

The 3 Ways One Pioneer Mother Taught Her Children to Love Reading

In a recent conversation, a friend of mine shared how one of her children had been diagnosed with dyslexia. They were working to overcome the difficulty, but the obstacle was still troubling to her as a mother. “After all,” she mourned, “children learn so much more if they’re able to read. They miss so much if they can’t!”

I agreed, but then reminded her that children don’t have to just learn from reading by themselves. They can also learn a lot through family read-aloud times.

The problem is, busy schedules and the distractions of fast-paced media can sometimes make reading aloud seem like an unappetizing process. So how can families successfully execute this [all-important activity](#) of reading aloud?

I discovered some interesting insights on that topic while recently perusing one of the great family-read-aloud tales: [Little Britches](#).

Referred to by some as *Little House on the Prairie* for boys, *Little Britches* tells the story of a family who moves to Colorado and takes up ranching in the early 1900s. Told through the eyes of the son, Ralph Moody, readers learn about handling hardship and humor with character and grit.

But the story isn’t all about cowboys and hard work; it’s also portrays sound family values, particularly in instances where the family takes time to be with each other, gathering around Moody’s mother to hear her read aloud. And it is from the mother of this family that we learn the following three ways to effectively read aloud to children:

1. Read with Enthusiasm and Drama

As Moody explains, his mother never read in a boring, straightforward fashion. Instead, she infused her reading with life and excitement:

“She didn’t read like other people; she talked a book. I mean, if you were where you could hear her but couldn’t see her, you’d be sure she was telling the story from memory instead of reading.”

Naturally, not everyone has great storytelling talent like this. But are we able to read with enthusiasm? Is it so difficult to fluctuate our voices now and then? In essence, when we immerse ourselves in the story and enjoy it ourselves, it’s not hard to help our children enjoy it as well.

2. Allow Children to Multi-task

According to Moody, his father and mother did not allow their children to goof off during family reading times. If children weren’t listening, then it was time for the book to be put away.

But that policy didn’t prevent the children from keeping their hands busy:

“When Mother read, we children had to be quiet and pay attention. We could do most anything we pleased with our hands, like making whistles, stringing dried berries for beads, or playing with dolls, but if one of us whispered, Father would snap his fingers.”

As my family had a similar practice when I was a child, I can attest to its effectiveness. Working with one’s own hands not only increases productivity, but it also seems to [focus the mind](#) on the words being read – even if it’s something as simple as doodling or [coloring](#)!

3. Read Books Above a Child's Age Level

Finally, Moody's mother didn't feel restricted to read her children age appropriate literature. She boldly delved in and read them books which appear to have been geared to adults. In the process, however, she didn't leave her children in the dark. Instead, she carefully answered any questions they had:

*"I don't remember Mother ever reading anything I couldn't understand, and I never heard any of the others say so either, but I don't think many people would have read us the same books she did. ... Maybe she skipped spots we couldn't have understood, and maybe some of it drifted over our heads, but at least we remembered the stories she read. **I think part of the reason was that we could raise a hand whenever we wanted an explanation of any word or situation.**"*

The fact is, not every child in the world will turn into a stellar reader, sucking up information from books left and right. But if we as adults and parents can inject enthusiasm, encourage questions, and foster good attention by letting children multi-task during family read-aloud sessions, will they be more prone to reading and learning on their own as they grow older?