

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Title I Cooperative
Educational Service Unit 10

This Valentine's Day, celebrate love poetry

Throughout history, people have written poems to show their love. With your child, pretend you're living years ago and write a *cinquain*—a classic style of poem that has five non-rhyming lines. This type of poem traces its roots all the way back to medieval France!

Here's how to write a cinquain:

- **For the first line**, write a noun that describes the topic of your poem.
- **For the second line**, write two adjectives that describe the topic of your poem.
- **For the third line**, write three action verbs ending in “-ing” that describe your topic.
- **For the fourth line**, write a short phrase that describes your topic.
- **For the final line**, write a noun that is a synonym for or another way to describe the topic of your poem.

Here's an example of a Valentine's Day-themed cinquain:

*hearts
sweet, colorful
sharing, crunching, giggling
a box of tiny love letters
candy*

For more sample cinquains, visit www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/lesson_images/lesson43/RWT016-1.PDF.

Source: “Valentine's Day,” Reading Rockets, www.readingrockets.org/calendar/valentine.



Hemera

Fiction makes history come alive

Want to build your child's interest in social studies? Try historical fiction. Look for stories that:

- **Present** the time period accurately.
- **Are** set in real places.
- **Teach** facts.
- **Include** helpful pictures.
- **Aren't** far fetched.
- **Avoid** misconceptions about the past.



Source: C. Newquist, “Teaching fact through historical fiction,” Education World, www.educationworld.com/a_books/books002.shtml.

Share the love with written hearts

This month, write each family member's name on a heart cut out of paper. Now have everyone write one nice thing about everyone else. “I love when you read to your sister.” “I love when you help me with homework.” Post these notes where everyone can see them.



Three factors boost motivation to read

You want your child to spend free time reading, but you're not sure how to motivate her. Research shows certain factors make a difference:

1. **Confidence.** It's important for kids to feel good about themselves and reading. Talk with your child about her reading successes. Mention why reading is important.
2. **Choice.** Kids are more motivated when they pick what to read. Take regular trips to the library, and visit several sections (such as fiction, nonfiction and magazines).
3. **Interaction.** Model good reading skills by reading aloud to your child. Also encourage discussion about books in your family.

Source: L. Gambrell and B. Marinak, “Reading Motivation: What the Research Says,” Reading Rockets, www.readingrockets.org/article/29624/.

Graphic organizers can make understanding, remembering easier



Something as simple as a picture of a tree can help kids organize what they read on paper. This boosts reading comprehension. Each large branch can represent part of the story (such as the main character, plot and setting). Smaller branches—which grow from the big branches—would leave room for details. Ask your child's teacher or look online for suggestions of other types of graphic organizers, too.

Show your child that books aren't boring

If your child received a book for his birthday, how would he feel?

- a) Thrilled.
- b) A little disappointed.
- c) Insulted.

If you chose *b* or *c*, you may have a reluctant reader. But there's still hope he'll enjoy that birthday book—and other reading materials. For example, you might:



- **Read aloud.** Depending on your child, you might read the entire book aloud, take turns reading aloud, or read the first page aloud and see if it prompts him to read the rest.
- **See movies.** Many books have movie versions. Encourage your child to read the book first, either independently or with you. Then enjoy seeing the film together.
- **Choose carefully.** Look for “high-interest” books that aren't intimidating or difficult to read. Ask a librarian for help.

Source: “Reclaiming Reluctant Readers,” Work, Play, Read, www.workplayread.com/2011/09/reclaiming-reluctant-readers.html.

Science and reading soar high together

If your child likes science, encouraging her to read may be as easy as checking out books from the library. Try materials about:

- **Experiments.** The librarian can help you find books packed with science projects for kids. Janice VanCleave's *Science Around the Year* is a great example.
- **Famous scientists.** Perhaps your child has heard of Albert Einstein or George Washington Carver and wants to learn more. Or maybe she'd like to study someone new to her.



Getty Images

- **Irresistible topics.** Does your child love animals? Plants? Rocks? Space? Oceanography? There are countless scientific topics to research!



Q: My child has trouble reading. Will his reading struggles hurt his comprehension?

A: When kids struggle to read, sometimes they're so busy figuring out words that they don't absorb information. Work with the teacher to increase your child's fluency (ease of reading). As this

improves, so will comprehension. Meanwhile, use additional strategies to boost understanding. For example, talk about material before, during and after reading it. What will it be about? What is your child learning from it? What made it interesting?

Do you have a question about reading? Email readingadvisor@parent-institute.com.

Speeches require positive feedback

A student's first public-speaking experience can be scary! When your child practices an oral report at home, keep your responses positive and helpful. For example, “I can hear you well. That's great! Now let's pretend I'm all the way in the back of the classroom. Let's make sure I can hear you from over here.”



For lower elementary readers:

- **Marshall Armstrong Is New to Our School** by David Mackintosh (Abrams). Marshall Armstrong proves that being new and different is okay.



- **The One and Only Stuey Lewis** by Jane Schoenberg (Farrar, Straus and Giroux). Stuey Lewis has plenty of problems, including difficulty with reading. But that won't stop him from surviving second grade.

For upper elementary readers:

- **Every Day on Earth** by Steve Murrie and Matthew Murrie (Scholastic). What amazing things happen every day on Earth? This book provides fascinating details, such as how much air a person inhales each day.
- **The Case of the Rock 'N' Roll Dog** by Martha Freeman (Holiday House). Items are disappearing around Cammie and Tessa's home—which is the White House, by the way. Will they be able to crack the case?

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