

Book Picks

■ **Ghost Ship**

When 12-year-old Vicki reads

an old journal, a mysterious ship appears. Now it is up to Vicki and her friend Peter to solve the mystery of the ship and remove the curse from its ghostly crew. A spooky story by Dietlof Reiche.



■ **Henry Huggins**

Henry Huggins longs for excitement in this book by Beverly Cleary. One day he meets a stray dog, and life is no longer boring. With Ribsy by his side, he rides in a police car, catches earthworms, and gets covered in green paint. (Also available in Spanish.)

■ **Dr. Frankenstein's Human Body Book**

Youngsters can follow along as Dr. Frankenstein builds a person in Richard Walker's clever book about human anatomy.

Take a tour of the body from head to toe, and see cells, organs, bones, and muscles. Packed with detailed images from MRI and CT scans.

■ **Violet Raines Almost Got Struck by Lightning**

Does growing up change who you are on the inside? Eleven-year-old tomboy Violet hopes not, but the new girl in town has Violet's best friend talking about silly things like makeup and movie stars.

A coming-of-age tale by Danette Haworth.



Reading comprehension

As your child gets older, she will read books with more complicated characters and plots. Help her understand what she reads by suggesting that she step into an imaginary role herself. Here are three.

Fortune teller

What does the character's future hold? Let your youngster predict based on what she's read so far. In *Inkheart* (Cornelia Funke), she might notice that Meggie is curious and doesn't obey warnings. So she might think that Meggie will face danger. *Tip:* Suggest that your child jot down passages to support her prediction.



reads each chapter. When she finishes the book, she'll have a summary.

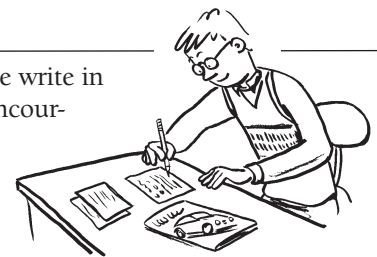
Private eye

Like an investigator solving a case, your youngster can use clues in a story to draw conclusions. She might think, "Meggie's father sent her to bed when the stranger arrived—he doesn't want her to be around the stranger." By "reading between the lines," or figuring out what the author meant but *didn't* say, your child will gain a deeper understanding of the plot. *Tip:* She could think about how her own experiences relate to what she's reading. ■

Reasons to write

Does your youngster realize how often people write in their daily lives? Use these real-life reasons to encourage him to write every day:

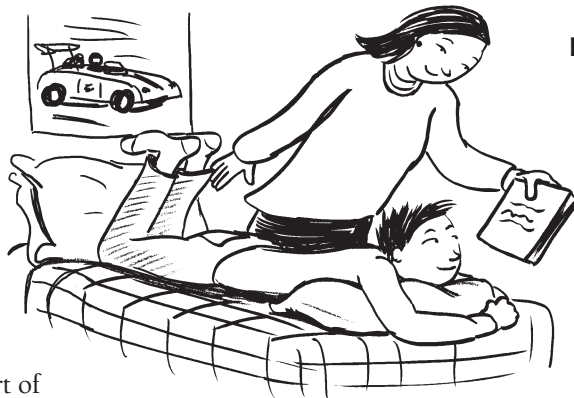
- Suggest that he jot down steps for a school project, such as researching and building a model, in a planner.
- Let your child post dinner requests on a whiteboard. "Can we have spaghetti on Friday?"
- Put your youngster in charge of filling out forms for magazine subscriptions, doctors' offices, and camp registration.
- Encourage him to e-mail announcements to relatives. "We walked three miles in the Relay for Life." ■



Books for life's challenges

Reading can help your child handle everyday dilemmas or cope with tough times. Suggest these ways to use books when he's faced with a challenge.

Find ideas. Nonfiction books may offer advice about struggles that are part of growing up. You might ask the librarian to recommend helpful books. If your youngster is dealing with a bully, for instance, she may suggest *Bullies Are a Pain in the Brain* by Trevor Romain. Or if he isn't getting much playing time on his basketball team, she might recommend *Chicken Soup for the Soul: Inside Basketball*.



Find comfort. When your child is dealing with a very difficult situation (death, divorce), his school counselor may have ideas. Discovering a fictional character who is experiencing the same thing may help. For example, if your youngster has lost a loved one, he might read *Sun & Spoon* by Kevin Henkes. If you're going through a divorce, he can try *It's Not the End of the World* by Judy Blume.

Tip: Have your child list advice from the stories he reads. He might try making new friends when he's dealing with a bully or save a memento that belonged to a loved one who died. ■



Fun with Words Humorous homonyms

Build your child's vocabulary with this silly homonym activity.

First, explain that homonyms are words that are spelled and pronounced the same but have different meanings (*present* is "a gift" or "right now," and *row* can mean "to move a boat" or "a line of people or objects"). Then, work together to list as many homonyms as possible. You might look for them in books or jot them down as you think of them.



Finally, take turns writing sentences using as many pairs of homonyms as possible. *Example:* "I couldn't *bear* the suspense, so we waited for the *right* moment, turned *right*, and headed for the *bear* cage." Read each other's sentences aloud for a good laugh. ■

Q&A Let's talk!

Q My daughter's teacher said Zoe needs to participate more in class discussions. How can I help her practice at home?

A One way is to help Zoe find a variety of people to have conversations with.

When you're chatting with a neighbor, include your daughter in the conversation by asking her opinion. Or Zoe might help out a classmate who is learning English. They can meet regularly to discuss what they're studying in school.

Also, take advantage of times when Zoe is most talkative, and try to bring up topics she likes. For example, she may be more willing to chat after school than during breakfast, and she may enjoy talking about movies or her latest science experiment. With regular practice outside of school, eventually she should feel more comfortable speaking up and sharing opinions in class, too. ■



Other Picks MAGAZINES

■ *Skipping Stones*

This magazine celebrates the diversity of people and places. Published five times a year, it includes folktales, poems, letters, and news contributed by children and adults. In each issue, a photo essay showcases a different culture or region.

541-342-4956, www.skippingstones.org

■ *Games Magazine*

Mazes, brainteasers, word games, quizzes, mystery photos, and more fill this magazine for puzzle enthusiasts. It also includes contests, reviews of electronic and board games, and a Kid Stuff section with easier puzzles for younger readers. 800-426-3768, www.gamesmagazine-online.com



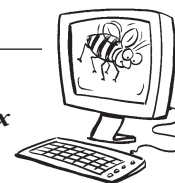
WEB SITES

■ *PBS Kids Beeswax*

Updated twice a week, this children's news site features more than a dozen photographs that show what's happening around the world. Click on a picture to read a short account of the news. Topics include politics, sports, science, and entertainment. <http://pbskids.org/beeswax>

■ *Free Rice*

Visitors can help fight hunger while answering questions on a subject they select. Choose from vocabulary, grammar, foreign language, geography, math, chemistry, and art. For each correct answer, the site donates 10 grains of rice to the United Nations World Food Programme. www.freerice.com



OUR PURPOSE

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

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