

# Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

November 2007

## Book Picks

### ■ Poppy

Poppy the mouse's family wants to move. So they ask Mr. Ocax, the owl who rules Dimwood, for permission. When he refuses, Poppy disobeys and looks for both a new home and the real reason Mr. Ocax doesn't want them to leave. A story of heroism and justice by Avi.



### ■ Ramona the Pest

Ramona Quimby doesn't mean to get into trouble. Can she help it if she wants to kiss Davy and pull Susan's curls on the first day of school? Children of all ages will enjoy Ramona's hilarious adventures in this classic by Beverly Cleary. (Also available in Spanish.)

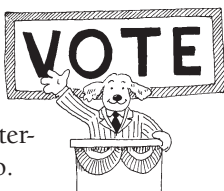


### ■ Hidden Talents

In David Lubar's tale, Martin Anderson and his friends are different from the other kids at school—they have special powers. The trouble is, they can't always control them. But when their school is about to be closed, the friends use their hidden talents to keep it open.

### ■ Vote!

Author Eileen Christelow uses a campaign for mayor to explain the voting process. Told through the eyes of two dogs, the story explains voter registration, debates, fundraising, and Election Day. Includes a timeline and Internet resources, too.



## A reading journal

Want to watch your child's reading skills grow by leaps and bounds? Encourage her to start a reading journal. Not only will she boost her comprehension, she'll build critical-thinking and writing skills, too. Try these steps:

1. Begin by explaining that a reading journal is a place to write thoughts about the books she reads. Let your youngster choose a notebook to use and decorate it with drawings, stickers, or words.
2. Encourage her to jot notes in the journal as she reads. She might predict what will happen next or describe how she would feel if she were the main character. Suggest that she pause every few chapters to write about a plot twist or a new setting.
3. Help your child think of "prompts"—questions to answer—to give her new ideas about what to write. Steer her toward prompts that can't be answered with a simple yes or no. *Examples:* "If the main character were a boy (or girl), how would the book be different?" "What would change if the story took place 100 years from now?" Your youngster can store the list of prompts in her journal.
4. Keep journal writing fun for your



child by letting her know there are no rules. Doodling pictures related to the story, noting interesting words, and writing letters to characters can make good journal entries, too. ■

## Flights of fantasy

Fantasy literature can do more for your youngster than stretch his imagination. Fantasy books also teach...

### Science

Artificial intelligence, lasers, and space travel are just a few of the topics covered in science fiction. Titles like Rebecca Rector's *Tria and the Great Star Rescue* encourage your child to explore the world of science.

### Geography

Maps in fantasies like *A Wizard of Earthsea* by Ursula K. Le Guin help the reader trace the characters' paths. Your youngster will work on map skills as he enjoys the stories.

### Foreign languages

Some fantasies, like J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, introduce made-up languages. Figuring out the new words can help your child develop an interest in learning another language. ■

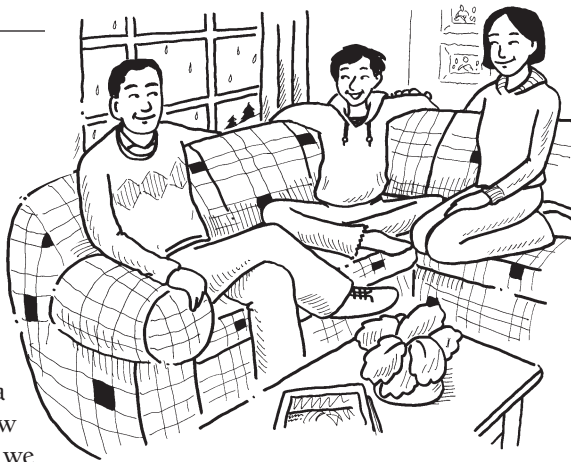


# Conversation skills

Did you know that strong speaking and listening skills help your child read better? Conversations increase vocabulary and give practice in building sentences. Use these tips to role-play at home.

**Get started.** Make a list of fun ways to begin a conversation. Suggest that your youngster ask a question about the other person or start with a topic of interest to both of them. *Examples:* “How did you get your nickname?” “I loved the movie we saw yesterday. What was your favorite part?”

**Take turns.** Show your child that a conversation means listening *and* speaking. When he talks, wait until he finishes before responding. *Idea:* Agree on a signal (finger to your lip,



touch your ear) to let him know not to interrupt when it's your turn. Help your youngster stay on topic by posing follow-up questions or commenting on what he said. Then, encourage him to do the same thing.

### Look interested.

Explain that “body language”—your gestures, expression, and posture—help keep a conversation going. Together, practice looking the other person in the eye, nodding your head to encourage him to continue, and not fidgeting or moving around when someone else is talking. 📖



## Parent 2 Parent

### Shh! Reading in progress

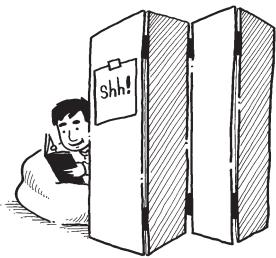
My son Mark recently complained that he couldn't find a quiet place to read in our house. So I asked everyone to brainstorm ideas for a “reading corner.”

Mark suggested that we include beanbag chairs. His brother Owen requested a rack for his magazines, and sister Katie wanted to use a sign to remind others to be quiet. With their ideas and a couple of my own (comfortable pillows and a

lamp for good light), we created a reading nook in a corner of the family room. We found a folding screen at a yard sale that

helped make the space more private.

Katie made a sign, “Shh! Reading in progress,” that we hung on the screen to remind others to keep their voices down. Now our reading nook is so popular, I think we need to make it bigger! 📖



## Q&A Picturing information

**Q** My child has trouble reading charts, tables, and graphs in her textbooks. How can I help?

**A** First, explain that charts, tables, and graphs provide an easy way to visualize information. Then, help your youngster learn more by using them in everyday life. For example, while she eats her cereal, show her how the nutrition label lists nutrients in a serving. Use a bus schedule to plan a trip to the zoo or a travel Web site to choose flights for a family vacation.

Encourage your child to make her own graphs, too. She can turn your grocery list into a picture graph (two cows = two gallons of milk). Or she can make a pie graph of her allowance ( $\frac{1}{2}$  to spend,  $\frac{1}{4}$  to save for a bike,  $\frac{1}{4}$  to put in the bank).

The more your youngster practices using charts, tables, and graphs, the better she'll understand the ones in her textbooks. 📖



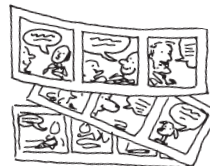
## Other Picks

### WEB SITES

#### ■ Make-beliefs Comix

On cartoonist Bill Zimmerman's site, kids can pick their characters, click on a thought or talk balloon, and tell a story comic-style.

Your child can print or e-mail completed comic strips. The site also contains story ideas to help young writers get started. [www.makebeliefscomix.com](http://www.makebeliefscomix.com)



#### ■ Windows to the Universe

Read postcards from scientists, learn about weather in space, and play games on this site packed with earth and space science information. Each section allows visitors to choose between three reading levels. Also includes a Spanish version. [www.windows.ucar.edu](http://www.windows.ucar.edu)

### GAMES

#### ■ My Word

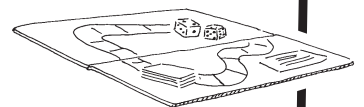
How quickly can you make a word from letter cards as the dealer puts them on the table? Find out with this fast-paced word game. Collect the most cards by making words of three or more letters.

*Out of the Box Games*

#### ■ Wit's End Junior Edition

Answer a riddle, choose the odd item in a group, and arrange things to move around the board and win this game. Questions teach youngsters spelling, vocabulary, science, nature, and more—all while they're having fun!

*Game Development Group*



## OUR PURPOSE

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

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