

Make it a Worksheet Free Summer!

Melissa Rossman, Reading Specialist, Freedom Hill ES

It's that time again when I look back and reflect on the ups and downs of the year. Friends and parents of my students alike have started asking me for my advice on how to keep their children growing as readers in the summer. Am I aware of a great workbook with passages and questions? Great apps? All are very good questions! So, I'd like to share a few of my own thoughts and hopefully they'll help you too!

The truth is that worksheets and apps don't make kids better readers. Only reading and talking about what we read will make kids better readers. The research here is clear: Only actual reading for sustained periods of time, independently or with others, (and talking about books) will make children better readers.

Some of you joined me for my parent session at our Dr. Seuss Night this spring on utilizing books to support positive behavior at home and school and heard how using books with characters our children can identify with can help them work through their own struggles. See this great blogpost for ideas to inspire compassion in your child this summer: http://www.scholastic.com/parents/blogs/scholastic-parents-raise-reader/best-picture-books-teaching-compassion#_a5y_p=2884137

One example: I intend to read ***Wonder*** to my own children this summer. In the book, the characters wrestle with their perceptions of others, perceptions of themselves, bullying, friendship, standing up for something you believe in, opening your eyes to see the exceptional qualities of those around us and acceptance of others with difference. What I expect my own children will gain from hearing this story is discussion with me and how I wrestle with big ideas and how I connect those big ideas to events in their lives. I expect reading aloud and talking about ***Wonder*** will grow their capacity to accept others, something my husband and I value greatly.

When children experience weighty issues WITH their parents, their ability to understand the main ideas and themes in books and have more higher order thinking increases exponentially, as does their ability to connect to and engage with more challenging material in the classroom. Truly, it's not WHAT they read, but HOW they read it that makes the difference.

So, this summer, encourage your child to read whatever they want to; graphic novels and comics, fairy books or sci fi or the newest series (see below), *even if it seems too easy for them*. Here's a great list of superhero books to support our national summer reading theme: "Every Hero Has a Story" <http://www.whatdowedoallday.com/2015/04/superhero-chapter-books.html>. But be sure, pick a few titles to read aloud to your child this summer and push them to think about the world in ways they hadn't thought to before. Here's a great blogpost with ideas for a Library

Challenge/treasure hunt for good books in the library:

<http://growingbookbybook.com/2015/05/11/summer-reading-ideas-library-challenge/>.

Our 21st Century thinkers might even surprise you with their capacity to understand and question, infer and challenge even your thinking about the stories. Allow them to share their thoughts and remember to press them to ask questions and try to answer the questions why and why do you think... One critical skill we work on at Freedom Hill is encouraging students to think of and draw their own conclusions about books. We stay away from telling them what the big idea is and instead coach them to think of what it might be and why. We accept their answers if they have good reasons for them.

Here are a few outstanding **series** for kids you can look into this summer (from 1st grade reading levels through 6th grade):

Fly Guy by Tedd Arnold

Biscuit by Alyssa Satin Capucilli and Pat Schories

Elephant and Piggie Mo Willems

Flat Stanley by Jeff Brown and Macky Pamintuan

Cam Jansen by David A. Adler

Rainbow Fairies by Daisy Meadows

Magic Treehouse by Mary Pope Osborne

Lemonade War series by Jacqueline Davies

Timewarp Trio by Jon Scieszka

Judy Moody by Megan McDonald

Stink by Megan McDonald

The Imaginary Vet series by by Suzanne Selfors

The Complete Ramona Collection by Beverly Cleary

The Mysterious Benedict Society Collection Paperback by Trenton Lee Stewart

A Series of Unfortunate Events by Limony Snicket

Percy Jackson or other Rick Riordon series

A Wrinkle in Time by Madeleine L'Engle

Chronicles of Narnia by C.S. Lewis

Harry Potter by J.K. Rowling

Hobbit and Lord of the Rings series by J.R.R. Tolkien

Here are a few novels to look into for a **read aloud**:

****Always read the book beforehand to ensure the content works for your family**

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory by Roald Dahl

Charlotte's Web by E.B. White

Harry Potter J.K. Rowling

Wonder by R. J. Palacio
The Tale of Despereaux Kate DiCamillo
The One and Only Ivan by Katherine Applegate
Inside Out and Back Again by Thanhha Lai

Visit <http://www.fcps.edu/FreedomHillES/> for the county's 6th and 7th grade reading lists. There are awesome books on there to share with your family (read them yourself before sharing if you have young children!) Email me if you're stuck and need more ideas, Melissa.Rossman@fcps.edu

I have big plans for the summer with my own children and hope to find ways to integrate quality reading experiences into our full and exciting summer fun. Let's ALL of us agree to skip the worksheets! See you in September!