

Reluctant Readers

“My daughter hates reading; she would rather watch TV or play on the computer than pick up a book.”

Many frustrated parents visit bookstores or libraries, hoping to find that magic book that will turn their child into a voracious reader. Is there such a book that will do the job? Of course there isn't just one magic book. Instead, as parents we must listen to our children as they express their interests, and then try to match those interests with appropriate reading materials.

Is your child into sports? Eyewitness books, such as the one titled *OLYMPICS*, and other books in the series are visually appealing with dozens of colour photographs and the written material is presented in short chunks. Most graded readers (e.g. books in the *Step into Reading Series*) also offer nonfiction titles, including some about sports. For some kids, it's easier to pick up a book about Wayne Gretsky than to read a story from start to finish. Writers like Matt Christopher have made a career of writing about sports for kids. Whether your child loves figure skating, horses, puppies, dinosaurs, or aliens, it's not hard to turn up several books on the topic.

Authors like Eric Wilson and Paul Kropp writes specifically for readers who need action-packed, tightly-plotted novels to hold their attention. Wilson's mystery novels (usually set in Canadian locales) start with a bang and use lots of dialogue and action to keep things rolling. The novels aren't too long, but Wilson doesn't shy away from using interesting vocabulary. He believes that the occasionally challenging word will not dissuade the reader who is in the middle of a good page-turner.

Good bets for novels that will grab the reluctant reader in the 8-12 year-old age group are those by Gordon Korman, the *Screech Owl* books by Roy MacGregor, or the *Ramona Quimby* books by Beverly Cleary. Titles in Orca Publishing's Young Reader series are also meant to appeal to this age group. Well-known and respected children's authors like Andrea Spalding and Eric Walters have all contributed titles to this series. The books are short with some illustrations and are generally tightly plotted and well-written.

Activity-based books are available for all ages from preschool to adult. Whether the books is about making world-class paper airplanes or friendship bracelets, there is a book out there to match your child's interests, age, and reading level.

Just as important as finding the right match book-wise is the creation of an environment that supports and encourages reading. Have lots of books and magazines available at all times. Make regular trips to the library, bookstore, thrift or garage sales and get in the habit of buying books as gifts. Read for pleasure yourself and read to and with your children – every day, if possible. Instead of flipping on the car radio, pop in a book-on-tape and set aside a certain amount of time each week where the television and the computer stays off and your kids are encouraged to read.

Your child doesn't have to be reading *The Odyssey* to be developing an affinity for words. Cookbooks, magazines, newspapers, computer game manuals, craft and activity books, non fiction titles, and heavily illustrated books are all valid forms of reading. The important thing to remember is that reading is a joyful activity, one that should bring hours of pleasure rather than be seen as a dreadful chore to be endured. By making reading as pleasant for your child as possible, you have the greatest chance of making a book-lover from your reluctant reader.

For more information on family literacy events and programs, or to volunteer please contact Lizanne Eastwood – Family Literacy Coordinator for Grand Forks and the West Boundary – Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy at 442-2533 or leastwood@thehub.literacy.bc.ca