



# This Holiday Season, Ask for Gifts That Make Your Job Easier!

## More Than a “Movie”

Younger generations have challenged educators with their exposure and interest in visuals. “As educators, our goal of course, is to get students energized and engaged in hands-on learning experiences, and video is the perfect medium for students who are auditory or visual learners (Library Video Company, 2008). After many years of lecturing college students, Professor Stan Rosen “discovered film as a valuable teaching tool” (USC, 2008). Rosen compiled movie clips as “it became clear over time that today’s younger generations are very visually oriented, and can see things on screen” that others might not see (USC, 2008). Educators of

younger students have found this to be true as movies have become frequently used as a teaching tool. “While you watch the movie with your students, you may want to stop it in certain places to emphasize certain points, ask students to make predictions, or to offer their opinions” (Walden, 2008). An entire movie does not need to be used as specific scenes can be powerful. For example, in the beginning of *Jurassic Park*, a cup on the dashboard begins to vibrate. Using only this scene, and stopping the movie before it continues, ask students to describe what they are seeing visually. What were the people thinking? What did their facial expressions convey? The same



*“I realized that images could be used as a teaching tool.”*  
Stan Rosen, USC Faculty

can be done for the gas station scene in *Lemony Snicket’s A Series of Unfortunate Events* as the car is locked and a train is coming. Ask students to pretend they must describe these scenes to someone using words alone. Ask students to use figurative language to create pictures and ideas, such as similes, metaphors and personification.

## Books Make Great Gifts

Wondering what to give your students this holiday season? Paperback books make perfect presents. “They’ll get used, but not used up, and every member of the family can enjoy them” (IRA, 2008). Not sure which title to give to which student? No prob-

lem. Draw numbers and ask that child to choose the book of their choice (make sure you have more book choices than students), or if ordering with bonus points, ask students to select their preferences. “Today books are available on every subject; there is

fiction, non-fiction, and one can choose from various authors that fill the bookshelves” (Artipot, 2008). If you know your students’ interests, you will surely find a book to captivate their mind this holiday season.

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### Special points of interest:

- The most popular book titles.
- How popular are videos?
- Finding books at bargain prices.
- Helping parents make the best selections.
- Which books are kids’ favorites?
- Reading for enjoyment.

## Recommended Books

When selecting quality literature for young children, many book titles have become timeless classics. Each year, organizations ask teachers, as well as students, to list their favorite book. These lists are available on web sites, including *The National Education Association*. In 2007, an online survey compiled the top 100 books recommended by educators.



*"I am always eager to give books that will encourage kids to read more."  
(Pixel Head, 2008)*

The top ten are listed below:

- 1) *Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White
- 2) *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak
- 3) *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein
- 4) *Green Eggs and Ham* by Dr. Seuss
- 5) *Good Night Moon* by Margaret Wise Brown

- 6) *I'll Love You Forever* by Robert N. Munsch
- 7) *Because of Winn Dixie* by Kate DiCamillo
- 8) *Oh! The Places You Will Go* by Dr. Seuss
- 9) *The Little House* by Virginia Lee Burton
- 10) *The Polar Express* by Chris Van Allsburg

Pixel Head, a former teacher, states that some of her favorite memories involve having books read to her (Hubpages Inc., 2008).

## More Than a "Movie" (continued)

These same movie segments may be constructed as a short story. Another idea is to write a fun, adventurous story from a difficult life event taking place in a DVD scene (Walden, 2008). Short scene fragments and specific scene freezing are a great way to introduce, or revisit, vocabulary, setting and character analysis to name a few. When choosing DVDs, keep in mind that what may be perceived as "childish" may lead to expanded creative writ-

*"According to a recent teacher survey, 94% of classroom teachers had effectively used video during the course of an academic year."  
(Library Video Company, 2008)*

ing. Every child, for example, can relate to Alexander in *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* by Judith Viorst. How

would students feel if they were home alone, trying to prove they're responsible, and someone like *The Cat in the Hat* showed up? "We all know from experience that the more engaged your students are, the more interactive your lesson is, the more your students will enjoy, learn from and retain information from your lessons (Library Video Company, 2008).

## Now That's a Bargain!

Books are treasures to many educators. However, books can become costly, especially if you are buying them for your classroom or as gifts for your students. When shopping for books, keep these things in mind:

\*Parents often ask how they can help. Ask them to be on the lookout for book bargains or to bring books from home that are placed in storage.

\*You can often find books at garage sales for a fraction of the original cost.

\*Half-Price books has great books that have been "gently used."

\*Watch for library sales.

\*If someone wants to donate items, or an item, to your classroom,



*"Reading is not just a hobby, but also a need for many."  
(Artipot, 2008)*

ask for books.

\*Bonus points are awarded when you place book orders through programs, such as Scholastic.

\*Parent-School Associations will often give money for classroom materials, such as books.

## Lighting the Way

Educators are fortunate because judging quality literature is second-nature for many. However, we sometimes forget that parents may not purchase a book, participate in a book order, or send money for a book fair because they do not know what to buy; therefore, it's easier to buy nothing at all.

If you send home book orders, attach a note to the book order, noting book titles that may be



*Reading Makes a Big Difference!*

beneficial for their child. Make sure you include multiple price ranges.

If a book fair is taking place at your school, ask your librarian for a list of expected book titles. Again, notify parents of book titles that would fall in your students' age range. Books may be those read in class or a favorite series that your students are interested in.

Encourage parents to think of books when holi-

days and birthdays come around each year. Explain to parents that "when you give a child a book, it shows them that you value books, and this encourages kids to become readers" (Hubpages Inc., 2008). Students can often learn from books when they can identify with the character's dilemma's and choices made. Kate DiCamillo, popular author of children's books, has said, "there is salvation in stories with characters who are real to us" (IRA, 2008).

## Favorite Book Series

Several years ago, the National Education Association had an on-line survey to determine which books were kid's favorites. Although the top 100 books were listed, it's noteworthy to notice how many were considered "series" collections.

- 1) Harry Potter by J.K. Rowling
- 2) Goosebumps by R. L. Stine
- 3) Arthur by Marc Brown
- 4) Shiloh (trilogy) by Phyllis Rey-

nolds Naylor

- 5) Tales of Fourth Grade Nothing by Judy Blume
- 6) Sideways Stories from Wayside School by Louis Sachar
- 7) The Boxcar Children by Gertrude Chandler Warner
- 8) Ramona Quimby, Age 8 by Beverly Cleary
- 9) The Babysitters Club by Ann M.

*"The results leave no doubt that America's kids LOVE to read."  
(NEA, 2008)*

Martin

- 10) Ralph S. Mouse by Beverly Cleary

For more loved series, visit NEA!

## Books + Fun = Reading

Reading is enjoyable when the subject or characters interests you. The same applies to students. Build on student interests by finding every avenue available to be used as a teaching tool. Non-fiction, fiction, biographies of those with similar interests, magazines, DVD's, newspaper clippings, comics, and advertisements are great ways to excite the learning journey that takes place in your classroom everyday.

As students read books from the library, ask them to discuss what books they enjoy most and why. Ask students to vote on favorite book titles as a classroom or school-wide effort. Hold book auctions or book exchanges. Tell students what you enjoy reading



*"Books no longer symbolize studies"  
(Artipot, 2008)*

in your spare time and why you personally value reading. When you enjoy literature, students will soon discover "the world that lies within its wonderful pages" (Hubpages Inc., 2008).

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*Daphne Morris, M.Ed., met Trevor Romain in 1992 when he visited a school as a guest speaker. Impressed by Trevor's profound and meaningful impact on students, Daphne joined The Trevor Romain Company in 2006. A former elementary school principal, Daphne holds two Master's degrees in education.*

## December Q&A

Q: What is a great holiday story for older students?

The International Reading Association recommends *When Washington Crossed the Delaware* by Lynne Cheney. On December 25, 1776, "a brilliant strategic campaign would begin that would eventually bring victory to George Washington and his revolutionary army. The ragtag American troops had been defeated repeatedly by better-equipped British forces, but Washington's bold plan to launch a surprise attack galvanized his men and turned the tide of the war."



Stories about the sacrifices made to found and preserve America can also reinforce the value of determination.

## Resources:

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