

# Reading Connection

INTERMEDIATE EDITION

Working Together for Learning Success

September 2020

James Bilbray Elementary School



## Book Picks

### ■ **Crazy About Cats** (Owen Davey)

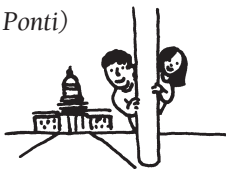
From wild cats like ocelots and pumas to house cats, this nonfiction book from the About Animals series teaches readers all about cats. Your child will discover where cats live, what they eat, and the special features they have.



(Also available in Spanish.)

### ■ **Framed!** (James Ponti)

Twelve-year-old Florian Bates is no ordinary middle schooler. When his family moves to Washington, DC, he starts his own spy agency with the help of his new friend Margaret. Follow along in this spy adventure as the young sleuths help the FBI solve a big case.



### ■ **The House That Lou Built** (Mae Respicio)

Lou loves her woodshop class, and for a school project, she's planning to build her own tiny house on a piece of land she's inherited. But she quickly realizes that building a new structure isn't as simple as it seems. Determined, Lou finds creative solutions to the many roadblocks she faces along the way.



### ■ **Go Figure! Big Questions About Numbers** (Johnny Ball)

Your youngster can learn about ancient numbers, explore "magic" numbers, and imagine a newspaper with no numbers in this nonfiction book. He'll also see how numbers are used in all aspects of life. Includes quiz questions and answers.

## Strategies for a new year

As your youngster reads more complex stories and textbooks, she'll need new strategies for understanding and remembering new material. Help her start the year off right with these activities.

### Fill a "thinking cap"

When your child needs to tackle a challenging chapter, have her get a baseball cap. Each time she finds a new fact or unfamiliar word, she can write it on a slip of paper and put the slip in the hat. After she finishes reading, she should reread everything in her thinking cap and look up definitions of words she doesn't know. Writing and reviewing the information will help her learn it.

### Draw a comic strip

Suggest that your youngster create a comic strip about what she's studying (stick figures are okay!). Say she's reading about the water cycle in her science book. She could draw one panel with a character boiling a pot of water and explaining evaporation, and another panel with someone walking in the rain



and talking about precipitation. This is a fun way for her to visualize the material.

### Take a "commercial break"

Your child can pretend there's a commercial break at the end of each chapter in a novel she's reading. Her job is to write a "teaser"—a question to encourage the audience to stay tuned. If she's reading *Bunnicula* (Deborah and James Howe), she might write, "Will Bunnicula get caught in the vegetable garden?" Then, have her predict the answer. Asking questions and checking predictions let her monitor how well she understands a story. ■

## Fact or opinion?

"It's the best toothpaste for your family!" When your child reads a sentence like this in an advertisement, does he understand that it's an opinion? Distinguishing fact from opinion is an important reading skill. Suggest that he ask himself these questions to tell the difference:

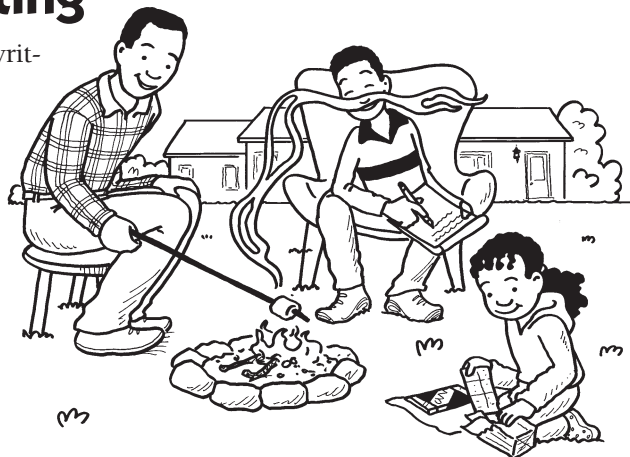
- "Would most people agree?" A fact is true regardless of who wrote it ("Trees are plants"), while an opinion reflects the writer's feelings or beliefs ("Trees shouldn't be cut down").
- "Does it rely on adjectives?" Descriptive words ("Apple pie with ice cream is the perfect dessert") frequently indicate opinions, while facts are more likely to stand alone ("Apples are harvested in autumn"). ■



## Add details to writing

Vivid details make your youngster's writing come alive. And getting a firsthand look at something he's describing can help him be more specific. Share these ideas to use when he writes stories.

**Specific verbs.** Suggest that your child think of active verbs that illustrate what he sees rather than using bland verbs like *was* or *went*. When he's outside, he might notice how a tractor moves along a road. Later, he can incorporate the details



into a story about a boy living on a farm: "The tractor crept slowly along the dirt road" (instead of "The tractor went down the road").

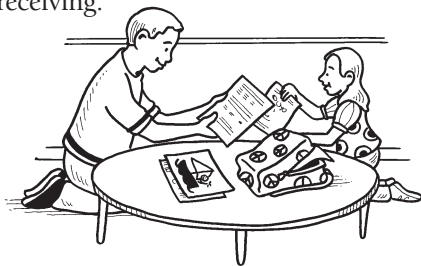
**My five senses.** Have your youngster use at least one of his senses (sight, hearing, taste, smell, touch) in his description. If he's writing about making s'mores, you could toast marshmallows together so he can notice how

they smell and look. That may lead him to write, "A sweet, toasty scent filled the air as my marshmallow turned golden brown." 📖

## Q&A Is my child on track?

**Q** As the school year gets underway, how can I tell if my daughter is on track with reading and writing or if she needs help?

**A** The best way is to stay involved with what your child is doing in school. Go through her backpack with her daily, and look over her work. Review the teacher's comments on her assignments or tests, and monitor the grades she's receiving.



Also, notice what she's reading for pleasure—or if she's reading for pleasure. Take turns reading aloud to each other, and when it's her turn, listen for whether she reads smoothly or seems to stumble over words.

If you're concerned, contact your daughter's teacher. He can let you know if your child is on track, and if she's not, he'll work with you to provide help. 📖



## Better listening = better learning

Good listening skills help your child learn information from lessons, class presentations, and videos. Encourage him to become a better listener with these challenges.

● **What's different?** Read a paragraph from a newspaper or magazine to your youngster. Then read it again, but switch a few details. For example, you might change the name of a person or a city. It's your child's job to listen closely and tell you what's different the second time around.

● **Listen and answer.** Together, listen to a podcast or an audiobook for five minutes. Each of you can jot down a question the other person should be able to answer—if you listened carefully. Then trade questions, and answer them. Replay the audio to check if you heard right. 📖



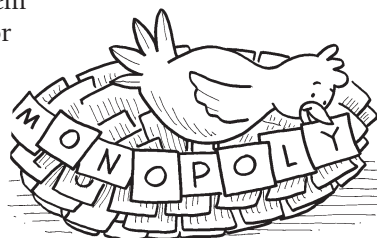
## Fun with Words Build a word

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 scatter 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 in any order. The goal is for players to come up with

the most words that no one else thought of *and* the longest possible word they can define. For M, L, and P, a player might write **monopoly** or **planetarium**.

When time's up, read your words aloud to each other. Earn one point for every 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 CCH Incorporated  
128 N. Royal Avenue • Front Royal, VA 22630  
800-394-5052 • rfeustomer@wolterskluwer.com  
www.rfeonline.com  
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