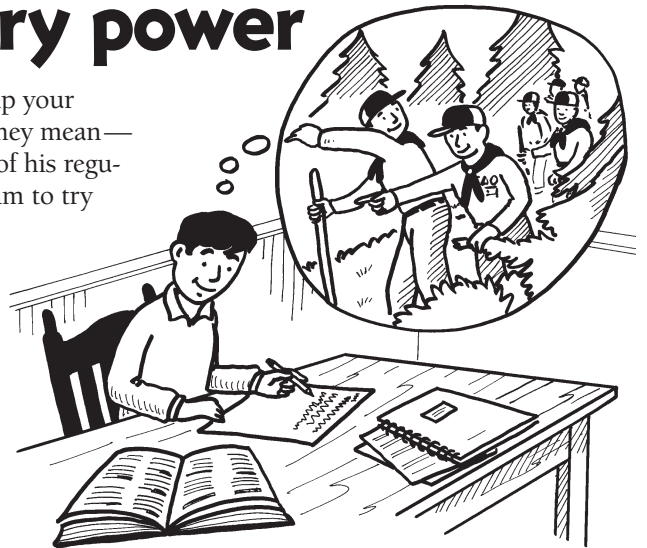
Have your child look up a word in a dictionary or textbook glossary and write his own definition for it. This will make the word feel more familiar to him. *Example:* "A correspondent is a person who writes letters to someone."

Illustrate it

Your youngster will remember a new word more easily if he can visualize its meaning. After he reads a definition, he might draw a picture to go with it. For instance, he can write "demolition" and draw a picture of a wrecking ball tearing down a building.

Narrate it

Another way your child can remember a new word is by making up a story



about it. For *scout* (to explore for information), he could write about two Boy Scouts who travel ahead of their troop to see what's in a forest.

Record it

Some people listen to recordings to learn another language so that they get used to hearing the sounds and context of the words. Let your youngster record himself reading definitions of new words and using them in sentences. He might use a cassette player, a cell phone, or an MP3 player. Then, he can listen to his recordings to help him remember the words and their meanings.

Hooked on books

Spark your child's interest in fiction by helping her enjoy popular tales. Here are two ideas:

1. Read classics. Your youngster can ask adults she knows about their all-time favorite books. An aunt might name Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*, or her PE teacher could say Fred Gipson's *Old Yeller*. Books like these show how people lived in the past—yet your child will find themes and lessons that apply today.

2. Rediscover fairy tales. Your youngster might be surprised to learn that different cultures have their own versions. Have her type a familiar title (*Cinderella*) into a library database. She might enjoy *Yeh-Shen: A Cinderella Story from China* by Ai-Ling Louie, or *The Rough-Face Girl*, an Algonquin Indian version by Rafe Martin.



Making sense of graphics

Charts and diagrams provide a lot of information in a small amount of space. Help your youngster get comfortable with these textbook features by reading and using graphics that appear in everyday life:

- Your child's math book might have charts that compare fractions and percents or Fahrenheit and Celsius temperatures. One example of a chart she can use at home



is the nutrition facts box on her favorite snack. Suggest that she slide her finger over rows and down columns to keep her place as she reads. Also, explain that she'll need to read the whole thing—"120 calories per serving" is useful information only if she knows the serving size.

- Science textbooks contain diagrams—for example, those illustrating the parts of an insect or a flower. To understand a diagram, your youngster will need to read the labels (thorax, abdomen) and look at what they point to. She can practice using these graphics at home by following diagrams to build toys or to help assemble furniture. ■

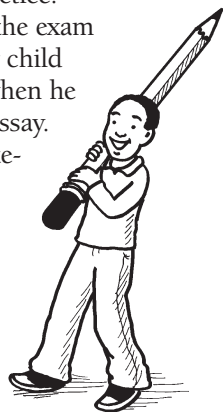
Q&A Ready for testing

Q My son has standardized tests coming up. How can I help him prepare for the reading sections?

A Start by asking him what kinds of questions will be on the test. He can find out from his teacher or look at sample exams given out in class or posted online. Then, he can use homework assignments as practice.

For instance, if the exam will be timed, your child can time himself when he writes an English essay. Or he can use strategies for reading-comprehension questions when he has history assignments. Suggest that he start by reading the questions in a hand-out or textbook chapter—and then read the relevant passages. This will let him know exactly what information he's looking for.

Note: Make sure your child gets a good night's sleep and a healthy breakfast before his test. ■



Fun with Words

My word collection

Authors choose words to create a mood, make a point, or paint a picture in a reader's mind. Here's an activity that can strengthen your child's writing by showing her how to find and use vivid words.

First, give her a notebook where she can write interesting words that she finds as she's reading. She can write the sentence containing the word, highlight the word, and cite the book title and the author's name.

Next, suggest that your youngster use her notebook to inspire word choices when she has a creative-writing project. She might write a story and then go back and replace so-so words with ones she has gathered. For instance, instead of, "The *big* waves *rocked* the boat" she could write, "The *frigid, stormy* waves *slammed* the boat." ■



Other Picks

WEB SITES

■ Wonderopolis

Children wonder many things. Why are all snowflakes different? How old is soccer? Wonderopolis, developed by the National Center for Family Literacy, answers a new question every day. Your youngster can even submit her own "wonder" for consideration. <http://wonderopolis.org>



■ The Fun Works

Explore a wide variety of careers at this site designed to get children thinking about their futures. Your child can take a quiz to find out what field might suit her, and then read about jobs. <http://thefunworks.edc.org/SPT-home-graphic.php>

MAGAZINES

■ Muse

This history, science, and arts magazine is designed to entertain readers while making them think. Beyond the articles, youngsters will find photos, illustrations, activities, and even cartoon "muses" who fill the margins with their quirky humor and comments. www.cobblestonepub.com/magazine/MUS

■ 4Kids

This weekly online magazine includes articles about the environment, space travel, the arts, and other topics. Your child can also play math and language arts games, watch videos, and use the 4Kids search engine to find safe sites. www.4kids.org



OUR PURPOSE

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

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