



Fostering a Lifelong
Love of Reading:
Strategies to Promote
Early Literacy
Development

1. The Transformative Power of Reading: How Early Language Experiences Shape Lifelong Literacy

Welcoming my little ones into the world of reading is one of the most heartwarming and rewarding experiences for me as a parent with a background in language education. In the early years of life, every interaction with language – whether through reading,

talking, or singing — lays the foundation for a child's future literacy success. We are our children's first and most influential teachers in cultivating a love of books and promoting language and communication skills. By understanding how to create engaging, impactful shared reading experiences and nurturing curiosity and imagination, we can foster their lifelong passion for reading. This infatuation with reading will not only advance cognitive development and academic achievement but also enrich their social



well-being, particularly their parent-child emotional bond.ⁱ This article explores guidelines and practical strategies to support our children's journey toward becoming confident, enthusiastic readers.

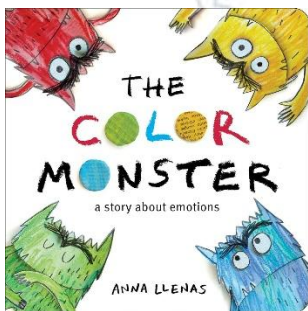
2. Pre-reading Stage: Setting the Stage for Reading Success

Creating a nurturing environment for our children begins well before they turn the pages of a book. During this pre-reading stage, it is essential to select developmentally appropriate

stories and materials that match your child's current language abilities –known as '*comprehensible input (i+1)*'.ⁱⁱ This means choosing readers that are just a bit more challenging than your child's existing vocabulary and understanding, encouraging growth without causing frustration. Such strategic selections help children make meaningful connections with new words and ideas, a vital building block for language acquisition.

To capture your children's interest and attention, here are a few suggested directions for book selection:

(i) Books with vibrant illustrations that complement the story – Bright, expressive images stimulate curiosity and support comprehension by providing visual clues to the narrative.



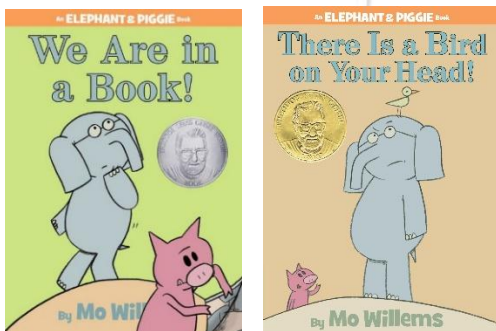
Example: 'The Colour Monster' by Anna Llenas

(ii) Books that incorporate playful language features like alliteration, rhythmic patterns and clever wordplay, which serve as precursors to developing phonological awarenessⁱⁱⁱ.



Example: Books from Julia Donaldson are famous for their rhythmic quality and lyrical style. In particular, her *Songbirds Phonics Series* is carefully designed to follow a systematic phonics progression.

(iii) Books with silly or amusing storylines are particularly effective in making reading fun and encouraging your child to explore stories again and again.



Example: 'We Are in a Book!' and 'There Is a Bird on Your Head!' (from the *Elephant & Piggie Series*) by Mo Willems feature interactivity and goofy friendship tales.

3. Active Reading Strategies: Making Storytime Interactive, Fun, and Valuable

During the while-reading stage, making storytime lively and interactive is crucial for cultivating a love of reading.

One effective method is bringing stories to life through expressive voices, animated gestures, and pretend play. Incorporating visual aids, props and realia — everyday objects related to the story — can ignite children's imagination and make the narrative more tangible. For instance, using a toy animal



or a piece of fabric to represent a character or setting helps children visualize and engage more deeply with the story.

Furthermore, Dialogic Reading^{iv} is an interactive approach that transforms reading from a passive activity into a lively conversation between the parent and child. Instead of simply reading the story aloud, parents encourage children to actively participate by asking questions, making predictions, and sharing their

thoughts about the story. To facilitate this process, the CROWD question prompts serve as useful tools. Here are sample questions based on *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*.

Completion:

'I think the caterpillar will eat more because... *(Pause and allow your child to finish off the sentence) ...*'

Recall:

'What did the caterpillar eat on Monday?'

Open-ended:

'What do you think will happen to the caterpillar next?'



Wh-questions:

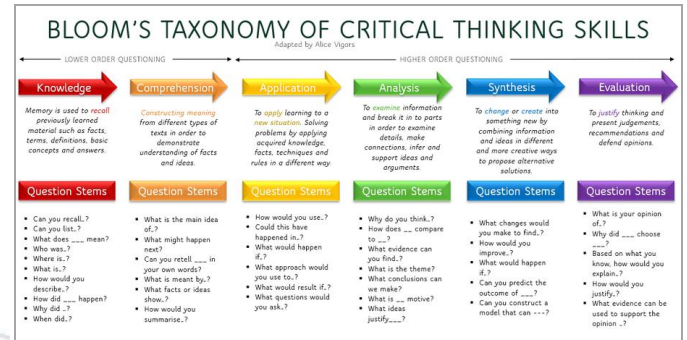
'Where do you think the caterpillar is going now?'

Distancing:

'Have you ever had a stomachache like the caterpillar?'

Another fundamental principle of effective questioning is the use of diverse question types. Bloom's Taxonomy (1956)^v is widely used as a framework for constructing questions by categorizing them into six levels of cognitive complexity, from basic recall to advanced

creation. These are the levels and sample question stems:



These approaches encourage children to think critically, express themselves, and deepen their understanding of the stories, making storytime both engaging and educational.

4. Beyond the Pages: Reinforcing Learning and Fostering Appreciation for Books



After finishing a story, repeating readings offers invaluable benefits for young learners. Chances are — your children are already yelling, 'Again! Again!' Indeed, repetition helps solidify vocabulary, enhance comprehension, and boost confidence as children become familiar with story details and language patterns. To deepen engagement, parents can encourage reflection by asking, 'What was your favourite part?' or 'Why do you think the character did that?' — questions belonging to the

upper levels of Bloom's Taxonomy. These discussions boost critical thinking and help children relate stories to their own experiences as well as real-world understanding.

Other than that, creative activities such as arts and crafts — drawing characters or making story-related art — transform stories into tangible projects. Retelling the story in their own words or acting out scenes encourages productive language and sequencing skills. What's more, prose reading exercises and



imaginative play further develop fluency and confidence, turning storytime into a performative exploration of language and creativity. These strategies not only reinforce literacy skills but also cultivate a lasting love for books, nurturing curious, confident, and joyful learners.

5. Final Remarks: Key to Success

In creating a supportive literacy environment for your children, surrounding them with a variety of relevant

words and stories in a print-rich setting is essential. This approach provides natural opportunities for learning within their 'zone of proximal development'^{vi}, helping them build new skills with your gentle guidance. Remember that modelling reading behaviour — showing enthusiasm for books, reading aloud, and sharing your own love of stories — can greatly influence your children's attitude towards learning and reading. Set aside a daily or weekly family reading time and be consistent. Lastly,



fostering curiosity by encouraging questions and independent exploration of books empowers your children to become an active participant in their literacy journey. Every shared story, playful activity, and meaningful conversation contributes to a future where your children see reading as a joyful and rewarding experience — an integral part of their growth and discovery.

Writer: Mrs. Grace Chang

Wong Asher Nicholas (Lower Cherry)(2025-2026)

References

i Sociocultural Theory

emphasizes that children's early experiences are shaped through meaningful social interactions with peers and adults, which influence their cognitive and literacy development (Vygotsky, 1978). Read more:

<https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-sociocultural-theory-27950>

[88](#)

ii **The Input Hypothesis**, a core principle in Krashen's theory of second language acquisition (SLA), asserts that learners acquire language when exposed to input slightly above their current proficiency level. Read more:



<https://www.leonardoenglish.com>

</blog/comprehensible-input>

iii **The Development of**

Phonological Skills:

<https://www.readingrockets.org/t>

<opics/developmental-milestones/>

<articles/development-phonologic>

<al-skills>

iv **Dialogic Reading and the**

CROWD question prompts:

<https://www.southampton.gov.uk/>

media/zdglmnth/dialogic_reading

<.pdf>

v Based on **Bloom's Taxonomy**

(1956), questions move from

lower-order thinking skills, such as

recalling facts, to higher-order

skills, like creating new ideas, to

promote critical thinking and

deeper understanding of a subject.

Read more:

<https://thinkingpathwayz.weebly.c>

<om/artofquestioning.html>

vi **The Zone of Proximal**

Development (ZPD) is the range

of tasks that a child cannot fully

do alone but can accomplish with

guidance and support from a

more knowledgeable person,

helping them learn and grow

beyond their current abilities.

Read more:

<https://www.simplypsychology.or>

<g/zone-of-proximal-development.>

<html>