

Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

December 2007

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

Book Picks



■ *Escape! The Story of the Great Houdini*

Author Sid Fleischman

gives young readers a look at the life of famous magician Harry Houdini. The rags-to-riches story follows Houdini from his childhood in Budapest to his rise to fame as an escape artist and illusionist. Includes photographs from throughout Houdini's life.



■ *Wait Till Helen Comes*

Molly can't stand her tattletale step-sister Heather. But when Heather makes friends with a ghost named Helen, Molly has new worries. What does the ghost really want? Will Molly find out in time to save Heather? A spooky tale about ghosts and family by Mary Downing Hahn.

■ *Meet the Dinosaurs*

From the fastest to the smartest to the deadliest, each title in Don Lessem's series includes fun facts, timelines, and maps of fossil discoveries. Younger children will love the simple language, while more advanced fans of these prehistoric creatures will be delighted to find information about the pyroraptor, utahraptor, and other unusual dinosaurs.



■ *The Stink Files, Dossier 001: The Postman Always Brings Mice*

The first book in the humorous series by Jennifer Holm and Jonathan Hamel tells the tale of James Edward Bristlefur, a secret agent who happens to be a cat. James sets out to discover his owner's killer and winds up being adopted by a New Jersey family.



Time for poetry

A poem to read is what we need.

Poetry can be a great hook for getting your youngster interested in reading. Poems tend to be short, making them perfect for reading aloud. Plus, they're filled with interesting words and fun rhythms and rhymes. Try these ideas to bring poetry into your home.

Find

Choose a wall or door to use as a poetry board. Ask family members to look for poems they like (check poetry books and Web sites), copy them on construction paper, and hang them up. Once a week, clear the board and start again. Searching for poems will build your child's critical-thinking skills, and reading the selections will boost his comprehension.

Create

Use the refrigerator door as a place to write poetry. Buy an inexpensive magnetic poetry set, or make one by clipping words from magazines and gluing them to magnets. Encourage your youngster to move the words around to create poems. Writing poetry will stretch his imagination and give him practice in word usage and vocabulary.

Perform

Once a month, host a family poetry party where everyone reads verses aloud.



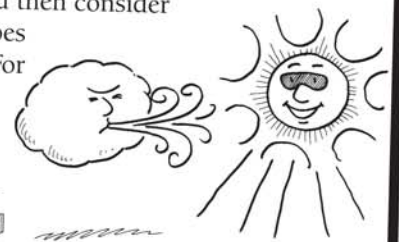
Idea: Let your child name a theme, and take a family trip to the library to find poems. For example, the theme "nighttime" can include poems about stars, the moon, and sleep. Performing poetry will help your child learn to read more smoothly and be more comfortable with public speaking. ■

Analogy challenge

Build your child's reasoning and vocabulary skills by playing with analogies.

Analogies compare two pairs of words. Here's an example: "Top is to bottom as in is to ____." Ask your youngster to think about the relationship between *top* and *bottom* (opposites) to figure out the missing word (*out*, the opposite of *in*).

Take turns making up analogies and discussing how to solve them. Say you write, "Wind is to blow as sun is to ____." Your youngster can think about how wind and blow are related (the wind blows) and then consider what the sun does (shines, rises). For more practice, have her try analogies at www.factmonster.com/analogies. ■



Better book reports

Large jobs become easier when broken into smaller pieces. Teach your youngster this simple three-step approach to book reports:

1 Before she reads the book, have her make a checklist of information she needs to find. *Examples:* title, author, genre (mystery, historical fiction, biography), characters, setting, conflict. *Tip:* Instead of stopping to take notes as she reads, your child can use sticky notes to mark key parts.

2 Suggest that she write an outline before drafting the report. The introduction should include the title, author, and type of story. The body will tell about the story (setting, characters,



major events). The conclusion should sum up her report and say whether she would recommend the book to others and why.

3 Have your youngster review the report to make sure it is clear, accurate, and interesting. Did she follow the teacher's directions? Are the spelling, punctuation, and grammar correct? Is the writing creative? *Tip:* Encourage her to read the report aloud. It's often easier to catch mistakes that way. 📖



Parent 2 Parent

Reading twins

My daughter Rachel came home with the best idea from her teacher recently. Mrs. Martinez suggested that parents and children be "reading twins." She recommended that we read books on the same subject, but at our own levels.

Rachel and I decided to take turns picking topics. I wasn't surprised when she chose dogs, since she's been begging for one. At the library, she borrowed the classic *Old Yeller* by Fred Gipson, while I selected a newer book, *Marley & Me* by John Grogan.



After we finished reading, we had a great discussion about the pros and

cons of having pets. The next month, I picked my favorite subject—gardening. Rachel read *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett, and I chose a guide to Japanese gardens.

Our new system is not only helping us both read more, it's helping us connect with each other. 📖

OUR PURPOSE

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

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Other Picks

MAGAZINES

■ Crinkles

Each issue of *Crinkles* is filled with articles, activities, and puzzles related to a single theme. Past issues have featured subjects like pirates, Egypt, and the Olympics. Young readers will also find recommendations for books, Web sites, and other resources to explore. 800-225-5800, ext. 4488

■ Pack-O-Fun

Kids will love doing the arts and crafts that fill the pages of this magazine. Each issue contains easy step-by-step directions for dozens of projects, many of which can be made from things found around the house. 847-635-5800



SOFTWARE

■ JumpStart Spy Masters: Unmask the Prankster

Join the Spy Masters team and catch a mysterious villain known as the Prankster in this 3D adventure. To solve the puzzles, children must use language arts, math, science, and logic skills.

Knowledge Adventure

■ Word Island

Your child can practice typing and spelling in this clever game. Type words quickly and accurately to help monkeys cross a river or climb a waterfall. Or get a spelling workout by unscrambling words. Features two game types and three skill levels.

The Learning Company



Q&A In focus

Q The teacher says my son daydreams in class when he should be focused on an assignment. How can I help him concentrate?

A Begin with the basics. Be sure he gets enough sleep and eats a good breakfast. It's harder for kids to concentrate when they are tired or hungry.

Next, try to suggest activities each day that will help your child focus

better. Doing jigsaw puzzles and building model airplanes are two good activities for strengthening concentration.

Finally, offer your youngster some strategies to use in school. Encourage him to think of questions to ask as he works on an assignment or listens to the teacher. Being actively involved in the classroom will help him focus. He also might try this trick: suggest that he close his eyes for one deep breath, then sit up tall and refocus. 📖

