

Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

October 2012

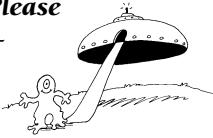
Sweetbriar Elementary School

Book Picks

■ *You Can't Have My Planet, But Take My Brother, Please*

Giles doesn't get perfect grades like his brother or play the violin like his sister.

But when he finds out that aliens plan to take over the earth, he jumps at the chance to stand out. He fights back with help from an alien lawyer and a mad scientist in James Mihaley's funny science fiction tale.



■ *An American Plague*



In the summer of 1793, a strange illness spread across America. Author Jim Murphy uses news-

paper articles and other historical documents to tell the true story of the yellow fever epidemic in Philadelphia. Readers will learn about the politics, medical practices, and customs of the time.

■ *Word After Word After Word*

Miss Cash's fourth-graders aren't interested in writing—until a real poet spends six weeks in their classroom. In this story by Patricia MacLachlan, the students discover that writing poetry strengthens their friendships, helps them cope with problems, and even changes how they see the world.

■ *Inkheart*

What if, when you read a book out loud, the characters came to life? Meggie and her father have the magical power to “read” people out of books. And when an evil character kidnaps her father, Meggie must get the author to rewrite the story's ending. The first book in Cornelia Funke's *Inkheart* trilogy. (Also available in Spanish.)



Everyday spelling

Your child needs good spelling skills throughout her life—for school papers, job applications, work, and more. Here are fun ideas for fitting spelling practice into your everyday activities.

Mini-bees

Hold spontaneous spelling bees throughout the day. You might give your youngster a word from a recipe you're making (*marzipan*) or read one from the newspaper during breakfast (*controversy*). Say the word clearly, and then use it in a sentence. If she spells the word correctly, she finds a word for someone else to spell. If not, give her another word to try.

Word travels

English words come from many languages. Suggest that your child look up the origins of words your family uses frequently. For instance, she might learn that we got *android* from Greek or *lacrosse* from Canadian French. *Idea:* Let her print out a world map and write the words on the countries they come



from. Does she notice similarities among words of the same origin?

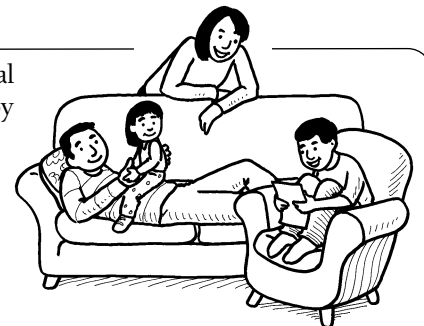
Error list

How many misspelled words can your family find while you're out and about? Your youngster might spot *strawbery* on a restaurant menu or *coupon* on a store sign. Put her in charge of keeping a list of the errors you see. She can include the correct spelling of each word (*strawberry, coupon*). *Tip:* Encourage your child to add to the list any words she misspells on homework assignments or vocabulary tests. ■

Sharing stories

You can make your youngster feel like a real author—and motivate him to do his best—by listening as he shares his creative writing. He can use these steps to give a “book talk”:

1. Have your child choose a story he wrote for school to read aloud to your family. He might start by explaining how he came up with his idea. (“My story is about a wolf that finds himself in the city. I got interested in wolves after watching a movie about them.”)
2. Let him hold a question-and-answer session with his audience. Family members can ask questions (“How did you choose the wolf's name?”) or give their reactions to his story. ■



A reader's notebook

Keeping a reading journal is a good way for your youngster to think about what he reads from different angles. These strategies can give him a place to start.

Express thoughts. What does your child like, dislike, and wonder about the book he's reading? If he reads *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing* (Judy Blume), he might write that he likes the part where Fudge acts like a dog, dislikes that Fudge eats Peter's turtle, and wonders how Fudge got his name.



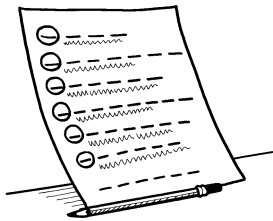
Collect quotations. Characters in novels might say funny or insightful things. Encourage your youngster to jot his favorite quotes in his journal. He can include the book title and character's name and then use markers or crayons to illustrate the page.

Add "missing" pages. Have him ask himself, "If I wrote this book, what would I add?" He could write a prologue that tells how two characters in a novel met. Or he may be inspired to find more information on a nonfiction topic and write about it.

Fun with Words Find the mystery word

Making and playing this word game will stretch your child's vocabulary.

Have each person choose a six-letter mystery word, such as *meteor*. Then, the player should think of another word that begins with each letter in the mystery word (melt, elevate, turban, envelope, octopus, recite).



On a piece of paper, she can draw lines (hangman-style) for the letters in each word and write a definition. So for *melt*, a player would write "_____ : to turn to liquid," and for *elevate*, "_____ : to raise up." *Note:* Keep a dictionary handy to help with definitions.

Trade papers, and use the definitions to fill in the blanks. Then, write the first letters of the answers to find the mystery word. The first to finish wins that round.

OUR PURPOSE

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

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Parent 2 Parent Tackling reading assignments

My daughter Olivia likes to read, but only when she chooses the book. She has always struggled to finish assigned reading that she thinks is "boring."

I remembered having the same problem at her age. What helped was reading a few pages each day rather than leaving the whole assignment until the last minute. So I suggested that Olivia divide the number of assigned pages by the number of days. She writes each day's page numbers on her calendar and crosses them off as she finishes. She has also gotten into the habit of reading at the same time each day.

Finally, I encouraged Olivia to learn as much as possible about a book before she opens it. She enjoys online reviews, and reading goes more smoothly once she has an idea of what a story is about and what other people think of it. Along the way, she has even discovered a few books that she liked once she got into them.

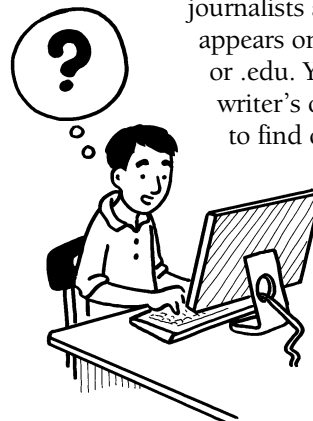


Q&A Online fact-checking

Q My son believes everything he reads online. How can I help him figure out what's really true?

A Recognizing inaccurate information online can be a challenge for anyone. Encourage your son to ask himself a few questions.

How old is the information? Remind him to look for the date an article was posted. (It's often at the bottom of the main page.) If it is more than a few years old, or if he can't find a date, it might be outdated.



Who published it? Anyone can post online. Reliable information tends to come from sources like professional journalists and experts, and it often appears on websites that end in .gov or .edu. Your child can Google the writer's or the organization's name to find out more. If no author is listed, suggest that he look elsewhere.

What do other sites say? If three or more reputable sites contain the same fact, it's likely to be true.