

# Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

May 2012

Haywood County Schools  
Title 1 Program

## Book Picks

### ■ *The Dark Hills Divide*

What lies beyond the city walls, and why does no one travel outside them? Twelve-year-old Alexa's determination to find out leads her on an adventure to solve the mystery. The first book of *The Land of Elyon* series by Patrick Carman. (Also available in Spanish.)



### ■ *Tales from Outer Suburbia*

Fifteen unusual short stories fill this book by Shaun Tan. There is a water buffalo who gives directions, stick figures that come to life, and a house that contains a hidden courtyard.

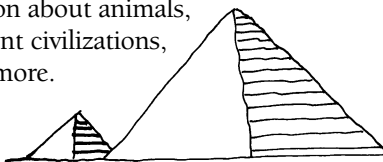


### ■ *Maniac Magee*

Jeffrey Magee is an orphan in search of a family. He ends up in a racially divided town where he becomes famous for his sports talent. As he looks for a permanent home, he tries to fight racism and help others solve problems. A Newbery Medal winner by Jerry Spinelli.

### ■ *Over 1,000 Fantastic Facts*

If the sun were the size of a large beach ball, the earth would be the size of a pea. There are 2.3 million blocks in the Great Pyramid. These are just two of the more than 1,000 facts in Miles Kelly's book. Your youngster will discover all kinds of surprising information about animals, ancient civilizations, and more.



## Summer writing

How can you get your child to practice writing this summer? Suggest fun projects like these that appeal to her interests.

### Yearbook

Your youngster can be the writer, editor, illustrator, and photographer for her very own yearbook. Have her get a photo album or scrapbook and fill it with memories from the school year. She might put a different heading on each page ("The funniest thing that happened this year" or "My favorite class"). Then, she can write a paragraph about each topic and add photos or drawings. She'll work on organizing her writing as she creates a keepsake.



Women and Dorothy from *The Wizard of Oz*. As she writes letters back and forth between the characters, she'll practice writing from different points of view.

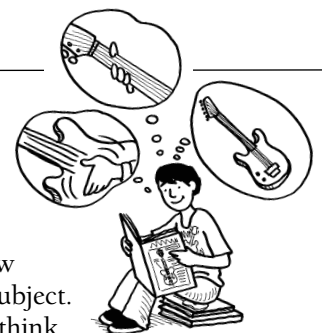
### Skit

Encourage your youngster to write a skit to act out with her friends. Perhaps she will base it on something that really happened, such as an interesting field trip or a funny incident in the cafeteria. She will work on writing dialogue the way people really talk. When she's finished, she and her friends can rehearse. Offer to film their performance when they're ready, and then watch it together. ■

## Use what you know

Every child is an expert in something, whether it's electric guitars or geocaching. Before your youngster reads about a favorite topic, he can use an important comprehension skill: "activating" background knowledge. Here's how:

- Familiar words can help your child understand new material. Ask him to brainstorm words related to a subject. If he's going to read about electric guitars, he might think of *amplifier*, *frets*, and *strum*. As he reads, he can see how each word is used.
- Have your youngster divide a sheet of paper into two columns labeled "I know" and "I wonder." Before he reads a book on geocaching, he might quickly jot down "a treasure hunt using GPS" in the first column. In the second, he can write questions he has ("What interesting things have people found?"). ■



## Hooked on a series

Has your child ever read a book that was so good he didn't want it to end? When he reads books in a series, he might feel like the action is never ending!

To find a series that's right for him, your child could ask a librarian or friend for recommendations. Or you can explore options together at [kidsbookseries.com](http://kidsbookseries.com). Then, consider these tips.

**Be a character.** After your youngster finishes each book, suggest that he write a journal entry from the main character's point of view. His journal will show how the characters are feeling and what they're doing throughout each book.



**Compare books.** Books in a series often follow a formula. Can your child find the pattern? Ask him what he notices after reading a few books. He might see specific ways that the author introduces characters, sets up a mystery, or wraps up the plot.

**Try online activities.** Let your child visit the website for the series he is reading.

He might find games, background information on characters, and activities related to the books at sites like [magictreehouse.com](http://magictreehouse.com), [littlehousebooks.com](http://littlehousebooks.com), and [percyjacksonbooks.com](http://percyjacksonbooks.com). Note: The web address is usually on each book's back cover. ■

## Parent 2 Parent

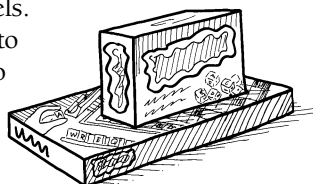
### Learning with word lists

Our family loves Scrabble. But my daughter, Megan, used to get frustrated if she had a Q but no U, or if she got too many vowels. Then, she discovered the word lists in the instruction booklet. One list includes "Q without U" words and another has words where 66% of the letters are vowels.

We decided to learn the lists so we could get higher scores—and it wound up being a vocabulary lesson for our whole family!

Megan found more word lists on the Scrabble website, and she has even started keeping her own lists in a notebook. For example, she looked through the dictionary and found eight-letter words, and then she searched for words with no vowels except Y. When she finishes a list, she types them in an email to us.

Now our Scrabble scores are higher, and we do better at other word games, like Boggle and Bananagrams. Best of all, Megan's vocabulary is growing quickly! ■



### Be a tour guide

If you travel this summer or you're expecting visitors, make your child the official family tour guide. These ideas will let her practice doing research and reading for information:

- Get brochures from a hotel lobby. She can learn about tourist sites like museums and miniature golf courses. Suggest that she make a list or spreadsheet with columns for prices, hours, and other details.
- Have your youngster read the extended forecast on a site like [weather.com](http://weather.com). She could recommend a packing list of clothes that are appropriate for the weather.
- Encourage her to check newspapers, local magazines, and the visitors' center website for coupons. She might find discounted tickets for theme parks, shows, or other attractions.

**Tip:** Let her decorate a binder or folder and use it to assemble the information she collects. ■



## Fun with Words

### Once upon a time...

Give your youngster's creativity a boost with this family storytelling game:

1. Have each player write 10–20 random words (*feud*, *necessary*, *magical*) on slips of paper. Fold the slips in half, put them in a bag, and mix them up.
2. Let your child pull out a slip and begin telling

a story that uses the word he drew. "Once upon a time, there was a feud between two kings." Then, it's the next person's turn to draw a word and continue the story. "One king thought it was necessary to build a moat."

Continue taking turns drawing slips and adding to the story.

3. The person who draws the last word gets to wrap up the tale. ■



#### OUR PURPOSE

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

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