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Youth Education Through Illustration

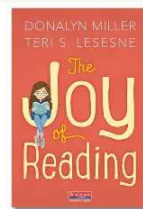
Monthly Blog - December 2025

"Planting Seeds"

By Bonnie Kirkpatrick



Check It Out!
A Reading Resource for Adults



The Joy of Reading
By Donalyn Miller /
Teri S. Lesesne

"A book is a dream that you hold in your hand."
~Neil Gaiman

Engage

Foster early literacy development by reading together. Have them talk to you about what they are thinking, have them read to you, take the time to explore curiosity in the books they enjoy reading.

Develop

Provide positive feedback. This will encourage your child(ren) to read more.

"Wow! I noticed how much fun you had with this story. You did an awesome job retelling me your favorite parts!"

Create

Get crafty!

Write a poem, make up your own songs, draw pictures. Whatever your imagination craves, don't be shy to explore what that might look like, and then... DO it!

We are so excited to share our first newsletter with you! Each month we will focus on specific topics for adults who interact with young readers. However, for our first newsletter I am going to share how the love of reading picture books fostered my belief that picture books are instrumental in literacy development for any reader.

It all started when I was a young girl. Growing up, we didn't have many books laying around, and we moved a few times throughout my childhood. We lived in poverty and we didn't have much.

In 4th grade, my teacher had her students complete a picture book project where we had to write and illustrate our own books. Inspired by "The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe" by C. S. Lewis, I wrote about a young girl who gets lost in the woods and she can speak to animals. Our teacher had our stories turned into books, and we were able to pick what color our book jacket would be. I hadn't realized that some of the student books were going to be selected to be read aloud in front of a group of adults, so when I got the news that mine was selected and I was invited to read my story, I was excited and nervous. My older sister walked me to school the night of the event, and I remember reading my story in front of the adults.

I was terrified.

They all applauded when I finished and I recall looking up into the crowd and saw smiles and nods of appreciation. I was never the same after that.

That moment planted a seed of "literacy love" inside me that slowly grew over the years. It took me several more to finally do something about it.

During my childhood, I didn't know that my father had dyslexia and was reading at a 3rd grade level. I was, initially, surprised to learn his tricks, and as I look back, more memories come forward and teach me what that must have been like for him.

I recall once, when I was in the 3rd grade, my dad was working on a document for his construction company, and my mother was not home at the time to help him. He tried finding a word in the dictionary, but whatever word he was looking for, phonetically didn't work for his search. He must have had to meet a deadline, because he was trying to get his document completed. When he asked me how to spell the word, I didn't know and so he had me call the telephone operator.

At first, I was embarrassed and told my dad that it would cost him 25 cents to call the operator. I could sense his frustration, and he told me to call anyway. When the operator answered, I asked her if she could help me spell a word. I wish I could remember what the word was! The operator didn't help me right away. Instead, she asked if my parents knew I was calling to spell a word. She lectured me and said that's not what calling the operator was used for. She also told me my parents would probably be upset to learn I charged 25 cents to their phone bill just to spell a word. My dad, sitting next to me, could hear her and he whispered, "It's ok, just tell her your parents know and ask her to spell the word again."

She must have heard him whisper to me, because the tone in her voice changed when she answered me the second time.

"Ok, I'm ready to spell the word when you are," she said.

My dad nodded and jumped up to grab a pencil and paper. "I'm ready," I told her.

She spelled the word slowly for me, asking me after each letter if I had gotten it. When she finished, she said to me, "Ok sweetie, have him spell it back to you so I can make sure he has it right." I knew instantly that she knew I was helping my dad and so I said, "I'm ready to spell it back to you."

My dad whispered the letters back to me, and I repeated them into the phone. He had transposed two letters, and she was able to help me get those corrected. When we were finished, I thanked her for her time. Before she hung up, she told me that she wasn't going to charge me 25 cents for the call and that I was a good girl for helping my dad. Being so young, and not realizing my dad had dyslexia, it didn't occur to me this was one of the reasons we didn't have many books around.

When I had my first child, Kenneth, I was attending college and was working as a library clerk to help pay for bills. I was living with my parents, and my son was in the homebase Head Start program. During his preschool sessions, my dad was home with him and was the primary adult to work through the lessons with my son's preschool teacher. On one of their session days, I didn't have school or work scheduled. I asked my dad if he would be able to come in from work and do the session or if he wanted me to attend. I was looking forward to sitting in and spending time with my son. Surprisingly, my dad said he would be there. I didn't realize how special these sessions were to him.

My son was 4, and he started reading by age 2. I read to him as often as I could and surrounded him with books. His preschool teacher was always challenged by him.

While they did their lessons with the preschool teacher, I stayed in the kitchen and prepared lunch and just kept busy. I was eavesdropping (as every curious parent does) and it was so

much fun to listen to the three of them work through the planned activities. However, when it was reading time at the end of their lessons, I was in for a treat.

Their book was *Green Eggs and Ham*, by Dr. Seuss. Kenneth had this story memorized. It was one of his favorites! Usually, the preschool teacher would have the adult read the story to the child. When she asked my dad if he wanted to read this one, I froze for a minute, not sure what his response would be. He hesitated, but he said "Sure, I will give it a try."

Kenneth was very excited and chimed in, "I'll help you PaPa!"

My dad began to read. It was slow, choppy and unsure. But he kept going. My son sat and waited patiently as my dad worked through the story. At one point, Kenneth told my dad to follow his finger as he read, and you could tell that it worked for him.

When my dad finished, Kenneth was so proud! "Good job, PaPa! I LOVE that story!"

I was so moved that I began to cry, alone in the kitchen. I didn't interrupt; I didn't come into their space. I let my dad have that moment. I let another literacy seed be planted that day and it was truly one of the most magical memories I have.

It was then that I knew books CHANGED how we learn. Picture books are so much more than words and pictures. They encourage growth. Whether it be learning to read, emotional wellbeing, understanding culture, and so much more.

Children NEED picture books to grow. This is why we (my library curator and I) spend hours upon hours reading through hundreds of books each month to find content that is rich in text and medium (illustration). We have a library curated around this mission. We want to immerse readers into stories that are not cookie cutter, generic books.

With each YETI Book Box, know that we have read through at least 250 books, and only pick four!

We encourage you to sit down with your readers and make story time memories with them that will last a lifetime.

Thank you!

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