

# Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

February 2006

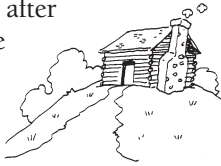
North Middle School  
Dianne Tilson, Principal



## Book Picks

### ■ *Tadpole*

In Ruth White's award-winning story, Carolina feels overshadowed by her popular older sisters. She finds her special place in the family after her cousin Tadpole comes to stay at their rural Kentucky home.



### ■ *Snowmen: Snow Creatures, Crafts, and Other Winter Projects*

This how-to book inspires young readers to get outside and build fantastic snowmen and imaginative snow structures. Laminated pages for outdoor reading, by Peter Cole and others.



### ■ *Travel Team*

Danny can't make the basketball travel team because he's too short, so he joins some other boys to form a team of their own. With his dad as their coach, can they beat the other team? There's lots of excitement in this story by Mike Lupica.

### ■ *The Voyages of Dr. Dolittle*

When Tommy takes a wounded squirrel to Dr. Dolittle, he meets the amazing man who can talk to the animals. In Hugh Lofting's classic story, they head off on a voyage to the mysterious Spidermonkey Island. (Also available in Spanish.)



## Writing at home

Did you know that everyday activities can be a fun source for imaginative writing? Get your child's creative wheels spinning with these ideas:

- ✎ Pull out a family photo album. Have your child thumb through the photographs until he comes across one that looks like it has a story to tell. Ask questions like "Who's in the picture?" "What was happening that day?" and "What might have happened after the picture was taken?" Your youngster will have fun writing a story to go with the photo.
- ✎ Invite your child to make up a menu for tonight's meal. Encourage him to use mouth-watering descriptions to make it sound irresistibly delicious. *Example:* "Tender, juicy pot roast smothered in gravy. Served with fresh



red-skinned potatoes, candied carrots, and buttered broccoli." To give the menu a professional look, suggest that he write it on colored paper and add original drawings or pictures that he cuts out of magazines.

- ✎ Challenge your youngster to write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper. Help him get started by asking him to choose a topic he feels strongly about, such as getting a bicycle path in the park. Remind him to include his address, the date, and one or two short paragraphs that support his ideas. ■

## Fun with Words

### Brain workout

Games aren't just for fun—sometimes they're a real workout for the brain. Here are two simple games to get your youngster playing with words.

**Make a word.** Write a single word, such as "signature," at the top of a piece of paper. Have your youngster see how many words she can make using the letters in the word. *Examples:* true, gate, train, stain. For an added challenge, suggest that she write only words with at least five letters.

**List twister.** Give your child two letters, such as "s" and "r." Let her see how many words she can list that begin with "s" and end with "r." *Examples:* super, sneaker, server. ■



# Tackling tough text

Want to help your child read and understand challenging text? Try this activity—it can be used with either factual information or fictional stories:

**1** Browse through the material and locate six to ten important key words. For example, in a book about astronomy, you might choose “meteor,” “telescope,” “constellation,” “planets,” “binoculars,” and “galaxies.”

**2** Write the words on a sheet of paper. Ask your youngster to read them and tell you what she thinks they mean. If she’s stumped,



suggest that she look them up in a dictionary or the glossary in the back of the book.

**3** Have her write a sentence or two that explains what the text is about. “This is going to be about ways to study the stars and planets.”

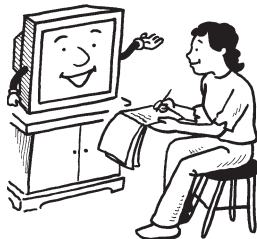
**4** Let her read the text. Then, ask her to tell you what she read about, using the key words. *Example:* “By using binoculars or a telescope, I can see many things in the sky, such as the Milky Way galaxy, meteors, constellations, and the planet Saturn.”



## Q&A TV thinking

**Q** How can I make my child’s TV viewing time more educational?

**A** Most experts say school-age children shouldn’t watch more than two hours of TV a day. Too much



television can cut into time for outdoor play and quiet reading—both important activities to exercise the mind and body. Consider using viewing time to sharpen your youngster’s critical-thinking skills. Here’s how.

The next time a commercial comes on, ask your child if she thinks the product is as good as it looks in the advertisement. Is it healthy? Safe? Has she ever been disappointed with a new product, such as a shampoo or toy, after seeing it on TV? Explain that the purpose of most ads is to convince viewers to buy things they may not need.

## Parent 2 Parent Reading a series

As a child, I read all of the *Lord of the Rings* books and every other series I could find. So when my son David showed an interest in the *Star Wars* series, I encouraged him to keep on reading.

Every time he finishes a book, we stop by the library or make a trip to the bookstore for the next one. Although I knew I loved my books, I didn’t know at the time that readers build confidence and comfort with their skills as they read series books. The familiar characters and words are helping my son increase his reading speed, and he feels successful when he finishes each one.

David is getting lots of reading practice. And he says that after he has read all the *Star Wars* books, he’s going to get started on the *Time Quartet* series.



## Other Picks

### MAGAZINES

#### ■ Dogs for Kids

Help your youngster be a responsible pet owner with this magazine. Articles on different breeds and training tips will turn a dog lover into a dog expert. Also contains activities to do with the family dog. 800-678-8022



#### ■ Kind News

Steer your child toward this online magazine published by the National Association for Humane and Environmental Education. Stories about real people and animals, along with puzzles and games, encourage kids to be kind to animals, the environment, and each other. [www.kindnews.org](http://www.kindnews.org)

### WEB SITES

#### ■ The Write Site

Developed with older readers in mind, this site has tips on how to start writing, how to write for a newspaper, and where to go for reliable sources. Also features student samples of news stories. [www.writesite.org](http://www.writesite.org)



#### ■ WayBack: U.S. History for Kids

Jump into a WayBack machine to learn about the gold rush, the history of music videos, and more. Articles, pictures, games, and videos all help kids get a handle on history. <http://pbskids.org/wayback>

## OUR PURPOSE

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

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