

Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

February 2015

Bennet Academy
Joseph Chella, Principal



Book Picks

■ *The 13-Story Treehouse* (Andy Griffiths)

Andy and Terry are way behind on the deadline for their latest book, but they don't know what to write about. Sea monsters? Flying cats? Luckily, their giant treehouse—complete with bowling alley, theater, and secret laboratory—provides plenty of ideas for the pair in this funny adventure.

■ *Vincent Van Gogh and the Colors of the Wind* (Chiara Lossani)

Your child will learn about Vincent Van Gogh's life in this book inspired by letters between the famous artist and his brother, Theo. The book includes pictures of Van Gogh's paintings, explains his artistic style, and describes the struggles he faced. (Also available in Spanish.)



■ *Saving Lucas Biggs* (Marisa de los Santos and David Teague)

Can traveling back in time change the future? Thirteen-year-old Margaret hopes so, because her father's life depends on it. If she can't change the events that turned Lucas Biggs from a nice boy into a corrupt judge, Margaret's father will be convicted of a crime he didn't commit.



■ *One Well: The Story of Water on Earth* (Rochelle Strauss)

Water is not an unlimited resource. This nonfiction book shows how all the water in the world is connected. And it provides readers with a clear picture of what people can do—from planting trees to picking up trash—to conserve the water we depend on.



Reading for what matters

What's the most important information in that chapter or story your child is reading? Well, that depends on her reason for reading it. These ideas can help your youngster focus on what matters most—and avoid getting hung up on less critical details.

Eye on the goal

Encourage your child to read with a particular goal in mind. She can write it down and put the note in plain sight so she'll stay on task. If she's researching animal adaptation for a school project, she might write, "Find three ways animals protect themselves." Or if her assignment is to summarize a short story, her goal could be "Describe how the mystery was solved."

Important, or just interesting?

Your youngster may find it fascinating that some people keep skunks as pets or that a character's favorite color is lime green. But does it belong in her report or summary? Suggest that she put sticky notes on facts or details that catch her



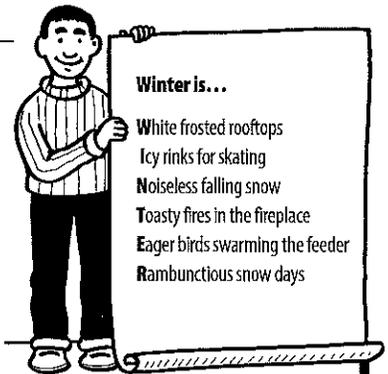
eye and use stars to rank their importance. For instance, "Skunks spray predators from up to 10 feet away" or "Stella spotted a clue that the detective missed" might get five stars, while loosely related details may get one or two.

Idea: When your child has finished reading, ask her to tell you about what she read—using only her four- or five-star facts or details. Reciting them aloud could help her realize she forgot something crucial or included a detail that doesn't matter. ■

Acrostic poetry

Everyone's a poet with this activity. Suggest that your child write an acrostic poem—he'll work on creative ways to describe a topic. Share these steps.

1. Pick a noun—that will be your poem's topic (*winter, Grandma, dogs*). Put it at the top of the page along with *is* or *are* ("Winter is...").
2. Think of activities or images you associate with the word. For winter, you might come up with sitting by the fireplace or having a snowball fight.
3. Write the word vertically down the left side of a sheet of paper. Add a related adjective that begins with each letter. (Example: For winter, you might write *white, icy, noiseless, toasty, eager, and rambunctious*.)
4. Use the adjectives to write lines of poetry. ■



Winter is...

- White frosted rooftops
- Icy rinks for skating
- Noiseless falling snow
- Toasty fires in the fireplace
- Eager birds swarming the feeder
- Rambunctious snow days

A growing vocabulary

A child who reads for 20 minutes every night reads almost 2 million words in a school year! The more your youngster reads, the more words he will be able to read automatically. Consider these tips.

Go for variety. Your child will come across words in a science fiction novel that he wouldn't find in historical fiction, and vice versa. Have him try a variety of reading materials (how-to books, folk tales, newspapers) so he'll be exposed to many kinds of words.



Understand the meaning. Encourage your youngster to say unfamiliar words aloud. This can help cement them in his memory. If he can't figure out a word from the context of the sentence or paragraph, the root word

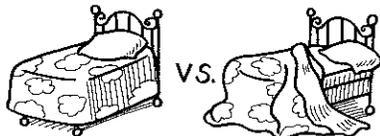
and prefix or suffix might provide clues. Or he could look it up in a dictionary. Once he knows its definition and can pronounce it, he should go back and read the passage.

Tip: Good readers know whether a book is making sense. If your child gets confused, he should reread to be sure he is reading all the words correctly. ■

Let's debate

With this family debate, you'll actually encourage your child to argue with you. You may not reach an agreement, but your youngster will get better at making logical arguments and backing them up with evidence—skills she needs for school assignments. Here's how:

- Agree on a debate topic. *Examples:* "Should you make your bed every day?" "Which way should the toilet paper be put in the holder?"



- Have each person prepare by jotting down her opinion ("Making your bed seems pointless") and supporting evidence ("You just unmake it every night"). She should also think of ways to *rebut*—or argue against—the opposite view. ("Yes, an unmade bed looks messy, but you can close your door so no one sees it.")

- To debate, take turns making your cases and rebutting opposing arguments. Then, try to decide who made the most convincing argument, whether you agree with that person or not. ■



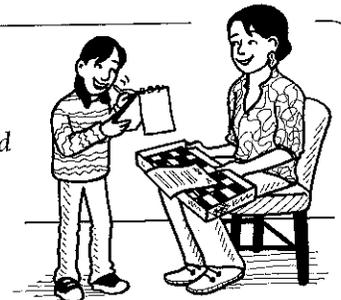
Q&A In my own words

Q My daughter knows she can't copy from sources when she's writing reports, but she says it's hard to think of new ways to say the same thing. Is there a way I can help her with this?

A Your daughter is right—copying others' words is known as *plagiarism*. Not only is it dishonest, but it can cause her to lose credit for an assignment. Help her practice paraphrasing, or putting source material in her own words, with this activity.

Ask her to read a short item (board game instructions, recipe, weather forecast). Put it away, and have her rewrite it to be as different as possible from the original. Instead of "Checkers is a two-player strategy game," she might write, "You need two people to play checkers. Use strategic thinking to win."

Encourage her to use the same method when she does research. She can read a page or section, then look away and write about it in her own words. She should check her writing against the source to make sure it's not too similar. ■



Parent 2 Parent Loving the library

One dreary Saturday, my son and I decided to escape the house. Instead of browsing at the mall, we visited the library. We ended up staying for two hours—and never spent a penny!

We discovered the library has an endless selection of great things to do. Jason used a computer to find a current event to discuss in class on Monday. Then, he found a quiet corner and read a dirt bike magazine. I looked for

audio books the whole family could listen to in the car and also glanced through travel books to get ideas for a summer vacation. We both asked the librarian for help in finding books on topics we like and checked out several to take home.

Now that we've seen how much the library has to offer, we're making it a regular stop on our schedule. ■



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 CCH Incorporated
128 N. Royal Avenue • Front Royal, VA 22630
540-636-4280 • rfeustomer@wolterskluwer.com
www.rfeonline.com
ISSN 1540-5583