

Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

March 2010

Seneca Middle School
Gemma M. Salvia, Principal



Book Picks

■ *A Week in the Woods*

Mark's fifth-grade teacher thinks he's spoiled and lazy. And Mark does nothing to prove him wrong. After all, why should he get attached to his new school when he's being sent to boarding school next year? Then, a dangerous adventure during a class camping trip changes everything. A novel by Andrew Clements.



■ *The Ugly Princess and the Wise Fool*



In this funny fairy tale by Margaret Gray, Princess Rose doesn't care about her looks—until she falls for Prince Parsley. But when a wish makes

her beautiful, Rose discovers that beauty and the prince aren't all she hoped for. Can she undo the spell and return to normal?

■ *Ruby Electric*

Life always works out fine for the heroine in 12-year-old Ruby's screenplays. But Ruby's real life is nothing like a movie. Her dad is missing, her mom has secrets, and Ruby has been accused of a crime she didn't commit. An American Library Association Notable Children's Book by Theresa Nelson.

■ *The Circuit*

The migrant workers in Francisco Jiménez's family might not have a permanent home, but they have plenty of love and hope. In this book, the author shares a series of autobiographical stories about his childhood spent moving from farm to farm. (Also available in Spanish.)



Surf and read

You probably know that the Internet can help your child do research. Did you also know that it can make her a better reader? Planning a search, using a variety of sources, and exploring information in different formats all improve reading skills. Here's how.



Decide what's important. Before your youngster begins her research, have her jot down what she wants to find. Planning ahead will encourage her to think about the information she needs and to look for it as she reads. For example, if she's writing a report on the Hoover Dam, she might list "size, location, date built, purpose." Then, she can use those words in her online searches.

Vary sources. The Internet lets your child practice reading from an array of sources. For an update on an earthquake in Asia, she'd probably choose an online newspaper such as www.timeforkids.com. For science fair ideas, she might try science organizations (choose .org sites under Advanced Search Options) or university sites (.edu). Evaluating information from

various sites will help her build critical-thinking skills.

Encourage site-seeing. Online reading often involves jumping from link to link. Following different paths will give her the opportunity to soak up information in several formats. For instance, she may get halfway through a Wikipedia article about the Renaissance and then follow a link to an art gallery describing the history and paintings of Leonardo da Vinci. She may also be able to take a quiz on the artist or look up painting techniques in a glossary.

Note: Monitor your child's online activity, and remind her not to give out personal information such as her name or address. 📖

Inventive reading

Does your youngster have an idea for an invention? Maybe he wants a hands-free umbrella or markers that don't dry out. Encourage him to read about inventions and then write about his own idea.

- Together, look for books about inventors (try *The Kids' Invention Book* by Arlene Erlbach or *Brainstorm!* by Tom Tucker). Ask your child to read interesting ideas aloud to you—such as an edible pet-food spoon invented by a six-year-old girl.
- Suggest that your youngster write about a product he'd like to invent. He can start by thinking of a problem (he loses marker caps or doesn't snap them on tightly enough). Then, he can draw and describe a gadget to help (markers that seal shut when you press a button on the bottom). 📖



Comic strip fun

Your youngster can laugh and learn at the same time by doing activities with newspaper comic strips. Here are three ideas that will build reading-comprehension and writing skills.

Mix and match

Have your child collect several days' worth of a comic strip and cut them into individual frames. Then, he can choose five at random and arrange them into a new story. As he looks for ways to put the frames together, he'll practice sequencing skills.



Bubble heads

Use correction fluid, sticky notes, or masking tape to cover the words in a comic strip. Ask your youngster to write dialogue for each frame based on the drawings. This will help him learn to use clues in illustrations to understand stories.

Last laugh

Drawing tomorrow's comic strip based on what happens in today's edition can help your child learn to make predictions. Have him read a comic and then draw the next few frames. He can check tomorrow's paper to see how close he came—or which version he likes better! ■

Fun with Words

And the answer is...

Use this Jeopardy-like game to help your children learn contractions.

Materials: poster board, pencil, index cards

Make a Jeopardy game board. Divide a poster board into five columns and four rows. In the top row, write *n't*, *'ll*, *'s*, *'ve*, and *'re*. Under each heading, write three contractions using those endings. For *n't*, you might write *didn't*, *can't*, and *won't*. Then, tape an index card over each contraction and write point values on each one (5, 10, 15).

n't	'll	's	've	're
5	we'll	5	we've	you're
can't	10	10	I've	they're
15	15	it's	15	we're

Players take turns choosing a category and selecting a box. *Example:* A player lifts up the "5" card under *'ve* and finds *we've*. He must say the two words that make up that contraction (*we have*). If he's correct, he scores the 5 points and continues. If not, it's the next person's turn.

Play until all the cards have been used, and tally the scores. ■

OUR PURPOSE

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

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Q&A

Neater handwriting

Q My daughter struggles with handwriting.

How can I help her?

A Better handwriting will not only make your daughter's schoolwork easier to read, it will also boost her confidence. Talk to her teacher about what tools she can use at home that might help.

For example, she could experiment with a variety of pencils to find the one that's most comfortable. Also, writing on graph paper (one letter per square) can help her learn to make evenly spaced letters and fit her writing onto ruled paper. (Google "graph paper" to print out free graph paper of different sizes.)

Finally, give your daughter plenty of chances to practice. You might ask her to address envelopes, make grocery lists, and take messages when she answers the phone. ■



Other Picks

WEB SITES

■ Kids on the Net

Would your young writer like to see his work published? At this site, he'll find tips on writing and advice from well-known authors. He can submit his own writing and read stories, poems, and book reports written by children from around the world.
www.kidsonthenet.org.uk

■ CSI: The Experience

Youngsters can visit virtual crime scenes, collect evidence, and analyze clues as they try to solve cases. Or they can click on "Fun Stuff" for activities like a scavenger hunt, handwriting analysis, and more. This site is available in English and Spanish.
<http://forensics.rice.edu>



MAGAZINES

■ Dig

Visit ancient civilizations in the pages of this archaeology magazine. Your child will find a new theme (cooking, transportation) in every issue. She can also read articles on the latest scientific discoveries, see photographs taken at digs, try crafts, and more.
800-821-0115, www.digonsite.com



■ Ranger Rick

Children fascinated by nature will love this monthly publication of the National Wildlife Federation. Articles cover animals, the environment, and outdoor adventures. The magazine includes puzzles and games, crafts, a question-and-answer section, and letters from young readers.
800-822-9919, www.nwf.org/rangerrick