



Books: Help kids discover reading

BY ANGELA REIDER, SPECIAL TO THE DAILY, Friday, June 25, 2010

School has been out for a few weeks now. Hopefully our children are enjoying all that summer has to offer and are taking a well-deserved break. Reading a book might be the last thing on their minds, however, summer is a perfect time to introduce the idea of reading for pleasure, and to encourage a life-long love of reading. Need inspiration? Here are some ways to make reading appealing to kids:

Stop by the library: Attend a special story time or event, and sign up for the Summer Reading Program. Children of all ages can earn books and prizes for reading. The idea behind this is to motivate them with rewards, so that when they find out just how pleasurable reading can be, they will continue on their own.

Incorporate reading into summer vacations: Take a wildflower book on a hike, and challenge kids to identify flowers they spot along the trail. "Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark" by Alvin Schwartz makes for good campfire thrills. Listen to an audio book while on a road trip – Dave Barry and Ridley Pearson's "Peter and the Starcatchers" imagines how Peter Pan became the flying boy we all know and have come to love and is jam-packed with enough humor and pirate action to keep the interest of the whole family.

Use movie tie-ins: Summertime and movies seem to go hand in hand. Why not read a book together and then watch the movie version? It's a great opportunity for discussion and bonding between parents and kids, and a lot of fun to boot. Some of the best movies began as books: Jeff Kinney's "Diary of a Wimpy Kid," "Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events," and "Percy Jackson and the Olympians: The Lightning Thief" by Rick Riordan were extremely popular books before their big screen debuts.

Be a good role model: With kids, it is "Monkey See, Monkey Do." Studies have shown that kids are more likely to pick up a book and read if they see a parent or caregiver doing the same. As busy parents, even those of us that love to read often have a difficult time finding the time. Try to devote small pockets of time this summer to reading – both on your own and with your children. Even an older child that is perfectly capable of reading on his own will enjoy and benefit from being read to.

Get creative and use "out of the book" thinking: These days, books come in different formats. If your child is a reluctant reader, is auditory-oriented, or has difficulty with traditional printed materials, try downloading an audio book that can be played on an i-pod or other portable device from the library's website. The service is free to Summit County Library card holders, and with titles like "Curious George Rides a Bike" by H.A. Rey for young children, Erin Hunter's "Warriors" series for middle readers, and Suzanne Collins' "The Hunger Games" for young adults, there is something to please all tastes and levels.

Involve children in book selection: You want them to read worthy classics like E.B. White's "Charlotte's Web" or "Tom Sawyer" by Mark Twain. They might have other ideas, like "Captain Underpants" by Dav Pilkey or Star Wars. This summer let them choose, even if it means the likes of Sponge Bob. (Boy, is he annoying!) That being said, it doesn't hurt to offer up a few suggestions. "1001 Children's Books You Must Read before you Grow Up" by Julia Eccleshare is a great starting point. It is organized by age and offers a thorough examination of book content complete with sample illustrations. Pam Allyn's "What to Read When" is organized by theme and can recommend a book that will help a child cope with a bad day, or celebrate a love of sports. **"Reading Together: Everything You Need to Know to Raise a Child Who Loves to Read" by Diane W. Frankenstein lists "101 books kids will want to read and talk about." (This might prove especially helpful in those pre-teen years when we can barely get two words out of our kids.)** Make sure children have access to a wide variety of books and then let them choose whatever most interests them; this is truly the key to reading for pleasure. Who knows, they might even surprise you with a classic or two!