

4 Ways Parents Can Encourage Their Children to Read Good Books

As a grade-school child, there was nothing I loved more than burying my nose in a book. Mysteries particularly. I pounded my way through various series, happily ignoring the fact that they all revolved around the same, mind-numbing plot and rarely broadened my knowledge or intellectual ability.

Fortunately, my mother recognized this problem better than I did. And after examining various reading lists, she directed me toward several titles which offered more worthwhile reading material. Although I at first balked at reading them, I soon buckled down, and now count those books as some of the most memorable and worthwhile that I read as a child.

According to 19th century author H. Clay Trumbull, what my mother did for me in re-directing my reading choices is one of the key facets of child-rearing. [Trumbull says](#):

“A wise parent can train his children to an interest in any book in which they ought to be interested. He can cultivate in their minds such a taste for books of history, of biography, of travel, of popular science, and of other useful knowledge, that they will find in these books a higher and more satisfying pleasure than is found by their companions in the exciting or delusive narrations of fiction and fancy.”

But directing children to worthwhile reading material requires more than picking up a book and handing it to them. For parents who genuinely want to influence their child's reading habits for good, Trumbull suggests the following steps:

1. Do your homework

A parent “must know what books his children ought to read, and what books ought to be kept away from them.” Furthermore, parents should take time to become familiar with the subject matter of various books, so that they are able to recommend appropriate ones as topics come up in conversation.

2. Engage in energetic PR

According to Trumbull, a wise parent will “set himself to make the good books attractive to his children,” and when they are given to the child “it must be with such words of commendation and explanation as to awaken in the child’s mind a desire to become possessed of their contents.”

3. Avoid giving a taste for the bad

In addition to being on the watch for good reading material, a parent also must be on constant guard against the bad. As Turnbull notes, fairy tales and fiction are both good in their own place, but care must be given to not give a steady diet of either, particularly if they are excessively sensational in nature.

4. Discuss books

Finally, Turnbull suggests using books as a means of communication: “Reading with the child, and questioning the child concerning his reading, will intensify the child’s interest in his reading, and will promote his enjoyment as he reads.”

Unsure of where to start on finding good reading material for your children? Check out [this list](#) for some great starter books!

—

[Image Credit: U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Medina Ayala-Lo]