

Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

January 2016

Alice Birney Elementary
Jessica Gomez, Principal

Book Picks

■ *Mudville* (Kurtis Scaletta)

It has been raining for 22 years in Roy McGuire's hometown, interfering with the 12-year-old's dream of playing baseball. The rain suddenly stops when Roy's new foster brother arrives, ending what some called a curse. Sturgis isn't easy to get along with, but as Roy discovers when he puts together a team, the boy can throw a baseball.



■ *Fearless! Stunt People* (Jessica Cohn)

How do stunt performers survive death-defying tricks? This nonfiction book explains how they spend years training and learning safety precautions. Read about different fields in the stunt world and the history of the profession, too. (Also available in Spanish.)



■ *The Geography Book: Activities for Exploring, Mapping, and Enjoying Your World* (Caroline Arnold)

This collection of hands-on geography projects lets readers discover maps, landforms, water, and weather. Follow step-by-step instructions and use household items to make a balloon globe, salt crystals, a mini-greenhouse, and more.

■ *Words with Wings* (Nikki Grimes)
Gabby's daydreams help her escape from real life after her parents split up and she moves to another town. When her new teacher reaches out, Gabby discovers that her vivid daydreams can make her a good writer—and that writing gives her strength. A novel written as a series of poems from Gabby's point of view.



Read-alouds for big kids

Reading aloud to your child is entertaining and helps her grow as a reader, no matter how old she is. Expose her to more complex plots and new vocabulary—and enjoy discussing books together—with these ideas.

Choose challenging books

Sometimes, pick books that are a little above your youngster's reading ability (you can ask a librarian for advice). For example, understanding a plot that goes back and forth in time may be easier for her if you read it aloud. As her comprehension and vocabulary grow, she'll start to read more complex books by herself.

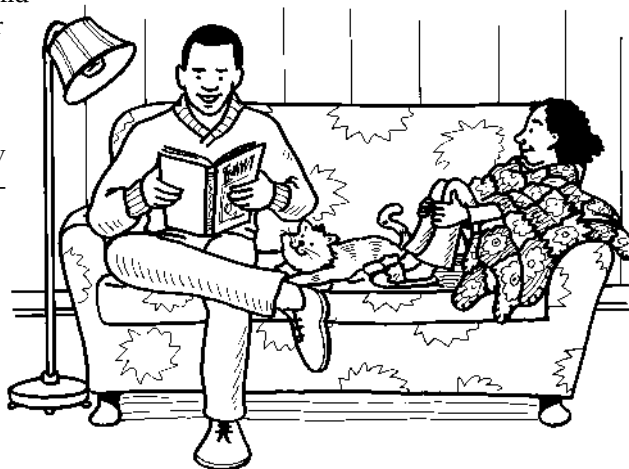
Learn together

If you come to a word you don't know or a sentence or paragraph you don't understand, say so. Then, try to figure it out along with your child. You might look up the word in a dictionary or reread the passage, for instance. She'll see that there

are strategies she can try when she gets stumped while reading alone.

Talk it over

After you finish a book, discuss it. Which character would you like to trade places with? What do you imagine the story's setting looks like? Talking allows your youngster to think more deeply about the plot. *Tip:* For more ideas, look for reader's guides with discussion questions in the book or on the publisher's website. ▣



An alternate ending

Making up a new ending for a book is a fun way for your youngster to practice writing. Here are two approaches he might take:

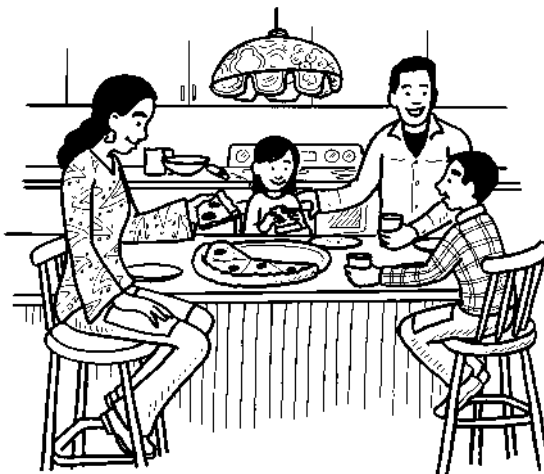
- Suggest that he change the ending completely. Maybe he is sad that the pet died, and he wants a happy ending. In his new chapter, perhaps the pet's owner swoops in at the last second to prevent an accident.
- Encourage him to write an additional chapter that continues the action and wraps it up. Based on what he knows about the characters, what does he think they will do next? A teenage character who loves surfing could become a professional surfer or an instructor as an adult, for instance. ▣



Tips for family conversations

Everyday conversation develops your youngster's speaking, listening, and thinking skills. Use these strategies from other parents to keep family chats from fizzling out.

Quiet space. "Distractions were a big issue whenever I tried to start conversations with my son Jake. Now when we sit down to talk, anything with a screen—phones, computers, video games—is turned off and put away. That way we focus on each other."



Interesting topics. "Like many families, a lot of our discussions revolve around homework, chores, and who needs a ride to where. We agreed to set that stuff aside at dinner and talk about something different for a change. Now, we choose topics like current events, animals, or science. We learn from each other, and the kids really enjoy our discussions."

On track. "Our toughest problem was getting our youngest to stay on topic. To practice, we take turns talking and see how many turns we can go without changing the subject. Sometimes I ask questions to help him, such as 'What do you think about that idea?' or 'Could you explain that a little?' It lets him know I'm listening and keeps him focused." □

Fun with Words

Make a flip book

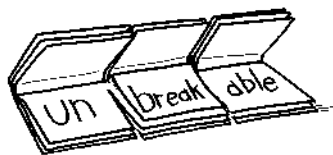
Breaking words into parts makes it easier for your child to *decode*, or figure out, their meanings. Suggest that she create this flip book to practice using prefixes, suffixes, and root words.

Ask your youngster to stack three sheets of paper, fold them in half horizontally, and staple along the fold. Keeping the pages folded, she should make two vertical cuts through all the layers (stopping just before the fold) to create three flaps.

On each flap on the left side, she can write a different pre-

fix: *re, un, dis, de, in, pre*. Each flap on the right gets a suffix: *tion, able, ful, ed, ing, er*. On the center flaps, have her write root words that will go with the prefixes, suffixes, or both. For instance, *play* would go with *re* (*replay*) or *ful* (*playful*), and *break* will go with both *un* and *able* (*unbreakable*).

Can she use every prefix or suffix at least once? Let her flip through and write down each word to see all the ones she made. □

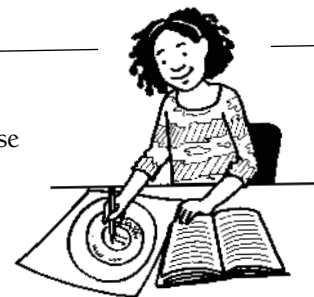


Learning to synthesize

When a reader adjusts her thinking over the course of a book to include new ideas and information, she is *synthesizing*. This "ripple chart" can help your youngster if she is asked to synthesize for a school assignment.

After she reads the first chapter of a book, she could write her impression of what's going on in a small circle in the center of her paper. ("I think *The Giver* by Lois Lowry is about a perfect world because no one feels pain.") Each time her thinking changes, have her draw a larger ring around the circle and write her revised thoughts. ("It appears perfect on the surface, but it's disturbing that citizens can't choose their own careers.")

Her completed chart will show how her thinking developed and changed as she read. □



Q&A Books for life's challenges

Q My son seems drawn to books with heavy topics like kids getting cancer or becoming orphans. Should I be concerned?

A It's common for children to use books as a safe way to explore sad or frightening issues. And indeed, many popular books for young readers address these topics.

If you see your son reading a book on a tough subject, invite him to tell you about it. He might be

worried that something similar will happen to him. Sharing his feelings could help relieve anxiety and clear up any misconceptions he may have.

Also, encourage him to focus on

the strength that characters showed and on ways they handled the obstacles they faced. For example, a character may have formed a relationship with another child going through the same thing. Your son will learn life lessons through the books he's choosing. □



OUR PURPOSE

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

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