

Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

April 2011

Haywood County Schools

Book Picks

■ Walls Within Walls

The Smithfork kids are unhappy about moving. Then, they discover that their new Manhattan apartment is filled with clues about the millionaire who lived there before. Will the secrets lead to a long-lost fortune? Maureen Sherry's mystery includes a look at historical New York.



■ The Extraordinary Mark Twain (According to Susy)

This biography of author Mark Twain is based on the journal entries of someone who knew him well: his 13-year-old daughter, Susy. Author Barbara Kerley weaves Susy's original writings together with information about the lives of both father and daughter.

■ The Lemonade War



Brother and sister Evan and Jessie Treski are friends until they discover that she's going to skip a grade and be in his fourth-grade class. Now he's out to prove that he's better than she is at something—selling lemonade. A story about sibling relationships, and economics, by Jacqueline Davies.

■ **The Scarecrow and His Servant** Jack, an orphan, agrees to become the servant of a scarecrow who has come to life. Soon he's caught up in an adventure that involves pirates and lost treasure. A modern-day fairy tale by Philip Pullman. (Also available in Spanish.)



A family book nook

A cozy place to curl up with a book or magazine can encourage your child to read more. Follow these steps to carve out a special "book nook" for your family.

1. Create. Even the smallest space can become a reading zone. Together, choose a quiet spot away from distractions. For example, your youngster might suggest a corner of the family room or basement, or a space between two bookcases in the living room. Let her add a comfortable seat (favorite chair, bean bag, big pillows) and a lamp.

2. Organize. Help your child collect containers for reading materials. Cereal boxes make ideal magazine holders, shoeboxes are just right for small paperbacks, and larger cardboard boxes or baskets could hold bigger books. She can cover the



recycled boxes with construction paper and label the containers ("Science magazines," "Mysteries," "Biographies"). *Tip:* Have her create a special box for library materials that must be returned.

3. Enjoy. Make using the book nook part of your family's daily routine. You might read the newspaper there in the morning. Your youngster can use the spot for reading assignments after school. And family members might take turns relaxing there on evenings and weekends to read novels or listen to audiobooks. ■

Writing book reports

Your youngster has been assigned a book report. Now what? These tips can help the project go more smoothly:

- Encourage him to start reading right away so he has plenty of time and doesn't feel rushed. As he reads, he can jot down ideas for his report and mark important pages with sticky notes.
- When he finishes the book, have him tell you the story. Summarizing the plot out loud is good practice for writing about it.
- Book reports usually include your child's opinion of the book. Help him make that part interesting by suggesting that he compare it to other books on the same topic, critique the author's writing style, or relate the story to his own life. ■



Conversation skills

Can something as simple as talking with your child help him in school? You bet! Good conversation teaches him to take part in group discussions and listen to other people's ideas. He'll build thinking skills, too. Try these ideas for talking together.

Choose a topic

Take turns thinking of topics that appeal to everyone so nobody feels left out of the conversation. Some starter ideas: favorite books, hobbies, sports teams, family history.



Practice listening

Help your youngster learn to listen with this tip. He should respond to what the other person said before he adds his thoughts to the conversation. For example, if his sister says, "I had pizza for lunch today," he might say, "Oh, I had pizza, too. It was my favorite—pepperoni."

Keep it going

Encourage your child to ask questions that will keep a conversation going. Suggest that he think of question words (who, what, when, where, why, how) to use for follow-up. For instance, if your family is discussing baseball season, he might ask, "Who do you think will make it to the playoffs?" or "When is the first game?"

Parent 2 Parent

Share reading

During a recent trip to the dentist, my daughter Christina read to a couple of younger children in the waiting room. She doesn't normally feel comfortable reading aloud, but she seemed to enjoy herself and asked if she could do it again.

I suggested that she help me babysit my friend's little boy by reading to him when he came over. I also stopped by the office at Christina's after-school day care to ask if she might occasionally read to the toddlers or preschoolers. The director thought it was a great idea.

Now every Friday, Christina visits a different day-care class to read to the little ones. The teachers appreciate the extra pair of hands, and Christina's "job" seems to be boosting her confidence in her reading ability.



Other Picks

WEB SITES

■ Genna's World

A 10-year-old girl created this site to encourage other children to read and write. Youngsters can offer suggestions for one of Genna's stories in progress, submit their own stories, or read the contributions of other young writers. www.gennasworld.com

■ American Philatelic Society

The children's section of this stamp lovers' site contains stamp facts and games like cross-word puzzles and word scrambles. Young collectors will also find a list of stamp clubs, along with information on starting their own. www.stamps.org/kids



GAMES

■ Word Rummy

Combine letter tiles in this game to make words that can increase your youngster's vocabulary. Build longer words or use less-common letters (Q, X, Y, Z) to earn extra points. But watch out—other players can build onto your word and steal your score. *Cadaco*



■ Go to the Head of the Class

Three levels of difficulty make this trivia game fun for the whole family. Answer questions in six subjects to move forward through the classroom. A wrong answer sends you back. Ace the final quiz to win! *Hasbro*

Fun with Words

Parts of speech

Your child can stock up on grammar knowledge during visits to the grocery store. This activity will encourage him to read a wide variety of words—and help him stay occupied in the store.

On your next shopping trip, ask him to search food packages and signs for a noun, a verb, and an adjective that begin with each letter of the alphabet. The challenge is

to find an A word for each part of speech (apples, add, acidic) before he moves on to B words.

You can continue the game each time you shop. For how many letters can he find all three parts of speech?

Tip: When you get home, your youngster can use a dictionary to look up words he doesn't know.



OUR PURPOSE

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

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