

Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

January 2015

Mrs. Coffman, Mrs. Husted, and Miss Samp
Clinton Elementary School Reading

Book Picks

■ *The Map Trap* (Andrew Clements)

Middle schooler Alton Barnes loves maps. He even makes “maps” showing his opinions of everyone he knows. But now his maps are missing, and it will take all of his navigational skills to get out of the mess he has made.



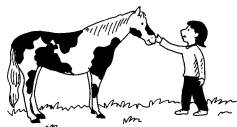
■ *Empire State Building* (Elizabeth Mann)

In 1929, a race to build New York City’s tallest skyscraper pitted the Empire State Building against the Chrysler Building. That tale unfolds in this book, along with pictures showing how constructing the 86-floor Empire State Building changed the way architects design tall buildings.



■ *Paint the Wind* (Pam Muñoz Ryan)

When 11-year-old Maya’s overprotective grandmother dies, Maya goes to Wyoming to live with relatives she’s never met. There she enjoys new freedom and the friendship of a wild mustang. Her love is tested when she must decide whether to keep the horse or set her free. (Also available in Spanish.)



■ *Go: A Kidd’s Guide to Graphic Design* (Chip Kidd)

Here’s an eye-opening look at the history of graphic design and the enormous role it plays in everyday life. Readers will explore typography, color, form, and scale with hundreds of posters, photos, and book covers as examples. Includes projects for readers to do, too.

Creative writing: Plan ahead

Before your budding author tackles his next creative writing assignment, encourage him to try these planning strategies. They’ll make writing go more smoothly and help him write a better story.



“Interview” characters

The more your youngster knows about his characters, the more interesting they will seem in his story. Suggest that he conduct an imaginary interview with each one. He could list questions (“Do you own a pet?” “What are your hobbies?”) and write answers from the character’s point of view. *Example:* “My pet is a snake.” “I collect stamps and do karate.” He’ll imagine details to use in his story.

Plot the action

Making a game board is a fun way to outline what will happen in the beginning, middle, and end of his tale. Have him draw an S-shaped path with 10 boxes. In each box, he could write one event. (“The characters go hiking.” “They

get lost.” “They meet a wolf.”) He can cross off each box as he writes.

Add a realistic touch

Authors make stories feel real by weaving in facts. Encourage your youngster to find ways to do this, too. For instance, if his character owns a boa constrictor, he could read a nonfiction book to learn how the character would take care of the snake. Or if someone in his story builds a raft, your child can read instructions online to learn how to explain it realistically. ■

Who reads? Everyone!

Is it possible to get through a day without reading? Ask your youngster to look around—she’ll be surprised by how much reading she sees and does each day:

- When you’re out together, try to spot as many people reading as you can. For example, your child might notice the dental hygienist reading a chart. You could point out the mechanic reading the service order for your car.
- Have your youngster keep a list of everything she reads in a day. Remind her to include things outside of school, too, like directions on the oatmeal packet or a sign advertising a winter carnival. At bedtime, let her count the items. ■



Other places, other lives

Learning about other countries is an interesting way for your child to practice reading for information. Let her pick a country and explore topics like these.

Language. Suggest that your youngster fill a notebook with phrases she would use while visiting the country. *Examples:* “Good morning.” “See you soon.” “Thank you.” She can look up translations in a bilingual dictionary at the library and practice saying the phrases.



Celebrations. Have your child celebrate a holiday from her country. For China, she might read instructions for making a traditional Chinese New Year paper lantern. Or for Haiti’s Independence Day, she may find a recipe for Soup Joumou, a pumpkin soup eaten to celebrate.

Music. Ask your youngster to make a musical instrument from the country. She could read a book like *Let’s Make Music! An Interactive Musical Trip Around the World* (Jessica Baron Turner) and make a Chilean rain stick or a wood scraper from India. Then, let her play it for you. 🎵



Fun with Words

Fill in the part of speech

Dive into the newspaper and race to find parts of speech in this fast-paced game. Your child will learn about grammar, and you’ll all have fun!

Materials: pencils, paper, newspaper, timer

Have each player draw a 3 x 5 grid on paper and write a part of speech (noun, verb, adjective) above each column. Then, let your youngster pick five random letters (say, S, T, A, V, G), and write one to the left of each row. Give each person a section of the newspaper, and set a timer for three minutes.



Players race to fill their grids with words from the newspaper. For example, your youngster might fill his S row with *sunshine* (noun), *sell* (verb), and *superior* (adjective).

When time is up, check the grids, and cross out any incorrect words (use a dictionary if you’re not sure). The player with the most correct words wins. 🏆

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

Online reading counts

Q My son reads novels and textbooks for school, but when he doesn’t have an assignment, he only wants to read blogs and online magazines. Is that okay?

A Encouraging your child to read for pleasure is one of the most important things you can do. And even when he’s reading his favorite websites, he may learn new words or discover facts he didn’t know.

Online reading offers other benefits, too. Your youngster can easily look up a new word’s definition, search for facts, or click on a link to read more about a topic. Plus, videos and graphics can help him understand complex information. For instance, an article explaining how glaciers move will make more sense if it is paired with a video showing their movement.

Try offering him books to read, but don’t worry if he reads for pleasure online. He’s reading—and that’s what matters. *Note:* Have him use the computer in a common area so you can make sure he’s visiting only safe and appropriate sites. 🖥️



Parent 2 Parent

Year in review

Last year, our family started a new tradition: On New Year’s Day, we each write a summary of our favorite memories from the past year. Then, we put our papers into a binder that my daughter Victoria decorated.

As 2014 ended, we re-read our 2013 memories. Everyone smiled as we remembered the school play Victoria acted in, the new job I got, and the birth of my sister’s baby.

Next, we wrote about special moments from 2014.

Victoria picked learning to knit and repainting her bedroom. My best memories were of our beach vacation and making friends with our new neighbors.

One thing that surprised me was how much Victoria’s writing has improved. She summed up her memories nicely, probably because she’s been writing summaries in school. Now we look forward to adding to our binder each year—and to seeing Victoria’s writing get even better. 📖

