

Reading Connection

INTERMEDIATE EDITION

Working Together for Learning Success

October 2020



Book Picks

■ *Joey Fly Private Eye in Creepy Crawly Crime* (Aaron Reynolds)

In the first book of the Joey Fly, Private Eye series, this graphic novel mystery stars an all-bug cast. Joey Fly is a detective who wants to protect Bug City. His latest case: Find Delilah the butterfly's missing diamond pencil case.

■ *The Thrifty Guide to Ancient Rome* (Jonathan W. Stokes)

Your child will become a “time traveler” in this guidebook that transports readers to Ancient Rome. A humorous book from the Thrifty Guide series, it weaves in historical information and introduces young readers to an important period in history. Includes maps and illustrations, and advises travelers on where to stay, what to wear, and more.



■ *Sarai and the Meaning of Awesome (Sarai #1)* (Sarai Gonzalez and Monica Brown)

Sarai has always lived close to her cousins and grandparents. When their rented home goes up for sale, her mission is to raise money so they don't have to move. She sells cupcakes and lemonade, and even enters a dance contest. Book 1 in the Sarai series. (Also available in Spanish.)



■ *10 Plants that Shook the World* (Gillian Richardson)

How much trouble can a simple plant cause? Plenty! This book gets to the roots of 10 plants that started wars, helped medicine, and altered history. Fun facts, history, and anecdotes show how something as small as a plant can change the world.



Fall for nonfiction

Reading about the real world is fascinating! Whether your child is already a nonfiction reader or is new to these books, you can help him fall in love with “reality reading.” Try these tips.

Discover interesting people

Biographies, autobiographies, memoirs, and diaries are often popular with youngsters. Encourage your child to find books about athletes, inventors, or presidents. Just one good story can get him hooked on nonfiction.

Use fiction as inspiration

Sometimes the setting or subject of a novel can lead to new nonfiction reading. Talk to your youngster about fiction he reads, and suggest topics he might look into. Was he fascinated by New York City or the Roaring Twenties in a recent story? He could ask a librarian to recommend nonfiction books that give him the real scoop.

Keep up with the news

The newspaper is a regular source of nonfiction. Hand your child a section,



and invite him to read alongside you. He can try different parts to find a favorite—and to discover various kinds of nonfiction. For instance, he could read factual accounts in the news section and persuasive pieces on the opinion page. *Tip:* Share news websites, too.

Explore a school subject

Perhaps your youngster is studying the solar system in science class or Greek mythology in social studies. Have him type that topic into the library database and look for nonfiction books. They can deepen his knowledge and offer new insights that will help him in school. ■

Unraveling words

Your youngster is reading and comes to a word she doesn't know the meaning of. What does she do? These strategies can help her figure it out:

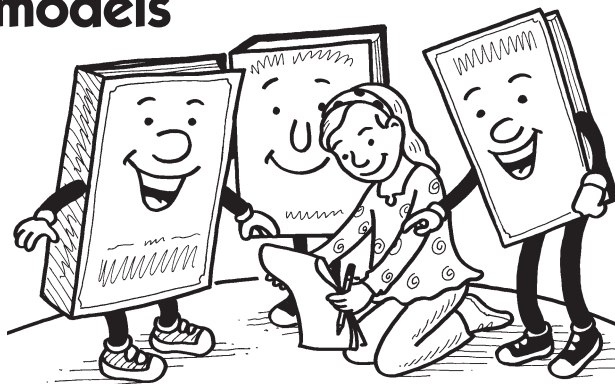
- Reread the sentence, and try to substitute a different word that would make sense. The context might make the unfamiliar word clear.
- Study the word for clues. Does she recognize any part of the word, such as a *prefix* (beginning), *suffix* (ending), or *root* (base word)?
- Write down the word. Then, look up its meaning and synonyms in a dictionary or a thesaurus. Seeing synonyms for the word can help her remember its definition in the future. ■



Authors as role models

The pages of your child's favorite book hold more than a good tale. They contain examples of writing techniques she can use in her own stories. Encourage her to watch for these.

Transitions. Good writing flows smoothly from one event to another, and transition words and phrases make that happen. Suggest that your youngster look closely at how an author switches the action to a different place ("Meanwhile, back at the villain's lair ...") or time ("Later, while Mom fixed dinner ..."). Ask her why clear transitions are important (they lead the reader through the story).



When she writes a story, suggest that she circle places where the action changes. Then she can come up with interesting transitions.

Tense. An author may choose to write in the past or present tense. Have your child look for books with examples of each and try reading a sentence or two in the opposite tense. *Example:*

"The leaves are falling from the tree" (present) vs. "The leaves fell from the tree" (past). Which does she

prefer? What effect does each have? The present tense may make her feel like the story is happening right now, for instance. Encourage her to experiment with each technique in her own stories. 📖

Make reading fun(ny)

Psst! Want your youngster to spend more time reading? Tickle her funny bone! Consider these three hints.

1. Keep joke books and volumes of silly poems on the coffee table, in the bathroom, and in the car for quick reading any time.
2. Help your child find humorous stories at the library. She could ask her teacher, the librarian, or cousins and friends for funny authors they like. (Two to try: Tom Angleberger and Jeff Kinney.)



3. Look up comic books at the library. Also, when you read a funny comic strip or cartoon in the newspaper, cut it out to share with her, or email your youngster ones that you find online. 📖



Parent & Parent

Act it out

When my son Steven had trouble following story plots, the reading specialist suggested that we take advantage of the fact that he likes to perform in school plays. She said they were acting out reading material during resource sessions at school, and she thought this approach would work at home, too.



The funny thing is, it has turned out to be a great activity for our entire family. To "see" the action in the novel he was reading for class, we used his little brother's action figures as characters from the story.

While I read, Steven and Timmy moved the figures around on the table according to the description from the book. Then, the two boys acted out the chapter themselves. As Steven made up the dialogue, I could tell that he understood what had happened in the story. Now reading time has turned into acting time! 📖

Fun with Words

What's in a contraction?

Contractions such as *it's*, *she'll*, and *wouldn't* add variety to our language and help to make writing flow smoothly. These activities will show your youngster how language sounds without contractions and help him learn to spell them.

"I'll have some peas." Everyone must listen closely to see if anyone uses a contraction. Who can go the longest without saying one?

Talk and listen

Announce that no contractions are allowed at dinner! During conversations, your child will need to choose his words carefully. He might say, "I will have some peas" instead of



Read and write

Ask your youngster to read a short newspaper article out loud, replacing each contraction with the two words that form it. For example, if he sees *you're*, he would say *you are*. Then, have him write each contraction on one side of an index card and the two words that form it on the other side. This will help him remember the correct spelling. 📖

OUR PURPOSE

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

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■ *Liberty Porter, First Daughter* (Julia DeVillers)

Liberty's life changes when her dad is elected president of the United States. Follow along as she gets used to living in the White House, attending a new school, and following all the rules that come with being the president's child. Book 1 in the First Daughter series.



■ *Ostriches* (Rachel Poliquin)

From the Superpower Field Guide series, this nonfiction book is filled with fascinating facts about ostriches. Your child will meet an ostrich named Eno and learn how this grumpy two-toed animal survives in the African savanna,



what special features he has, and much more.

Includes illustrations and a glossary with science terms.

■ *Poetry for Young People: Langston Hughes* (David Roessel and Arnold Rampersad)

Young readers are introduced to a famous African American poet in this illustrated collection. The compilation contains Hughes's poems about hopes and dreams, plus an introduction and a biography of his life.

■ *The Vanishing Coin* (Kate Egan)

When fourth-grader Mike and his new friend Nora discover the local magic shop, owner Mr. Zerlin teaches Mike his first magic trick. From that point on, Mike is hooked! Find out how Mike's life changes—and learn magic tricks—in this first book in the Magic Shop series.



Subject-area writing

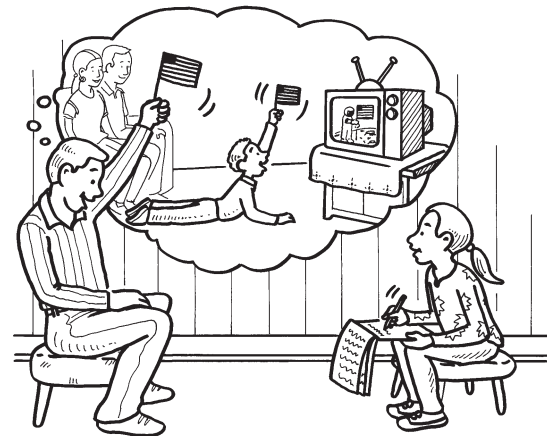
When your youngster answers questions in her social studies book, explains how she solved a math problem, or completes a science lab report, she needs strong writing skills. Encourage her to practice writing with these at-home activities for each subject.

Social studies

Suggest that your child interview a relative or family friend about a historical event she studied in class. A grandparent, an aunt, or an uncle might remember watching the first moon landing or the fall of the Berlin Wall. Your youngster could write about the event through that person's eyes and include details like names, dates, and places.

Math

Hooray! Your child figured out the math problem that had her stumped. Before she moves on to the next one, have her write a step-by-step description of how she did it. She'll practice explaining her math thinking and putting her



thoughts in logical order. Plus, she'll have a handy reference when she needs to solve similar math problems.

Science

Which brand of stain remover or lint roller works best? Ask your youngster to do a science experiment using household products. She can write an explanation of her procedure and record the results, just like she does in science class. *Tip:* Let her post the write-up, complete with photos, on the refrigerator so family members can learn which product "won." ■

Hooked on classic fiction

Spark your child's interest in fiction by steering him toward tales you enjoyed at his age or ones he liked listening to when he was younger. Here are two ideas.

1. Read classics. Suggest books from your childhood. He might like Michael Ende's *The Neverending Story* or Fred Gipson's *Old Yeller*, for instance. Perhaps he'll be inspired to read more classics and find his own favorites.

2. Rediscover fairy tales. Different cultures have their own versions of various fairy tales. Have your youngster type a familiar title (*Cinderella*) into a library database. He may be surprised by the differences in *Yeh-Shen: A Cinderella Story from China* by Ai-Ling Louie or *The Rough-Face Girl*, an Algonquin Indian version by Rafe Martin. ■



A reading checklist

Good readers use many different strategies to help them understand books. Share this checklist with your child. He can monitor his comprehension—and get back on track if things don't make sense.

- Before I begin reading, I ask myself what I already know about the topic. I use this knowledge to help me learn new information in the text.
- When I read difficult material, I stop and think after each paragraph or section to make sure I understand it. I might summarize it in my head or on paper.



- I reread parts that are confusing. If I'm still stuck, I ask a teacher or parent for help.
- I read between the lines to figure out events or information that the author didn't come right out and explain.
- I jot down questions when I read nonfiction. I check to see whether my questions are answered later in the text.

- I predict what's going to happen next in a novel. Then I read on to see whether my prediction was accurate.

Mark it, flag it

A bookmark that's also a tracking tool? We have just the thing! Your youngster can make this simple bookmark and use it to learn and get ideas from what he reads.

First, have him cut a bookmark-size strip from cardboard and decorate it with crayons or markers. Then he could glue a small pad of sticky notes to the top. As he reads, he can use the sticky notes to:



- Write down unfamiliar words to look up later.
- Flag passages to share in class.
- Think of character names or details for a story of his own.
- Mark names of cities or countries he'd like to visit.
- Note a new sport or hobby to try.
- Jot down a personal experience, a movie, or another book that he's reminded of.

Q&A How to give—and get—feedback

Q During “writing workshop,” my daughter’s classmates give each other feedback on their stories. Nicole feels uncomfortable giving and receiving criticism. How can I help?

A Encourage your daughter to think of feedback not as criticism but as making the writing the best it can be. It's a good idea to start by saying something nice about her classmate's story, such as, “I really like this plot twist.” Then, if she sees something that could be improved, she might try, “I got confused here” or “I'm not sure what you meant when you said ...”



Meanwhile, *getting* feedback will show your child how others view her writing. If a classmate says, “I don't understand why your character would do that,” Nicole may decide to change the character's action. With time, she'll get more comfortable giving and getting feedback—and see its value. And this experience will serve her well in the future, since giving and receiving criticism is often part of a job.

Fun with Words Don't make a word!

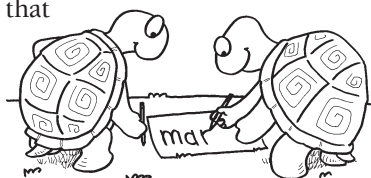
Force your opponent to add the last letter to a word in this game that boosts spelling and vocabulary skills.

To start, think of a word (*moment*), and write the first letter (*m*) on a sheet of paper. Your child should come up with a word that begins with *m* (it will probably be different from yours) and write the second letter of her

word (add *a* to *m* for *match*). On your turn, think of a word that starts with *ma* and add the next letter (*r* for *marble*).

Continue until a player is forced to complete a word that has four or more letters. For example, if your youngster adds *e* to *mar*, she spells *mare* and loses.

Note: A player must have a real word in mind when adding a letter. If someone is challenged, she has to say the word she's thinking.



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