

# Reading Connection

INTERMEDIATE EDITION

Working Together for Learning Success

December 2019

## Book Picks

■ **Moo** (Sharon Creech)  
City kids Reena and Luke experience culture shock when their family moves and they have to help out on a farm. Told in a blend of poetry and prose, this novel follows the siblings as they make new friends and bond with the animals—even a stubborn cow named Zora.



### ■ Money Sense for Kids!

(Hollis Page Harman)

This book introduces youngsters to basic economics, offers advice for earning and managing money, and explains how banks and stock exchanges work. Readers will also learn the history of U.S. currency. Each chapter includes a practical activity, such as budgeting allowance money.



### ■ The Girl Who Drew Butterflies: How Maria Merian's Art Changed Science

(Joyce Sidman)

Maria Merian's unique approach to studying insects led her to create beautiful art and become one of the first scientists to draw the life cycle of butterflies. This biography describes how Maria dedicated her life to entomology, or the science of insects.



### ■ The Year of Billy Miller

(Kevin Henkes)

Billy is a sometimes misunderstood second-grader who spends the year navigating school challenges, friendships, and sibling squabbles. The story of his life is told in four chapters: "Teacher," "Father," "Sister," and "Mother."

## A family book nook

A cozy place to curl up with a book or magazine can inspire your child to read more. Use these steps to carve out a special book nook for your family.

- 1. Create.** Even the smallest space can become a reading zone. Together, choose a quiet spot away from distractions. For example, your youngster might suggest a corner of the family room or basement, or a space between two bookcases in the living room. Let her add a comfortable seat (favorite chair, beanbag, big pillows) and a lamp.
- 2. Organize.** Help your child collect containers to hold reading materials. Maybe she'll put magazines in cereal boxes, small paperbacks in shoeboxes, and bigger books in baskets. She can cover the boxes with construction paper and label them ("Science magazines,"



"Mysteries," "Biographies"). *Tip:* Include a special box for library books, and have her add sticky notes with due dates.

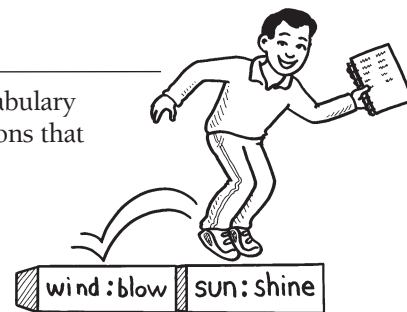
- 3. Enjoy.** Make using the book nook part of your family's daily routine. You might read the newspaper there in the morning. Your youngster can use the spot for reading assignments after school. And family members might take turns relaxing there on evenings and weekends to read novels or listen to audiobooks. ■

## Analogy challenge

Build your youngster's reasoning and vocabulary skills by playing with *analogies*, or comparisons that show how two things are similar.

Analogies encourage your child to think about relationships. Here's an example: "Top is to bottom as in is to \_\_\_\_." Ask your youngster to think about the relationship between *top* and *bottom* (opposites) to determine the missing word (*out*, the opposite of *in*).

Take turns making up analogies and discussing how to solve them. Say you write, "Wind is to blow as sun is to \_\_\_\_." Your child can think about how *wind* and *blow* are related (the wind blows) and then consider what the sun does (shines, rises). For more practice, have him try analogies at [factmonster.com/analogies](http://factmonster.com/analogies). ■

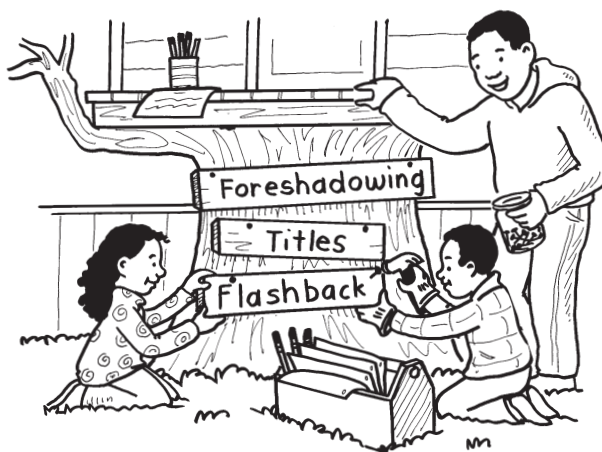


## Spice up your writing

Encourage your youngster to view creative writing assignments as opportunities to try new ideas. The following tips can improve his stories and make writing even more fun.

### Foreshadowing

Authors sometimes drop hints about what's going to happen later in a book. If a big thunderstorm will be important in your child's story, he might mention his character's fear of storms early in his tale.



### Titles

Have your youngster consider different titles for his story. One way to create an eye-catching title is to refer to an exciting aspect of an event. Instead of "My Summer Vacation," his title could be "Trapped in the Treehouse."

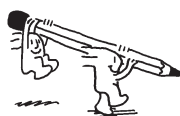
### Flashback

Rather than starting his tale at the beginning, your youngster might begin at the end. Perhaps the main character is finishing his first year at a new school. Your child could write about the character spending time with friends he has made, and then go back and describe his struggle to fit in at first.

## Parent 2 Parent

### Math stories

When my son Kieran was struggling with math homework, I remembered a strategy my fifth-grade math teacher taught me. She had me turn equations into stories, and this really helped me visualize and solve the problems.



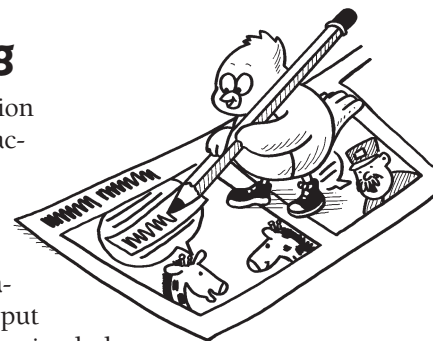
I mentioned this idea to Kieran and helped him make up a story to go with the first problem,  $6 \times 24$ . He wrote, "Six buses traveled to the museum. Each bus held 24 students. In all, 144 students went on the trip." Then he decided to connect all the problems into one big story. For  $8 \times 45$ , he continued: "The museum had 8 exhibits. Each had 45 artifacts. There were 360 artifacts altogether."

When Kieran finished, he read his story to me. He agreed that the activity helped him picture the math and come up with the right answers. I think it also strengthened his storytelling skills!

## Fun with Words

### Comically speaking

Stretch your child's imagination with this activity that lets her practice writing dialogue—the conversations characters have with each other.



**Choose comics.** Let your youngster cut some of her favorite comics from the newspaper or print some from the internet. She can put small pieces of masking tape over the conversation bubbles to block out the existing words.

**Write new dialogue.** Each of you can pick one of the comics, think about what's going on in the pictures, and write lines for the characters on the pieces of tape.

**Share your versions.** Take turns reading your dialogue aloud. Then, choose new comics and make up conversations for those characters.

## Q&A

### Reading and writing gifts—on a budget

**Q** I'd like to give my daughter gifts that will keep her reading and writing during winter break—and when it's over. My budget is tight. Any suggestions?

**A** You'll both keep reading when you create coupons good for library visits together. These make great gifts for your child, and they're free! Another idea is a magazine subscription related to her interests (perhaps *National*

*Geographic Kids*, *Fun for Kidz*, or *Ask*). Many magazines offer deep discounts this time of year.

For a writing-related gift, you could visit a craft shop or dollar store and fill a gift bag with fun writing treats. You can find

notepads in different shapes and sizes, colorful pens, and pencils with interesting erasers. Also consider a diary, as well as books of crossword puzzles, word searches, or Mad Libs.



### OUR PURPOSE

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

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