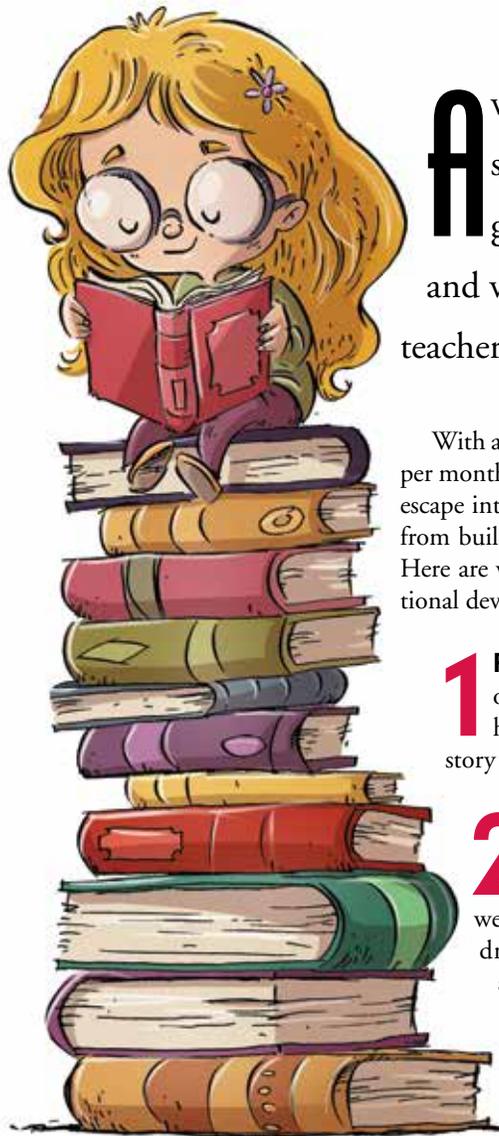


# My Child is Reading Another Book: 10 Ways to Spark a Love of Learning through Social Engagement and Creativity

By Kristi A. Mascher



**A**vid reading is one of the hallmarks of giftedness in young students. While not a prerequisite before school entry, many gifted students can read before kindergarten. In fact, early and vast reading is often the first indication for parents and teachers that a child might be an exceptional learner.

With a voracious appetite for books, it is common for gifted learners to read dozens of books per month, often having more than one story or text active at a time. Many times, this personal escape into an alternate world isolates readers from others. This isolation may prevent a child from building other skills, like empathy, creativity, communication, and reciprocity of ideas. Here are ways parents can encourage their child's love of reading while nurturing socio-emotional development and/or creativity.

**1 Rewrite the ending together.** Choose a book you have either read previously or concurrently. Take out the last chapter or so and co-author a new ending. What happens if the villain isn't defeated or the problem remains unresolved? How will the story change if a new character is introduced at the very end? I smell a sequel!

**2 Insert yourselves as characters.** Within each main event of the story, discuss what you would do if you were in the story. Would you fight the dragon or disappear behind the magic stone? How would you get along with the main characters? Who would you find a friend or foe? What would be your selected superpower?



**3 Find the fiction/nonfiction counterpart.** While vast reading across all subject areas is common, some kids confine themselves to a specific author or genre. Find the fiction/nonfiction counterpart to the book you are currently reading and discuss the connections. While reading *Bridge to Terabithia*, find a real-world text about bridges around the world. Research and discuss design, engineering, and geography. Reading a nonfiction text about factories? Check out *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* next time you're at the library.

**4 Create a movie trailer for the book.** After reading the book, use YouTube, Google Slides, or VoiceThread to make a movie trailer of the story. Discuss the most important elements that need to be included in a 3-minute advertisement for the story. Why not create a YouTube playlist in which your child can recommend books they've read to others?

**5 Create an iTunes playlist.** Tap into an in-depth understanding of the artistic elements of a piece of literature. Create a music playlist of songs the main characters would listen to or the author would use if the book needed a movie score. Ask your child to justify why they chose those songs.

**6 Create a LEGO® bricks world.** Who doesn't love LEGO® bricks? During or after the book, work together to create a visual representation of main locations of the story. Can you map out Frodo's journey or create the inner world of Alice's wonderland?

**7 Visit the real world.** Whenever possible, connect the story to the real world through a shared experience. Try family camping after you've read *Walden* or visit a museum after reading *Olivia*. Discuss the role these elements played throughout the book and how the overall story would be different without them.

**8 Host a dinner party.** This will take some coordination. As a team, plan and execute a dinner party that may have occurred in the story or would be attended by its characters in real life. Recruit family members and friends to dress up as each character, eat story-themed food, and answer questions from the perspective of their character. *The Hunger Games* may not be the best choice for this one!

**9 Keep a journal.** Nothing is more intimate and whimsical than keeping a journal. Keep personal journals while you read the same book and meet for discussion times. Try shaking up this idea by sharing a "big ideas" journal in which you add reactions, newly learned words, predictions, and more!

**10 Make a game.** Tap into creativity and comprehension by working together to build a board game with characters, setting, and plot twists. You make the rules! For the techies out there, try coding a video game using Tynker or Scratch. Pull these original creations out for family game night and allow your learner to officiate.

#### **Author's Note**

**Kristi A. Mascher** is a professor in Teacher Education at Missouri Southern State University in Joplin, with a focus on early childhood and literacy education. She has taught early childhood and gifted education classes in the K–12 setting and holds certifications in Elementary Education, Early Childhood Education, and K–12 Gifted Education. She is currently pursuing her Ph.D. in Gifted Education Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Arkansas.

