

Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

April 2016

Bennet Academy
Joseph Chella, Principal



Book Picks

■ *This Side of Wild* (Gary Paulsen)

Bears, horses, and dogs are just a few of the animals that have taught award-winning author Gary Paulsen lessons in his life. In this memoir, he shares true stories of animals he has encountered, what he has learned from them, and how that knowledge has shaped his life and his fiction.

■ *Book Scavenger* (Jennifer Chambliss Bertman)

After moving around her whole life, 12-year-old Emily feels most at home in the online gaming community of Book Scavenger. So she's excited to move to San Francisco, where the game's creator lives. But when he is attacked in real life, the game may be over forever—unless Emily and a fellow gamer can unravel the mystery.



■ *Geronimo Stilton: Lost Treasure of the Emerald Eye* (Geronimo Stilton)



A mouse named Geronimo is content with his job as a newspaper editor until his sister persuades him to go on a treasure hunt. Geronimo might recover the treasure, but first he'll have to survive a hurricane, a shipwreck, and his sister. The hilarious first book in the Geronimo Stilton series.

■ *Sports Illustrated Kids Big Book of Why* (Sports Illustrated Kids)

Why are left-handed pitchers called southpaws? Why do competitive swimmers use a flip turn at the end of a pool? Readers will find the answers to these questions and many more in this volume. Includes photos of athletes in action.



Be your own editor

Good writing can become great when your child revises his reports or stories to make them clearer and more creative. Suggest that he use these strategies to analyze and improve his writing.

Rearrange

Encourage your youngster to think of his rough draft as a room of furniture that can be moved around. He should ask himself whether the paragraphs are in a logical order and if any sentences belong in a different section. In a geography report, for example, he might move a sentence about population density into a paragraph on access to clean water. *Idea:* Have him mark up his draft in red pen, circling parts to move and drawing arrows to where they will go.

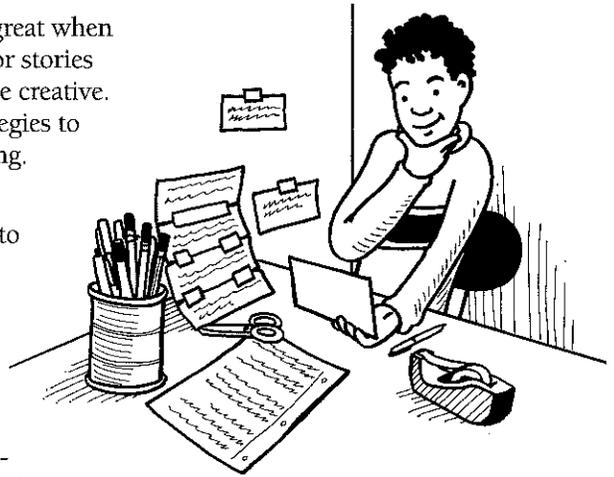
Rethink

Tell your child to look for places to make his writing more eye-catching or informative. He could insert details, quotes, or examples to add supporting facts or explanations. For a report on the history of the automobile, he may decide to open with a Henry Ford quote and add

descriptions of assembly line jobs to a paragraph about the factories.

Reword

Your youngster can improve his paper by varying his words. Suggest that he read his work aloud and highlight words he has repeated often, such as *saw*, *can*, or *went*. Have him list different options for each, reread the sentences substituting the new words, and pick the ones he likes best. In a creative writing piece about a teenage explorer, he might substitute *spotted* for *saw* or *dashed* for *went*.



Celebrate poetry

April is National Poetry Month. Let your family join in the celebration by getting poetry books from the library and trying activities like these.

● **Read and paint.** Poems often contain vivid descriptions. Get paper and paints, and read a poem aloud. Family members can paint on paper the images they see in their heads! Share your paintings, and tell which words and phrases inspired them.

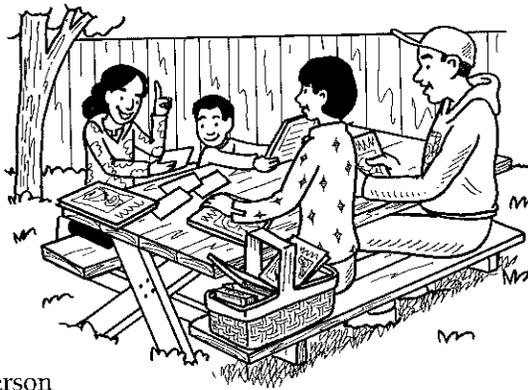
● **Select and share.** Have your child pick a topic that a relative or friend likes (say, baseball for her grandfather). Together, look through the poetry books to find verses with that theme. Then, she could read each poem aloud to the person in a phone or video call.



The family book club

Join the club—the book club, that is. Starting a family book club can motivate your youngster to read, boost her comprehension, and create memories.

Each month, let a different person choose a book. Check out library copies, and give everyone enough time to read. Then, hold a meeting with fun discussion ideas like these.



Cast a movie. Select a character, and ask each person to name an actor for the movie version. Explain why your choice is the perfect one (the actor looks the way you imagined the character, he has played similar roles in the past).

Share a review. Take turns pretending you're a radio personality reviewing the book. Summarize the story, tell what you

liked or didn't like, and explain your reasoning. *Idea:* Interview the other book club members about their opinions.

Play "Who said it?"

Ask each family member to choose five different lines of dialogue from the book and write each line (and the character's name) on a separate index card. Have your child

read one of her cards aloud. The first person to guess which character said the line keeps the card and reads one of her own. When you've read them all, the player with the most cards wins. 📖

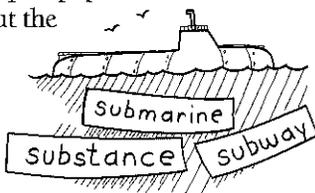


Word sort

What do *domino*, *bureau*, and *panorama* have in common? (They all end in vowels.) Your child will sharpen thinking and spelling skills with this game.

Ask your youngster to list 20–30 spelling or vocabulary words from teacher handouts, textbooks, or nonfiction books. Together, print each word on a separate slip of paper.

Spread out the slips faceup. The first player searches for three words that



have something in common. It's up to him to decide what that something is, perhaps words that are synonyms or that begin with *sub-*. He places those words in front of him, and the other players try to figure out his category.

The first one to shout out the category scores a point. Return the cards to the table, and the next person sorts words into a set for others to guess. Score 10 points to win. 📖



Beyond "sound it out"

When my son Lucas asked for help reading a hard word, I would tell him to sound it out. That's what I was taught, so I was surprised to learn at a school literacy night that about half of all English words can't be easily sounded out.

The presenter explained strategies for kids to use when a word isn't spelled like it sounds. For example, Lucas can cover all but the first letter of a word and reread the sentence, saying only the word's first sound. We tried this when he got stuck on *bright*. He read, "Bees buzzed among the b____, colorful flowers," and he figured it out by thinking about what word made sense.

Or he can look for word parts that he knows, such as *bio-* in *biography* or *-ful* in *thoughtful*. If the word is still a mystery, he could check the dictionary or get help from someone.

Now when Lucas tells me he doesn't know a word, I ask, "What strategies have you tried?" 📖



Writing on the road

It's easier—and more fun—for your youngster to write about her favorite animals or foods if she's actually looking at them! Let her take a notebook along to practice writing when you're out and about.

Zoo

Suggest that your child jot notes as she observes the animals and reads the signs. She could write an informational piece on the zoo or a fictional story about the animal she likes best.

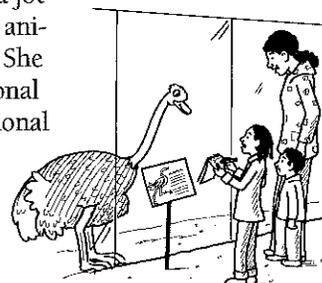
Restaurant

Your youngster might write a menu blurb for the

dish she orders. Encourage her to use mouthwatering details that would make customers want to try the item. *Example:* "Creamy cheddar cheese and fresh tomato slices sandwiched between perfectly toasted sourdough bread."

Park

Sit on a bench together, and your child can write about the sights, sounds, and smells all around her. She could describe the scent of barbecue from a grill, the laughter of children, or the "thump thump" of a basketball. 📖



OUR PURPOSE

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

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