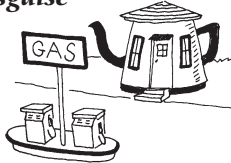


Book Picks

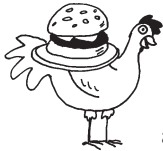
■ Buildings in Disguise

Is it a teapot or a gas station? A bulldozer or an office building? Joan Marie Arbogast's nonfiction book shows unusual buildings that look like objects, vehicles, animals, food, and more. Includes detailed information about the architecture and location of each structure.



■ The Trouble with Chickens

In the first of Doreen Cronin's mystery series, J.J. Tully has retired from his job as a search-and-rescue dog. But he's lured out of his peaceful retirement by a mother chicken who promises him a cheeseburger if he finds her missing chicks.



■ The Dreamer

Pam Muñoz Ryan's story is based on the childhood of poet Pablo Neruda. Neftalí, as he was called, grew up in Chile, where he was fascinated by nature and language. He followed his passions and became one of the world's most famous poets. (Also available in Spanish.)

■ Every Soul a Star

The lives of three teenagers cross during a total eclipse of the sun. Home-schooled Ally lives at a secluded campground, and popular Bree and awkward Jack are among hundreds of tourists who are visiting for the once-in-a-lifetime event. The science of an eclipse is woven throughout this tale by Wendy Mass.



Think like a writer

If your child thinks of herself as a writer, she will feel more confident tackling writing assignments. Encourage her to try these strategies.

Get advice

Suggest that she browse authors' websites for writing tips. For example, Avi (avi-writer.com) offers advice, such as "Write what you would enjoy reading" and "Read your work out loud." These ideas can inspire her when she has writing assignments.

Talk to writers

Help your youngster find a writer who would be willing to talk to her. Perhaps a neighbor freelances for a magazine or a relative writes press releases for his company. Suggest that your child prepare questions in advance ("How do you come up with topics?"). Or have her check at local bookstores about upcoming author visits. Authors might read

from their books, describe their writing process, and take questions from the audience.

Discuss writing

Encourage your child to share her writing with others. She and a friend might swap rough drafts of stories and suggest ways they could be improved. Or she could find out if a local library or community center has a writing group for children her age. If not, she might start a writing group for her friends to discuss their work and exchange feedback. ■

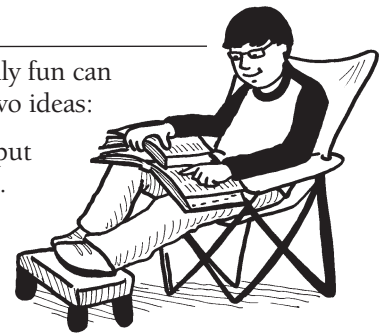


Finding new words

Using a dictionary and a thesaurus for family fun can build your youngster's word skills. Here are two ideas:

- Let your child open a dictionary, randomly put his finger on a word, and read the entry aloud. Then, hold a family contest to see who can use the word in a sentence the most times that day.

- Have family members use a thesaurus to leave silly messages for one another. Pick a different synonym for each word. You might write, "I'll be back to our dwelling subsequent to my trot" instead of, "I'll be back home after my jog." ■

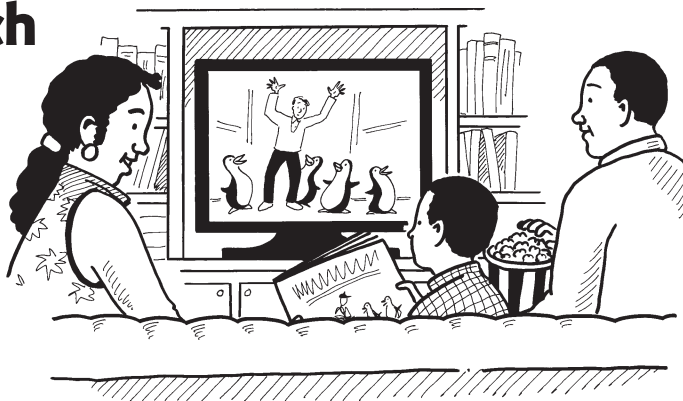


Read and watch

Watching the film version of a favorite book is not only fun, it can build reading comprehension skills. Let your child turn movie night into learning time with these easy steps:

I. Read

Have your youngster find a book that has been made into a movie (preferably one he hasn't seen). He might try *The Water Horse* (Dick King-Smith) or *Mr. Popper's Penguins* (Richard and Florence Atwater). He can ask his teacher for help finding good choices or visit a website like kidsreads.com/features/books2movies.asp.



2. Imagine

Suggest that your child read the book as if he's a movie director and sketch images he would want to film. This will encourage him to think carefully about what's happening in the story. He might draw the main character ("It says the baby Loch Ness monster has warty skin like a toad's"), or he could sketch a setting that is cheerful or dreary.

3. Watch

Finally, watch the movie together. Have him compare his drawings with the images in the film. How are they the same? What's different? Discussing the movie and book versions of the story can add to his understanding—and enjoyment! ■

Fun with Words

Making plurals

Does your youngster get confused about how to make some words plural? Play a card game to help her remember.

Together, think of 20 words with tricky plurals (fungus/fungi, shelf/shelves, deer/deer, potato/potatoes). *Tip:* You can find a list of many irregular plurals, and the rules for making them, at lvesl.com/documents/IrregularPlurals.pdf.



Have her write each singular word on one side of an index card and its plural on the other. Shuffle the cards and lay them out in rows on a table with the singular words faceup.

To play, take turns reading a card and, without looking, spell the plural version of the word. If you're right, take the card, and go again. If not, return the card to the table, and it's the other person's turn. The player with the most cards at the end of the game wins. ■

OUR PURPOSE

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

Resources for Educators,
a division of CCH Incorporated
128 N. Royal Avenue • Front Royal, VA 22630
540-636-4280 • rfeustomer@wolterskluwer.com
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Parent 2 Parent

Our family history

When I was going through old family photos, my son Jacob became interested in a black-and-white shot of his great-grandfather in a baseball uniform. Like many of the pictures, it wasn't labeled, so I didn't know when or where it was taken. I suggested that Jacob take the stack of pictures and ask his grandparents about them.

The next time he visited my parents, he took the photos along and asked questions. He wrote down the answers, and when he got home, he told me about his great-grandfather growing up with seven brothers and sisters and playing on a minor-league baseball team. Jacob labeled the photos so we'd remember the information.

Now most of our photos have been labeled, and we know more about our family history. And Jacob got to use research, interviewing, and writing skills that he needs for school projects. ■



Poetry time

Poems offer a way for your youngster to enjoy reading and to try her hand at writing. Suggest these tips:

- Ask your child to get several poetry books from the library. She might try collections by Langston Hughes, Eloise Greenfield, and Jane Yolen. At home, pass the books around and take turns reading poems aloud. *Idea:* Encourage your youngster to find a favorite

poem. She can type it up, decorate the paper, and hang it on her bedroom wall.

- Have your child get some type of reading material other than poetry (novel, magazine, newspaper) and choose a topic (spring, fashion). She can look for related words or phrases to write down and then arrange them to create a poem. Invite her to share her poem when she's finished. ■

