

# Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

February 2011

Batavia City School District  
Reading Department

## Book Picks



### ■ *Fablehaven*

In this first book of Brandon Mull's series, Kendra and Seth discover their grandfather's secret: he's the caretaker of Fablehaven, a forest of magical creatures. When Seth breaks a rule, everyone is in danger, and it's up to the children to save them. (Also available in Spanish.)



### ■ *Eleven*

Each chapter in Lauren Myracle's story describes one month in the life of 11-year-old Winnie. No longer a little girl, but not yet a teenager, she struggles to cope with the changes in her life. Youngsters will relate to Winnie's shifting relationships with friends and family.

### ■ *Wildfire Run*

As son of the U.S. president, Luke is always protected by Secret Service agents. That changes when a wildfire surrounds Camp David and Luke and his friends have to figure out how to escape the fire on their own. A tale of adventure by Dee Garretson.



### ■ *Independent Dames*

Your child has probably heard of Paul Revere, Patrick Henry, and other heroes of the American Revolution. But what about Prudence Wright, Sybil Ludington, and Elizabeth Burgin? They're just a few of the heroic women whose lives are described in Laurie Halse Anderson's nonfiction book.



## Writing warm-ups

Creative writing is like any other skill: it gets easier with practice. Your child can limber up her imagination and stretch writing muscles with fun ideas like these.

### Collect characters

Let your youngster cut pictures of people from old magazines and newspapers. She can glue each one onto an index card and write a character sketch (a description of the person) on the back. Suggest that she include the person's name and tell how he talks, what his personality is like, and what's important to him. She should be as detailed as possible. Then, she'll have a cast of characters to include in her creative-writing assignments.

### Ask questions

This activity is good for brainstorming plot ideas. Give your child a small notebook and encourage her to jot down "what if?" questions whenever they strike her. For example, while working on her science fair project, she might think, "What if a science experiment made the



whole school invisible?" She can use her questions as inspiration for stories.

### Pick a point of view

Have your youngster keep a list of story starters, each from a different point of view. For example, she might imagine how a runner feels when he's preparing for a race and then think about how the sneakers might feel ("We were nervous as we were being laced up for the big race"). *Idea:* Suggest that your child use the same plot but write it from a different object's or character's point of view each time. How does the story change? 📖

## Beyond books

The world is full of things to read. Share some with your youngster each day, and watch him become a well-rounded reader. Here are a few suggestions:

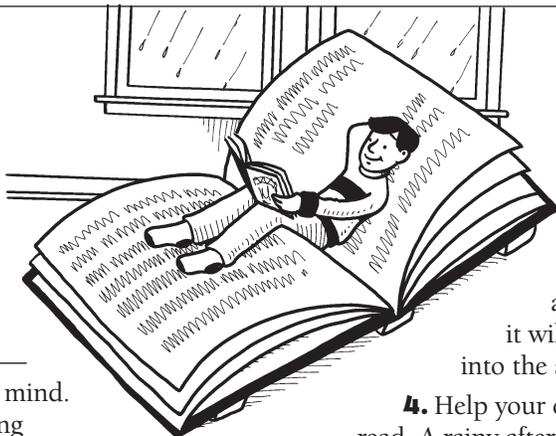
- Turn your refrigerator door into a reading center. Encourage everyone to post reviews of books, movies, restaurants, and gadgets. You could also hang up travel brochures or comics.
- E-mail each other on a regular basis. You might send schedule reminders, news about your day, poems, or inspirational quotes.
- Share cards and letters that come in the mail. Bulk mail (advertising circulars, catalogs) offers reading practice, too—ask your child to find coupons or to tell you about new businesses in your area. 📖



# Enjoying novels

When your child was younger, he read stories that he could finish in one sitting. Now he might be reading novels that take a few days or more. These tips will help him remember what he reads from day to day and keep him interested until the last page:

1. Reading each day—even a page or two—can keep a story fresh in your youngster’s mind. Encourage him to set a regular daily reading time (perhaps after school or before bed).
2. Instead of picking up his book and starting right where he left off, suggest that he skim



over the last few pages he read. This will refresh his memory about what was happening in the story.

3. Encourage your youngster to choose reasonable stopping points. If he puts his book down at the end of a chapter or a big scene, it will be less confusing to jump back into the action the next day.
4. Help your child find longer stretches of time to read. A rainy afternoon, a quiet evening, or a train trip offers opportunities to really get into a book. Reading in large chunks rather than a page here and there makes a story easier to follow. 📖

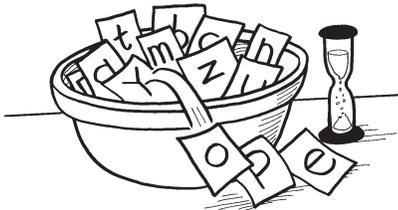


**Fun with Words**

## Build a word

The word-making possibilities are almost endless in this vocabulary game.

Have your youngster write each letter (A–Z) on separate slips of paper and put them in a bowl. For each round, draw three letters, lay them faceup, and set a timer for three minutes. Each person writes words that contain all three letters anywhere and in any order. The goal is for players to come up with the most unique words (words that no one else thought of) and the longest possible word they can define. For L, M, and P, a player might write “MonoPoLy” or “PLanetariumM.”



When time’s up, earn one point for each word that no one else wrote and a bonus point for giving the correct definition of your longest word. *Tip:* Keep a dictionary on hand to check answers. 📖

**OUR PURPOSE**

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

Resources for Educators,  
a division of Aspen Publishers, Inc.  
128 N. Royal Avenue • Front Royal, VA 22630  
540-636-4280 • rfeustomer@wolterskluwer.com  
www.rfeonline.com  
ISSN 1540-5583

## Other Picks

### WEB SITES

#### ■ Anne Frank the Writer: An Unfinished Story

Anne Frank is most famous for the diary she kept while her family was in hiding from the Nazis during World War II. But she also wrote stories, essays, and fairy tales. Your child can read these works at [www.ushmm.org/museum/exhibit/online/af/htmlsite/index.html](http://www.ushmm.org/museum/exhibit/online/af/htmlsite/index.html)

#### ■ A Series of Unfortunate Events

Fans of author Lemony Snicket’s series will enjoy this site dedicated to all things unfortunate. Your youngster can learn about Snicket and his books, play word games, decipher secret codes, and more. [www.lemonysnicket.com](http://www.lemonysnicket.com)

### GAMES

#### ■ Buzzword

In this word game, teams have 45 seconds to solve 10 clues. The catch? Each answer must contain that round’s buzzword. *Example:* If the buzzword is “apple” and the clue is “New York’s nickname,” the answer would be “the Big Apple.” The first team with 50 correct answers wins. *Patch Products*

#### ■ Once Upon a Time

This game can improve your youngster’s storytelling skills. Players make up stories using common fairy-tale items pictured on cards (king, sword). The winner is the first person to complete a story by playing all her cards. But watch out—other players can use “Interrupt” cards to change the course of her tale! *Atlas Games*

## Stellar spellers

How do children become good spellers? Understanding how words “work” can help. Share these strategies with your youngster:

- Know patterns and rules. For example, *dge* sounds like *j* in words like *bridge*, *dodge*, and *fudge*. And *i* before *e*, except after *c*, applies to words like *friend* and *receive*. Suggest that your child keep lists of words that don’t fit familiar patterns (*neither*, *weird*) to help her memorize their spellings.
- Recognize roots. Have your youngster look in a

dictionary for a list of Greek and Latin roots, which are part of many English words. Each root that she learns will open the door to more words. For example, if she can spell *graph*, it will be easier for her to spell *autograph*, *biography*, and *graphic*.

*Tip:* Remind your child to proof-read typed work after she runs a spell-check. Explain that computers often won’t catch a word that is spelled correctly but used incorrectly (“We are *hear*” instead of “We are *here*”). 📖

