

## **Section Four**

Supporting Independent  
Reading: Serving Upper  
Elementary School  
Students

## Literacy notes for libraries serving children in upper elementary school

At about third grade level, reading expectations in most schools change. At about third grade the school expects children will begin to read text independently and learn from it. The shift has traditionally been expressed as “moving from learning to read to reading to learn.” Many theoreticians now find that distinction too rigid, but it does indicate that the amount of school instruction that depends on children reading for themselves grows each year.

For some students this shift is the first time the reading task becomes sufficiently complex that teachers and parents realize there is a problem. Unfortunately for these students, by third grade most schools are finished teaching the basic reading process except in remedial situations. By fifth or sixth grade, schools assume children will read and comprehend text on at least the literal level; in other words, children have the basics of literacy. The focus turns to increased comprehension and establishing independent reading behaviors. Even in some remedial sessions the focus changes to teaching compensation strategies.

The important literacy tasks of late elementary school are:

- ✓ gaining reading fluency,
- ✓ becoming an independent reader,
- ✓ making more meaning on more levels in response to text,
- ✓ and being able to learn from written text, and learn from text with fewer pictures and more words.

*Fluency* means reading smoothly and quickly so the language flows together with meaning, and figuring out what the words are doesn't interfere with comprehension. Fluency requires strong decoding skills and helps children become independent and willing readers. *Independent readers* read silently to themselves for more than a few minutes with meaning and some memory of what they read. They read age-appropriate text well enough that they don't need help decoding words; they understand most of the words, and they process the text enough to understand what the author is saying. They also respond to the message with thoughts of their own. These processes are also crucial to being able to learn from text.

Ultimately, good readers comprehend and make meaning on more than the recall or retelling level. They compare what they have just read to other things they have read, they monitor their own comprehension, they predict and confirm their predictions, they agree or disagree with what the author said, they react, they challenge, they evaluate and begin to read critically, and they make connections to other things they know or have read. These skills are gradually developed in elementary school and the school system begins to expect them and coaches students to practice them.

All public school third graders in Missouri are tested with some standardized test, and those whose test scores are more than a year behind should receive special help. A Missouri law mandates retention if reading skills are still a year or more below expectations at the end of

fourth grade. This is often a crisis point for children and their parents, so the literacy of upper elementary school children is becoming an important issue. This law pushes schools, educational support systems, and families to take action when children aren't reading well. Unfortunately, both educational research and experience indicate retention, especially retention as late as fourth grade, seldom solves academic problems. Dropouts are more likely to have been retained and the negative social and personal consequences of retention may set up other problems adding to the reading problem. So anything libraries and other educational support systems can do to help children reach grade level reading by late third grade has benefits beyond literacy.

There are surprisingly few studies about the basic literacy process in upper elementary children. Several things do emerge consistently, however.

The gaps between readers and non-readers widen in late elementary and junior high. Readers who are "on track" spend these years learning to handle an ever-widening array of written materials, and they learn to make meaning in response to what they read on deeper and more varied levels. A place for the library collections and programming is already carved out for these students.

Those who are not on track tend to lose ground at this point. There may be several problems. Students who are unable to decode continue to struggle to determine what words the print on the page represent. Other students can decode but find it so slow and laborious that they have no effort left for processing the message. Still others have learned to identify words well enough, but they somehow believe that the essence of reading is word calling, and they do not seek a message in the text. Some students can read the words but make only the most rudimentary meaning from the text; they don't interact with the text, and this limits not only comprehension but also higher-level responses. At this point *aliteracy* begins to be a problem for some children; they can read, but they don't or won't for a variety of reasons. Since readers become better by reading, aliterate students usually fall behind and don't develop background knowledge or higher-level comprehension skills. Children who read, are read to, and have a chance to talk about what they read, retain the advantage they had in the earlier grades.

The Center for Improvement of Early Reading (CIERA) tells us:

Proficient reading in third grade and above is sustained and enhanced by programs that adhere to four fundamental features: (1) deep and wide opportunities to read, (2) the acquisition of new knowledge and vocabulary, partially through wide reading but also through explicit attention to acquiring networks of new concepts through instruction, (3) an emphasis on the influence that the kinds of text (e.g., stories versus essays) and the ways writers organize particular texts has on understanding, and (4) explicit attention to assisting students in reasoning about text. (<http://www.ciera.org/library/instrsrc/principles/>)

While libraries are seldom in the reading instruction business, libraries readily support at least three of these features through both collection development and programming.

## Collection

For children who are developing expected reading skill (in most communities this is well over half of them), the library collection is now a major vehicle for expanding their reading skills and helping them establish the recreational reading habit. The library collection offers older children deep and wide opportunities to read at very low cost to their families. Reading a variety of material not only builds reading skill but also promotes acquisition of new knowledge and vocabulary. New knowledge and vocabulary then advance reading skill as well as general knowledge and school achievement.

Recommendations for helping students improve fluency include using text at a level manageable for the young readers. This includes more easily decoded texts for struggling readers. Middle grade books at easy reading levels are harder to find than books for primary readers, but adding them to the collection is a strong plus for children moving from deliberate decoding to fluent independent reading. Series books are also good for readers at this stage; their predictability eases reading since the reader can use the same expectations and background knowledge for all the books in a series. Series books may also “hook” a young reader who likes the topic and encourage them to read the next one and the next one and the next one, building fluency and reading experience in the process. While many librarians and teachers wish children were more interested in great literature than in series books, books that simply provide a pleasant and non-stressful reading experience have an important place as literacy tools. They help children develop the reading skills that will someday let them experience great literature.

For children still struggling with print, there are a growing number of what are usually called high-low (or hi-lo) books; that is, books combining high interest with low reading level. Adding these to the collection is a good literacy move. Audio books provide a reader who is still struggling a chance to participate in the joy of books. Audio books help older children develop higher-level comprehension and meaning strategies while bypassing the print that is still troublesome. Audio books have their literacy advantage, too, especially if the student will follow along with a copy of the book. This gives them a model of fluent reading and some experience with text. (There is a method of remedial reading based on tracking a text being read by a tape.)

The acquisition of new knowledge and vocabulary characterizes successful students at this level. Once gained, new knowledge becomes background knowledge to help readers understand and find meaning in new texts. Many researchers and theorists believe background knowledge does more than enrich the reading process; it is a basic factor in all reading skill. Background knowledge and previous experience not only make instructive text clearer but also establish a framework out of which readers understand and interpret a text. For example, fantasy is read differently from non-fiction, and text can convey sarcasm or nonsense as well as factual information. Reading builds on itself as it builds background knowledge for more effective reading which, in turn, builds more knowledge.

Although some researchers question the value of unguided silent reading as an instructional strategy for struggling readers, the tie between recreational reading and higher reading achievement is almost universally accepted. During these upper elementary years, schools,

libraries, and families are laying the foundation for the knowledge, growth, and experience that comes with lifelong reading.

Parents of children who are not reading well now are faced with the tasks of advocating for their children and sometimes intervening. Therefore, it is also a good thing for the general library collection to include books and resources to help them do this. (Home schoolers will appreciate some of the same texts.)

### **Programming**

This is the point at which the phenomenon of children becoming better readers simply by reading is strongest. Encourage children to read.

Children this age are old enough for book groups and interactive events that help them process different kinds of text and styles, reason about text, and connect with what they read. (This is also the point at which books and programming can begin to show children the world of human experience that has been preserved in print and can be accessed by reading.) The Internet is full of unit plans and discussion questions based on specific books. Studies indicate helping readers preview a text helps them comprehend it. Previewing is easily added to book discussions, conversations, and book talks.

Recommendations for helping students improve fluency include using text at a level manageable for the young readers, yet stretches them a bit (including more easily decoded texts for struggling readers). Choosing books at different difficulty levels for programs or discussions helps libraries reach all readers. Recommendations for helping students improve fluency include multiple readings of a familiar text. Libraries might set this up through readers theater, poetry groups, or having mid-schoolers read to younger children. Recommendations for helping students improve fluency include modeling fluent reading. Librarians have been providing that since preschool story hours! Finding ways to have a fluent adult reader model the process for these intermediate readers is still a good idea; audio books also help. There are many things libraries can do to support upper elementary and middle school readers as they make the important shift to independent reading and learn to handle different kinds of text.

Libraries are in the perfect position to create events and situations to help children want to read; examples might be a read-a-thon, a book club, inviting older children to become reading buddies with younger ones, a drama group, or even a reading incentive program. Summer reading programs also fit in this category. Summer reading may well be the best literacy bargain in America since it encourages children to read over the summer, thus improving their reading, getting them interested in many topics, and counteracting the danger of their losing ground in reading skill over the summer.

Many libraries also support and participate in the activities of groups like scouts and after school programs that strive to broaden children's incidental learning and knowledge of the world. Anything that broadens children's interests, knowledge base, and view of the world impacts their reading comprehension. Children this age are often eager to be teens. Sometimes versions of the

programming a library uses for teens will catch their interest and send them the message to keep on coming to the library and reading when they get to be teens.

And as a final benefit, children this age are often still willing to interact with adults and share what they are interested in with anyone who will listen or give them access to materials they like. It is a time in their lives when grownups still have good influence, and libraries can take full advantage of this stage to influence them in the direction of literacy!

## **Mandatory Retention Of Fourth Grade Students In Missouri Who Are Reading Below Third Grade Level**

**Missouri Revised Statute 167.645** (also called also called Senate Bill 319) says children who are more than a year behind in reading achievement must receive extra instruction, which often includes summer school, and they must be retained in fourth grade if they are not reading at third grade level by the end of fourth grade.

The text of the statute is available at <http://www.moga.state.mo.us/statutes/c100-199/1670000645.htm> or may be found through the general introduction page for the revised statutes (<http://www.moga.state.mo.us/homestat.asp>) by using the keywords “retention and reading.”

A readable explanation of the law is available from **Practical Parenting Partnerships**. It may be printed from their Web page, <http://www.pppctr.org/readingandretention.asp>.

Practical Parenting Partnerships may also be contacted at  
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# Summer Reading – Libraries Supporting Literacy

Each year, the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) completes a study of education in the United States called “The Nation’s Report Card.” When the reading section for the year 2000 was released, one finding was the same as all the NAEP studies that came before it: **children who report reading more pages daily, in and out of school, have higher scores on reading achievement.** Students who reported reading for fun on their own time every day had higher average scores than students who reported reading for fun less frequently. As before, the fourth graders who reported reading 11 or more pages daily for school and for homework scored higher than students who read fewer pages daily.

The 1999 National Center for Educational Statistics report, *The Condition of Education*, states flatly: Research has shown reading ability is positively correlated with the extent to which students read recreationally. Educators are increasingly encouraging their students to read and write on their own, outside of school.

Other experience and research continues to indicate that for many, perhaps most, learners the simple act of reading increases reading skill. As people read, they get better at it. That seems to be true at all levels and stages of reading development. And now researchers are suggesting that the experience children have with books before they even enter school may be the deciding factor in how well they learn to read in the first place. In addition, the experience and incidental knowledge children gain from recreational reading increases their ability to comprehend what they read.

So – add to all the other benefits of a summer reading program the knowledge that recreational readers become better readers. Children who are reading for fun at any level are becoming better readers.

There is great concern in this country about the number of children who are not good readers. Some encouraging items for your information:

- ✓ Summer reading programs and other efforts like them help children achieve in school through helping them gain both general knowledge and reading skill.
- ✓ Summer reading programs and similar efforts can help raise the literacy level of children in the United States.
- ✓ Children who are struggling readers will benefit from the library’s summer reading program.
- ✓ Debate about the best way to teach reading and the best way to remediate reading problems continues, but all the research from every side of the debate agrees that recreational reading helps children become better readers and motivates children to keep on reading.
- ✓ And when children are reading they are getting better and better at it!

While society worries about reading achievement, libraries are doing something about it!

# **Activity Notes**

# **Anything encouraging children to read more, re-read, discuss, re-tell, or write is a literacy activity!**

Ideas:

- Readers' theater or pretend radio drama can be done impromptu with a few minutes practice and a little preparation.
- Pair or group children to prepare a dramatic reading of a poem for the group. With more practice, some might perform this reading for an outside group.
- Read something chorally as a large group, or with children in the group, joining in on repeated lines or taking the parts of characters.
- Reread the story with different individuals taking different parts.
- Invite older children in the group to be the guest reader for the second read-through of a short book, poem, or article.
- Older children can read to younger children individually or as guest readers during story time.
- Over the summer or a few sequential weekends, a group of children could put together a display or some information sheets or a booklet about a topic of interest to the community or to other kids.
- Act out a story just read or heard. This may be done impromptu for the fun of the moment or developed into a performance for another audience.
- Make a story into a puppet show or do a puppet show about other things happening to the characters.
- Write or tell a different version of a story just read.
- Imagine and write or tell a sequel or a "prequel."
- Act out the sequel, "prequel," or different version.
- Invite children to create a brief monologue explaining to the audience how a character in the book felt. They might use a puppet to present the thoughts.
- Stage a quick imaginary talk show with children taking the parts of the interviewer and characters in the book.

# Encouraging Responses to Stories and Books

Jacque Wuertenberg

**What:** Invite youngsters to make connections with stories and books by responding to the text with guiding questions. Connecting to the text indicates a student's ability make meaning of the author's ideas and to relate to these ideas in a meaningful context and further comprehension.

**Why:** Ask guiding questions that allow youngsters to explore ideas together. These guiding questions provide opportunities for readers to carefully think and connect to the author, to the text, to each other, and to the community. Keep this period of time relaxed and joyful. This is a time for exploring ideas and notions about the story and/or book and often leads to further reading and additional research about the author and similar genres.

**What's Next:** Students also enjoy reading, thinking, and talking together about the stories and books they find of interest. Literature circles provide one way for youngsters to meet together and talk about a favorite book. Patterned after successful book study groups, lit circles function successfully with a few guidelines, such as when to meet and what pages and chapters will be discussed. Have volunteers who agree beforehand to look for specific points, such as interesting words, favorite quotations, and several of the most important things the author stated.

**Procedure:** **Before and during** the story and read aloud time:

- Invite youngsters to predict what will happen next. This strategy, developed by Russell Stauffer, and often referred to as a "Directed Reading Thinking Activity" (DRTA) suggests that the storyteller and/or reader occasionally stops and asks, "What do you think will happen next?" Youngsters now have an opportunity to refine their foreshadowing skills (in light of what just happened, what could happen next?).
- The prediction that follows is now based on the reader's understanding of the author's style. As the reading continues, and additional information is gained, the reader frequently revises the original account. This strategy encourages comprehension.
- **After** the story and/or read-aloud time, have fun with the following guiding questions:
  1. How did the storytelling/reading remind you of your own experience? What did the author say? How did it relate to your life?
  2. What were the most important ideas you discovered in the book.
  3. Why are they important to you?
  4. What were the most interesting words or phrases you encountered in the storytelling/reading? Why did they interest you?
  5. What "aha" moment did you have during the reading?

**Advantages:**

**Responding to text:** Youngsters enjoy listening and responding to the story and/or read aloud, and are eager to share their own experiences, ideas and create connections.

**Questioning strategy:** If a youngster responds by saying, "I don't know," when asked about the story, gently continue, "If you did know, what would you say?" Watch the joy on the youngster's faces, as they try to make meaning of the story and/or read aloud.

# Dramatic Play and Improvisation

Jacque Wuertenberg

**What:** Bring language to life as you are reading aloud. Invite youngsters to add sound effects and other improvisations as the piece is reread.

**Why:** Tap into the various multiple intelligences and different learning styles by addressing auditory, visual and kinesthetic preferences.

**What's next:** Youngsters understand improvisation and often spend hours adding, changing and rearranging their own made-up scenes. Tap into this rich area of play, and help youngsters see, hear, and feel what they are reading by “playing the scenes” during read-alouds.

**Procedure:** Choose a piece to read aloud that provides opportunities for dramatic additions. For example:

- Read aloud a favorite piece such as: “I never saw a purple cow. I never hope to see one. But, I can tell you anyhow. I’d rather see than be one.”
- Help youngsters internalize the piece you have just read aloud by adding these **three strategies:**
  1. **Echo Read:** Read the same piece aloud again and invite youngsters to echo each phrase. You say it. They say it.
  2. **Choral Read:** Next, invite youngsters to choral read it by saying it with you. Start by reading: “I never saw a purple (pause and invite the youngsters to join in and choral read with you as you say the word, “cow.” Continue pausing at key words.
  3. **Dramatic Play:** Bring language to life with dramatic play. Solicit help from the youngsters and request cow “moos” when you read it again and get to the word “cow.” Those who are wearing purple could also stand when the word “purple” is heard, etc.

**Advantages:**

**Improvisation is easy and enjoyable:** Invite animal and other sound effects and movement where all can take part without scripts to memorize.

**Improvisation promotes comprehension:** Youngsters eagerly add dramatic play when it is appropriate and, as it is needed.

**Improvisation is a prelude to revision:** Adding dramatic play can be a first step to understanding the role of revision in writing. Youngsters understand adding, changing and rearranging in dramatic play and often ask, “Can we do it again?” Rehearsal in drama can easily be understood and translated to the concept of revision (add, change, rearrange) in writing!

# Creating Choral Readings

Jacque Wuertenberg

- What:** Bring language to life by showcasing favorite pieces with productions of choral readings. Choral reading is a group reading providing a community reading experience in much the same way as singing together in a choir.
- Why:** Youngsters who take part in choral readings experience the rigor of fluent oral reading and the joy of producing a memorable experience for themselves and possibly others when there is an audience available.
- What's next:** Choral readings are available already scripted into parts and can be found in library collections. In addition, Paul Fleischman's book, *Joyful Noise*, is a delightful resource of science poetry arranged for two voices. Have fun creating your own choral readings with favorite poems, nursery rhymes and even songs.
- Procedure:** Choose a choral reading already prepared or create one with a favorite piece, perhaps even from a piece of writing done by a youngster. It is easiest to start with two groups or voices. Group I and Group II can be identified and the piece marked as such. Next, add Solo I and perhaps Solo II, etc. Keep it simple. Mark the parts and have enough copies for each youngster. Read the piece aloud in your voice. Discuss the group parts and ask for volunteers for the solo pieces. Rehearse, rehearse, and rehearse. Suggest stage directions such as: softly, louder, extra loud, etc.
- Advantages:**
- Fluent Oral Reading:** You will be delighted with the enthusiasm youngsters share for reading aloud with Choral Readings. You will also be surprised at how quickly the pieces are memorized as the youngsters request, "Can we do it again, please?"
- Celebrating Reading and Writing:** Watch the surprise youngsters show when they see one of their own writing pieces has been formatted into a choral reading for all to enjoy. Be sure to give the writer the spotlight!

# Reader's Theater

Jacque Wuertenberg

**What:** Reader's theater is a production youngsters take part in that allows them to bring a story, poem or other writing to life.

**Why:** Youngsters are provided with scripts, often from familiar read aloud pieces. They are assigned parts, and the staging takes place with students standing with their backs to the audience until they are ready to read their assigned part. At that time, they turn to face the audience and their voice reflects the actions of the character.

**What's next:**

1. Students practice oral reading as they rehearse for the reader's theater production.
2. Following the performance, provide copies of the original works, additional scripts and other related pieces in different genres for further reading.
3. Invite youngsters to "script writing workshops" so that they can learn to create their own reader's theater scripts.

**Procedure:**

1. Choose a prepared script or a favorite piece of literature or poetry you have read aloud or familiar to youngsters. Adapt the piece by creating dialogue. Identify the number of characters in the piece and create a speaking part for a narrator. Take out the "he said's" and "she said's" and have the narrator introduce the characters and set the scenes. There are Web sites such as <http://www.aaronshep.com/rt/> available with prepared scripts and others can be found by doing a Web search with the words "reader's theater."
2. Highlight the character's part on each script. Assign parts and read aloud through the entire script so all of the characters are identified. Rehearse, rehearse, and rehearse by having the cast read the script aloud. Instruct the youngsters in the stylized format of reader's theater.
  - Carry script and walk to the front of the audience.
  - Stand with back to the audience.
  - Narrator turns to face the audience, introduces play and characters.
  - Each character faces the audience when reading (on stage) and then turns with back to the audience when not reading (off stage).
  - Variations: Use music stands to hold scripts, add stools for readers to sit on, place readers at different levels – some sitting, kneeling, standing. Place readers in different parts of the room.

**Advantages:**

**No memorization:** Youngsters hold and read scripts during performance.

**Minimal, if any, actions, costumes or sets:** The action is in the youngster's voice!

# Bulletin Boards

Jacque Wuertenberg

**What:** Create meaningful bulletin boards that are student-centered by displaying and featuring the illustrations and writings of youngsters.

**Why:** Youngsters believe time and presence. They know how busy we are, so when our time is given to displaying and featuring pieces of their art and/or writing, youngsters begin to believe someone does care. Thus, when a bulletin board consists of their own work, they know we have given their ideas both time and presence. Someone cares enough about their own work to feature it prominently for others to see. At home, whenever we post a child's work on the refrigerator, the child knows we care.

**What's next:** Give presence to a youngster's work by matting and mounting the art and/or written pieces on background paper. Consider: colored construction paper, wallpaper samples, wrapping paper, collage pieces from magazines. Framing a youngster's work also focuses the viewer's eye on these individual pieces.

## Procedure:

1. Create a student-centered bulletin board by inviting youngsters to display an inventory of their favorite interests and experiences. This list will provide an effective and ongoing strategy for writing and illustrating. Feature these pieces on a bulletin board with cutout letters to indicate an appropriate title, such as:
  - Things We Enjoy
  - Places We Like to Visit
  - Our Favorite Pets/Animals/Hobbies/Collections
  - Older People We Love
  - Words We Know ("environmental print" for beginning readers includes words such as: "Stop, Go, McDonalds;" sports words for baseball, basketball enthusiasts.) Feature favorite words on a bulletin board with interesting script and invite youngsters to add to this "Word Wall."
2. Create an attractive layout of these pieces so that viewers will be drawn to the design and content.
3. Consider adding a "Presentation Piece" that brings the viewer up to date on the making of the bulletin board. Indicate how the project came to be, what the youngsters did, and what they learned. Type this in a large font and hang it near the bulletin board.

## Advantages:

1. **Posting Indicates Presence:** Youngsters are eager to show others when their work is featured and attractively presented.
2. **Publishing Bulletin Boards:** When the bulletin boards are ready to be taken down, assemble the pieces into a group book to be featured in the library.
3. **Bulletin Board Themes:** Identify themes indicating life lessons. It is much easier to expand a theme as opposed to topics. For example: The theme of cooperation has many possibilities, as opposed to a single topic, such as a particular sport.

## Ideas for a brief literacy stop at the library

Keep a notebook on a familiar shelf for patrons (especially young ones) to write each other notes about books. This might work well during summer reading. Or you could have one notebook for each kind of books or series of books to get the baseball fans, the horse lovers, the Nancy Drew buffs, or the Mark Twain Award readers to write to each other.

A creative reading/writing activity a library might implement is letting many people contribute to a sequential story. Teachers usually do this activity by having one person write a paragraph and then pass the paper to another, who writes the next paragraph and so on. You could adapt this idea by posting a long sheet of paper somewhere or designating a spiral notebook for the purpose, inviting various patrons of all ages add to the story. At the conclusion (which you may decide to write when the story is long enough), type it up and let people read the final story. Then start another. This might work especially well for holidays.

If you have bulletin boards in the children's area, devote one board to word activities. For a while you might have a "pair-pear tree" where children can write pairs of homophones they have discovered (sun-son, red-read, etc.) on pear shaped cutouts and add them to a cutout tree trunk. Later you might have an "oddball words" bulletin board and invite children to write words that break the rules on lopsided paper circles and put them on a bulletin board. (Why is d-o-n-e pronounced "dun" when it has a silent e and should rhyme with phone?) Holiday words, vacations words, action words, or letter-of-the-week are other options. Even a bulletin board full of names organized by first letter invites children to consider sound-letter correspondence.

The opportunity to write group letters or cards to authors, local celebrities, or people in the news invites patrons to take a brief writing break.

A large poster or photo to which children may add word labels helps them see how familiar words look in print. They read the labels already on the picture and then decide which ones they want to add.

# Word Puzzles

Word puzzles give children a chance to practice reading words and phrases. They may be worksheets kids do during a library activity, individually or in teams. You can make a giant word game on chart paper or a bulletin board and do it as a group, thus teaching kids puzzles and at the same time a group activity. Word puzzles may also be reproduced as take home activities that extend story hour. A variety of them may be available in a literature rack or by the circulation desk. If you make your own, there is no copyright problem, and Web sites such as <http://www.worldvillage.com/wv/gamezone/puzzlegen/>, <http://puzzlemaker.school.discovery.com/>, and <http://www.funbrain.com/detect/> and make creating word puzzles relatively quick and easy. It doesn't take long to build up a file for quick reproduction.

Some ideas for topics:

- Names of characters in the books
- Names of items or places in a book just read or a series older children enjoy
- Titles of series or award winners
- Clues for the puzzle are fill in the blank statements about the plot
- Words related to the topic of a book (mysteries, science, bedtime, plants, etc.) or a Dewey Decimal classification
- Holidays, school, or sports
- Summer activities, winter activities, seasons

## **Two literacy notes about word puzzles:**

When you are working with beginning or struggling readers, it is better to keep the words in word-find puzzles and other word puzzles running from left to right or top to bottom. Young children and children with learning disabilities are still firming up the principle that reading goes left to right or occasionally top to bottom. Encountering words written backwards or upside down confuses the issue.

If children can't read the words they need for word puzzle activities, it is probably best just to tell them the word or give them a partner who can read the words, if a very general clue won't work. There is a time and place for insisting children use whatever skills they have to figure out what words are, but group library activities are not generally the time and place. Library programs are meant to be fun, and frustration and embarrassment aren't fun. Library programs are meant to build good feelings about activities, including reading. It doesn't build good feelings to struggle with a word in front of peers, or be unable to play because no one will tell you what you need to know. There is not generally much helpful context in a word puzzle; this reduces the clues a child might use to decode. Library staff often can't focus on helping a child figure out a word in the midst of a busy activity. This doesn't mean adults never have a child sound out or decipher a word, but during a group activity it is better to just supply the word.

# What libraries do for school age literacy in Missouri

A list of library literacy efforts, ideas, activities, and collaborations

Literacy efforts in Missouri's libraries are diverse, and they represent many kinds of service and literacy support. The ideas collected below come from libraries in Missouri, some previously done, others are in process, and still others ideas being developed. They are collected here as a catalogue of ideas that any other library in Missouri might borrow to increase library literacy efforts. The best ideas often come from the trenches!

- Tutoring school kids, either by individual volunteers or through formal homework helpers programs. (Tutoring for kids is more common now than tutoring for adults.)
- Hosting a state representative who read for story time and brought donated Scholastic books to give attendees with him.
- Offer workshops like "Draw Your Own Comic Strip" or "Icky Science for Kids."
- Offer a science project assistance program has been popular where science fairs are popular.
- Host Read Across America events, or a chance to help host a Read Across America event for younger children.
- Some scout groups or club groups earn a reading achievement patch through library.
- Organize reading clubs/book groups after school (some with incentives through or support from local business) for "tweens".
- Provide Spanish classes for kids. (Other languages or topics work, too.)
- Offering summer reading programs of various types, most often available through the Missouri State Library, but others are available.
- Arrange a summer reading sign up group (YMCA camp, for example) as well as for individuals.
- Holding after school programs on a regular schedule, or a allowing a library staff member to accompany children with a reading-related activity on a regular schedule. (Sometimes this is done in collaboration with the school library.)
- Offering winter reading programs. (Use all those past summer reading manuals for ideas.)
- Sponsor writing contests for kids
- Hold team reading events or contests to let struggling readers participate with more fluent readers.

- Allow groups of friends, or other groups (like Brownie troops) to enter reading events or contests together. This mixes struggling and fluent readers and makes the good readers peer group models while it lets slower readers get in on the fun.
- Facilitate and host reading emphasis programs involving athletes from local colleges or even a professional athlete.
- Acquire materials for Accelerated Reader, Reading Recovery, etc., used in the local school. Some headaches may accompany this, but it does get the kids to read and come to the library.
- Make available reading and other educational software on computers.
- Let older kids help with Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) programs for younger ones.
- Meet the needs of home schooling programs and services.
- Offer alternative activities to watching television.
- Stock shelves with books to help hobby groups assist participants with their hobbies.
- Offer computer clubs connecting children with appropriate online learning resources.
- Incorporate math materials/answers/games.

# **Reproducible Information**

## Helping Older Children Read

Reading aloud is still a good thing with older children and families.

Books can help you teach your child about your family's culture, values, celebrations, and even challenges. There are children's and young adults' books about all kinds of people, time, situations, and experiences.

There are now picture books for all ages, some with wonderful art in the illustrations and some that look like comic books or have great graphics.

Magazines or appropriate Web sites may be more interesting than books as children get older. Just get them reading!

Reading encourages your children's interests, and their interests can encourage them to read. Reading helps them learn through books, magazines, or even Web sites. It can give them information about their hobbies or interests or even their problems.

Reading builds incidental knowledge, helping with school achievement.

Sometimes children will insist on reading only one kind of book. Time spent reading anything builds skill for later reading interests. Series books, for example, have a predictability that makes them good choices for developing readers. Reading about what interests them helps children get meaning from print and learn other things in the process.

Libraries and other organizations may have programs, such as book clubs, read-ins, or summer reading events that encourage reading.

Too much television seems to interfere with reading and learning skills.

Read for information, for pleasure, for entertainment, for help, for education, to pass the time – but read and read and keep on reading!

Notes for Parents

## **Summer Reading and Reading Success**

Reading researchers agree that children who read for fun become better readers. As children read, even at the beginning level, they get better at it. As they get better at it, they read more and get still better at reading. It seems to work at all reading levels and all ages. People can raise their reading levels by simply spending time reading whatever they can read. So if children are reading over the summer, they are doing more than staying busy and having fun, they are actually learning and becoming better readers.

Studies show children lose part of what they learned during the school year if they don't read and learn over the summer. Children whose summer activities include reading and other learning experiences, however, often actually gain academic skill.

The experience and knowledge children gain from recreational reading helps in other ways. It increases their ability to understand what they read. Vocabulary is a major factor in reading skill. The more words children know, the better they understand what they read. One study found the vocabulary in children's books is richer than the vocabulary of prime time television. So by simply reading, a child is building vocabulary to help him or her be a better reader. Another important part of reading well is background knowledge. When readers already know something about the subject they are reading, they read more successfully. Readers with background knowledge can figure out what the words mean and understand the ideas in what they read. It takes background knowledge to read critically, to respond to an author's message, and to make meaning. Summer reading adds to background knowledge. Readers learn about places, topics, and events they might never experience personally. This is why summer reading may increase general school success as well as reading skill.

The major reading task of the middle grades is gaining fluency. Fluency is the smooth combination of all the things a reader must do so the process of reading the print doesn't interfere with the author's message or the reader's understanding. Perfect reading is not necessary, but a reader must know most of the words almost automatically. Practice is the key to building fluency. Recreational reading is practice.

Children struggling as readers will also benefit from the library's summer reading program. Educators still argue about the best way to overcome reading problems, but the research from every side of the debate agrees that recreational reading helps children become better readers. Recreational reading motivates children to keep on reading. And if they keep on reading, they keep on getting better and better at it!

So summer reading is more than fun. Summer reading raises reading levels and helps children go back to school in the fall ready to succeed and make progress!

## Notes for Parents

# Reading Problems in the Middle Grades

If a child is still struggling with reading in third grade, it's time to deal with the problem more aggressively than you might have earlier.

Questions to ask: What options does the school offer? What does the teacher think the problem is? Are there other problems? Is your child already getting help? If so, how is the extra help different from the regular classroom? Try to form a team with the reading teacher and work together. Positive relationships between parent and school help.

If the school can't or doesn't provide help, consider a tutor. Before you sink a lot of money into a commercial program, try to find people who used it and see if it succeeded for their child, or try to borrow a copy of the materials. There are many causes for reading problems and many possible answers. Explore them all, but don't assume any one of them will be the final answer for your child just because a commercial promises that it will be.

One of the interesting but frustrating things about reading problems is that some techniques seem to be almost magic for one child, but may not work at all for another.

If you decide to have the child tested, find out as much as you can about what kinds of tests will be used, what they measure, and whether the testing will include work samples and conversations with the teacher and with you. (These last things are important, because the child may not behave the same in the testing situation as in the familiar classroom.) When you get the results, ask a lot of questions about what they mean.

Keep reading to the child. This provides information the child can understand and learn even if he or she can't read it for himself. Pleasant reading aloud helps preserve good feelings about reading, and it allows the child to see mature reading habits. It helps keep interest and learning alive. Books and magazines help teach values, traditions, family heritage, hobbies, skills, and the background knowledge that is part of good reading. Reading together is almost always good family time.

If they have any understanding at all of the reading process, people get to be better readers by reading. Children or teen magazines may be more appealing than books. There is easy reading material on almost every topic, although you may have to search for it. Book clubs or reading programs help some children. Some families even work reading time into the child's allowance system.

There are more and more easy reading level books on everything. Biographies and other nonfiction books at easy reading levels may "hook" some children. They also help with textbook material the child may not be able to read. Try series books related to interests. Simply reading at the appropriate reading level improves reading skill. Recreational reading has actually solved the reading skill problem for some children.

Computers motivate some children to read the screen. There is also computer software to improve reading skills. It is worth checking out and may be part of a total program to help a child. Don't, however, assume computers are an answer by themselves. They don't help some readers, and the lower print quality and distracting images make the screen harder to read for some children.

Books on tape may help, and the school may already have some textbooks on tape. Tracking the text while a tape reads it may also improve reading skill if children are willing to take this time.

Limit television time but do NOT attribute this to the reading problem. Children have a limited amount of time in a day and they need most of it for things like learning, playing, sleeping, and reading more than they need it for television. Some research suggests saturating children with television interferes with their ability to fully process some cognitive tasks, and reading is a task involving processing. Unfortunately, most children like television, and even adults know the challenge of pulling themselves away from it. Sometimes parents may have to be subtle but directive in managing television time.

Try a tutor or homework helper. Parent-child relations are hard enough as the children get older, without mixing in the emotions attached to reading problems. Even if parents are doing the tutoring, balance reading with activities the child enjoys and pleasant interactions. Parents need to be more than enforcers.

If reading feels like punishment, the child will only hate reading, and few people ever get good at things they hate. If having to read or go to tutoring costs the child something that matters to them, the bad feeling transfers to reading. If a reading problem overwhelms the child's whole life, the child often develops other problems, and everybody loses.

Effort does matter, but just trying harder won't solve the problem for most children. "Trying hard" is not the same as knowing what to do. Accusing children of not trying hard enough when they are already discouraged and doing everything they know how to do destroys motivation and adds new layers to the problem. Even if a child really isn't trying, being scolded or punished doesn't usually provide the motivation to change. Negative consequences may (or may not) stop undesired behavior, but they won't usually produce new desired behavior. Generally it takes something pleasurable or rewarding to establish a new behavior. Usually feeling successful or rewarded is what produces effort.

If there are still reading and other academic problems by the middle grades and interventions have not worked, it is now time to consider full-scale testing seriously. By the middle grades testing results will usually be more accurate and there are services and steps that the school cannot offer unless they test the child.

Require reading time, practice, or help, but then let the child go on to something he/she enjoys. **Do NOT let the reading issue overwhelm the child's whole life.**

# Helping Reluctant Readers And Children With Reading Problems

- Children get to be better and more interested readers by spending time reading. Apparently it's a little like riding a bike – do it and you'll get better at it and enjoy it more. Combine reading with something a child enjoys to get him or her to read.
- Keep on reading aloud to the reluctant reader to keep interest and learning alive.
- If a child finds reading aloud to others burdensome, try reading aloud together so your voice pulls the child along. Try reading alternate pages or paragraphs, or have the child read all the conversation parts for one character while you read the rest. If children have to read aloud at school, reading the school passages together ahead of time when possible may help.
- Word games may help in some stages of learning to read. Since beginning or struggling readers are at a disadvantage in scoring, you can play for a group score (add everyone's score together) and try to beat the group score of the last session instead of playing against each other. You can also play with partners who equal out the skill level.
- Children's or teenager's magazines may be more appealing than books. A subscription to a magazine on a child's favorite topic may spark interest.
- Computers motivate some children to read the screen. A lot of educational computer material is also fun. (Try the library!) Internet sites are often confusing, so you may need to help children learn how to focus on what to look for instead of all the "click here" boxes and advertisements. And of course you will have the child observe the necessary Internet cautions.
- Find easy reading material on the child's interests. There are easy reading level books on almost everything. They are often called high-low books, meaning they are high interest level and low reading level (Try the library again!)
- Biographies and other nonfiction books may "hook" some children who don't like fiction. There are also picture books for older children.
- Try series books related to interests or favorite characters; there are even some book series related to television shows. Sometimes reading a book from which a movie was taken will spark interest (although many of these books may be at higher reading levels). There is a predictability to series books that helps "carry" a struggling reader.
- Limit television time but do NOT blame this on the lack of reading interest.
- Try books on tape or CD. Reading along with the audio book sometimes even improves skill. Audio books are especially good for trips and can keep the child company during other activities. Even if a child won't read along, hearing books helps develop

comprehension skills that are sometimes delayed if a child struggles with print. Audio books also remind children there is interesting or entertaining material in books and build general knowledge that helps with school.

- Having an older child read aloud to younger children is good practice and good fun. Often books for younger children are at easier reading levels an older child can read with ease.
- Sometimes parents can get a child to read regularly by including reading in the child's chore structure or allowance system. Sometimes you can give a child a choice of activities that make reading the most attractive one. For example, "Do you want to wash these dishes while I read to your sister or read to your sister while I do the dishes?" "Your chore for tonight is either cleaning the bathroom or half an hour of reading."
- Social activities attract many children. Summer reading, teen reading groups at the library, or events like read-a-thons may attract even a reluctant reader. They may even discover an author or type of book they enjoy and continue reading.
- Reading and writing are two ends of the same process. Encourage sending letters to friends or family, e-mail correspondences with family or friends (NOT chat rooms or e-mail to strangers), appropriate pen pals, journals, or memory books. Making their own books can help children develop writing skills and therefore reading skills. Often for these "process" activities it is better to accept imperfect spelling and grammar, but sometimes writing to be shared offers an opportunity to help with spelling correction, standard grammar, and neatness. Editing offers a chance to standardize a manuscript after the creative process is done.
- Some reluctant readers simply have other more active things on their minds. They can read, but they don't want to. Others are experiencing real problems with the reading process. It can be hard to tell the difference. Try to figure out which situation you are dealing with.
- If a child can read at grade level but just doesn't enjoy the reading, keep on exposing the child to interesting reading material (see all the tips above) but try to keep the situation low key. Kids don't usually learn to enjoy something they feel hassled about. As they get older, they try to prove "you can't make me" if adults push too hard. You really can't make a child read; you can sometimes make a child sit with a book in front of his face for twenty minutes, but you can't make a child read. Try to get children interested instead.
- If a struggling reader is not getting enough help at school by second or third grade, it is time to intervene. There are many different ways of practicing reading and different approaches to tutoring. Try several approaches and talk to the school about what is being done there.
- We tell children who are having reading problems to try harder, but often what they need is to try something different. It is true some children just won't make the effort, but in

most cases children with reading problems don't know what to do in the first place so they can't "try harder" unless they know what to try.

- Be very careful about any one program or approach that promises to be THE ANSWER for all reading problems. A particular program might be very helpful to your child, but it also might not be. One of the curious things about reading problems is that different things seem to work for different readers. Therefore, it's fine and helpful to check out programs you read about or hear about, but don't assume any one program will be the magic answer for your particular child just because it claims to be, especially if it comes with a hefty price tag.
- Good reading skill is increasingly important. There can be a lot of pressure on a child who is not a good reader. The child should get help and practice reading, but the child also needs other activities to get a break from the pressure. Pressure and panic do not seem to help the learning process. If reading feels like punishment or loss, the problem will grow worse.
- If there is a diagnosed, ongoing learning disability or reading problem, try a tutor or homework helper. Sometimes when parents tutor it is very hard on family relations. Each family is different, but children need good relationships with their parents more than they need free tutors.
- Some children have long term difficulties with reading even if they try hard. There really are learning disabilities and some perfectly intelligent children have them. Do not allow a reading problem to overwhelm the child's entire life. A child often develops other problems if the reading problem causes too many other bad things. Reading does not improve just because the negative consequences of not being able to read increase. Learning proceeds best when people of all ages have some experiences of success, security, and happiness.

## **If you think you might be dealing with learning disabilities**

*Learning disabilities, learning disability, and learning disabled* are all abbreviated “LD.” People in different fields don’t always mean the same thing when they say “learning disabilities.” Even people whose specialty is learning disabilities do not agree about exactly what a learning disability is or exactly what to do about it. Ask questions about what the people dealing with your child mean when they say “LD.” Being considered learning disabled in one setting may not mean the same thing as testing learning disabled in another. This can be an important point when you ask for accommodations.

Don’t automatically buy a blanket statement like “the answer is phonics” or “something’s wrong with his vision.” It is true that very systematic phonics instruction helps many children classified as learning disabled, but not all of them. Children whose difficulty is a poor sense of language sounds may not be able to use phonics very well unless they have specific training in the sound system of the language. It is true that some vision problems cause reading difficulties, but this does not mean that all people who test “learning disabled” have vision problems. At present, there is no one answer for all learning disabilities or all students. Learning disabilities are a group of problems that result in the same situation: a person has trouble learning in the usual academic ways even when their intelligence is normal. When you hear about materials or techniques, explore them, but do not consider any one method the total answer just because it claims to be.

Be careful where you get your information. There have been a lot of ideas about LD disproved by more research and follow-up on LD individuals. For example, researchers once thought more boys than girls were learning disabled, but now evidence suggests more boys are being identified but there are as many girls who actually have learning disabilities. People once thought learning disabilities were all visual perceptual problems; now there are recognized learning disabilities involving many processes. We used to hear that children outgrow learning disabilities; researchers now say true LD conditions are lifelong, but as people learn to cope with them, the signs are no longer obvious or the problems they cause decrease.

Although effort matters, an LD child needs to do more than “try harder.” There are problems that “trying harder” will not solve. Generally, a person with learning disabilities needs to try something different. The basis of LD instruction is trying different approaches until the right match between individual and teaching technique is found. Once a helpful technique is found, then effort can begin to produce progress.

In most cases, students who have reading and writing problems need to hang on and get a traditional high school diploma. The main alternative to a high school diploma is the GED, and the GED is exclusively a reading/writing/math test that will probably be quite difficult for a person with reading or math disabilities. Also, traditional high school curriculum offers some choices in course work, which the GED does not. It is possible to get accommodations in taking the GED test, but the other tests required to “prove” the disability are more exacting and stringent than those used in most public schools.

# **Four Strategies & Eighteen Ideas**

to motivate youngsters to be excited about literacy  
at home and at the library

By Jacque Wuertenberg

Children need to see, hear, and feel that family at home and friends at the library are saying and doing the same things regarding literacy. When this happens, youngsters begin to also believe literacy is important! Here are four specific strategies with 18 ideas family members and friends at the library may use to provide a community of support for readers and writers. The success of these four strategies depends on mutual understanding and cooperation between family members and friends of literacy.

- 1. Read Aloud Everyday.**
- 2. Write Everyday.**
- 3. Take Note of What Youngsters Say and Do.**
- 4. Periodically Post, Produce, and Publish.**

# 1. Read aloud to youngsters.

Read these things aloud:

- Favorite picture books. Rhythm, rhyme, and repetition assist with comprehension.
- Poems, riddles, nursery rhymes – try echo reading (you say it, the child repeats it) and choral reading (you and the child say it together).
- Songs. Sing favorite songs together. Write out the words to the song, one line on a page, add illustrations, and create your own homemade songbook.
- Chapter books. Your understanding of the book comes through in your voice and assists in comprehension.
- Books about a youngster’s interest. Look for a variety of genre within a topic. For example: horse lovers can read poetry of horses, biographies of horse trainers, how-to books on caring for horses, as well as fiction. Check out the reference book in the library called *From A to Zoo* for titles of books by topics.
- Letters and notes received. Say, “Listen to this!”
- Books on your own interest (gardening, fishing, sports, animals, etc.). Occasionally read aloud a passage you like. Start by saying, “Listen to this!” Youngsters need to see the adults who are important to them reading too. Often, when youngsters hear someone reading aloud, they also hear the love of reading as it comes through in that person’s voice.
- Read aloud the youngster’s writing. Again, say, “Listen to this!” Children know we read aloud from our favorite authors and when they hear us read aloud from their own writing, they begin to know what they write is important to us too.

## 2. Write everyday.

Each day try to find time to write and share your writing with youngsters. Try these ideas to encourage writing:

- Talk about yourself as a writer. Use the word “writing” as often as you can. Say, “I am writing this letter. I am writing this grocery list.” When you overhear your youngster saying something, say, “I like the way you said that. Please say it again so I can write it down and remember it.”
- Talk about youngsters as writers. When you see a child writing say, “I can see that you are writing!”
- Become a scribe for youngsters and write down exactly what is said, word for word. Read it back to the youngster by saying, “Here is what you just wrote.” The scribe serves to record the ideas and the scribe’s job is to transcribe – get the ideas down as quickly as possible.
- Write notes to youngsters. Ask questions to encourage youngsters to write back to you.
- Respond to writing by reading for content. Take the child’s piece of writing with two hands to remind you to acknowledge the importance of the writer’s ideas.
- When you read a child’s piece, emphasize content rather than focusing on errors. (Copyediting is only necessary when a writing piece is being prepared for publication or going public. Respond first to content to assure the writer knows he or she has been heard.)
- Respond to a piece of writing in the following order:
  1. Mirroring - I read that your dog’s name is Rusty.
  2. Questioning -What are some things Rusty likes to do?
  3. Connecting - I have a Basenji dog that climbs trees and doesn’t bark. (Connect only after mirroring and questioning since connecting takes the emphasis away from the writer.)

### **3. Take note of what youngsters say & do.**

- Listen attentively to youngsters by looking at them when they are talking.
- Identify something the youngster just said. Say, “That was well said! Tell me again what you just said so that I can write it down.”
- Listen and write down what the youngster has just said and then read it back by saying, “Here’s what you said!”
- Next, post it on the refrigerator door, or place it in a 3” x 5” or 4” x 6” stand-up acrylic frame and feature it on a specially marked bookshelf in the library.

Youngsters begin to believe they have something to say when their language is given time and presence. Children will think to themselves, “Well, if you like what I just said, wait until you hear this.” Watch for a time when you’re not around and the youngster writes down another idea for you to read. When this happens, congratulate yourself on the child’s achievement of a literacy milestone.

## 4. Periodically Post, Produce, Publish

**Post.** Feature writing by placing it in special places:

- Place writing and art anywhere it is accessible for others to read.
- Matte and mount pieces to add quality and presence.
- Purchase three ring binders with clear plastic sleeves to keep pieces of writing together.
- Help youngster get into the habit of dating writing pieces, as well as signing each piece.

**Produce.** Showcase important pieces by bringing language to life. Here are some ways to accomplish this:

- Add background music as writing is being read.
- Create a reader's theatre script by adapting the piece of writing. Omit the "he said" and "she said," add a narrator's part, and assign parts for each of the other characters. The readers stand with their backs to the audience until they are "on stage," at which time they turn and face the audience and read their part.
- Create a choral reading by assigning group or solo parts to the youngster's piece.
- Put on a puppet show based on the youngster's writing piece.
- Rewrite a favorite song to the piece of writing. (The song, "Oh My Darling Clementine" works well.)

**Publish.** Bind pages together:

- Add an "About the Author" page and a "Readers' Comments" page.
- Among many other things, you will have created a book for others to read as well as a family heirloom. Perhaps the library may feature "Our Own Young Authors" section.

# How to use the ideas from “You Can Be an Author”

The thirteen pages in the following booklet contain over 35 ideas arranged in two columns. Start with the left-hand column and read from left to right to move from ideas and instructions to the examples. The ideas and examples can also be mixed and matched. All are illustrating, writing, and publishing ideas youngsters can immediately put into action.

These pages will spark ideas to help youngsters become actively involved in language production – an important part of the literacy process. Suggested supplies are available in most grocery, hardware, or feed stores in your area. An index with page reference assists you in locating special interests, techniques, and strategies. You can also use individual pages as handouts to introduce ideas a few at a time, or in a series of group experiences.

These ideas are presented by Jacque Wuertenberg. Please feel free to contact her with comments and questions. Jacque is also interested in any specific examples you can provide her and can be reached at:

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# **You Can Be an Author**

**Ideas for young authors  
and their friends**

**By Jacque Wuertenberg**

Masking Tape Resist Art  
 "Q is for Duck"  
 Laminating for Durability

# You can be an author!

Here are the Things  
 You Need:

**Illustrate**

**Masking Tape Resist**

**You'll Need**

- masking tape
- construction paper
- brush
- tempera paint

**Here's How**

1. Make a design by placing cut or torn masking tape on paper
2. Paint paper with watered down tempera paint. Let paint dry.
3. Pull up masking tape. The tape forms a design and keeps the colors from running into each other.

Here are the Things  
 That Can Happen:

**Illustrate**

When you write about the things you love...

... try Masking Tape Resist to illustrate.

**write**

Elting, Mary and Mike Folsom. **Q Is For Duck.**  
 New York: Houghton Mifflin/Clarion Books, 1980.  
 In this unique alphabet book, we eagerly turn each page to satisfy our curiosity. Did you know ...

"B is for Dog. Why?  
 Because a dog **B**arks ...

**I** is for **M**osquito. Why?  
 Because Mosquito bites **I**tch ...

**N** is for **C**ats. Why?  
 Because a cat **N**aps."

**write**

Nancy George and Willie Brown, two airplane enthusiasts, had fun writing their own version of **Q Is For Duck**. They wrote about airplanes:

... **F** is for SR-71 Blackbird  
 because it's so **FAST**!

... **H** is for F-104 Starfighter  
 because it **HOWLS**!

... **S** is for F-14 Tomcat  
 because it's so **SMART**!  
 (It can track 24 planes at the same time)

**Publish**

A roll laminator will assist you in making a long hanging mural out of individual papers. Insert the pages to be laminated with about  $\frac{1}{2}$ " space between sheets. Do not cut the pages apart. Put a brad at the top for hanging.

**Publish**

Laminating is available at most media production centers.

The plastic coating gives your work a professional quality.

Sketching Ideas  
People I Know ...  
File Cards and Publishing

# You can be an author!

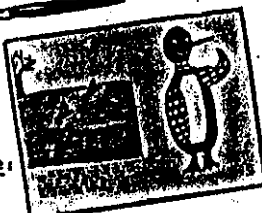
## Here are the Things You Need:

**Illustrate**

You can draw about your ideas!

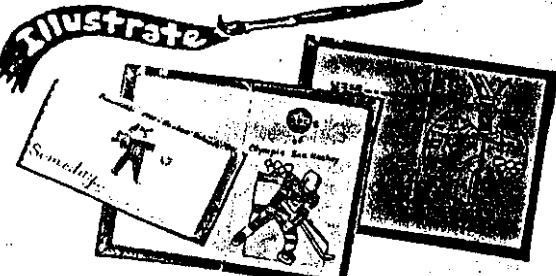
Supplies needed include:

colored pencils	chalk	pencils
water colors	crayons	charcoal
magic markers		
paint		



## Here are the Things That Can Happen:

**Illustrate**




Sketches from student-authored books.

**write**

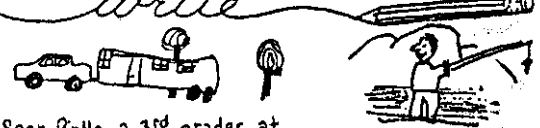
You can write about the special people in your life. Grandparents, and favorite aunts and uncles often rate as the chosen celebrities.

Mrs. Nolte's fourth grade class in Wilton, Iowa wrote the class book, Older People We Love. Kris Flake's page reads:

My grandpa is very wise, caring, understanding and loving. He takes time to listen. He is especially special to me because of the way he smiles at me.



**write**



Sean Pirtle, a 3<sup>rd</sup> grader at Coverdale Elementary School in St. Charles, Missouri wrote:

**A Special Man**


"My grandpa is Thomas Samuel Cooper... He has many hobbies. He likes to fish... He also likes to go camping..."

**Publish**

File cards come in different colors and sizes, and can also be laminated and bound with a comb binder as well as rings, staples and yarn.

**Publish**

**File Cards**



1. Write a story on 3x5 or 4x6 cards.
2. Bind with rings, staples, or yarn.


Vegetable Printing Art

"I Never Saw..."

Staples and Tape for Binding Books

# You can be an author!


## Here are the Things You Need:

**Illustrate** 

**You'll Need**

- assorted vegetables
- potato\*
- pepper
- squash
- beet
- paper
- paint or ink

**Vegetable Prints**

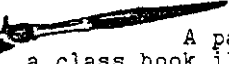


**Here's How**


1. Cut vegetable into various sizes
2. Dip pieces into paint or ink.
3. Print on paper.

\* potato may be carved into a variety of shapes!


## Here are the Things That Can Happen:

**Illustrate** 


A page from a class book illustrated by grade 8 students in Ontario, Canada



Grass, trees, people, and hearts go together.


**write** 

Judson, Jerome. **I Never Saw....** Chicago: Albert Whitman and Company, 1975.



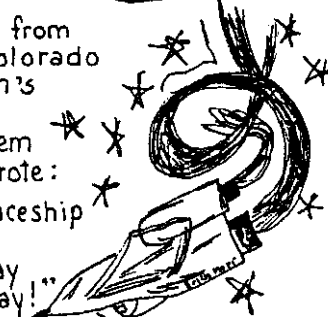
Vivid artwork sets a fascinating dream-like tone for Judson's verse describing images he's never seen.


I've watched the clouds for hours and hours lying still upon my back but never saw an eagle pass with wings so wide and black.

**write** 

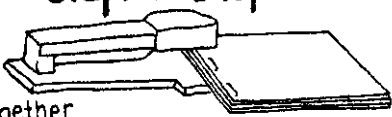
Todd and Erick Morr from Colorado Springs, Colorado used Jerome Judson's **I Never Saw** as a starter for their poem about space. They wrote:

"I've never seen a spaceship  
Doing a flip  
While finding its way  
Through the Milky Way!"

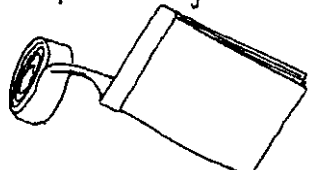



**Publish** 

**Staples and Tape**




1. Staple book together.
2. Use masking tape or colored mystic tape to cover staples.



**Publish** 

A book called **The Art Museum**



Stapled and bound with colored mystic tape


mystic tape →

written by Sarah and Zachary Frankel

Creating stencils  
Asking Questions  
Accordion Books

# You can be an author!

## Here are the Things You Need:

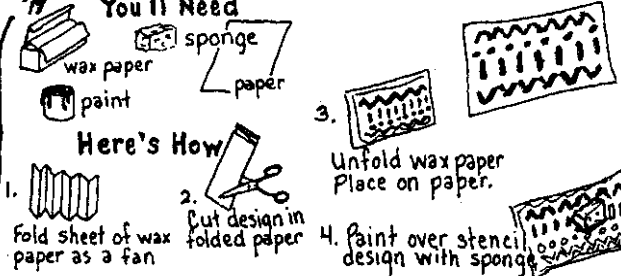
**Illustrate** 

**Accordion Stencils**


**You'll Need**  
wax paper, sponge, paper, paint

**Here's How**

1. Fold sheet of wax paper as a fan.
2. Cut design in folded paper.
3. Unfold wax paper. Place on paper.
4. Paint over stencil design with sponge.



## Here are the Things That Can Happen:





**Illustrate** 

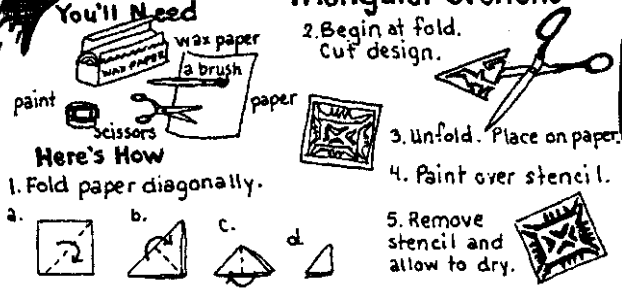
**Triangular Stencils**

**You'll Need**  
wax paper, paper, paint, brush, scissors

**Here's How**

1. Fold paper diagonally.
2. Begin at fold. Cut design.
3. Unfold. Place on paper.
4. Paint over stencil.
5. Remove stencil and allow to dry.

a.  b.  c.  d. 



*write* 

Burningham, John. Would you Rather...  
New York; T.Y. Crowell, 1978.

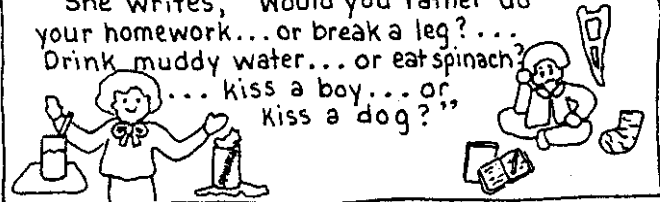
A book of questions giving two choices, both of which are often difficult. Would you rather... or Would you rather?

You'll love the illustrations!

*write* 

Jean Drysdale from Wedgewood School in Florissant, Missouri made up her own list of choices. You'd enjoy her version of **Would You Rather...?**

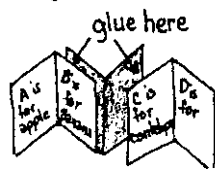
She writes, "Would you rather do your homework... or break a leg?... Drink muddy water... or eat spinach?... kiss a boy... or, Kiss a dog?"



**Publish**  **Accordion Books**

1. Fold several uniform sized sheets of paper in half.\*
2. Glue the backs of the sheets together.

\* Several different colored sheets of construction paper make a colorful and sturdy background!



**Publish**  **Easy Accordion Books**

Fold long stiff sheets of paper like an accordion.




Write, illustrate, let the story unfold!

Stand outs/Pop up ideas  
 Bumper Stickers as Writing Ideas  
 Stitchery and Making Books



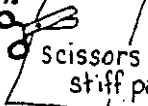
# You can be an author!

## Here are the Things You Need:

## Here are the Things That Can Happen:


**Illustrate**  **Stand Outs**


**You'll Need**

 scissors  glue  
 stiff paper




**Here's How**

1. Glue "stand out" object to stiff paper.
2. Cut it out.
3. Cut 3 or 4 strips of paper 2½ inches by ¼ inch.
4. Fold strips accordion style.
5. Glue strips to stand out and to background.



**Illustrate**  **Stand Outs**



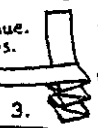
**You'll Need**

 stiff paper  glue  scissors

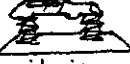
**Here's How**

1. Make 3 or 4 "springs."

For each spring:  
 Cut 2 strips of paper (2x5 inches)  
 Place strips in "L" shape. Secure with glue.  
 Fold back and forth, alternating strips.

2. Cut out object or figure from story.
3. Glue figure to paper springs.
4. Mount on story page with glue.

side view 

*write* 

Merrill, Jean and Frances Gruse Scott.  
 The Bumper Sticker Book, Chicago, Albert Whitman and Company, 1973.

Here's a book to which we can all relate and add our own ideas -

"I see a Skylark  
 With a bumper sticker on it,  
 And the bumper sticker says -  
 Land a Lady on the Moon . . .  
 . . . And on the brand new Vega  
 The Bumper sticker says -  
 Support your local bumper sticker store."



*write* 

Use the Bumper Sticker pattern lots of ways!

Make your own book of Bumper Stickers:


CB Bumper Stickers . . .  
 Friendly Bumper Stickers . . .


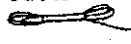
or write The ABC's of Bumper Stickers!

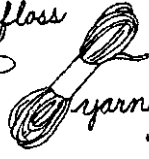


Begin a "What If" book:


"If buildings (or people or animals) had bumper stickers . . .!"

Design your own T-shirt, buttons, or sweatshirt. What messages would they give?

**Publish**  Have fun with materials that work well for stitching books. Try:

dental floss  embroidery thread 

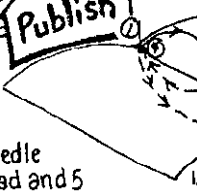
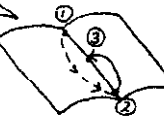

yarn  cord  fishing line 

**Publish**  **Stitchery**

Use a needle and thread and 5 easy stitches, or make the 3 holes and use heavy cord, yarn, or colored string.


Stitch:

1. Down at the edge.
2. Up the other edge.
3. Down at the middle
4. Up the 1<sup>st</sup> edge
5. Down the middle
6. Tie a knot.






# You can be an author!


Here are the Things  
 You Need:

**Illustrate** 

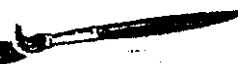
**You'll Need**  
 a knife  
 paper  
 gum erasers  
 paint

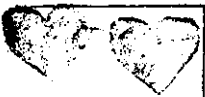
**Eraser Printing** 

**Here's How**  
 1. Use erasers "as is," or cut into shapes or designs.  
 2. Dip into paint (or ink)  
 3. Print on a sheet of paper.




Here are the Things  
 That Can Happen:

**Illustrate** 

**LISTEN ~** 

*with your heart.*

From Lynn Hallquist Anchorage, Alaska


*write* 

**shapes**

*YOU CAN MAKE WORDS GO AROUND AN OUTLINE.*

*YOU CAN FILL A SHAPE WITH WORDS*

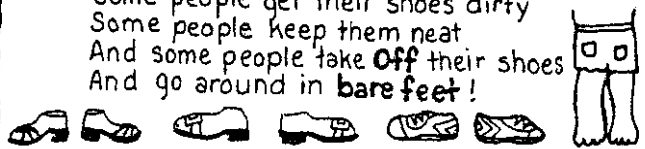
*It's fun to illustrate your page in the shape of your idea.*


*write* 

**You Can Make Up Your Own Ideas**


Matt McCarthy, a student at Mark Twain Elementary School in Florissant, Missouri wrote: **THE SHOE BOOK**

Some people get their shoes dirty  
 Some people keep them neat  
 And some people take **off** their shoes  
 And go around in **bare feet!**





**Publish** 

**Shape Covers**

1. Choose an object relevant to the story 


2. Cut its shape out of construction paper, leaving one straight edge.


3. Insert pages! 

**Publish** 

**Shape Books**

1. Cut the cover and the pages in the shape of an object from the story.

Be sure to leave a straight edge for binding! 

2. Illustrate and rewrite the story on the shape pages. 

3. Fill in the details on the cover.

4. Bind it!

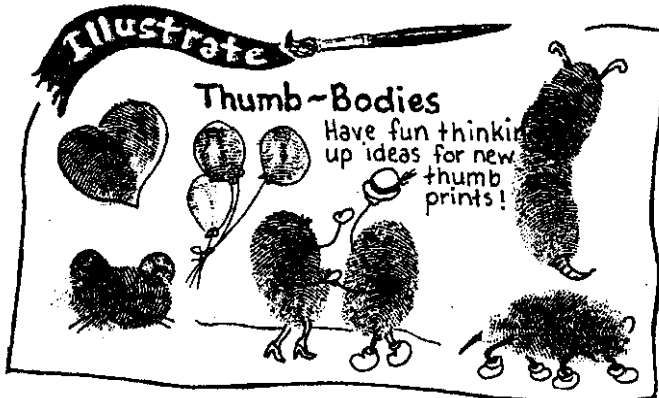
Thumb Print Art

What is a...

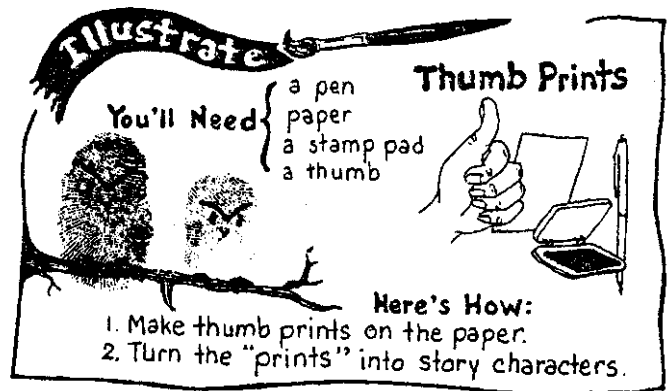
Chicken Rings for Binding Books

# You can be an author!

## Here are the Things You Need:



## Here are the Things That Can Happen:



*write*

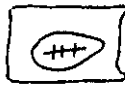
Glenn Baumgarth, a 5<sup>th</sup> grader at Robinwood School in Florissant, Missouri, created his own writing pattern. He wrote:

### Fingerprints of Different Sport Players

These are the fingerprints of...



Minnesota fats



Pat Tilly



Pelé



Dr. "J"

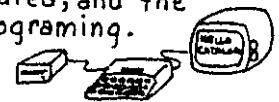
*write*

**You can write about what you know and care about!**

Dean Davis, a 6<sup>th</sup> grader at Lake Highland Elementary School in Dallas, Texas wrote

### What is a Computer?

Complete with a glossary, this book on computers explains the three main parts of a computer's memory, how it is used and measured, and the language used in programming.



**Publish**

### Chicken Rings \*

\* And turkey bands and hog rings

Chicken rings, turkey bands, and hog rings are available at local feed stores. They make excellent inexpensive binders.



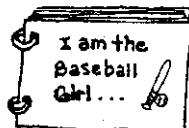
chicken rings



turkey bands



hog rings



**Publish**

chicken rings




Chicken rings come in different colors, are easy to assemble and provide an easy way to bind books.

Tissue Paper Art  
 ABC's of...  
 Dry Mount Book Covers

# You can be an author!

Here are the Things  
 You Need:

Here are the Things  
 That Can Happen:

**Illustrate** 

**Tissue Paper Painting**

**You'll Need**

- tissue paper (or crepe paper)
- white glue
- paper container for water

**Here's How**


- Mix solution of 1/2 water 1/2 glue
- Dip tissue paper into glue solution. Use as a brush. Glue solution will release color from the tissue paper.

Pieces of tissue paper may be left on the picture to add texture.

**Illustrate** 

**A cloth bound book illustrated with tissue paper**

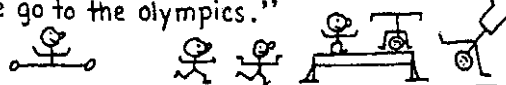
Illustration of a book cover with a rainbow and a page with text: "Sometimes when I am alone... by Scott Wheelwright, July 1, 1980"


**write** 

Christi Garber, a gymnast and a 5<sup>th</sup> grader in Mrs. Foster's class at Chavez Elementary School in Albuquerque, New Mexico, wrote:

**The ABC's of Gymnastics**

"A is for apparatus  
 Apparatus is the equipment the gymnast uses to work on, so she can do well and maybe go to the olympics."





**write** 

ABC books can be written on any subject and can be adapted to various skill levels.

**The ABC's of Horses** can demonstrate considerable knowledge of horses:


"A is for Appaloosa"  
 or it can convey a deep love of horses:  
 "A is for Always. I will always love horses!" from Martha Bond



**Publish** 

**A cloth covered book made with DRY MOUNT**

titled  
**The ABC's of Olympic Ice Hockey**



by  
 Scott Wheelwright

**Publish** 

**You'll need**

dry mount:

- 1 sheet - paper size; 1 sheet - cloth cover size. (available through photographic supply stores)
- paper: several sheets for pages - double the page size.
- cardboard: 2 light weight pieces: cover size
- cloth: Covering: 1" larger than 4
- an iron

**Here's how**

- Place large sheet of dry mount on cloth (wrong side) Center 2 sheets of cardboard.
- Fold corners. Iron them down.
- Iron in place.
- Place small dry mount sheet on top.
- Insert pages. Secure by ironing top sheet to dry mount.




Collage ideas

I am...

Different Book Covers

# You can be an author!

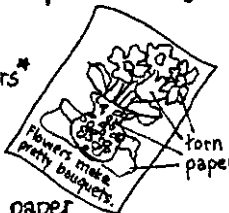
## Here are the Things You Need:

**Illustrate**  **Torn Paper Collage**


You'll need  
construction paper in assorted colors\*  
glue  
paper

**Here's How**  
Tear shapes out of construction paper  
Glue them down to form figures and/or objects.

\*wallpaper and wrapping paper provide texture and variety.



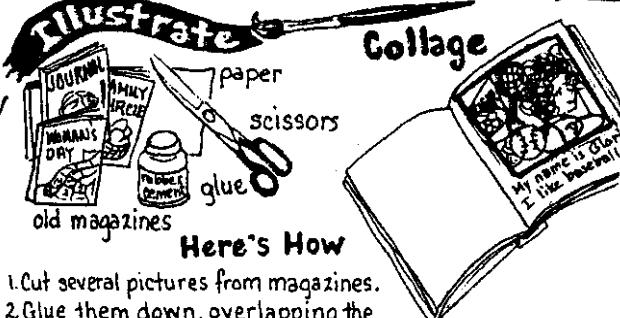
## Here are the Things That Can Happen:


**Illustrate**  **Collage**

paper  
scissors  
glue

old magazines


**Here's How**  
1. Cut several pictures from magazines.  
2. Glue them down, overlapping the edges so that little or no paper shows through.




**write** 

Adoff, Arnold. I Am The Running Girl.  
New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1979.



The running girl says,  
"poppa plays tennis  
and my sisters swim  
and jog and walk  
but  
i am the running girl  
in the family"  
Even nonrunners will "feel" the experience  
of running in these vivid poems.




**write** 


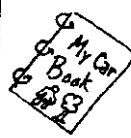
Change the pattern of I am the Running Girl  
to write about yourself, a special friend,  
or even a pet.

Do you know -  
... a football boy?  
... a writing girl?  
... a championship dog?  
... a 4-wheel drive kid?  
... or a CB'er?





**Publish**  **Contact Covers**


You may cover a hand-decorated cover with clear contact paper to better preserve it; or use patterned contact paper for a colorful cover!

1. Cover light weight card board with contact paper.
2. Insert pages.
3. Bind with rings or a comb binding.

**Publish** 

The different designs of contact paper provide interesting book covers.



Crayon Resist Art

My Name is ...

Comb Bindings for Books

# You can be an author!

## Here are the Things You Need:

*Illustrate*

### You'll Need



point construction paper  
crayons

### Crayon Resist

\* works especially well for snow scenes.

### Here's How

1. Draw a picture. Color it brightly (press firmly)

2. Paint over the crayon with white paint

3. The crayon will "resist" the paint, causing a snowflake effect.

## Here are the Things That Can Happen:

*Illustrate*

After a snow storm in Livonia, Michigan, students wrote a book called

*A Snowy Day*



illustrated with crayon resist

*write*



Write about who you are!

*CHRIS*

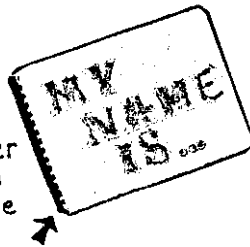
Start with your name and tell the whole story: How your name came to be ... who gave it to you ...

*write*

Shelly Osborne at Longfellow School in Alameda, California produced a class book called *My Name IS...* that reflects the multicultural composition of her second grade class. Each page has a self portrait with an explanation of his or her given name. "My name is Desi. My mom and dad named me. My name means 'desired one.'" Shelly added her own page, explaining how her aunt suggested naming her Sheldeen, after her father, Sheldon.

*Publish*

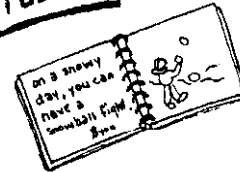
Children are impressed when you bring in a bestseller and it's their book and it doesn't fall apart the first time it's read.



Plastic comb binders are attractive and durable.

*Publish*

Comb Binding



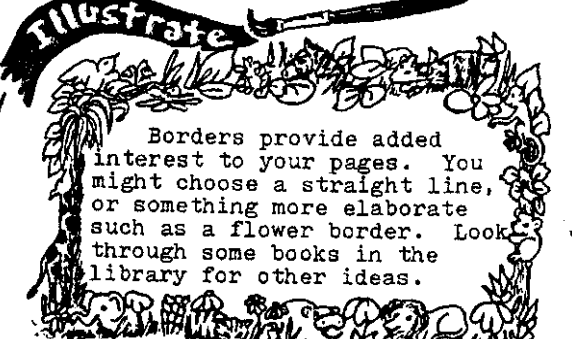
Comb binders are inexpensive and are available at most material production centers. They give a professional look to any book.

Borders on pages  
Counting ideas  
End Papers

# You can be an author!

## Here are the Things You Need:

**Illustrate**

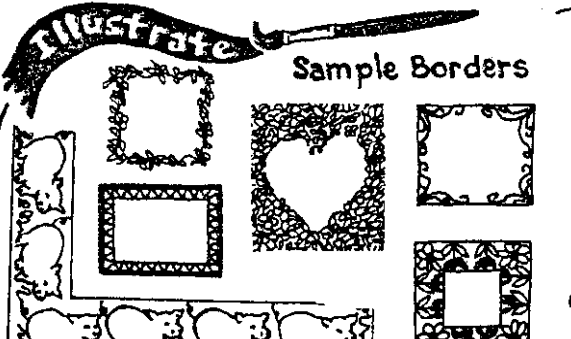


**BORDERS**

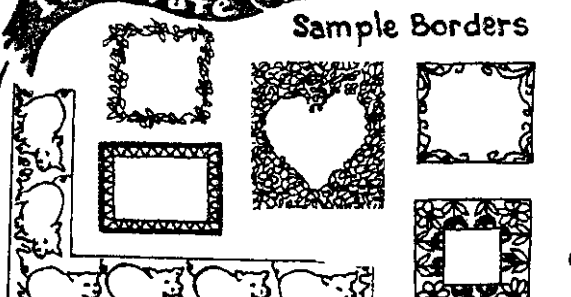
Borders provide added interest to your pages. You might choose a straight line, or something more elaborate such as a flower border. Look through some books in the library for other ideas.

## Here are the Things That Can Happen:

**Illustrate**



**Sample Borders**



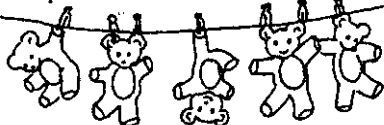
*write*

Gretz, Susanna. Teddy Bears 1 to 10. Chicago: Follett Publishing Co., 1969.

This delightful book amuses us with its colorful simplicity: "3 dirty old teddy bears

4 teddy bears in the wash

5 teddy bears on the clothesline..."



*write*

You can write about what you know about!

Mark Paiste wrote I Like Turtles and his classmates said that he really does. Mark says,

"I like box turtles

I like map turtles



I like snapping turtles... painted turtles and sea turtles. I just like turtles."

Matthew Lakofsky, a fifth grader in Pennsylvania wrote: I Like Basketball

I like passing... dribbling... shooting... winning... the sound of the crowd cheering.



**Publish**

End Papers

**End Papers**

**End Papers** -- the inside front and back covers, and the first and last pages -- are often illustrated.

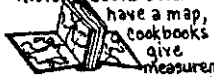
You can decorate the end papers of your book.

Here are three ways to try:

1. **Choose a pattern or illustration from your book and repeat it**



2. **Give information.** Social Studies and history books often have a map, a book gives measurements.



3. **Create a mood.** Choose a particular color or design to set the tone.



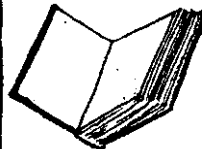
**Publish**

**End Paper Suggestions**

There are many possibilities!

Here's an example with one book.

If your book is about **BEARS** and you have brown bears on the cover, you could...



Use brown end papers

Repeat the figure of a bear



Repeat the title, Bears



Background Paper Art  
 "Some Things You Should Know About...  
 Unique Publications

# You can be an author!

## Here are the Things You Need:

## Here are the Things That Can Happen:

**Illustrate** **Marbled Paper**

pan of water, paper, paint thinner, oil paint

1. Thin the oil paint.
2. Place drops of oil paint in the water.
3. Stir
4. Lay paper on the water.
5. Remove paper and allow it to dry.
6. Bind into a book.

a cover that looks like **MARBLE**

**Illustrate** **Bubble Print Cover**

**You'll Need**  
 a straw, a bowl, liquid detergent or shampoo, paint or food coloring, the binding of your choice

**Here's How**

1. Add several drops of detergent or shampoo to water.
2. Add a few drops of food coloring or paint. Stir.
3. Blow into straw, causing bubbles to rise above the bowl.
4. Touch paper to bubbles. Bubbles will "pop," creating a marble effect.
5. Bind into a book!

*write*

Batherman, Muriel. Some Things You Should Know About My Dog. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1976.

"When people ask, 'What kind of dog is that?' I tell them, 'He's an extraordinary dog!'"

Batherman gives details and examples:  
 "He always follows me; He is faithful. He isn't afraid of the dark; he is courageous..."

*write*

A group of youngsters in Hazelwood, Missouri had fun writing:  
**Some Things You Should Know About Our School**  
 They wrote:  
 "We like our school.  
 When people say, 'Tell us about your school,' we say, 'Our school is great. Our teacher takes us on field trips; she is adventurous. Our custodian got our ball off the roof; he is helpful.'"

**Publish** **Unique Publications**

Make your own:

wrapping paper, greeting cards, mobiles and murals.

**Publish** **Newspaper**

**BITS OF CLAY**  
 Clay School Newspaper  
 Clay Students Give Program Share Books  
 The 6th grade class will give a puppet

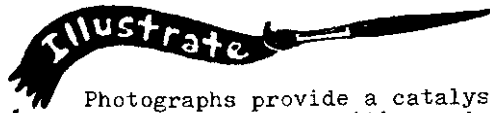
**THE FAMILY PORTRAIT**  
 Mother's Day Edition  
 Special  
 Eddie's Poem  
 Mothers are great because they are always there when you need...

\* Try a special Mother's Day edition.

Photograph and Art  
Caption Ideas  
Peel Off Labels and Publishing

# You can be an author!

## Here are the Things You Need:



Photographs provide a catalyst for writing. Arrange your favorite pictures in a photo album, add captions and you'll have a BEST SELLER!



## Here are the Things That Can Happen:



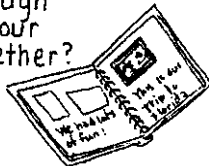
• Photographs



*write*

In the same way that George Mendoza added captions to Norman Rockwell's paintings, youngsters can add captions to other paintings, to cartoons, to magazine pictures . . . or . . .

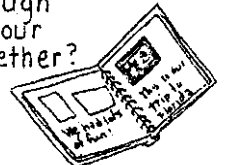
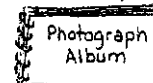
How about going through the photograph album of your last trip or family get-together?



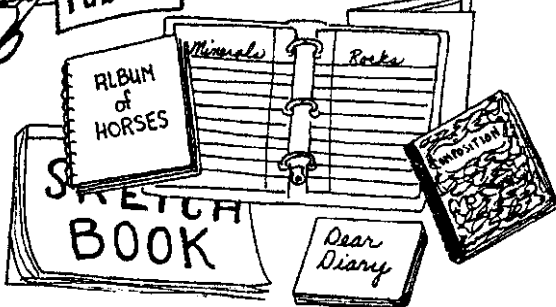
*write*

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*Publish*



*Publish*

### Peel Off Labels

White or colored peel off labels may be purchased at stationery stores. They are inexpensive and easy to use.

Labels come in various sizes and shapes. Choose the size that best fits your story. You may want to use one size for the pictures and another size for the story. Mount and bind.



# You Can Be an Author

## Index

<b>Illustrating Ideas</b>		<b>Publishing Ideas</b>	
Background Paper	6	Accordion Books	1
Bubble Prints		Albums	8
Marbled paper		Bindings	
Borders	2	Chicken Rings	11
Collage	3	Comb Bindings	4
Crayon Resist	4	Cord	10
Masking Tape Resist	7	Dental Floss	10
Photographs	8	Drymount	12
Pop Ups	10	Embroidery Thread	10
Prints		Fishing Line	10
Bubble Prints	6	Hogs Rings	11
Eraser Prints	5	Rings	11
Thumb Prints	11	Staples	13
Vegetable Prints	13	Stitchery	10
Shape Books	5	Staples	13
Sketching	9	Tape	13
Stand Outs	10	Turkey Bands	11
Stencils		Yarn	10
Accordion	1	Contact Paper	3
Triangular	1	Cards	
Tissue Paper	12	File Cards	9
Torn Paper	3	Greetings	6
		End Papers	2
		Laminating	7
		Mobiles	6
		Murals	6
		Newspapers	6
		Peel Off Labels	8
		Shape Books	5
		Sketch Books	8
		Unique Publications	6
		Wrapping Paper	6

<b>Writing Ideas</b>		Sean Pirtle	
ABCs	12	<i>A Special Man</i>	
Adoff, Arnold	3	Missouri, St. Charles	5,8
Alaska, Anchorage	5	Matt McCarthy	5
Lynn Hallquist		Mark Twain Elementary	
Listen with Your Heart		<i>The Shoe Book</i>	
California, Alameda	4	Bindy Wuertenberg,	8
Longfellow Elementary		Horse Photos	
Shelly Osborne, Teacher		Missouri, St. Louis	12, 7
<i>My Name is...</i>		Martha Bond	12
Captions	8	<i>ABC's of Horses</i>	
Colorado, Co Springs	13	N. George, W. Brown	7
Morr, Todd and Erick		<i>F is for Airplane</i>	
<i>I Never Saw a Spaceship</i>		Mendoza, George	8
Elting, Mary	7	New Mexico, Albuquerque	12
Fingerprints of...	11	Chavez Elementary	
Gretz, Susan	2	<i>The ABC's of Gymnastics</i>	
<i>I am the Running Girl</i>	3	Oregon, Bond	12
<i>I like Turtles</i>	2	Tom Wrightman	
Mike Paiste		<i>Sometime When I'm Alone</i>	
Michigan, Livonia		Pennsylvania	2
Frankel, S. and Z.	13	Matt Lakofsky	
<i>The Art Museum</i>		<i>I Like Basketball</i>	
Morr, Becky, Teacher	4	Pennsylvania	12
<i>A Snowy Day</i>		Scott Wheelwright	
Missouri, Florissant	1	<i>ABC's of Olympic</i>	
<i>Would You Rather</i>		<i>Ice Hockey</i>	
Jean Drysdale		<i>Q is for Duck</i>	7
Wedgewood Elementary		Shapes Books	5
Missouri, Hazelwood	6	<i>Teddy Bears 1-10</i>	2
<i>Something you Need to</i>		Texas, Lake Highland	11
<i>Know about our School</i>		Dean Davis	
Missouri, St. Charles	9	<i>What is a Computer?</i>	
Coverdale Elementary		<i>What is...?</i>	11