

Reading Aloud

There was a wonderful article in **The Wall Street Journal** in the Books section dated July 11-12 written by Meghan Cox Gurdon who writes about children's books for the Weekend Journal.

She writes of the joy of reading to her five children every day, but also acknowledges that as children get older it becomes more difficult: the schedule gets busier; it is harder "to get literary classics into children's minds before they see the Hollywood variants"; and because the ever present technology beckons.

Kate DiCamillo, a Newbery Medalist, says, "I do think that people, in the rush and clamor and get-things-done-ness of daily life, need to be reminded about what reading aloud can do." Sitting together with your children provides a warm, togetherness, an opportunity for shared in-jokes and a common cultural understanding. Unlike tech devices like iPads and Kindles which separate families, each with his or her own device, reading together draws families together emotionally as well as physically. Often both parents enjoy being involved in family reading time. Audio books, iPads and the like have no knowledge of your child; they can't share a joke or ask a question or explain the meaning of an unknown word.

When you read books that are beyond the child's ability to read themselves, you are building vocabulary. You are modeling a love of books and passing that on to your children who are then more apt to go on and enjoy reading throughout their lives. When you read the classics to your children before they see the movie, you give your children an opportunity to imagine the characters and make them their own, instead of the way Walt Disney's creators imagined them. They also hear the book as it was originally written, not someone else's interpretation of it. Reading aloud to your children is magical. Children can imagine and visualize images that are safe and comfortable as they sit secure and protected surrounded by family. Reading aloud to your children is a gift to them and to yourselves. Try to set aside 30 or 45 minutes (or more) a day to enjoy this gift together.

Some books Ms. Gurdon suggests are: *The Little House* and *Mike Mulligan's Steam Shovel*, both by Virginia Lee Burton; *Anatole* and *Anatole and the Cat* by Eve Titus; *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble* and *Dr. DeSoto* by William Steig; *Make Way for Ducklings* by Robert McCloskey; *Wee Gillis* and *The Story of Ferdinand* by Munro Leaf.

Winnie-the-Pooh, *When We Were Very Young*, *Now We are Six* and *The House at Pooh Corner* by A.A. Milne; many of Roald Dahl's books including *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and *James and the Giant Peach*; *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett and Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House* books are also good choices. A wonderful resource is Jim Trelease's *The Read-Aloud Handbook*.

Start today. Find a book, gather your family and enjoy!