

# Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

October 2010



## Book Picks

### ■ *Bad News for Outlaws*

Bass Reeves

was born a Texas slave who grew up to become one of the first African American deputy U.S. marshals. This true story by Vaunda Micheaux Nelson follows Reeves' life and career as he arrested more than 3,000 outlaws in the Old West.



### ■ *Half-Minute Horrors*

R. L. Stine, James Patterson, and dozens of other popular authors teamed up to create this collection of scary short stories. Each tale takes about 30 seconds to read—and many are less than a page long. A good choice for children who think they don't like to read.



### ■ *The Color of My Words*

In this story by Lynn Joseph, 12-year-old Ana wants to be a writer. But her family can't afford paper, and in her Caribbean nation only the president writes books. So she shares her poems just with her mother. Then one day, she learns a lesson about the power of words. (Also available in Spanish.)

### ■ *The Storm in the Barn*

During the drought of the 1930s, 11-year-old Jack discovers a secret. The Storm King has been hiding in a barn, keeping the rain away from Kansas. It's up to Jack to defeat the Storm King and bring back the rain. A graphic novel by Matt Phelan.



Washington Jr. High School  
Mr. Curt Mayer, Principal

## Four steps to writing success

How does a writer turn an idea into a polished final draft? A writing plan can make it easier. The next time your child has a written assignment, suggest that she try these four steps.



**1. Pre-write.** Before your youngster begins a report or a story, she can jot down information or ideas she wants to include. She might make a list or use a graphic organizer. For a report on explorers, she could write headings ("Spanish," "French," "Portuguese," "English") and add details under each one. If she's writing a story, she might draw a circle, divide it into four sections (characters, setting, problem, solution), and fill in her ideas.

**2. Draft.** Encourage your child to use her pre-writing to prepare a rough draft. For a report, she might write a paragraph about each item on her list. For a story, she can develop a plot by following her graphic organizer. Her goal is to get her thoughts on paper—at this stage the writing does not have to be perfect.

**3. Revise.** Have your youngster read her draft aloud. Does the paper flow logically, or would it make more sense if certain parts were rearranged? She can also listen for places where more details are needed or where words or ideas are repeated. Now is the time to polish her writing and prepare a final draft.

**4. Proofread.** When she has finished, she should check her work for mistakes. Suggest that she read it sentence by sentence, looking for proper spelling, grammar, and punctuation. *Tip:* If your child is writing on a computer, be sure she proofreads in addition to running spell-check—the computer will not catch every error. ■

## Library time

A library card gives your child access to all kinds of free reading material. Share these ideas to help him get the most from the library:

- Explore a different section during each visit. On one trip, your youngster might look for animal stories. Another time, he could check out biographies about his favorite athletes.
- Learn about local history. How was your town founded? What did your city look like in 1920? Your child can browse old newspaper articles, photographs, and maps in the library's local history section.
- Discover other options. Your youngster might borrow computer software or check out audiobooks, for instance. ■

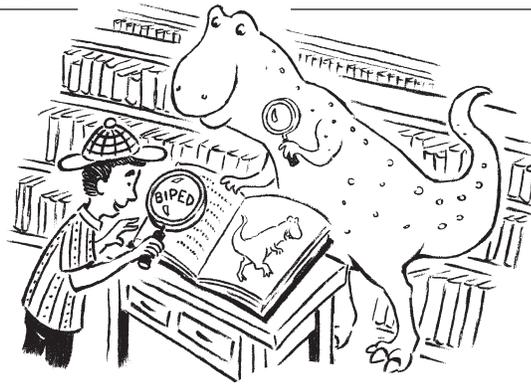


# Reading for clues

Good news: your youngster doesn't have to recognize every word to understand a challenging book. Instead, he can use clues in the text to figure out words he doesn't know. These tips will help build his vocabulary and turn him into a more confident reader.

## Definitions

Sometimes a sentence will define a word. Suggest that your child look for hints that a definition is coming, such as "or," "that is," and "in other words." *Example:* "Some dinosaurs were bipeds, or they walked on two feet."



## Series

A series of familiar words in a sentence can help your youngster figure out a new word. Have him compare an unfamiliar word to the rest of the list to see if he can guess its meaning. *Example:* "His non-stop pranks, gags, and other she-nanigans kept everyone laughing."

## Examples

Examples are easy to spot because most use introductory phrases like "including," "such as," and "for instance." *Example:* "Fiction comes in many different genres, including fantasy, horror, and mystery."

*Tip:* Keep a dictionary handy so your child can look up a word if he can't figure out the meaning. 📖

# Reading and writing in the workplace

What does your child want to do when he grows up? Whether he becomes a restaurant manager or a lawyer, he's sure to read and write on the job. Show him the importance of reading and writing with these ideas:

- When you talk to your youngster about your day, mention what you read or wrote.



*Examples:* "I had 15 e-mails waiting for me this morning!" or "I filled out orders for new furniture at the store today."

- While you're out with your child, point out workers who are reading or writing ("The nurse is reading your chart," or "That waitress wrote down our order").

- When your youngster reads or writes at home, talk about how he might use what he's learning when he's an adult. If he's trying to solve a problem with his computer, you could say, "Good idea to pull out the user manual. That's the kind of reading you would do as a computer technician!" 📖

## Other Picks

### WEB SITES

#### ■ Grammaropolis

Make grammar fun with cartoon characters like Noun, Adjective, and Adverb. On this site, each part of speech has its own personality and adventures. Watch videos, read a book, play games, and learn songs about grammar. [www.grammaropolis.com](http://www.grammaropolis.com)

#### ■ iCivics

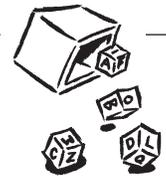
Your child can read about the branches of the U.S. government and find out how they work together. Games let her be president for a day or make decisions as a Supreme Court justice. [www.icivics.org](http://www.icivics.org)



### GAMES

#### ■ Play on Words

Shake the cube filled with dice and start the timer. Players race to make the most words using only the eight letters shown. The more words you write and the more letters you use, the higher your score. *Winning Moves*



#### ■ Now What?

This storytelling game will improve your child's creativity and problem-solving skills. Players take turns making up stories about using common objects (sled, cheese) to solve strange dilemmas. Solutions can be silly or serious—the goal is to be original. *Patch Products*

## Q&A

### Time to read

**Q** As my daughter gets older, she has less free time to read for fun. How can I help her fit it in?

**A** With a little creativity, you can work reading into even the busiest of schedules. Suggest that your daughter get into bed 15 minutes early to read at night. Or, if she's a "morning person," she might wake up 10 minutes early to read before school. Also, remind her to tuck a book into her

backpack so she'll have it for silent reading time in class or while she's waiting for the bus.

Another idea is to make reading a family activity. For example, keep books of short stories on your coffee table. Instead of watching TV after dinner, family members can each pick out a short story to read. Or carry an outdoor-themed book on a family hike. Each time you stop for a break, a different person can read aloud. 📖



### OUR PURPOSE

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

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