

Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

September 2008

Strawberry Knoll Elementary School
Kristin Pierce, Reading Specialist

Book Picks



■ Pictures of Hollis Woods

Hollis is always running away from foster families. She thinks she has finally found a home with Josie, an eccentric, aging artist. Then Josie starts becoming forgetful. How far will Hollis go to keep the authorities from finding out? A Newbery Honor Book by Patricia Reilly Giff.



■ Ben Franklin's Almanac: Being a True Account of the Good Gentleman's Life

Candace Fleming's scrapbook-style biography explores the life of Benjamin Franklin. With cartoons, facts, and timelines, children will learn about Franklin's achievements—from starting the first lending library to inventing bifocals and experimenting with electricity.



■ Dominic

When Dominic the dog sets off to explore the world and ponder the meaning of life, he meets a group of villains. Can the piccolo-playing pooch take down an infamous gang and become a hero? A humorous tale by William Steig. (Also available in Spanish.)

■ The Coming Storm

Before becoming a pirate, Jack Sparrow was an adventurous teenager. On a quest to rule the sea, he sets sail in search of a legendary sword. *Pirates of the Caribbean* fans will enjoy this first book in Rob Kidd's Jack Sparrow series.



Understanding fiction

Claire is a strong reader. She can follow a complicated plot, and she gets to know the characters in a book so well that she can guess what they might do next.

Help your child be a strong reader, too, with these fun ways to boost reading comprehension.

Create a storyboard

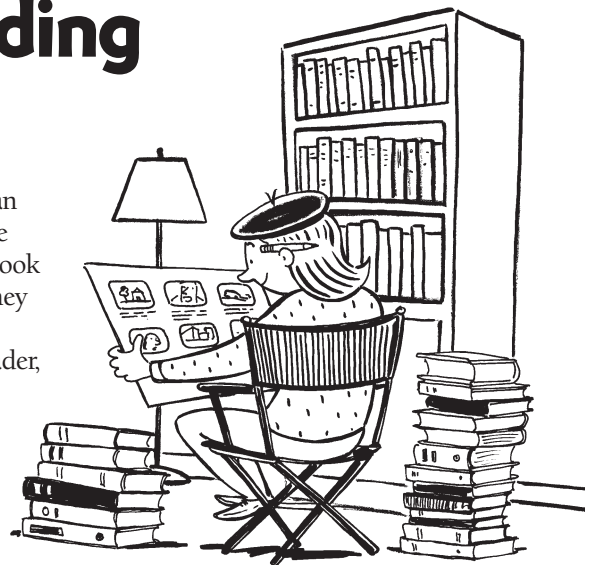
Filmmakers use a series of drawings called a "storyboard" to write movies. Let your youngster try this idea to visualize a book's plot. Have her divide a sheet of paper into eighths and sketch simple pictures (one per box) as she reads. *Tip:* Drawing arrows from box to box will show the sequence. With the storyboard, she can retell the story or write a summary.

Map the characters

Understanding a book's characters will help your youngster grasp the story. Encourage her to make a character chart while reading. Suggest three columns: one for basic facts (name, age), one for traits (shy, brave), and one for actions (goes to the beach, makes the softball team). Reviewing her chart will give her a better sense of the characters.

Predict the future

To forecast what will happen in a book, your child has to think about what has happened so far. Ask her to make predictions as she reads. Have her jot down her ideas in a notebook (best friend will move away, dad will recover). Suggest that she write her own ending about two-thirds of the way through. She'll enjoy seeing how it compares with the real one! 📖



A taste of reading

Bite-sized bits of nonfiction like these can encourage your child to "snack" on reading anytime.

- Feast on facts. Look for record books like Scholastic's *Book of World Records* (Jennifer Morse), or clip sports stats from the newspaper to keep in the family room or bathroom.



- Nibble on trivia. Your youngster can read online tidbits of information—and test his knowledge—at kid-friendly trivia sites like www.freekids-trivia.com or www.brainquest.com/kids.php.

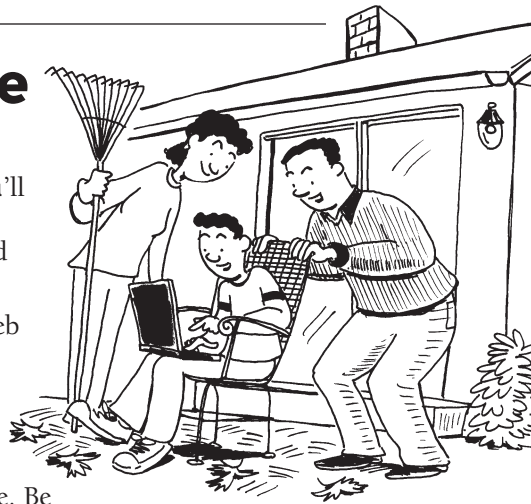
- Gobble up quotes. Check out *Quotationary* (Leonard Roy Frank) or www.quotationspage.com. Ask your child to jot down quotes he likes and share them at breakfast. 📖

Home sweet homepage

Most kids love being in front of the computer. Use that time to create a family Web page, and you'll build your child's writing skills while spending time together and staying in touch with friends and relatives. Follow these four easy steps:

1. Help your youngster research sites that host Web pages. Look for free sites, such as www.familyplanit.com, www.myfamily.com, or www.comehome.net.
Note: Be sure to choose a Web site that can only be viewed by people you invite.

2. Follow the site's instructions to build your page. Be creative—your child can experiment with fun names ("The Adventurous Andersons"), colorful backgrounds, and special



friends and relatives inviting them to visit your site. He can even encourage them to write in the guest book or record an audio message.

touches (glittery fonts, links to songs, scrolling messages).

3. Suggest that your youngster upload family photos and write captions. If your site includes a calendar, have him add birthdays, vacations, or sports events. He might also update it with a monthly newsletter.

4. Your child can e-mail friends and relatives inviting them to visit your site. He can even encourage them to write in the guest book or record an audio message.



Fun with Words Word pictures

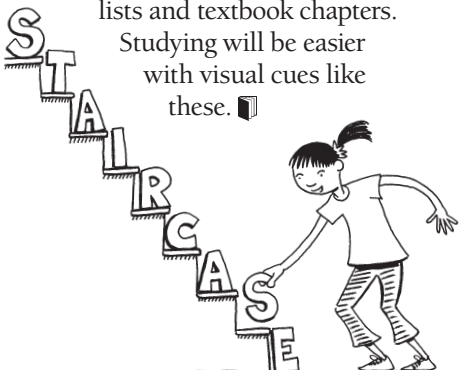
This activity makes vocabulary building fun!

Have your child make her own deck of vocabulary cards that show definitions at a glance. Start by brainstorming words (backward, vertical) that can be written in ways that illustrate their meaning. Then, suggest that she write each one on an index card with brightly colored markers or pens.

For example, she could write "backward" as "drawkcab" or print "twins" twice. Let her try "vertical" (stack the letters one under the other) or "staircase" (write them on a slant).

Encourage your youngster to add words from her vocabulary or spelling lists and textbook chapters.

Studying will be easier with visual cues like these.



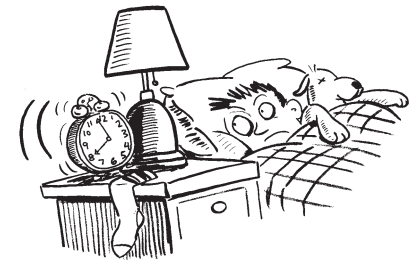
Q&A Story starters

Q My son has trouble coming up with ideas when he writes stories for school. Any suggestions?

A You can help your child see that story possibilities are everywhere. He just needs to know where to look.

Choose three things around the house (alarm clock, dog, socks), and ask your youngster to write a story mentioning all of them. He might write about a boy who misses his soccer game because his alarm went off late and a dog ate one of his socks.

Your child can try this at school, too. Suggest that he look around to find people or objects to write about. Encourage him to be creative by changing the setting, adding details, and making up dialogue.



Other Picks WEB SITES

■ Gigggle Poetry
 Everyone's a poet at this site. Your youngster will enjoy writing silly verses in Poetry Class, acting out hilarious poems in Poetry Theater, or reading and rating hundreds of poems. He'll also find poetry games and interviews with popular children's poets.
www.gigglepoe.com

■ EarthSky Kids
 Why do we see differently underwater? What are NASA's plans for moon exploration? Your child can listen to podcasts that answer questions like these, or she can ask scientists questions of her own.
www.earthsky.org/kids



GAMES

■ Reading Between the Lines: Fantasyland
 Build reasoning and reading skills while sailing through an enchanted land. Players read passages on story cards and draw conclusions to answer multiple-choice questions. The winner is the first player to reach the magic castle. *Edupress*



■ Snatch
 Take turns flipping over letter tiles in this fast-paced word game. The moment you spot a word with three or more letters, shout it out and collect it for points. But watch out! Other players can add letters to your words and steal them. *US Games*

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