

My Child is a Reader...

Kavita Singh

Educator & Reading Specialist, The Shri Ram School, Vasant Vihar, New Delhi

Reading gives us someplace to go. This saying holds good, for the year that has gone by. Everyone of us, especially children have explored their love for books, stretched themselves beyond imagination, in pursuit of knowledge. We as parents, educators, want our children to be, lifelong readers and thinkers. Those who don't read just for the sake of reading, but are able to pause, think, ponder and excavate.

Reading is Thinking- It is all about supporting children to be critical thinkers. It is a lifelong skill. Critical thinking, helps readers, see things in a wider perspective. It helps them have engaging conversations. It promises to build purposeful thinkers and change makers. Reading is a science, in it's own right! There are many factors to be taken into consideration when helping a child /children choose book/books-build a repertoire of strategies, thoughts, ideas and skills, to make the reading wide and meaningful.

Picture books appeal to all ages from 0-99 yrs. They indulge our imagination, prompt us to look at captions, pictures together, and understand what's happening in the picture. Visualize the story elements, interpret the author and the illustrator's purpose. Emergent readers, before they read conventionally, learn to tell a story, by looking at photos and illustrations. A complex skill ,that keeps thinkers sustained for their entire reading life...

Good readers infer, think, question the author's writing. They look for clues, synthesize information, put it all together, visualize their thoughts-those that help them to draw conclusions. They are able to identify the problems and the solutions in their reading. All to spur their lateral thinking. To be able to identify and comprehend, the purpose, the author has for writing the book- all of those to help develop powerful readers, who grow ideas.

Fluency is achieved over time. Children must aim to read wide and long, set the bar high. The Five Finger rule of choosing books: To be able to hold up fingers for the number of words they can read and decipher on a page is essential. A book

is a far reach, if a child is unable to read and understand, three or more words on a page. Help them choose books that are just right and adhere to, age appropriate reading levels. It builds confidence, increases reading stamina, leads to fluency and comprehension. Makes reading a successful experience.

Exploring different genres, including graphic novels brings variety and flavour in reading. It teaches readers from a very young age to explore titles, authors, styles in writing and reading. It sustains a lifelong interest in books, reading and fluency. Reading builds vocabulary. It familiarises readers with: figurative language, like similes, and metaphors. It helps them understand phrases and writing styles, authors use. Over time, they learn to do the same in their writing- use phrases and words that are fun, colourful and away from the ordinary. Reading is Writing & Writing is Reading.

Following characters, when reading is what makes reading real. To understand, how settings impact characters and how characters change from the beginning of the story until the end. To be able to identify the feelings and traits of the characters, to slide into the shoes of the character, to feel emotional about character/characters. is what makes reading fun and wholesome.

Parents are the best role models to help build good reading habits. Here are some ways in which parents can help with reading specially the children in the early childhood years.

Let children watch you read, and have engaging book talks and conversations.

- Play word games, to build vocabulary.
- Read mystery stories with children, and together help them find clues- make the reading exciting.
- Assign a reading corner at home.
- Visit public libraries.

Encourage children to use Graphic organizers to break down story elements and record their thinking

Keep a dictionary and a thesaurus within reach, to help children look up words- origins, meanings, synonyms and antonyms.

- A reading journal for recording thoughts and ideas, sketch and doodle their thinking.
- Talk and sketch about story mountains- Beginning, middle and story endings.
- Have discussions around the why, what & how of stories- their settings, themes, characters and characters.
- Open ended questions and discussions- How readers can think of different endings to the same story.
- Discuss your characters, their challenges, problems, and how characters solve problems in the story.
- Character study- discuss traits vs feelings
- Continue your reading journey at home and wherever you go.
- Swap books with other readers.

According to Albert Bandura, ‘Fortunately, most human behaviour is learned observationally through modelling from others’. So if the young children see adults around them reading, they will also model the same.