

Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

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Central Middle School
Rex Crosnoe, Principal



Book Picks

Life in Motion: An Unlikely Ballerina (Young Readers Edition)

(Misty Copeland)

In 2015, Misty Copeland became the first African-American principal ballerina in the American Ballet Theatre's history. This children's version of her autobiography describes how she pursued a ballet career despite the odds.



The Neverending Story (Michael Ende)

In an antique bookshop, a boy named Bastian finds a mysterious book filled with enchanted creatures. When the world inside the book turns out to be real and he discovers it's in danger, he must go on a quest to save it. (Also available in Spanish.)



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A Child's Introduction to the Night Sky (Michael Driscoll)

Your youngster can explore astronomy with this colorful non-fiction book. She'll learn about stars and planets, important scientific achievements, space exploration, and more. Includes a star chart pullout.



I Survived the Bombing of Pearl Harbor, 1941 (Lauren Tarshis)

This installment of the popular historical fiction series I Survived takes readers back in time to the day of the Pearl Harbor attack. The story is told from the point of view of an 11-year-old boy who had recently moved to Hawaii.

Motivated to read

Hide a special book for your youngster to find. Hold an indoor reading campout. Encourage family members to "like" each other's book reviews. With these creative ideas, you can inspire your child to use more of his spare time for reading!

Leave hidden gems

At the library, secretly look for a book you think your youngster would like, such as one you read at his age or a story about the sport he plays. At home, leave the book where he can find it, along with a note about why you chose it for him. *Idea:* Suggest that your child hide a book for you or a younger sibling to discover.

Hold special events

Ask your youngster to organize a family reading event once a month or so. Perhaps he'll plan an indoor campout or a New Year's Eve read-a-thon. He could find books with a related theme—maybe an outdoor adventure tale for the campout or



a book about New Year traditions around the world for the read-a-thon.

Post reviews

Have your child find a spot on a wall where he and other family members can display reviews of books they've read. You could "like" each other's reviews by adding star stickers and comments. Let your youngster ask relatives to mail or email reviews that he could post, too. He may be inspired to read a book that his cousin or a favorite uncle enjoyed.

Storytelling time

Encourage your child to make a "story pole" and use it to tell a tale. She'll practice story planning, a skill that can help with creative writing assignments in school.

First, have her think of something funny or interesting that happened to your family, perhaps getting caught in a downpour during a hike. Then, she can cut a sheet of construction paper into four horizontal strips and, on each, draw a picture of a story event (seeing the first big drops, laughing and holding backpacks over your heads, hurrying to the car, getting cozy at home in pajamas).

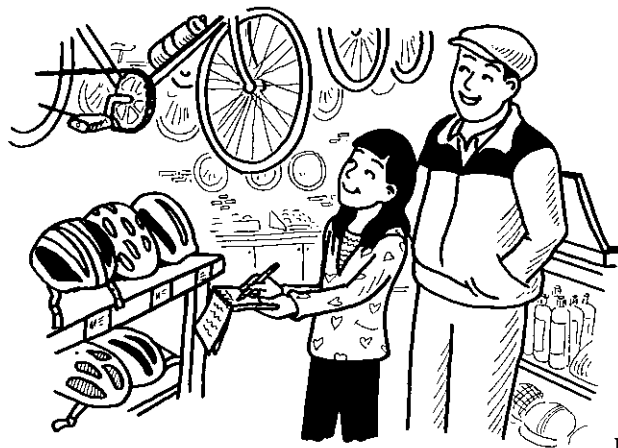
Let your youngster tape the pictures around a paper towel tube in the order the events happened. Now it's time to tell her story! She could point to the pictures on her pole and add details as she talks.



Research and write

Your youngster may think of research as something she does for a report. But writers do research for stories, too! Share these tips to help your child bring real-life elements into her fiction.

Go on location. Authors often visit the places they write about. If the characters in your youngster's story work at a bike shop, she could go to one herself. Encourage her to notice details she might mention in her story, like bikes hanging from the ceiling or an employee fixing a tire.



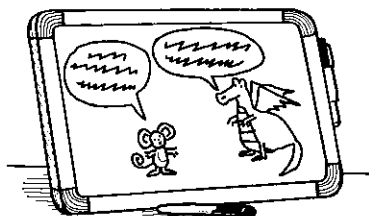
Consult an expert. Writers get help from people with firsthand knowledge of their story topics. Say your child is writing about cheerleading. She could talk to a neighbor or a classmate who cheers. The interviewee may describe what it feels like to be tossed in the air or to lead a stadium full of fans rooting for their team.

Read nonfiction. Your youngster may not be able to observe crocodiles or kangaroos in real life—but she can read about them in nonfiction library books or online. Encourage her to dig for facts that will bring animal characters to life, such as the way they communicate with each other or the habitat they live in.

Fun with Words

Dialogue you can believe

Writing dialogue that reflects how people actually talk is a skill that takes practice. Your child can learn to write believable dialogue with this activity.



On a whiteboard or chalkboard, let your youngster draw two very different characters, such as a dragon and a mouse. Have him add a big speech bubble above each character's head.

He can decide which character each of you will be and write a line of dialogue in his speech bubble. ("I'll try not to breathe fire in your direction, little mouse.") Now you write a reply in your character's bubble. ("Thanks. You're a good friend!")

Read your dialogue aloud. Does it sound realistic? If not, you could revise it and try again. Then continue the "conversation" by erasing your lines and writing new ones.

OUR PURPOSE

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

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What is close reading?

Q My daughter is doing "close reading" in school this year. What does that mean, and how can I help her at home?

A You can think of *close reading* as peeling back layers of meaning in a story. For example, your daughter probably doesn't need to read closely to know that a story is about a lost dog. But a closer reading might lead her to understand that the story is about the bond between humans and pets.

Close reading also includes thinking about *how* a story is written, so your child might consider why the author decided to tell it from the point of view of the dog rather than its owner.

At home, suggest that your youngster keep tools like a highlighter, sticky notes, and a pencil nearby when she reads. She could jot down passages from the book that really make her think, words and phrases she likes, or questions she has. Then, she can go back through the book to consider why the author picked a particular word, for instance, or why a character made a certain decision.



Books that comfort

When my husband and I divorced last year, our son Jeremy took it hard. I tried talking with him, but he clammed up. So I turned to the school counselor for help. She told me that reading books about young people facing similar problems would help Jeremy talk about his own situation.

I'm happy to say the counselor was right. The books she suggested made my son realize that he was not alone. They also gave him a way to ask me questions ("Do you think the divorce was the boy's fault?") and me a way to answer him ("Absolutely not. What happened was only between the parents"). Some days are still rough, but I'm glad we have found a way to talk through our problems.

