

Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

March 2008

 **Boulder Valley School District**
Department of Reading and Literacy

Book Picks

■ *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing*

Fourth-grader Peter Hatcher has one problem—his little brother, Fudge. He can handle Fudge pretending to be a dog, throwing tantrums, and trying to fly. But when he eats Peter’s pet turtle, it’s the



last straw. A hilarious look at brotherly love by Judy Blume.

■ *The Mysterious Benedict Society*

Reynie is one of four children working undercover at a school where students are being trained to take over the world. To spoil the plot, the young spies must work together. Trenton Lee Stewart’s story is full of clues and puzzles for youngsters to solve along the way.

■ *What Makes Me, Me?*

Take an inside look at what makes humans tick in this combination activity and fact book. Filled with diagrams, photos, and trivia, Robert Winston’s book makes learning about the human body fun and entertaining. Quizzes help young readers understand differences among people. (Also available in Spanish.)



■ *The Seeing Stone (The Spiderwick Chronicles, Book 2)*

Holly Black and Tony DiTerlizzi’s sequel to *The Field Guide* takes readers further into the magical world of faeries. When Simon disappears, his brother and sister go on a quest to rescue him from greedy goblins. A magical stone guides the children in this illustrated adventure book.

What’s that word?

To understand and enjoy a story, your child needs to know what the words mean. Luckily, the story itself often holds the keys to figuring out unfamiliar vocabulary. Suggest these strategies to improve your youngster’s reading comprehension.

Look at the word. Knowing the part of speech can give a clue to the word’s meaning. *Tip:* Show your child that words ending in *ed* or *ing* (*laughed*, *laughing*) are usually verbs, while those ending in *ly* (*slowly*) are often adverbs.

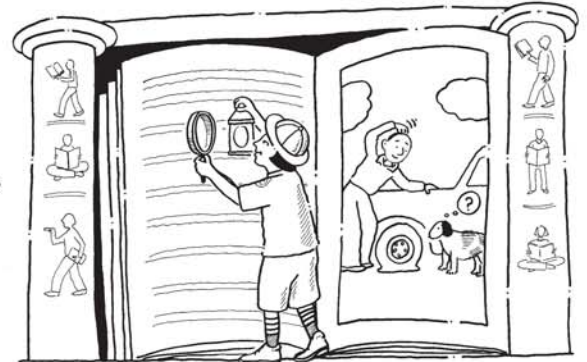
Example: “When Luke dropped the cookie, it *crumbled* into pieces.”

Your youngster might think, “*Crumbled* is probably a verb. What would a cookie do if I dropped it? *Crumbled* might mean *broke apart*.”

Look at the sentence. Sometimes familiar words can reveal a new word’s meaning.

Example: “I tried talking, arguing, and begging, but I couldn’t *persuade* Dad to buy the puppy.”

Your child might think, “Talking, arguing, and begging are ways to



convince someone. *Persuade* could mean *convince*.”

Look at the paragraph. If the sentence doesn’t help, encourage your youngster to keep reading. The events that follow might clear things up.

Example: “The nail *punctured* the tire. Air hissed out, and the tire went flat.”

Your child might think, “The next sentence says air came out of the tire. *Punctured* may mean *made a hole*.”

Tip: If these clues aren’t enough, suggest that your youngster look up the tricky word. She can write it down or bookmark the page for later if a dictionary isn’t handy. ■

A shortcut to reading fun

What kind of book has many plots and dozens of characters? A short story collection! Here are three reasons to try this type of fiction:

1. Action usually moves quickly in short stories. A fast-paced story can motivate a reluctant reader or a youngster who doesn’t like long books.

2. Some collections allow children to sample different authors. Then, you can visit the library for titles by your child’s favorite writers.

Example: *Awesome Animal Adventures*, compiled by Elizabeth Holland.

3. A book with several topics is bound to have something for everyone. If your child doesn’t like one tale, he might enjoy another. Try *Baseball in April and Other Stories* by Gary Soto. ■

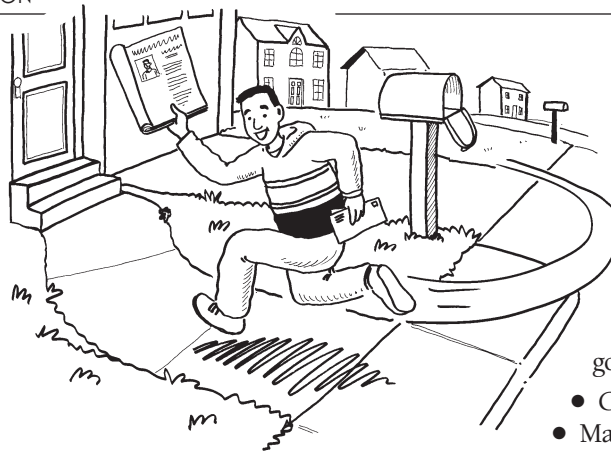


Publishing 101

Mary likes to write poetry. John spends hours making up ghost stories. Both dream of being published. If this sounds like your child, here are some tips to turn his dreams into reality.

Ready? Encourage your youngster to choose a topic he thinks will interest other children. He might consider what he likes to read about (cars, pirates). Then, he could try an unusual angle to capture an editor's attention (*example*: a pirate's little boy runs away to join the "good guys").

Set? Once your child writes his story or poem, suggest that he look for magazines or Web sites where it would fit. He should



Submit! Finally, your child should proofread his work carefully for spelling, punctuation, and grammar. Let him read his story or poem aloud to you as a final check.

Note: These Web sites are good places to start:

- Creative Kids, www.pruftrock.com
- Magic Dragon, www.magicdragonmagazine.com

- Cyberkids, www.cyberkids.com
- Launch Pad, www.launchpadmag.com
- Kids' Space Storybook, www.kids-space.org
- Young Writer, <http://youngwriter.org>

check the content (poetry, science fiction, general) and age range. Be sure he reads the writer's guidelines, too. *Example*: "Poems must be typed and may not exceed 100 words."



Parent 2 Parent

Adopt a school

My son's teacher frequently sends notes home asking for volunteers. Since several of my coworkers have children in the same school, I approached them with an idea—our office could "adopt" the school.

I called the principal and suggested our plan. She met with the teachers, and together they made a list of volunteer opportunities. Using the list, I started a sign-up sheet at work.

Throughout the year, we've made a big difference. Some of us donated lunch hours to place book catalog orders and make copies. Others took vacation days to help with the science fair. One person even found time to organize a student newspaper.

The idea has worked so well that we're already signing up for next school year!



Other Picks

GAMES

■ The Ungame

Spark family conversation with this open-ended game. Players answer questions, such as "What are the four most important things in your life?" There are no right or wrong answers and no winners or losers—just plenty of chances to boost thinking and communication. *Talicoor*



■ Man Bites Dog

Use your sentence-building skills to create funny headlines. Each card contains a word or short phrase (*Navy, 340 lb.*) and a point value. The more words you string together, the higher your score. *University Games*

WEB SITES

■ Highlights for Kids

This Web site companion to the popular magazine is packed with activities. Regular features include a science question, history facts, and a mystery photo. Your youngster will also find stories, crafts, and jokes that change every month. www.highlightskids.com

■ ASPCA Animaland

Visit Animaland to watch cartoons about pet care, read news, and find out about careers working with animals. Young animal lovers can play games, print out puzzles, or go on a "cyberhunt" to learn more about animals. www.aspc.org/animaland



Q&A

A ritual for all ages

Q My daughter still wants me to read to her. Shouldn't she be reading on her own now?

A Reading aloud to your child has no age limit. Listening to more experienced readers helps older children make the transition from easier to more complex books—an important step in becoming a lifelong reader. Plus, your child will probably like the one-on-one time.

Here are some ways to keep things interesting for both of you. Select books that you *and* your youngster will enjoy. Try a classic, such as *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott, and read a new chapter each night. You might take turns reading the dialogue of different characters. Finally, bring the story to life by playing a game, eating a meal, or doing an activity mentioned in the book.



OUR PURPOSE

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

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