**Leaping** into L i t e r a c y

***Reading + Writing Together = Literacy Success for All***  **May, 2015**

 South Elementary School

**Book Picks**

Jeanine Cambra, Reading Specialist

**Keep Reading!**

*Salsa Stories (Lulu*

 *Delacre)*

The gift of a blank notebook

 inspires Carmen Teresa to collect

 stories about her family’s Hispanic heritage. As she listens to the tales, she hears a common thread—food. This book of fictional

short stories includes recipes youngsters can make and sample. (Also available in Spanish.)

*Do Not Open (John Farndon)*

Readers who love a great secret will enjoy this encyclopedia-style book. Go behind the scenes to learn about lost treasures, satellite surveillance, advertising tricks, and much more. Each page uses illustrations, diagrams,

and photos to explore the facts.

*The History of Money: From Bartering to Banking (Martin Jenkins)* How are shells, stones, plastic cards, and paper alike? They’ve all been used as currency. This fun historical

tour of money begins in the Ice Age and continues to present day. Along the way, it makes complex topics like interest, exchange rates, and inflation easy to understand.

** *Frostborn (Lou Anders)* A sinister plot forces 12-year-old Karn to flee his family farm. He’ll need all the strategy he learned from his favorite game—Thrones and Bones—and help from his new half-giant friend

to outwit trolls, zombies, and a fire breathing

dragon. Book 1 of the Thrones and Bones fantasy.

*Just One Bite (Lola Schaefer)* Your youngster will learn about the eating habits of 11 animals in this nonfiction book. There’s

the whale that gulps down an entire giant

squid and the butterfly that swallows just three

drops of nectar. Each animal and its food are drawn to scale so your child can see exactly

**More reading practice equals better reading**

Youngsters who read for pleasure learn more and tend to be more successful in school. And when better to enjoy books than the lazy days of summer? Try these creative twists for motivating your child to read while school is out (and beyond).

 **Set the scene**

Help your youngster pitch a tent or spread a blanket out back so he can read beneath the stars. He could gather a flashlight and books with a night theme (non-fiction, nocturnal animals, a stargazing guide). Or suggest that he read “in the pool.” Let him fill an inflatable pool with pillows and stuffed animals instead of water—he’ll have a cozy place to curl up with books set at an ocean or a lake.

**Read across the map**

Start by printing out a map of the

United States or the world. Then, oura encourage your child to read books that allow him to color in a state or country. What qualifies? A story set in the state or country, author born there, or even just a mention of the location. See how many states or countries your youngster can fill in by the end of the summer.

 **Share reading material**

Make it a tradition for your family to collect fun and interesting “shorts” to read together. Give each person a large envelope to fill with things he reads each week: magazine and newspaper stories, comic strips and comic books, articles printed from the Internet, or mail. At the end of the week, read your favorites to

each other. Empty your envelopes, and begin gathering new material.

**When you’re looking for summer activities, consider outings**

**that involve reading, writing, and language.**

*Attend a poetry reading* at a coffee shop or bookstore.

Your child may be inspired to read more poems

by the speaker or to write her own poetry.

*Try out for a community play.* If your youngster gets a part,

she’ll need to do a lot of reading—and speaking—as she memorizes her lines.

*Join a Scrabble club* to work on spelling and vocabulary. Check libraries or

community centers, or look for clubs at *scrabbleplayers.org*.

*Listen to a storyteller* at a fair or festival. Encourage your child to experiment

with storytelling when you get home.



**Literacy at Home**

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**Let your little ones work on fine-motor skills this summer for better handwriting in**

**the fall. Play these games together:**

This homemade version of Jenga can improve your child’s hand-eye coordination. Cut four sponges into four strips

each. Take turns stacking the pieces to build a tower. Keep going until one player’s piece knocks over the tower—then start again.

Strengthen your little one’s pencil grip with this idea. Give each player a clean, empty squirt bottle (for example, a mustard or ketchup bottle) and a cotton ball. Pick a starting line and a finish line. Squeeze your containers to blow air on your cotton balls, “racing” to move the balls from a starting point to the finish line.

**Writing Techniques**

***Q.*** *I’m looking for*

 *inexpensive ways to help our*

 *daughter build a book collection.*

 *What do you suggest?*

***A****.* Warmer weather means more yard sales

 and garage sales—and more chances to add used books to your daughter’s shelves. Shop together so she can pick out books she’ll want to read. Any time of year, you’ll find bargains at used bookstores, thrift shops, library book sales, and online bookstores. You could also ask relatives and neighbors to

 pass down books their children have

 outgrown. It’s nice to get a few new books,

 too. For inexpensive ones, attend the

 school book fairs during the year and

 watch for the Scholastic book-club

 catalogs that your daughter

 brings home to your

 collection.

**Be a Family Historian and**

**Boost Literacy in a Fun Way!**

Q ***Q.*** *We’re taking several car trips this summer. How can*

*we encourage our children to read on the road rather*

*than watch videos?*

***A***. Instead of taking electronics with you, try packing a *reading goody bag* for your kiddos. Books are a must-have! Include titles that are fun to read to each other, such as choose-your-own adventure stories. Add colorful bookmarks, too. You could also put in travel brochures about the

places you’re going. For instance, they might look at pictures and read about a children’s museum or a pick-your-own farm near their grandparents’ house. Include maps, and ask your kids to help you

navigate. As you pass a sign for a town or a landmark, they could try to spot it on the map. Finally, toss in decks of trivia cards. You don’t need to play a formal game—just use them to ask each other questions. It will help pass the time, and your children will practice reading while learning new facts.

**Literacy at Home**

**“Goody Bags” for Reading**

Work with your child and become the family historians . . it can be a fun way to spark your child’s interest in nonfiction writing—and build her research skills, too. Suggest these ideas.

**Solve family mysteries.** How did Grandpa get his nickname? Why does your family bake bread every July 22? Let your son or daughter interview family members to find out. He or she can question them in person, by phone, or through letters or emails. Then, have your child write up what he or she discovers and share it.

**Uncover stories using documents.** Your child could flesh out family history by asking relatives to share *primary sources*—old letters, birth certificates, marriage licenses, newspaper articles, and other documents. For instance, if he or she’s writing about an uncle who won the state spelling bee, he or she might cite information from an article about the event.

**Create a record for the future.** Today’s events are tomorrow’s history. Encourage your child to collect current

family stories in a journal or blog for future generations to read. As he or she decides what to write about, encourage him or her to include details her future self would want to know, such as why she wanted to play the violin.

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