

Getting Teens to Read

How in the world do you get teenagers to read? Here are a few ideas gathered from parents and teachers that you might try. Did you know that kids see an average of 1000 commercials a month--NONE of which are for books or reading. Somebody has to keep plugging the values of reading, so I guess it has to be the grownups who love books.

1. Shut off the TV. Better yet, cut the PLUG off the TV for a month. It will only cost about ten dollars to get it rewired.
2. Buy kids gift certificates for BOOKS only at school book fairs and local bookstores.
3. Read aloud to kids when you're a co-passenger in the car or plane. Choose something funny, like "The Best Christmas Pageant Ever" or poignant, like "Jonathan Livingston Seagull" or even "Love Story".
4. Talk about books you love over a dress-up restaurant dinner "date" with your teen.
5. Listen to Listening Library's Books on Tape/CD in the car whenever you drive. If you have to disable the radio, DO IT.
6. Tell the kids about Banned Books. You can get a list at your local library. Just telling them that it's banned is often enough to pique some curiosity. You might just leave some of these contraband titles around the house, too.
7. Tell kids they're "not old enough to read this book" and you can bet your booties they'll beg, borrow or steal a copy.

8. Tell them you HATED the book and they will probably rush to find it and read it.
9. Add an allowance bonus of \$1 for every half hour kids spend in front of the TV with the one-eyed monster turned off, while they are reading.
10. Take kids to the bookstore, the library and the school book fair and buy them books. If we're going to win the war on illiteracy or aliteracy, we have to begin with a massive assault on lack of reading matter. In our world, if we value it, we BUY it.
11. Remind kids that readers make more money. Studies show that superior readers make an average of \$100,000 more in their lifetimes than nonreaders.
12. Put books in the car, put dictionaries in the bathroom, put joke books and poem books on the microwave, put books on the dining room table, put books beside their bed, put books on top of the CD player. Make it as easy to reach for a book as it is to reach for the remote.

If you've got ideas that have worked to keep your teens into reading, please share them! Remember--reading isn't the most important thing....it's the ONLY thing!!!

©2005 Gwynne Spencer, PO Box 121, Mancos, CO 81328,
gwynnespencer@aol.com, reprint rights available.