

Reading and Imagination

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(based on Honey for a child's heart by Gladys Hunt)

Also see 'The Enchanted Hour- the miraculous power of reading aloud in an age of distraction' by Meghan Cox Gordon (looking at the social, familial, neurological and psychological benefits of reading aloud)

Ice-breaker

1. What was your favourite book as a child and why?
2. Do you remember being read to, other than when you were very little?
3. Did you ever read aloud as a family?
4. Did any book give you some value or goal to live by?

Why is reading so valuable?

Brainstorm

Teaches them a way to relax and escape

Helps them to discover for themselves

Expands their universe, horizons, geography and cultural understanding

Instils values, goals, character traits, excitement, enthusiasm for life

Closeness and connection

Expanding a child's imagination and experiences

Reading

Helps you to know your child better as you chat about the adventure and experience

Helps a child learn morals and principles without lecturing them

Helps a child discover good and evil, kindness and meanness, fun and laughter, sadness and tears ie emotions and feelings

Closeness and Connection

We all know that lovely cosy feeling when we snuggle up with a small child and read to them. We enjoy the experience and we know that they enjoy the experience too, because often they want another story or they want it repeated or they snuggle in closer and relax. It

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clears any bad atmosphere. Use silly voices and get Daddy to read too. You will both do it differently and your kids will like that. They might be the one to be more loud and active and you might be the quieter gentler one. Depending on a child's needs, they will turn to the one who provides what they need. Older siblings can also have a lovely shared experience reading their favourite book to a younger sibling and they might also have more energy to do it in an active way or play a make believe version with them afterwards.

Writing and dreaming

Good books will encourage good writing and good speech too. They will come to love the written word and the art of expression. They will also dream dreams and have adventurous ideas.

Spiritual truths

There are many great classics that will teach a child spiritual truths without them even knowing it, or they might know it but only feel inspired and determined to do good. CS Lewis' Narnia Chronicles are an example. Children who have already fallen in love with the noble, wise and gentle Aslan will be shocked and saddened by his death. When it dawns on them that Aslan is portraying a Jesus like figure they will be more drawn to Jesus and understand his sacrifice better. They will rejoice in the resurrection of both.

JTR Tolkien's Lord of the Rings series vividly depicts the battle between good and evil and all the temptations and follies that go with it. It is partly inspired by the real battle between good and evil in the heavenly realms that the Bible describes. Children will be caught up in the excitement of the battle and be more aware of temptations and consequences of choices in their lives. These can be great books to discuss.

Understanding layers of meaning and symbolic imagery is a gradual process as children read. It will be so useful in their English exams but also in the general understanding of articles, media and not least the Bible. They will learn to love grappling and then appreciate the understanding of texts. I can see this as my son studies poetry for his GCSE. He loves the symbolism and hidden meanings although he would never say he likes poetry!

Read Bible stories, for your Christian heritage. The Bible is full of great stories and how God works through all sorts of people, good and bad. In fact, God loves to work with people who feel inadequate or useless or who have messed up, so these stories offer great comfort as well as adventure.

Conclusion

I hope you are totally inspired and looking forward to spending more time reading together, it will be good for you and good for them. Reading relaxes us more than many pursuits!

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