

# Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

March 2018

## Book Picks

### ■ *The Losers Club* (Andrew Clements)

In this laugh-out-loud story, Alec just wants to be left alone to read. So he starts a club with a name sure to keep the other kids away: "The Losers Club." Now the sixth grader can't understand why so many of his classmates want to join him.



### ■ *Who Was Albert Einstein?* (Jess Brallier)

This illustrated biography explores the life of physicist Albert Einstein. Einstein was a shy child who struggled in school but grew up to be one of the world's most famous scientists and thinkers. (Also available in Spanish.)

### ■ *Lily's Mountain* (Hannah Moderow)

Unwilling to accept that her father died while climbing Mt. Denali, 12-year-old Lily embarks on a mission to rescue him. Along the way, she uses the many outdoor skills her dad taught her to overcome physical and emotional challenges. A fast-paced adventure tale.



### ■ *The Animal Book* (Steve Jenkins)

Does your child know that most of the animals on earth are insects? Or that there are more extinct animal species than living ones? This almanac features hundreds of creatures and interesting facts about where they live, what they eat, how they defend themselves, and more.



## Write with a purpose

Whether your youngster is running for student council, writing a story for younger children, or leaving instructions for a pet sitter, keeping her purpose in mind will help her communicate clearly. This advice can help her keep her eye on her goal throughout the writing process.



### Keep it front and center

Encourage your child to write her purpose on a sticky note and put it where she'll see it as she works. For instance, maybe she's writing a campaign speech. Her purpose might be "To persuade others to vote for me." This will remind her to include information about how students would benefit from selecting her as their candidate.

### Choose words carefully

The words your youngster uses can help her achieve her goal. Say she's writing a story to read to a kindergarten class. Picking words little ones will understand (*happy* vs. *elated*) will make her story more entertaining for them. Or if she's

writing instructions for a neighbor who's watching her pet iguana over spring break, she could describe the animal's personality (*timid*, *playful*). That will tell the sitter how to approach him.

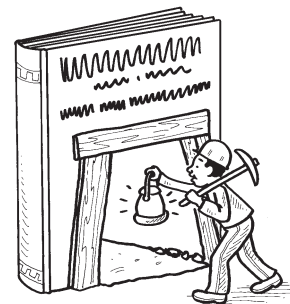
### Revise

Suggest that your child reread her writing to make sure every sentence is in line with her purpose. She might add missing points or take out anything that doesn't fit. For example, in a letter to her grandmother, she may realize that she should write about her piano lessons rather than mentioning her favorite video game twice. 📖

## Dig deep

As your child gets older, he'll be expected to think more deeply about books. Talk together about what he reads. You may not realize it, but the questions you ask can encourage higher-level thinking on his part! Here are two ideas:

- Pose questions that require more than a one-word answer. *Example:* "How did the main character change as the story went on?" instead of "Who is the main character?"
- Choose questions that can't be answered by what's in the story alone. Questions that start with "Why do you think..." or "What if..." are good options. ("Why do you think the author ended it that way?" or "What if the story took place 100 years ago?") 📖



# The “extra! extra!” benefits of newspapers

Sharing the newspaper every day is an easy way to encourage your youngster to read regularly. Consider these ideas.

**Sports recaps.** Start by watching a game together. The next day, pick up the sports section, and look for a story about the game. Which highlights does he think the reporter captured well? What would he have added if he were the writer?



**Entertainment reviews.** Does your child agree with reviewers’ opinions? After you see a movie, play, or museum exhibit, let him read a review of it in the newspaper and tell you what he thinks.

**Comic strips.** Have your youngster choose a comic to read aloud each day at breakfast or dinner. He could use a different voice for each character. At the end of the week, let family members vote for their favorite strip.

**Calendar of events.** Your child can use the newspaper to plan family outings. Encourage him to look for free community offerings like a farmers’ market or a parade. Then, let him announce the time, date, location, and other details.

## Fun with Words

### What’s in a contraction?

Words like *it’s*, *she’ll*, and *wouldn’t* add variety to our language and make writing flow smoothly. These *contractions* are formed by combining two words, with an apostrophe replacing one or more dropped letters. Enjoy these activities.

#### Talk and listen

Play a game over dinner: no contractions allowed during your conversations! Your child will need to choose her words carefully—and listen closely to others to make sure they don’t use a contraction. Who can go the longest? She’ll see that without contractions, speech can sound awkward or choppy.

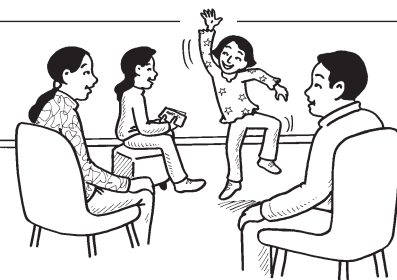
#### Read and write

Ask your youngster to read a page from a book out loud, replacing each contraction with the two words that form it. For example, if she sees *you’re*, she would say *you are*. Then, have her write each contraction on one side of an index card and the two words that form it on the other side. This will help her remember the correct spelling.



### Three cheers for improv

“Improv” lets your child practice speaking and thinking on her feet. Short for *improvisational theater*, improv involves acting without a script or planning ahead. Try these suggestions for a fun family night.



#### Guess the character

Each person secretly picks a storybook character (Curious George, Rapunzel). Set a timer for 5 minutes, and take turns being the character you picked. “Curious George” might run and jump around, then say, “I got in trouble today, as usual, but my friend with the yellow hat rescued me.” And “Rapunzel” could act out brushing her long hair while saying, “I can barely hear you up here in my tower!” When the timer goes off, try to guess each other’s characters.

#### One word at a time

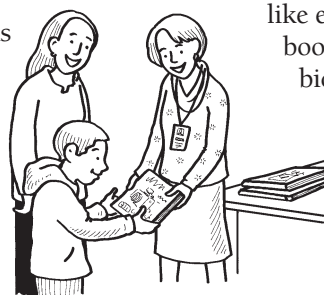
Work together to say an outrageous sentence. On each turn, a player may say only one word. The first person might say “I,” the next player could say, “saw,” and so on. (“I saw a big green dragon eating a cheeseburger on the bus.”) After the last word is said, everyone acts out the sentence. One player might be the dragon, another could drive the bus, and everyone else could be passengers, for example.

## Q&A

### Challenging a strong reader

**Q** My son reads above grade level. But the books he picks out are either too easy or the subjects are too mature. How can I help him stay challenged and find appropriate books?

**A** Start by talking to his school librarian. She will be able to suggest books on your child’s reading level that are appropriate for him. Perhaps classics or historical fiction would be a good fit.



Or nonfiction may be a good choice. Your youngster can look for books with advanced vocabulary that match his interests. Is he a shutterbug? He can check out photography books. Does he like engineering? He might enjoy books about how things work or biographies of engineers.

Keep in mind that it’s okay if your son occasionally wants to read easy books or reread old favorites. Reading for fun is an activity that he can enjoy all his life.

#### OUR PURPOSE

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

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