

# Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

October 2007

## Book Picks

### ■ *To Dance*

This autobiography, told in the form of a graphic novel, brings to life the struggles of becoming a ballerina. Readers follow Siena Cherson Siegel as she begins to dance at age six, goes on to perform in New York, suffers injuries, and still continues to dance.



### ■ *The Incredible Journey*

Can two dogs and a cat work together to survive? That's what must happen for Tao, Bodger, and Luath to travel through the wilderness and find their owners. Children will delight in this classic tale of animal adventure by Sheila Burnford.

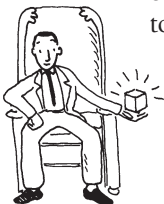
### ■ *A Corner of the Universe*

Hattie Owens is looking forward to spending the summer helping her mother run the family boarding-house. But when her mentally challenged uncle shows up, Hattie's life is changed forever. Ann M. Martin tells the emotional story of an unusual friendship.



### ■ *Artemis Fowl*

Twelve-year-old criminal mastermind Artemis Fowl gets more than he bargained for when he kidnaps a fairy cop. Now he's on the run from fairy creatures determined to rescue one of their own. First book in the Artemis Fowl series by Eoin Colfer. (Available in Spanish.)



## Cyber book clubs

"Great book! I was really surprised by the ending. Were you?" Alex L.

Welcome to the cyber-age of book clubs. Today's children can discuss books online with kids they've never met but who share their interests.

Introduce your youngster to virtual book clubs, and you'll give him a whole new way to enjoy reading. Plus, he'll build reading comprehension skills and be exposed to different viewpoints.

### Join a club

Help your child find an online club where he can give his opinion, read what other kids think, or write his own book review. Since the Internet is always open, your youngster will be able to talk about books whenever he wants.

Look for clubs with built-in safety features, such as allowing children to post first names only. Here are three to try: [www.epals.com/projects/book\\_club](http://www.epals.com/projects/book_club), <http://english.unitechnology.ac.nz/readerscafe/club>, [www.scholastic.com/flashlight](http://www.scholastic.com/flashlight).



### Start a club

Encourage your child to set up his own book talks. Using e-mail, he can invite friends or relatives to read and discuss a book ("We're reading *Hoot* by Carl Hiaasen this month. Our discussion will begin Dec. 1").

Have him make up questions to ask ("What did you like or dislike most?" "Who was your favorite character, and why?"). He can also use questions from reading guides at publishers' Web sites or sources like [www.kidsreads.com/clubs](http://www.kidsreads.com/clubs).

## Parallel play

Show your child ways to make her writing more exciting—and teach her how to write clear, well-constructed sentences at the same time.

Start by asking a simple question ("What are three activities you like to do?"). She might say, "Read, sing, and write." Next, have her turn her response into an interesting sentence by adding a few words that describe each activity. Remind her that the pattern of words in the sentence must remain "parallel." For example, "I like to read books about whales, sing funny songs, and write letters to my cousin" is parallel. It would not be parallel, however, to write, "I like to read, sing, and writing."



# Pairing fact and fiction

Some children like to read fiction. Others prefer nonfiction. Your youngster can get the best of both worlds by linking the two together.

The next time she's reading nonfiction, help her find a related story. Or when she finishes a chapter book, have her pick out a true account of the same subject. Combining fact and fiction can inspire interest, introduce new vocabulary, and boost understanding. Try these ideas:

■ Together, make a list of topics from your youngster's textbook. For example, if she is studying rainforests, she might write down "toucans," "orchids," and "spider monkeys." Have



her search the library's fiction database using those words.

■ As she reads fiction, have your child do some fact-checking. Say she's reading Jack London's *White Fang*. She can look up "sled dogs" in an encyclopedia and find out what's fact and what's fiction in the novel.

■ History is a great subject for pairing. If your youngster is learning about

the Great Depression in school, try the historical fiction account, *Bud, Not Buddy*, by Christopher Paul Curtis. Ask her teacher for other ideas, too.

Tip: Find a list of nonfiction and fiction "partner" books at [www.campusschool.dsu.edu/library/partner.htm](http://www.campusschool.dsu.edu/library/partner.htm).

## Parent 2 Parent

### Make spelling fun!

Getting my daughter to practice spelling words used to be a major battle. Then, I discovered that if I made a game of it instead of just drilling her, practice became fun.

One week we raced each other to put her spelling list in alphabetical order. Another time I gave her three spellings for each word, and she had to circle the correct one.

So far, our favorite activity is making up silly sentences using each letter of a

spelling word. Jocelyn loves turning words like "grammar" into funny sentences

(Grandma Roasted A Million Marshmallows And Radishes). The sentences help her

remember how to spell the words, and we both laugh at the results. Now we look forward to weekly spelling practice—and Jocelyn's quiz grades have improved!



## Q&A

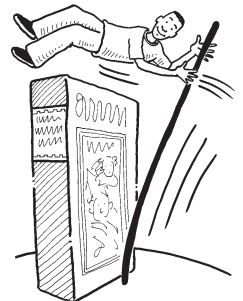
### Growing reading skills

Q My son Doug reads above his grade level, but he constantly picks easy books to read and reread. How can I help him stretch to harder books?

A Some readers hesitate to choose more difficult books because they lack confidence. Others read lower-level books to take the easy way out. Whatever the reason, you're right to want to push your child to read to his ability.

Try issuing a challenge. For every "easy" book your child reads, he needs to tackle a harder book, too. Once he has read a certain number of tougher books, consider buying his favorite to keep on his bookshelf.

You can also take turns reading aloud. Your youngster can read the first night, you can read the next, and so on. Sharing the reading will allow you to raise his confidence—and show him the great books he was missing by sticking to easy titles.



## Other Picks

### MAGAZINES

#### ■ Stone Soup

Young writers and artists will enjoy reading the work of kids their own age in *Stone Soup*. Each 48-page issue of the bimonthly magazine contains fiction, poetry, book reviews, and illustrations created by children ages 8–13. 800-447-4569

#### ■ Odyssey

Science lovers can explore a new theme every month through articles, activities, experiments, and stories. Recent topics have included nocturnal creatures, killer microbes, and the science of language. 800-821-0115



### SOFTWARE

#### ■ Merriam-Webster Spell-Jam

Join a competition, learn to spell commonly misspelled words, or take part in a game show. Download a free trial, or buy the full game. *TikGames*, <http://merriam-websters-spelljam.gamezone.net.softalizer.com>

#### ■ Word Krispies

Your child can rack up points by making words out of floating letters in this fast-paced, food-themed game. The longer the word, the higher the score. Start with a free trial, or purchase the full version. *Liquid Dragon Studios*, [www.liquiddragon.com/word\\_krispies.php](http://www.liquiddragon.com/word_krispies.php)



## OUR PURPOSE

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

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