

I WOULD DO ANYTHING TO GET MY KIDS TO READ

If your kids are reading less and less and it's bothering you more and more, here are some ideas to turn that whole situation around.

After you read "Blueberries for Sal" how about making blueberry muffins? After you read "Cinderella" try making a Barbie sized coach out of a pumpkin. If you read "The Midwife's Apprentice" make some herbal tea.

Allow kids to express emotional responses to literature. It's okay to cry when the dogs die in "Where the Red Fern Grows"!

Build listening stamina gradually. Five minutes at one sitting is an eternity to a two year old who has never been read to.

Challenge the kids, but don't overwhelm them. Don't be like the father who insisted on reading "Tale of Two Cities" to his seven year old.

Children love to learn but hate to be tested. Don't quiz them on the books. If you had to take a test on every article you read and every TV show you saw, you'd quit watching.

Choose big print whenever possible. Make it as easy as you can, not as hard as possible. Big print is easier to read.

Don't be afraid to abandon a book in the middle if it's a dud. It's not opera; nobody will chastise you for leaving in the middle of a book.

Don't be fooled by awards. Just because it won a Newbery doesn't mean everybody has to love it.

Don't censor what the kids read. If they are on a Garfield jag, it will soon wear itself out; but if you outlaw Garfield, it will never end.

Don't give kids a choice between reading and TV. You are the grownups, they aren't. Handy arrangement, isn't it?

Explain vocabulary as you go. Don't make the kids look up words. Large vocabulary comes from having someone put the words into context, giving synonyms, as you go along.

Find out something about the author (ask your local librarian) to share insights into how the story connects to his/her life. The story of how Roald Dahl came to write "James and the Giant' Peach" is almost as heartbreaking as the book itself!

Go to the bookstore at least once a month. Browse. Ruminant.

Ham it up when you read aloud. Nobody likes to listen to a monotone. . Go slow. Breathe. Give the listener pauses and spaces to enter into the material.

Have your kids read aloud to YOU while you drive. If they come to a word they don't know, have them spell it to you.

Help make connections between books (How is the Odyssey like The Giver?) as well as between books and life (e.g. 'How is the adventure of Max in Where the Wild Things Are like your trip to see Aunt Ethel last Christmas?")

If you hate a book or particular author, please don't share that sentiment with the kids: don't read that book or author to them. Skip it.

Keep a list on the refrigerator of ALL the books the family has read in a given time period (A month perhaps) When you hit a preset goal (a dozen?) celebrate with a trip to the bookstore followed by a trip to the ice cream store perhaps.

Keep a Reading Journal for each child with a list of books that have been read, with just one thing, one small thing that was garnered from that book-- a

phrase, a quote, a lesson, a memory. If kids are too little to write, then let them draw a picture to commemorate the story.

Keep a small book in your backpack or purse: jokes, riddles, word puzzles, poems, proverbs, little stories.

Let the kids draw while you read to them.

Let the kids eat while you read to them because it stimulates TWO pleasure centers at the same time.

Let the kids interrupt to ask pertinent questions.

Limit TV to one hour a day on the weekends and holidays. Turn it off after a violent incident.

Listen to tapes of favorite books. They are often available for rent at bookstores, or libraries. Especially recommended: everything by Listening Library.

Make reading a celebration! Drink hot chocolate in the winter while you listen to good books. Sip a lemonade julep in the summer.

Make reading fashionable. Don't let anything take priority. Don't answer the phone or the door while you are reading. Treat it as sacred time.

Make sure DAD reads to the kids too. Real men may not ask for directions, but they do read aloud.

Preread the book yourself. It's nicer to NOT have surprises.

Provide time and creature comforts for kids to read (pillows, snacks, no TV, no distractions)

Put books and magazines in the bathroom-- dictionaries, story collections, magazines of all kinds, BrainQuest, quiz books, Garfield, Far Side, short funny reading.

Put books in the back and front seats of the car: an almanac, dictionary, Guinness Book of World Records, Two Minute Mysteries, joke books, Garfield, Waldo, Mad Libs, Far Side

Put books on the microwave to read while you wait for things to nuke.

Read aloud as often as possible in short bursts with high enthusiasm.

Read aloud at every meal.

Read aloud to your kids until they leave home taking their furniture with them.

Read aloud when you are waiting in the car.

Read every day at the same time, even if the aliens are landing on the front lawn.

Read funny, sad, long, short, serious goofy books. In other words, a varied diet.

Read nonfiction as well as fiction

Read picture books to every age, not just little kids. Just a few ideas: Mysteries of Harris Burdick, Rotten Ralph, Dumb Bunnies, Bright and Early Thursday Evening, Rainbow Goblins

Read while you're waiting in the supermarket line.

Reward reading with reading, not pizza. Go shopping for books every time a kid finishes a book.

Set an example: read yourself.

Take your kids to meet real live authors at local bookstore and library events.

Turn off the TV.

Visit the library at least once a month.

Watch the video or the movie AFTER you read the

book, not before.

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