

# Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

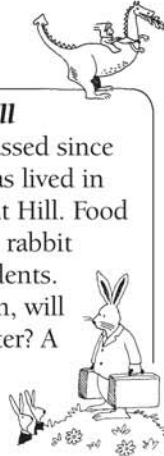
February 2008

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

## Book Picks

### ■ *Rabbit Hill*

Years have passed since a nice family has lived in the house on Rabbit Hill. Food is scarce for Little Georgie rabbit and the other animal residents. When new people move in, will life take a turn for the better? A Newbery Award winner by Robert Lawson.



### ■ *Top Secret*

Everyone laughs at Allen Brewster's science fair idea—turning sunlight into food for people. But then his project lands him in big trouble at school, and the president declares it a national security risk. This funny tale by John Reynolds Gardiner teaches youngsters about plants and photosynthesis. (Also available in Spanish.)



### ■ *The Salem Witch Trials: An Unsolved Mystery from History*

Jane Yolen and Heidi Yolen Stemple invite readers to examine evidence and draw their own conclusions about what happened during the Salem Witch Trials. This story follows the work of a young detective as she collects and analyzes historical information about the puzzling events.

### ■ *Rolling in the Aisles: Kids Pick the Funniest Poems*

More than 1,000 elementary and middle school students voted for their favorite funny poems. The winners are in this collection. Your child will giggle at verses about pets, family, school, and other kid-friendly topics. Poets include Jack Prelutsky, Bruce Lansky, and Shel Silverstein.



## News you can use

Here's the scoop: Newspapers and news Web sites can make your child a better reader and writer while helping him follow current events. Try these activities.



**Explore a story.** Teach your youngster to read for details and to understand how articles are organized.

Explain that news stories usually answer the "5 Ws": who, what, when, where, and why. Choose a story from today's paper or the online version. Have your child read the article. Can he answer the five questions? *Examples:* Where? Chicago. What? Basketball.

**Track a story.** Promote daily reading and build research skills by helping your youngster follow a news story, such as a hurricane or congressional debate, for several days.

Ask him to cut articles out of the newspaper or print them from the Web each day. He can post the clippings in order on a bulletin board or staple them together into a packet. Discuss the news

over dinner so he can tell the family what he has learned.

**Build a story.** Encourage your child to think creatively and practice writing by inventing his own story.

Start by having him find two print or online headlines and combine them into a funny new title. *Example:* "Llama farm forced to close" + "Local skier heads for Olympics" = "Llama heads for Olympics." Then, your youngster can write a story based on his new headline. When he's ready, listen as he reads his creation out loud.

## Transition words

Writers use transitions to help readers move smoothly from one idea to the next. Show your youngster these examples of transitions and ways she can use them when she writes.

● **To show order:** first, second, next, then, finally, last. *Example:* First, she unlocked the door. Then, she opened it. Finally, she peeked inside.

● **To compare ideas:** like, unlike, however, instead, still, also. *Example:* Unlike spiders, who have eight legs, ants have only six legs.

● **To indicate cause and effect:** because, since, as a result, therefore, so. *Example:* Since it's getting late, we have to go to bed.



# Like that book? Try this one!

With so many books to choose from, finding the perfect one can be a challenge. Make your child's choices easier by helping her use familiar stories to discover new ones. Suggest that she follow these steps:

**1.** Have her pick three favorite books and list what she likes about each one. Are the stories fiction, biographies, or fantasy? Are they funny or serious? Do they take place in the past, present, or future? Are the main characters boys, girls, or animals? Have your



youngster try to come up with as many qualities as possible for each story.

**2.** Ask her to go through the list and underline or highlight duplicates. She can use those features to write guidelines for choosing new books: "I like fiction books that are funny, have girl main characters, and tell something about history."

**3.** When your child finds a book she thinks she might like, have her read the summary on the back and compare it to her preferences. The more the new book has in common with her old favorites, the more likely it will fit her tastes. ■



## Fun with Words

### Fill in the fun

Here's a laugh-out-loud way to build your child's vocabulary and give her practice with parts of speech.

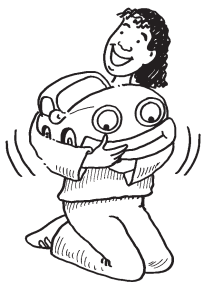
Copy a paragraph from a book or magazine. Choose one word in each sentence to replace with a blank. Beside the missing word, write the part of speech needed to complete the statement. *Example:*

"A new baby \_\_\_\_\_ (noun) was born at the zoo last month."

Without letting your youngster see the sentences, ask her for words to fill in the blanks.

*Example:* "Give me a noun. Now an adjective. Now a verb." Write her responses in each blank, and read the silly results aloud ("A new baby car was born at the zoo last month").

Switch places, and have your child make a fill-in-the-blank story for you. ■



## Q&A

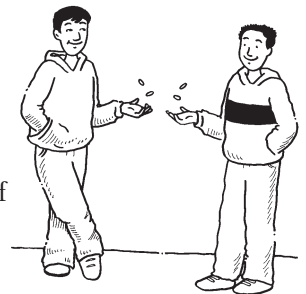
### Math + words = problems?

**Q** My son usually does well in math, but word problems confuse him. How can I help?

**A** Word problems are tricky for many kids. Try showing your son how to read for clues that will tell him what kind of equation he needs to write to solve the problem.

*Example:* Sam has 2 dimes. Dave has 3 times more dimes than Sam. How many dimes do the two boys have altogether? The word "times" is a signal that he needs to multiply ( $3 \times 2$  dimes = 6 dimes). "Altogether" tells him to add the boys' dimes ( $2 + 6 = 8$ ).

Ask your child what other words might signal addition (total, combine, sum). Can he think of words that indicate subtraction? *Examples:* spent, fewer, less than, difference. *Idea:* Suggest that he list clue words for addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division in the front of his math notebook to refer to when solving word problems. ■



## Other Picks

### MAGAZINES

#### ■ Kids Avenue

This magazine aims to teach reading and vocabulary through games, activities, and more. In six issues a year, children will read news articles, book and movie reviews, short stories, and accounts of faraway places.

(612) 216-2179, [www.kidsavenueonline.com](http://www.kidsavenueonline.com)

#### ■ Children's Digest

Your youngster will learn about sports, fitness, and safety in this colorful bimonthly publication of the Children's Better Health Institute. Promotes good health with stories, riddles, puzzles, recipes, and activities.

800-829-5579, [www.cbhi.org/cbhi/magazines/childrensdigest.shtml](http://www.cbhi.org/cbhi/magazines/childrensdigest.shtml)



### SOFTWARE

#### ■ Castle Explorer

Players in this game go on a secret mission for the king. Your child will enter a 14th-century castle, meet the people who live inside it, and read interesting facts about history while searching for clues to finish the mission.

DK Multimedia

#### ■ I Love Science

Budding scientists can visit three interactive labs, each hosted by animated characters. This program encourages youngsters to explore physics, chemistry, and biology through jokes, activities, games, and more. Includes more than 100 experiments to try, plus a reference section.

Global Software Publishing



## OUR PURPOSE

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

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