

Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

November 2005

Book Picks



■ *Anne of Green Gables*

Matthew and Marilla Cuthbert are surprised when the boy they thought they would be adopting turns out to be a redheaded girl named Anne! Anne's adventures are chronicled in the classic tale by Lucy Maud Montgomery.



■ *Pirate Diary: The Journal of Jake Carpenter*

This fictional diary of nine-year-old Jake is full of high adventure. Jake heads to sea to learn to be a sailor, but his plans take a twist when he's captured by pirates. Richard Platt's



book includes illustrations and the real history behind the tale. (Also available in Spanish.)

■ *Stick Up for Yourself! Every Kid's Guide to Personal Power and Positive Self-Esteem*

Gershen Kaufman and other authors help kids sort through feelings and important issues with this easy-to-use guide. Writing activities teach skills for making good choices, recognizing strengths, and solving problems.

■ *The Way a Door Closes*

When C.J.'s father walks out on the family, the boy struggles with his pain and new responsibilities. A powerful story of a family in crisis told in poems by Hope Anita Smith.



Paragraphs with punch

It's easy to write and organize a paragraph—simply by asking the right questions. Share these tips with your child, and she'll have a perfect paragraph in record time!

Consider the topic. To get started, your youngster needs a main idea. You can help by asking her what question she will answer in her paragraph. She might say, "What is the best part about visiting Grandma?"

Write an introduction. The first sentence of a paragraph introduces the topic. A good introduction comes from your child's answer to her own question: "When I visit Grandma, I love to help bake fresh bread."

Collect details. Have your youngster list everything she remembers about helping Grandma. For instance, does she like the baking aromas or the way they spend their time together? She needs to include these kinds of details in her paragraph.

Organize the facts. Now it's time to put the facts in order. Should your child tell the story from beginning to end, or list the details by importance? For baking bread, it makes sense to tell the process from beginning to end. These new sentences follow the introduction and are the body of the paragraph.

Develop a conclusion. The last sentence wraps up the topic. Encourage your youngster to restate the introduction, only in different words. She might conclude, "I will always remember my special times in the kitchen with Grandma." ▣



Adding variety to writing

Are the words in your child's writing uninteresting or repetitious? Introduce him to a thesaurus. This reference book is full of synonyms—different words with similar meanings.

For example, instead of writing, "I had a nice vacation," have your youngster look up "nice" in a thesaurus. He can choose from several more exciting words, including "awesome," "terrific," "fantastic," and "amusing."

All schools and libraries have a thesaurus in the reference section. And word-processing software programs often include a thesaurus (look in the Tools menu).

Note: Encourage your child to look up the meanings of the words he chooses from the thesaurus before adding them to a story or report. ▣

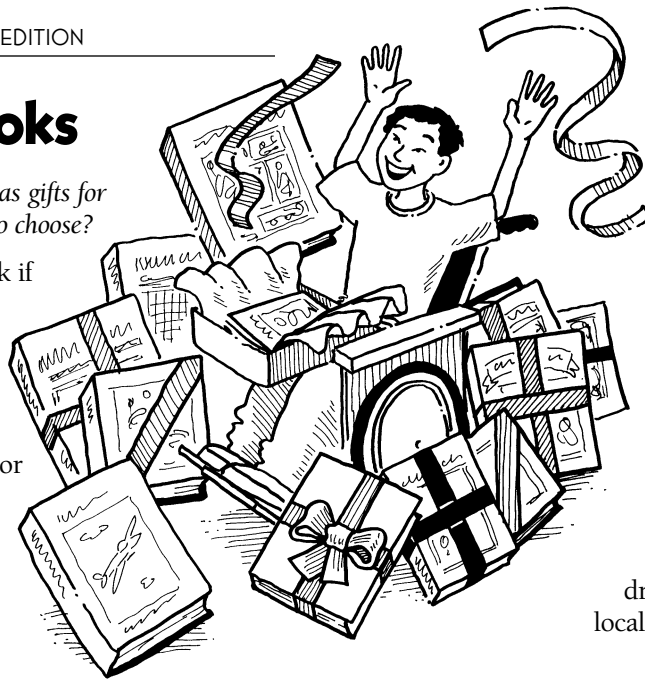


Q&A Choosing books

Q I want to buy some books as gifts for my children. How do I know which books to choose?

A You can never go wrong with a book if it's tied to your youngsters' interests. Luckily, there are many titles on a variety of reading levels, and some are sure to cover your children's most recent passions.

Start by asking your local bookseller or librarian for suggestions. Be sure to describe your kids' reading abilities as well as their interests. Another idea is to talk to the parents of your youngsters' friends and ask them what their kids are reading.



In addition, there are published resources to help families make great choices. Look for *The New York Times Parent's Guide to the Best Books for Children* or *The Best Children's Literature* from the *Parent's Guide* series. For a small fee, you can download a copy of *The Guide Book to Gift Books: An Annotated List of Books for Youth* (<http://bccb.lis.uiuc.edu/gb2>). Finally, keep your eyes open for children's book reviews in your local newspaper. 📖

Parent 2 Parent Concentration boost

My daughter Emily used to have a difficult time sitting still to finish her reading and other assignments. She seemed to have trouble focusing, so we came up with several ways to help her improve her concentration.



First, we found a quiet corner, free of distractions, in the family room downstairs. We added "white noise" to block sounds by running a fan nearby.

Next, we helped Emily list her homework assignments on a sheet of paper so she could cross off each job as she finished it. We suggested that she work on one task at a time, for 30 minutes, and then take a short break to play with the dog in the yard.

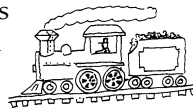
Now that my daughter realizes she can do more work in less time if she concentrates, homework is less of a chore for all of us! 📖

Other Picks

SOFTWARE

■ 3-D Ultra Lionel TrainTown Deluxe

Train lovers of all ages will enjoy learning how trains and railroads operate. From trying to deliver freight on time to keeping trains from crashing, players can choose from various levels of difficulty and even map out their own routes. *Sierra Attractions*



■ My Reading Coach

Does your child struggle with reading? This software program tests for weaknesses and then plans a course of instruction. Each lesson includes four activity sessions with immediate feedback.

Mindplay (www.myreadingcoach.com)

WEB SITES

■ Beacon Street Girls

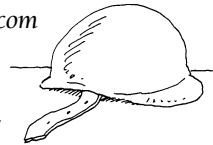
Five seventh-graders in Boston started this Web club and invite other girls, ages 9 to 13, to join. Visitors will find stories, quizzes, and tips for starting a book club and dealing with real issues like divorce and crushes.

www.beaconstreetgirls.com

■ Experiencing War: Stories from the Veterans History Project

History comes alive when veterans of World War I through the Persian Gulf War retell their stories. Videos, audiotapes, books, transcripts, and photographs take readers and listeners through these true experiences.

www.loc.gov/vets/stories/ex-war-home.html



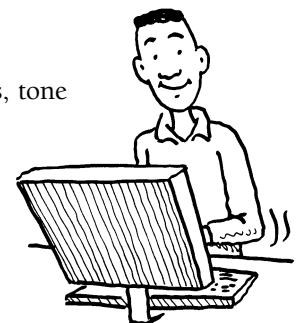
Digital learning

Did you know that time spent at the computer can build important skills like reading and writing? Here are two activities that can improve thinking, too:

■ Creating a Web page hones organization and summarizing skills. Your child must make decisions about how to present information so it looks good and clearly gets the message across. For help, visit www.lissaexplains.com.

■ E-mails and chat rooms are real-world practice in written communication. Because a message doesn't include

facial expressions, tone of voice, or body language, the words must carry the meaning. Online communication encourages your youngster to choose words carefully and to avoid writing sentences that will be misread.



Editor's Note: Be sure to monitor all your child's online activities. 📖

OUR PURPOSE

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

Resources for Educators,
a division of Aspen Publishers, Inc.
3035 Valley Avenue, Suite 103, Winchester, VA 22601
(540) 723-0322 • rfeustomer@aspenpubl.com
ISSN 1540-5583