



Read Aloud America RAP NOTES

News, updates, and tips about reading and reading aloud
January 15, 2007

Happy New Year!

We hope you are enjoying your read-aloud sessions at home and that the RAP message is alive and well in your family. **RAP Notes** are designed to keep you up to date on Read Aloud America's doings as well as provide short news and research briefs, ideas and tips, and book recommendations. We hope you enjoy it. Please feel free to share **RAP Notes** with your friends and colleagues.

All the best in 2007 and have fun reading!
Jed Gaines
Founder, Read Aloud America

Let's talk about....

Listening Comprehension: the key to reading success

We know that a child's listening comprehension is two to five years above his or her reading ability. Even toddlers, who are years away from reading, can enjoy listening to stories. How does a child develop listening comprehension, and what can you do to help? Listening comprehension actually has two parts. The first is the child's ability to *attend*, to sit still and focus on what he or she is hearing. The second part is knowing words. Simply put, the more words your child has heard and can recognize, the better his or her listening comprehension is.

Tips to increase listening comprehension:

- Turn off the television. TV is a passive activity which does not engage the child's creativity or stimulate their language development. In fact, recent research found that too much TV watching at an early age can actually interfere with the development of a child's attention span.
 - Read aloud in small doses to begin with. Try for 10 minutes at a time and gradually work up to longer read-aloud sessions. If you have to start with two- or three minutes with an active toddler, that's fine. Eventually the power of story will draw them in.
 - Talk to your children. The more words they hear and use, the better. Even baby talk is good - for babies.
 - Read aloud regularly. Many of the words you read in books are not used in everyday conversation and your child will never get to know them if he or she doesn't hear them.
 - Put music in your day. Play quiet music during breakfast or lunch, or while your child is playing alone. Sing songs together, and encourage your child to dance or move to music and rhythm.
 - Give your child free "think" time to sit and look at books or pictures, or play with manipulative toys, like blocks.
 - Encourage older children to do puzzles and play pencil games to stimulate language connections.
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Research in the News: A recent report by the American Academy of Pediatrics says that free play and unscheduled time is important to children's social, emotional, and cognitive development

and helps them manage stress. "A loss of free time in combination with a hurried lifestyle can be a source of stress, anxiety, and may even contribute to depression," the report states. See "The Importance of Play in Promoting Healthy Child Development and Maintaining Strong Parent-Child Bonds." www.aap.org/pressroom/play-public.htm

A Great New Idea: Book Pairing

Books are always a great gift, and Joan Tanji, former school librarian and toddler mother, has an idea to make gift-giving even more educational and fun. Match really good quality books (great story, terrific illustrations) with clever toys or other fun gifts that go along with the story. Here are a few ideas to get you started on your own book pairing creations:



Book title: *Fancy Nancy* by Jane O'Connor (Preschool - Gr. 2)

Synopsis: Nancy is a young diva in-the-making. She thinks her family is so - well - plain. So she gives them suggestions on how to be fancier, and to her delight, they follow along. Beautiful and funny illustrations, and the cover even glitters! Perfect for those little princesses on your list.

Paired gift ideas: Dress-up princess clothes. A great set at a local toy store includes a boa, dress, shoes, gloves, tiara and more. Throw in some costume jewelry.

Book title: *Swimming with Humuhumu* by Ron Hirschi (Grs. K-4)

Synopsis: A great book about Hawaiian sea life for young reef explorers. Two children are snorkeling in the shores of Hawaii. As they learn about all the wonderful marine life, they send letters home to Grandmother sharing many interesting facts.

Paired gift ideas: net, bucket, tabis, snorkel set, boogie board with a window to explore reef, look box or goggles; anything kids can use on a reef walk



Book title: *If you Give a Mouse a Cookie* by Laura Joffe Numeroff (Preschool - Gr. 2)

Synopsis: Everyone knows this classic!

Paired gift ideas: kid's chef outfit or apron, kid's cookie cookbook, rolling pin and fun cookie cutters, Easy Bake Oven, chocolate chip cookie mix, small cookie sheet.

Book title: *Harold and the Purple Crayon* by Crockett Johnson (Preschool - Gr. 1)

Synopsis: In this timeless classic, Harold can't sleep, so he takes his purple crayon and goes exploring, drawing his adventures along the way. Perfect for those budding artists!

Paired gift ideas: Crayons, color pencils, pens, art paper. Two DVDs based on the book, one based on the Emmy-award winning HBO Family Series, and the other the Scholastic Video Collection version. are both delightful.



Book title: *Russell the Sheep* by Rob Scotton (Preschool - Gr. 1)

Synopsis: Russell is a sheep and he can't sleep. As Russell goes through a variety of animated antics in the pursuit of sleep, children will find humorous details in each illustration to keep them giggling and as wide awake as Russell.

Paired gift ideas: A sheep pajama set, stuffed sheep, night light.

Looking for a good book?

Marci Prins, our Book Committee Chair, has some book recommendations to brighten up your family's winter days. For more book suggestions, be sure to browse our book lists at www.readaloudamerica.org/booklist.htm



***The Yellow Balloon* by Charlotte Dematons**

An imaginative trip around the world and through time. A story without words for both children and adults.

Ages 4 and up



***Gaspard and Lisa at the Museum* by Anne Gutman**

On a class trip, Gaspard and Lisa get left behind, locked in the museum!

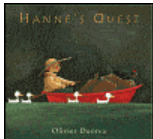
Ages 5- 7



***Owen & Mzee, The True Story of a Remarkable Friendship* by Isabella Hatkoff, Craig Hatkoff, and Dr. Paula Kahumbu**

A baby hippo, separated from his pod by the 2004 tsunami, looks for comfort from an old tortoise.

Ages 6 - 8. Nonfiction.



***Hanne's Quest* by Olivier Dunrea**

A magical journal creates an unforgettable new fairy tale.

Age 6 - 8



***Boy, were we wrong about dinosaurs!* by Kathleen V. Kudlinski**

New discoveries are changing our common beliefs about dinosaurs.

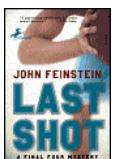
Ages 6 - 10. Nonfiction



***Every Living Thing* by Cynthia Rylant**

An appealing collection of short stories about the possibilities people and animals share.

Ages 8 -12



***Last Shot* by John Feinstein**

Stevie and Susan overhear someone warning MSU's star point guard he'd better lose the final game . . . or else. Exciting and believable.

Ages 12 and up. The author is a well-know sports writer.



***Alanna, The First Adventure* by Tamora Pierce**

When twins Alanna and Thomas are sent from home to become a knight and a lady, they change the plan and Alanna disguises herself as a boy. Ages 12 and up. First book in the series, *Song of the Lioness*.

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RAP Notes will be emailed at intervals during the year. Contributors to this issue were: Marion Coste, Read Aloud America's Educational Consultant, Joan Tanji, former member of the Read Aloud America Board of Directors, and Marci Prins, Book Committee Chair.