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**What Are Your Kids Reading?**

**By Susan Sitton**

Responsible parenting is very much on everyone's mind these days. Everywhere you look there are articles being written about it, television shows and videos which aim to alert parents to potential dangers facing their children, and websites and home pages filled with useful and helpful tips. The concerned parent has never had as many tools or as much information available to them to protect their children.

But, what are your kids reading?

Yes, that's right, reading. Ten years ago, I read an article which said that reading skills in America ranked among the lowest in the industrialized nations of the world. The printed word was no longer viable, the interactive game was in, and civilization as we knew it was over. LCD readout had replaced ink on paper as far as kids were concerned, and there was nothing that anybody could do about it.

And then along came J.K. Rowling, Lemony Snicket, and a number of others and BANG - according to Publishers Weekly, the Children's/Young Adult book market is the fastest growing market in publishing! Tens of millions of books per year are printed for the 6-15 year old market, encompassing thousands of titles and hundreds of different sorts of subject matter. Go to any local library and the odds are that you will find that the Children's/Young Adult section is one of the largest there is. And, of course, as children grow older and their reading skills continue to improve, the entire world of adult literature becomes available to them.

This, of course, is not a bad thing - however, even though a child has the skills to read something, the responsible parent needs to ask themselves: But do I really want them reading that yet? Is it, for example, appropriate for 8 year olds who have the skills to do so to read The Diary of Anne Frank, even though in many cases the child may not have developed the emotional maturity to be able to handle some of the more intense and disturbing aspects of that work?

All too often, parents adopt an attitude that goes something like: Well, at least they are reading. Whatever it is, it's better than them sitting in front of the television! Unfortunately, this is not always the case. It is important to remember that a child's imagination is usually far more vibrant than an adult's is

## What Are Your Kids Reading?

and, depending on their age, the line between what is real and what is imaginary is less clear. Children can be affected by the words they read on a number of different levels, and will often times emulate the characters they meet in books - both in their attitudes and their behaviors. As a parent, it is important that the books you allow your child to read reflect the value system that you have tried to instill in them. Just as with the monitoring you do of what your child watches on television or what video games he plays or websites he visits, if you don't want your child exposed to (or think that they are too young for) violence, sexual content, drug use, or anything else a Young Adult or Children's book may contain, it is up to you to make sure that they aren't until you feel they are ready.

As with every other part of the publishing industry, sales and sales alone drive what is published in the world of Children/Young Adult literature and the trend recently seems to be towards more sophisticated storylines which often times outline many of the less positive aspects of our culture and life. As a responsible parent, it is up to you to decide when you feel your children have reached the point in their emotional development where you believe they will be able to process this sort of information without

harm.

The problem then becomes: How can I possibly read all the books my children want to read before they do? Makes you wish you had an extra set of eyes, right?

There are some resources out there to help guide you. But, most of them either give you a synopsis, which frequently lacks enough details to make a truly educated decision, or, they only do write-ups of the good books, which would be fine if we lived in a perfect world. But things are looking up! There is a website, launched in 2005, that reviews books (and movies) from a parent's perspective. Each book is critiqued on positive and negative examples of character traits (i.e. honesty, compassion, responsibility, etc.); as well as providing specific examples of any negative areas of influence (i.e. drug usage, sexual content, violence, etc.). All of these examples will tell a parent, at a glance, if that book is appropriate for their particular child.

Instilling the love of reading in a child's life is one of the most important and positive things you can do for them as a parent. Watching what your child reads, and allowing them to grow into the books you choose together, is one way to help ensure that the values you have worked so hard to teach your children are reinforced by something that they love to do!

Susan Sitton is the founder of

<http://www.DiscoveryJourney.com>

. DiscoveryJourney has a variety of

tools available to help parents with their home learning efforts. Each children's book review contains 5 related fun and educational child activities to enjoy as a family, inspiring the passion for learning and reading!

### 3 Ways To Inspire A Love Of Reading In Your Children

By Nicole Dean

If your child is showing little interest in reading, there is hope. Sometimes moms and dads have to get sneaky, but you can still turn your child into a reader, even if he is reluctant about it.

1. The Early Bedtime trick. One of my favorite ways to get my kids to read is something they hopefully will not figure out until they have kids of their own. Two words "Early Bedtime".

You might be wondering how an increase in sleep can help your child to spend more time reading. Well, here's the trick. Set their bedtime for 45 minutes to an hour before they need their lights out.

Here's how our bedtime routine goes. The kids brush teeth and use the bathroom. Then I read them their stories. This is all done before their official bedtime. Then, I simply give them an option. I say "It's time for bed, now. Would you like lights out or would you like to stay up and read for a bit?"

Unless they are really tired, they'll always choose to read awhile. I do not have to beg nor manipulate them into reading. In fact, they think it's their idea and they have grown to love their chance for a 'late' bedtime. Then, I back off. I don't try to instruct them in any way, nor help them choose books. This is their time. They can choose whichever book they like and look at it however they like until I come in to kiss them goodnight and turn their lights out. Of course, if they want me to stay and listen to them read, I'm more than happy to comply. Try it. It works.

2. Summer reading incentives. You can sign up for a summer reading program at pretty much any library in the country. If your local library does not have a summer reading program, then create one at home, with rewards for reading books. You can use a Monopoly (or Life) board and allow your child to move one space for each book he reads. Or if you want to have more fun, let him roll the dice each time he reads a book and have prizes available for passing certain points.

Make sure the rewards are something very desirable. If your child values time with you more than toys, then set a date together doing his favorite thing. If he values a certain toy, let him earn it. Or let him earn a chance to get out of his regular chores. Take him to his favorite restaurant. Just have fun with it and he will, too.

3. Read the book before you can see the movie. This is a standard in our home. We won't go see any movie until we've read the book. Whether my husband and I read the book to the kids or they read it alone, each member of the family can go see the movie after the book is read. So, if your child is looking forward to seeing the next Chronicles of Narnia movie, the next Harry Potter movie or the next Lemony Snicket movie, they'll have to read the book first.

That's it. Three easy ways to turn your child into a reader for life.

Nicole Dean invites you to

<http://www.ShowKidstheFun.com>

## What Are Your Kids Reading?

-- a free website filled with activities to

make memories with your children and

<http://www.ShowMomtheMoney.com>

-- a fun and informative

resource for moms who want to make money from home.



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