



Accelerated Literacy Learning

Tips from literacy specialist Susan Radley Brown

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Susan Says....

We live in a world of high stakes testing that holds schools, teachers and students accountable to answering precise questions about the text they are reading. Comprehension exercises and test questions still require students to choose a main idea. So, students need to learn how to use reading strategies to build meaning and comprehend text.



It is essential that they understand what they read, but it is also important that readers interact more completely with the text. When they make a personal

connection between what they are reading and their own lives, they are engaged in a richer, deeper more thoughtful reading experience.

The activities I am suggesting in this newsletter invite parents and their children to respond to books, oral or written, as a way to share what they are thinking and learning. Whether a parent is reading aloud to his or her child, or a child is reading aloud to the parent, or if each person chooses to read the same book silently, when both are finished reading they should discuss and write what the book reminds them of or makes them think about. This type of authentic, personal response to literature is valuable.

For example, responding to a story about a young child pretending to be a teacher taking her make believe class into the hallway for a fire drill can run the gamut from “I used to pretend to be a teacher when I was a kid” or “I didn’t play teacher, but I pretended to be a doctor” or “I remember when I was in kindergarten, and we had our first fire drill

...I was so scared” to a more sophisticated reflection on how fleeting one’s childhood is when you look back years later. All of these

varied responses to the question, “What does the story remind you of/make you think about?” are valid. There isn’t a right or wrong answer, unlike asking a prompted question, such as, “Can you remember a time when you were a child and you pretended to be someone else?”

“Stopping By Woods On A Snowy Evening” by Robert Frost is an interesting poem for parents and children to read together.



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How to Build a Snowman

Ice skating is fun, sledding is cool, but building a snowman is a creative way to spend time together with friends.

First, make sure that there is plenty of snow to build a snowman. The snow must also be of the right consistency. If it is too powdery it will not compact very well. If it is too wet it will not mold well. Sometimes the snow has pieces of ice in it which also doesn't work very well.

Then, dress warmly. This includes wearing layers, coats, scarves, hats, gloves and suitable shoes.

Next, you will need to make two snowballs for the body - one larger than the other. To make the balls take a large handful of snow and shape it into a ball. Then roll this ball along the ground so that the snow sticks to it until it is the size you want. You may need help to push it when it gets very big as snow is quite heavy when compacted. Then place the medium sized ball on top of the large ball. If it rolls off, try flattening the two sides that will be placed together. After that, your snowman will need a head. To make one, simply roll a ball and place it on top of the body using the method above. The size of the head should be in proportion to the size of the body.

Finally, use your imagination. You can use tree branches for the arms, a carrot for a nose, buttons for eyes, and old clothes, a scarf, mittens and a hat to dress him up.



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I googled the poem and found that there are over 50 interpretations of it. This demonstrates that we construct meaning using our personal and collective experiences to enhance understanding. We've included some ways to think about responding to the poem, as well as a fun step-by-step "How To" for building a snowman.

The article, "Reading and Writing at Home", in this month's newsletter reinforces the idea of daily practice in both since a literate individual a reader and a writer.

"Reading and writing are so related. One reads best with a sense of a writer; and one writes best with a sense of a reader." -*Suzanne L. Holt & JoAnne L Vacca*

When we read, we naturally make connections to our own lives, other books we've read, and the world around us. When you've finished reading the poem, "Stopping By Woods On A Snowy Evening" by Robert Frost (<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/archive/poem.html?id=171621>) ask yourself what it reminds you of or makes you think about. There are many possibilities: a memory, facts, wonderings, other stories or poems...then write your response on a piece of paper, or in a notebook or your reading log.

Happy Reading and Writing!

Reading and Writing at Home

Adapted from: Read with Me: A RIF Parent-Teacher Partnership

Which will your child learn first: to read or to write? Most children develop these skills at the same time. The following are some things you can do to help your child become a reader and writer:

Read aloud every day. Set aside a regular time for reading that your child can count on.

Have plenty of children's books around your home within your child's reach. Go to the library regularly and check out books. Look for secondhand books at yard sales and thrift shops. Encourage family and friends to give books as gifts.

Reading is everywhere. Find other times to read, for example, when you're waiting at the doctor's office. Bring a book with you or pick up a magazine or read a brochure about health care. Read aloud the items you use in daily life: food labels, directions for baking a cake, and greeting cards you receive. Keep magnet letters on the refrigerator.

Stock up on supplies for writing and drawing. Store things to write on: paper, recycled paper, pads, or scratch paper. Store things to write with: crayons, markers, pencils, and pens. Store supplies for making books: cardboard, a stapler and scissors. Save items to cut and paste: junk mail, catalogs, coupons, and old magazines.

Let your children see you read and write. Read aloud a favorite poem. Read the caption under an interesting photograph in a newspaper or a magazine. Read aloud the words on food packages, menus, signs, and billboards. Write important dates on the calendar. Ask your child to help you make up a shopping list or write a letter.

In the next issue of Accelerated Literacy Learning's newsletter

Reading like a Writer