



# World of Words

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The children are back in school. While some mothers may be waltzing around the kitchen partnered by the scrub mop, there are just as many sitting at the kitchen table absent mindedly stirring a cold cup of coffee. What ever your reaction it means the end of summer and back to routine.

Soon the children will be coming to the library in need of a book for a book report. Every year we hear the same requests. "I'd like a thin book with large print." Far too many children regard reading a book in the same way they regard a trip to the dentist. This is sad and very disturbing. It means that educators and librarians are doing something wrong. I often wonder exactly what these compulsory book reports accomplish. One year some children were given an assignment to read a book with five hundred pages. Now books with five hundred pages aren't that plentiful. There was no attempt to interest or stimulate the child's interest in reading. It was just an enormous assignment to be accomplished. Reading should not be drudgery. It should be a source of pleasure and delight because it is something that everyone can do regardless of age, physical ability or gender (I'm tired of the word sex).

Some very excellent books were forever ruined for me because of the way they were handled in high school literature classes. *Kidnapped* by Robert Louis Stevenson is one of the greatest adventure stories ever written. When I think of it now I can only remember freshman English and how we dragged through it chapter by chapter with quizzes after each one. *House of Seven Gables* was another one spoiled. Fortunately I read *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre* on my own and enjoy them still.

What do you do to initiate your child into the joys of reading? Did or do you read your pre-school child a story at bedtime? When you go shopping do you suggest a book rather than something plastic that will be lost and broken in no time? Do you read yourself? Does the child have a book case of his own? Do you make a trip to the library a weekly family outing? We have many families who do just that. It is a pleasure to see a parent and four or five children sharing this experience. Nothing gladdens my heart more than to see a family walk out with twenty or thirty books, and many do.

Share with your child the books you loved when you were that age: Kenneth Grahame's, "The Wind in the Willows" is here, "Mary Poppins" and Laura Ingalls Wilder's incomparable series on pioneer life, the "Little House" books. Our old friend "Anne of Green Gables" is still, in my opinion, one of the best books ever written for older girls. "Anne" still has the freshness and humor that has delighted three generations of girls. Even Mark Twain thought her charming. Bring your children to the library and introduce them to your book friends.

Many mothers tell me that the children have too much homework to have time to read. How much time do they spend watching television? It would be interesting to check for a week just to see, we might be surprised.

Anyway, let's hope that this year we can reach some sort of a compromise so that there will be time for reading. A love of books is the most wonderful gift one can give a child.