

Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

April 2009

West Elementary School
Keith M. Groom, Principal

Book Picks



■ Sasquatch

Dylan doesn't believe Big-foot exists, but he promised his mom he would watch out for his dad. Now they are on an expedition tracking the creature also known as Sasquatch. Yet even as they hunt for him, something is hunting *them*. A thrilling adventure tale by Roland Smith.



■ Esperanza Rising

Thirteen-year-old Esperanza has a good life in Mexico. But when her father is killed, she and her mother flee to California, and everything changes. Esperanza must work in a migrant camp and deal with prejudice. Pam Muñoz Ryan's novel brings her own family's experiences to life. (Also available in Spanish.)

■ Money Sense for Kids

Hollis Page Harman's book introduces youngsters to basic economics. She offers advice for earning and managing money and explains how banks and stock exchanges work. Readers will also learn the history of U.S. currency. Each chapter includes a practical activity, such as budgeting allowance money.



■ Johnny Tremain

Johnny is a young apprentice living in Boston during the American Revolution. When he lands a newspaper job, he finds himself involved in many adventures. Through Johnny's eyes, readers experience the Boston Tea Party, Paul Revere's ride, and the Battle of Lexington. Historical fiction by Esther Forbes.



Unplugged fun

Stash the TV remote and put away the video games: April 20–26 is National Turnoff Week. Challenge your family to a week without screen time—and watch your child enjoy fun learning activities instead.



Playtime

Rather than watching TV, watch each other perform. Your youngster will improve her public speaking skills and sharpen her memory. For instance, find magic-trick books at the library. Choose tricks to practice, and put on a magic show. Check out a volume of poetry and memorize poems to recite aloud. Or turn a familiar story into a skit—each person can act out a different character's part.

Mealtime

Throw a potluck picnic. Help your child prepare a recipe from a cookbook—she'll practice reading and following directions. Then, eat on a blanket

in the yard or on the floor. During dinner, take turns making up food riddles: "I am small, green, and round. What am I?" (a pea). The first person to solve the riddle goes next.

Evening time

Does your family usually gather in front of the TV at night? Try reading together instead. Meet in the living room with books and magazines, and share interesting items aloud. You might ask everyone to answer a magazine quiz or share a joke from the comic pages. Or work on a crossword puzzle together, calling out the clues one at a time. 📖

Opinion spotting

Letters to the editor, online forums, blogs... anyone can publish an opinion. That's why learning to read critically is so important today. Here's how you can help your youngster distinguish between fact and opinion:

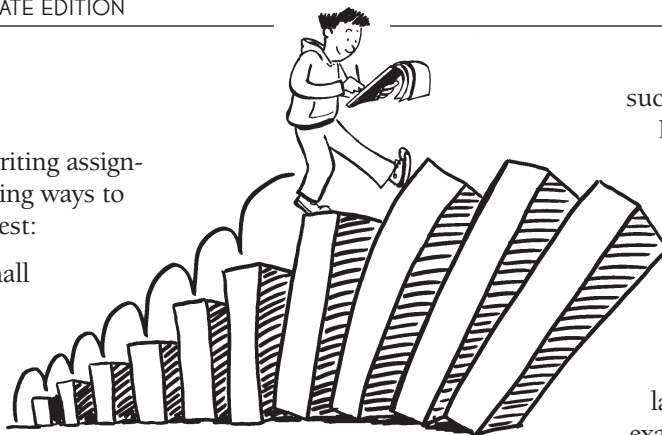


- Explain that he can sniff out a fact or an opinion by asking himself, "Is the statement true?" and, "Can it be proven?" If both answers are yes, it's a fact. An opinion, however, may be true for some people but can't be proven. *Example:* "A violin is a string instrument" is a fact. "The violin is the hardest instrument to learn" is an opinion.
- Clip an article and a letter to the editor from the newspaper. Help your child highlight facts in one color and opinions in another. Or read the sentences aloud, and discuss which ones are facts and which are opinions. 📖

Writing a plot

When your child has a creative-writing assignment, help inspire him with interesting ways to develop a plot. Here are two to suggest:

■ A *cumulative* plot begins with a small event and adds a series of increasingly bigger ones until the whole tale collapses in a funny way. For instance, your youngster might start with a raindrop that wakes a spider who builds a web that catches a person, and so on. Show him an example,



such as *May I Bring a Friend?* by Beatrice Schenk de Regniers.

■ A *circular* plot begins and ends the same way. *If You Give a Pig a Pancake* by Laura Numeroff is a good example. Suggest that your child develop his own circular plot by making a list of events. The first and last ones will be the same. For example, he might start his story in spring, list things that happen each month, and wind up in spring again. Remind him to link each event to the next, until his story comes “full circle”—or is back at the starting point. ■

Fun with Words

Digging up roots

Has your youngster ever wondered how spelling bee contestants learn all those long words?

One of their secrets is understanding root words. For example, *geo* means “earth” (*geography*), *neg* means “no” (*negative*), and *sub* means “under” (*submarine*).



Help your child learn more about roots with this activity. Write 20 roots and their definitions on index cards. *Note:* You can find root words and their meanings online at www.espindle.org/roots.html, or ask your librarian for help.

Have your youngster draw one card at a time. See if she can give you the root’s definition and a word containing the root. Then, let her read the roots to you, and see if you can come up with new words for each one. Together, make a list of all the words you’ve thought of. Which root did you find the most words for? ■

OUR PURPOSE

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

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Q&A

Recycling reading

Q My daughter has outgrown most of her books. I’m on a budget—how can I update her collection?

A How about suggesting that she recycle? She’ll make room for new things to read and help the environment. Then, show her ways to add to her library without spending much money.

For instance, old magazines might find a home in her pediatrician’s waiting room. And teachers of lower grades may appreciate donations of books to their classroom libraries.

To help your child get new books, suggest that she hold a swap with her friends, go to a library book sale, or look at bargain racks in bookstores. If relatives or neighbors pass along hand-me-down clothes, you might also ask if they have books their youngsters aren’t using anymore. ■



Other Picks

SOFTWARE

■ Punctuation Made Easy

This game show-style software makes punctuation fun. Players will learn to write more clearly by using punctuation marks correctly. Animated hosts provide easy-to-understand explanations of apostrophes, commas, quotation marks, and more. *Global Software Publishing*

■ Nancy Drew: Secrets Can Kill

Play the role of Nancy Drew in this murder mystery game. Solve puzzles, crack codes, interview suspects, examine evidence, and read between the lines. Can you uncover the clues that will reveal the culprit? *Her Interactive*



MAGAZINES

■ Faces

This magazine lets kids explore other countries and cultures. Each issue features a different area and includes articles, maps, photographs, book and video recommendations, and more. *800-821-0115*



■ Owl

Youngsters can stay up-to-date on science news with this publication. They’ll find articles on topics like the human brain or weather forecasting, discover strange facts in the *Weird Zone*, and enjoy animal-of-the-month puzzles and jokes and craft instructions. *800-551-6957*