

Reading Connection

INTERMEDIATE EDITION

Working Together for Learning Success

April 2020

Birmingham Public Schools

Book Picks



■ **Sparks!** (Ian Boothby)

Charlie and August are two cats who are anything but ordinary. Every day, they hide inside a mechanical dog while they save lives. Join them in this graphic-novel adventure as they try to stop an alien named Princess from taking over the world.



■ **Inventions That Could Have Changed the World ... But Didn't!**

(Joe Rhatigan)

This nonfiction book gives readers a glimpse into some of the wacky inventions people request patents for. Imagine a TV you can smell, an alarm clock that lunges you out of bed, and a screeching doll, to name a few. Find out what could have been in this hilarious read.



■ **Stella Diaz Has Something to Say**

(Angela Dominguez)
Stella has a lot to say, but she's still learning English and is nervous about speaking in front of her classmates. This year in school she wants to make a new friend and compete in the spelling bee, and she has to give an oral presentation. Follow along as Stella gains courage and finds her voice.

■ **Poetry for Kids: William Shakespeare**

(William Shakespeare, edited by Marguerite Tassi)
Introduce youngsters to Shakespeare in this illustrated volume. The book includes excerpts from 35 well-known poems, verses, and sonnets, with definitions and explanations.



Writing warm-ups

Creative writing is like any other skill—it gets easier with practice. Your child can limber up her imagination and stretch her writing muscles with these fun ideas.

Collect characters

Let your youngster cut pictures of people from old magazines and newspapers. Then, she can glue each one onto an index card and write a “character sketch” (description) on the back. Suggest that she include lots of details: the person’s name, his personality traits, and what’s important to him. She’ll have a cast of characters to use in her creative writing assignments.



Ask questions

This exercise is good for brainstorming plot twists. Give your child a small notebook, and encourage her to jot down “What if?” questions whenever they strike her. For example, while working on her science fair project, she might think, “What if a science experiment made the whole school invisible?” She can use her questions as inspiration for stories.

Pick a point of view

Have your youngster keep a list of story starters from different points of view. She might imagine how a ballerina feels before a recital—and how her ballet slippers might feel. (“We were nervous as we warmed up for the big performance.”) *Tip:* Suggest that your child write the same story from a different object’s or character’s point of view. How does the story change? 📖

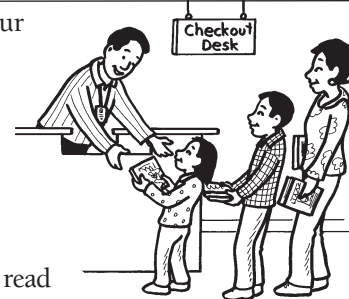
Use your library

Tap into your hometown library to foster your youngster’s love of reading and find free family activities. Consider these ways to put library trips into your regular routine.

1. Make time. Pick a day that works for your family. You might visit on the third Saturday of each month or every other Friday afternoon.

2. Make each trip different. Your child might read magazines on one trip and explore music or videos on another. Ask your youngster what he would like to dig into each time.

3. Make it a family affair. Check the library bulletin board or website for events your whole family would enjoy. Keep an eye out for club meetings, storytelling, concerts, and movies. 📖



Reading + community service

Encourage your child to share his love of reading with others, and he'll learn valuable lessons in generosity and compassion. Try book-related community service projects like these:

- Ask your youngster to decorate cardboard-box “donation stations” where people can drop off gently used books. He can ask businesses or places of worship to



display the boxes. Together, collect the books and donate them to a homeless shelter.

- Your child might invite friends along to read to seniors at a nearby assisted-living home. *Note:* Make sure an adult can chaperone.
- Turn outgrown picture books into audiobooks for younger children. Have your youngster record a story and give the tape and book to a day care center.

How many words?

Good writers vary the lengths of their sentences so the writing is more interesting and flows well. By making a simple graph, your youngster can see how her sentences stack up. Here's how.

1. Have her choose two or three paragraphs from one of her stories, reports, or essays. Let your child draw a bar graph showing the length of each sentence. If the first sentence has five words, she would draw a bar that is five squares tall.



2. Your youngster can compare the bars to analyze her writing.

If they are all about the same height, suggest that she edit her paragraph. She might use conjunctions (*and, but, or*) to combine two short sentences. Or she could break a long sentence into two shorter ones.

3. She can graph her revised paragraphs to see the difference—and then read the before and after versions to hear the improvement! 📖



Singular to plural

Does your youngster get confused about how to make some words plural? Play this card game to help her remember.

Together, think of 20 words with tricky plurals (*fungus/fungi, shelf/shelves, deer/deer, potato/potatoes*). *Tip:* You can find lists of irregular plurals online.

Have your child write each singular word on one side of an index card and its plural on the other. Shuffle the cards and lay them out in rows on a table with the singular words faceup.

To play, take turns reading a card and, without looking, spell the plural version of the word. If you're right, keep the card, and go again. If not, return the card to the table, and it's the other person's turn. When all the cards have been collected, the winner is the player with the most. 📖



Series books build comprehension

As a child, I read all of the books in my favorite science fiction series. So when my son David showed an interest in Lemony Snicket's *A Series of Unfortunate Events* books, I encouraged him to keep on reading. Every time he finishes a book, we stop by the library or a bookstore for the next one.

Although I knew I loved my books, I didn't know at the time that series books help readers build confidence and

comprehension skills. The familiar characters and words are helping my son become a faster reader, and he feels successful when he finishes each one.

I've also discovered some terrific adult series, and David and I are enjoying reading our books side by side. He says

that after he finishes the first series, he's going to get started on the *Secret Coders* series by Gene Luen Yang. 📖



OUR PURPOSE

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

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