

# READING WITH YOUR KIDS MAGAZINE



  
*November* 2023

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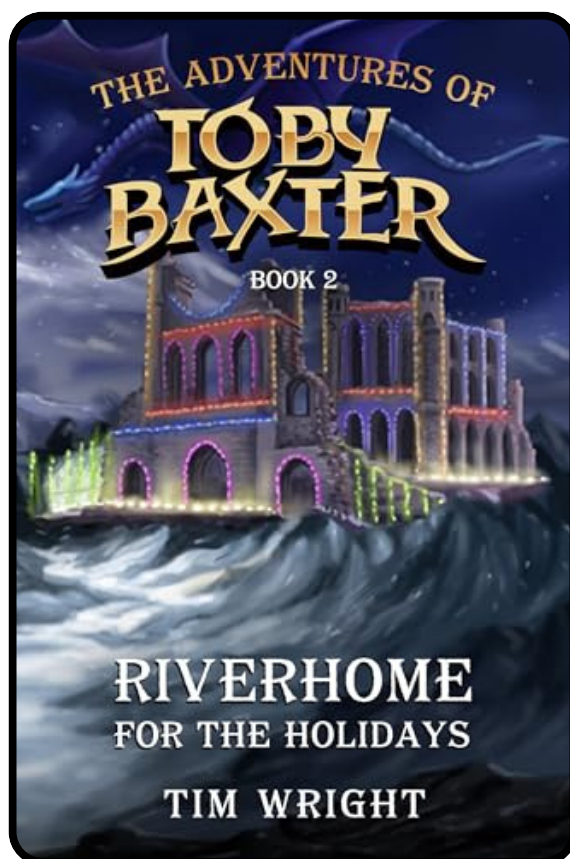
# Certified Great Reads

You can find our full reviews of these books  
and others at [readingwithyourkids.com](http://readingwithyourkids.com)  
Reviews by Fatima Khan

## RiverHome for the Holidays by Tim Wright

Embark on a whimsical journey into the heart of RiverHome with Toby Baxter in “**The Adventures of Toby Baxter: Book 2 – RiverHome for the Holidays**“! This enchanting sequel seamlessly blends fantasy elements with the festive spirit of the holidays.

“River Home for the Holidays” delivers a captivating blend of humor, danger, and inspiration. For lovers of fantasy with mythical creatures, this book is a must-read, promising a thrilling and heartwarming adventure. Dive into the enchanting world of RiverHome alongside Toby Baxter – you won’t be disappointed!



[Grab Your Copy From Amazon!](#)



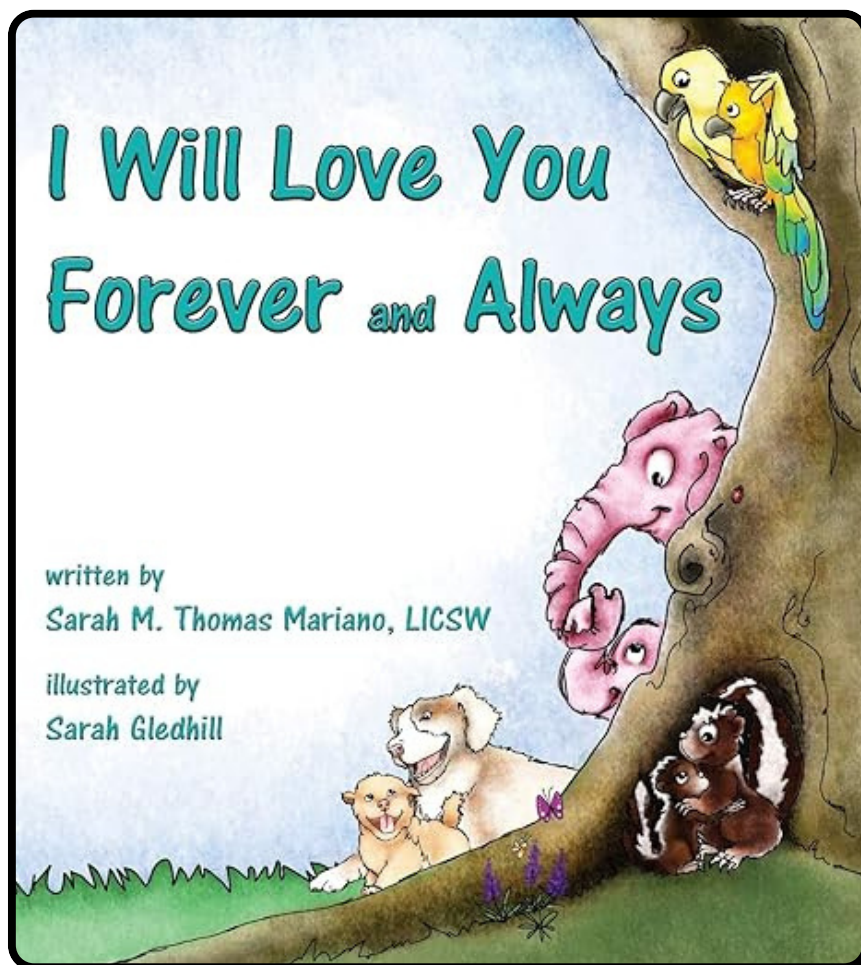
# Certified Great Reads

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and others at [readingwithyourkids.com](http://readingwithyourkids.com)  
Reviews by Fatima Khan

## [I Will Love You Forever and Always by Sarah M. Thomas Mariano](#)

“**I Will Love You Forever and Always**” by Sarah M. Thomas Mariano is a heartwarming and beautifully written children’s book that explores the enduring nature of love between a parent and child, even in the face of challenges and differences. The author takes readers on a delightful journey through the ups and downs of life, emphasizing the unwavering love between a parent and child.

The charming illustrations by Sarah Gledhill complement the narrative perfectly, bringing the characters and their emotions to life. The contrasting appearances and preferences of the alligator parent and child are portrayed with warmth and humor, reinforcing the idea that love transcends external differences.



[Grab Your Copy From Amazon!](#)

# THE BENEFITS OF COOKING WITH YOUR KIDS WITH SHANNON ADDISON

BY: ANNE O'LEARY

Thanksgiving is just around the corner, and it's an important time for both food and loved ones. For this month's segment of Cooking With Your Kids, we chose an author who ties both of these things together with a special Thanksgiving-themed treat to share at dinner.

Meet Shannon Addison, author of the book *My Crumbly Guide to Baking & Friendship Making*, where four bread-themed characters, Samantha Sourdough, Rachel Rye, Whitney Wheat, and Penelope Pumpnickel, each have unique identities. Their stories help young girls learn about building self-confidence and solving problems in school, like bullying. Additionally, Shannon provides bread-based recipes for each character for kids and parents to bake together.

Shannon's idea began when she noticed that her daughter was struggling in school with bullying. It wasn't the typical bullying we see in movies or on television; there was no stealing of lunch money or direct name-calling. Instead, it involved gossiping and an exclusionary social hierarchy. According to Shannon, this is more often than not how girls in school experience and perpetuate bullying. One of the stories in the book is based on a real story from Shannon's daughter when one of her friends told her she was her second-best friend.

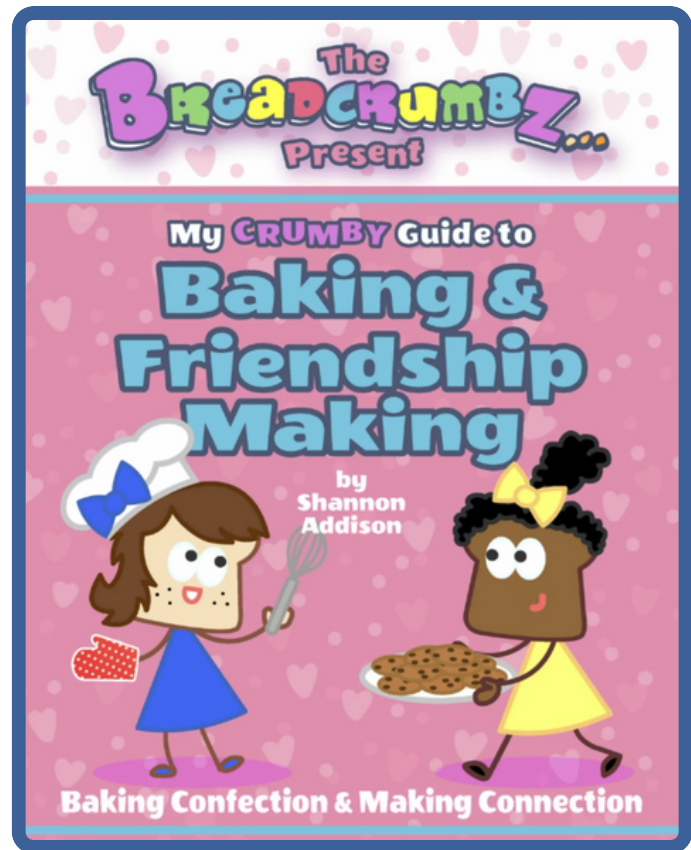


Shannon has several stories and activities in her book that teach girls to practice self-acceptance rather than self-excellence. To Shannon, the reason why girls have social hierarchies is because they're taught perfection is necessary. The way to be kinder to others is to be kinder to yourself.

*My Crumbly Guide to Baking & Friendship Making* is more than just a cookbook for girls. It is also a tool for parents to use to have difficult conversations with their kids about bullying in school. The book contains various activities and discussion prompts for downtime while baking. Baking is also a way for girls to learn a new skill, as it uses subjects taught in school, like math, reading comprehension, and science.

## My Crumby Guide to Baking and Friendship Making

The book also has activities and recipes related to friendship-making. One of the activities in the book is how to have a tea party, which includes a tea party cookie recipe and instructions on tea parties. The book also teaches girls what to think about when they look for friends. In baking, we look for the right ingredients to make our recipe, and it should be the same when looking for friends.



If you go to Shannon's website, <https://www.mycrumbyworld.com>, you can sign up for an exclusive opportunity to get the book before it is available for sale. Kids can also visit Shannon's website to play interactive games on the "Meet The Crumbz" tab. You can visit her blog to read about her advice on parenting and get the free coloring pages of the Crumbz characters.

Thankfully, Shannon has allowed us to share one of her recipes that is perfect for Thanksgiving.

if you're tired of making the same old pumpkin pie every year. With the help of Shannon and Penelope Pumpernickel, here is the BreadCrumbz "Pumpkin Nickel" Recipe!



# BreadCrumbz “Pumpkin Nickel”

## INGREDIENTS

1 1/2 cups bread flour  
1/2 cup whole wheat flour  
1/2 cup rye flour  
1/2 tsp instant dry yeast (NOT rapid-rise yeast)

1 1/2 tsp Kosher salt  
2 Tbsp cocoa  
3 Tbsp sugar

1/4 cup filtered water (no chlorine)

1/2 tbsp instant coffee

1/4 cup buttermilk

1/4 cup molasses

1/2 cup pumpkin

### 1. In a large bowl combine:

1 1/2 cups bread flour  
1/2 cup whole wheat flour  
1/2 cup rye flour  
1/2 tsp instant dry yeast (NOT rapid-rise yeast)

1 1/2 tsp Kosher salt  
2 Tbsp cocoa  
3 Tbsp sugar

3. Microwave for 15 seconds to warm, then add the buttermilk

4. Stir well, then pour into another mixing bowl and add the molasses and pumpkin.

5. Mix thoroughly to combine. Next, add to dry ingredients and stir well. The dough will NOT come together easily because of the thickness of the wet ingredients. You are going to have to use your hands to knead and fold the dough to get all ingredients absorbed.

6. When most of the flour has been incorporated, cover the bowl with plastic wrap and let it sit on your countertop for a minimum of 12 hours or a max of 20-22 hours. The longer it sits, the better the flavor.

7. After 20-22 hours, remove the dough from the bowl and place it on a lightly floured surface. I used the “gentle slap and fold” method to work the dough together just a little bit and formed it into a nice round loaf.

8. Gently place in another bowl lined with a small kitchen towel dusted with flour, and sprinkle a little more flour on top (or cornmeal). Cover and let it sit for another 2-3 hours.

9. Preheat the oven to 475 degrees and place a Dutch oven into the oven, and preheat for approximately 30 minutes. (Make sure the Dutch oven is safe for the high temps).

# BreadCrumbz “Pumpkin Nickel”

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10. Uncover the bread and score it 3 or 4 times, about 1 inch deep, to allow the crumb to open while it bakes. Once the oven is hot, carefully pull the rack with the Dutch oven out and remove the lid (using the silicone oven mitts... this thing is hot!)
11. Place the loaf into the Dutch oven, carefully replace the lid, and bake for 20 minutes covered, then remove the lid and bake for an additional 7-10 minutes.
12. Remove from the oven and allow to cool completely before you slice into it.
13. Once it is cooled, you can slice and warm up individual pieces and drizzle with butter and honey if you like!







# THE GIFTS OF RHYME BY RAVEN HOWELL

*TWINKLE, TWINKLE, LITTLE STAR,  
HOW I WONDER WHAT YOU ARE...*

Did you know children familiar with nursery rhymes tend to enter kindergarten with an advantage? These students have an easier time learning to read.

Children of all ages have more success learning when they read stories and poetry in rhyme. Rhyming text is a helpful guide to finding words through listening. During my classroom poetry workshops, I ask students to finish a rhyming verse for me, providing the last word. For example, *Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall. Humpty Dumpty had a great \_\_*. This strengthens their listening skills.

Rhyming, by nature, also promotes the discovery of word families. Working with common word patterns is a powerful base for developing literacy skills. Suddenly, the reader can notice and work with sounds in language, improving their ability to spell these new words. For example, in *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star*, one word family includes star and are, and from there, we add others, like car, far, bar, etc.

While you're sharing rhyme with a child, modulate your voice and emphasize the pattern, the echo. Reading my new book, *Pinkies Up*, during story time, I make sure to keep a beat and punctuate the rhyming words. Here's the first verse:

*Ladybugs at teatime  
Drink with pinkies up,  
But tigers chug straight from the pot,  
Discarding any cup.*

In children's literature, rhymes are usually fun. I remember my kids chanting, "One more time! Read it again!" when we had a new rhyming book. Don't be surprised if they'll want to hear the sing-song-y repetition over and over again. You may grow tired of it, but they won't! Books with rhyme will be remembered long after you read them.



**Rhyme offers a love  
of words and is vital  
in building memory  
skills**





While some rhymes are predictable, others express suspense and drama. Here's the tense moment from my story:

***And, oh, as everyone piles in  
Dishes clang and crash!  
The flower vases tilt and spill,  
Full teacups tip and splash.***

Don't worry; Pinkies Up ends on a high note, as the community of children learns cooperation, teamwork, and friendship in rhyme.

Rhyme offers a love of words and is vital in building memory skills, and rhyming books often lead children to a love of literature. Cheers to happy reading with your kids!

**Raven's website: <https://www.ravenhowell.com>**





## Let's Read Together

By: Georgia Christakis



Before my daughter was born, my husband and I read to her. We'd pick a book from the small pile my mom, a retired school teacher and children's librarian, had sent us in the mail, giggling at the awkwardness of animatedly telling a story to my belly. We'd laugh at lines like, "Daddies are delicious," and wonder what she'd think of these books once she arrived.

Those early days feel long behind us now, but we never stopped reading to our daughter, now three, and our son, who just turned four months old. We've all gone through phases of waxing and waning interest and engagement, like our daughter at four weeks of age, when she'd stare at us with a puzzled expression—or just cry—or at one year when the most interesting thing about books was the flavor. From the sleepless nights of early infancy to the trying days of defiant toddlerhood, we have always come back to reading together. Whether cuddled on the couch on a rainy afternoon or plopping down in a corner of our local library, reading together has become a comforting constant for our family.

Reading as a family is more than just a pleasant activity to enjoy together. Reading to children as young as newborns has many benefits both in their early brain development and further down the road once they are school-aged. Literacy has been associated with higher education completion rates and earning potential and lower school dropout and incarceration rates 1-2. Moreover, the vast majority of brain development occurs in the window from birth to two years of age 3. Reading to children during this critical period facilitates that development.

The benefits of reading with young children are well studied, and as a pediatrician, I'm lucky to work with and counsel new parents throughout early childhood on why reading to children can be so beneficial. Here are just a few reasons why reading to your kids is so important—especially at a young age—and some tips on making it more fun as a family.

BY: GEORGIA  
CHRISTAKIS

# Let's Read Together: The Benefits of Reading to Children and How to Make It Fun

**Reading aloud improves early childhood vocabulary.** Children learn words from what they hear in the world around them. Some of this comes from conversations with parents and peers. But books — even picture books — have richer, more complex language and expose children to higher-level vocabulary at an early age. Both types of language are crucial for success later in life, and the more words children are exposed to early in childhood, the more successful they are at reading once they reach school age.

You certainly don't have to start with long books containing big words or complex sentences; in fact, it's best to start small. Instead, for young infants, choose picture-forward books with shorter text. Brains are programmed to enjoy looking at faces, so books featuring people and facial expressions are a good choice at this age. You can talk about things happening in the pictures, ask open-ended questions, and point out objects on the pages.

**Reading exposes infants to natural speech patterns.** Have you heard of serve and return language? Reading exposes infants to natural speech patterns. Have you heard of serve and return language? If not, you've certainly heard it. It's the natural way that people converse with each other every day, such as asking a question while another person replies or making a comment that someone responds to.

It's often described as a tennis match. One person serves the ball to their partner across the net, and the other returns it, continuing the conversation<sup>5</sup>. This type of interactive speech pattern has many benefits both in speech development and secure attachment to caregivers. Not only does it model and help babies practice this style of speech pattern, but also, by encouraging and responding to an infant's coos and babbles, it fosters secure attachment and positive brain development<sup>6-7</sup>.

How can you practice serve and return language with your kids? Ask questions! What do you think will happen next? Who do you see in this picture? Will you count all the animals with me? Try it the next time you're reading with your child. Even in the pre-verbal period, this encourages infant babbling, which develops into normal language patterns later in life.

**Reading together promotes parental bonding.** When you enjoy doing something, you want to do it more. Anyone who has binge-watched a TV show or eaten chocolate can tell you this, but it's also a scientific fact<sup>8</sup>. Reading is no different. When children associate reading with curling up on the couch with loved ones, it creates a positive association that will bring them back to reading again and again.

BY: GEORGIA  
CHRISTAKIS

# Let's Read Together: The Benefits of Reading to Children and How to Make It Fun

Some great ways to incorporate more reading into quality time include reading during bedtime and naptime routines, taking little ones on outings to the library, and attending local Storytime event with them. We also always keep books within arm's reach at home — we keep a large basket of picture books next to the couch, in our bedroom, and in our children's play space. Some parents may use a tent, pillows, or toddler-sized furniture to create a reading nook in the home. This creates plenty of natural opportunities to plop down on the couch and read together<sup>9</sup>.

**Reading the same story allows for language acquisition.** Any parent of a toddler right now can probably recite every word of at least one of their kid's favorite books. For us, it's *Little Blue Truck* and *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom*. At their peak, my daughter would ask us to read these books upwards of ten times a day. What gives? As it turns out, it's more than just your toddler trying to assert some autonomy (although that's certainly part of it). Every time you reread that story, your child is listening, learning, and solidifying their understanding of new words and concepts. With each reread, children are listening, processing, and understanding more of what's being read.

**Reading together is an important part of school readiness.** In addition to exposing children to natural speech patterns and vocabulary, reading together introduces children to the building blocks of literacy.

This includes identifying sounds in spoken words, connecting letters to sounds, understanding what is being read, vocabulary, and fluency. While your child doesn't have to be reading before kindergarten, exposure to the building blocks of literacy through reading aloud together will help children achieve literacy once they reach school age.

**A final note.** Reading to a young child is not always easy. It may feel strange in early infancy or later, in the toddler years. It may become exhausting as they get distracted, uninterested, or feel too wiggly to sit through an entire book. The one constant in early childhood is that kids change constantly; what didn't appeal to them last week will suddenly become their favorite thing. Remember, if your child goes through a period where they're no longer interested in reading, don't push it, and try not to sweat it. You can always switch to shorter books, less time reading, or take a break altogether and try again in a few days.

Not long ago, I came home from a shift stressed out. It had been a busy day, with back-to-back patients, complicated issues to triage, and little time to eat, drink, or pump breast milk for my baby boy. I walked through the door on edge and eager to shower off the stress and germs of a busy day at the clinic before hugging my little ones.

"Mama, I missed you! Can we read?" My daughter, almost three here, was making a beeline to hug me, scrubs and all.

# Let's Read Together: The Benefits of Reading to Children and How to Make It Fun By Georgia Christakis

"Not yet!" I said. "Wait until I've showered!"

Since we're heading into cold and flu season, I make a conscious effort to change clothes before embracing my children. A shock of guilt ran through me. The disappointment was written all over her face.

I hurried through my shower and tossed on my favorite lounge pants, sweatshirt, and socks, eager to find my daughter before she lost interest in hanging out with me. I found her in one of our favorite reading spots, curled deep into the corner of our couch, surrounded by her stuffed animal friends, her favorite plastic Maui figurine, and, of course, piles of picture books. She was reading to herself — or at least trying. She's memorized a few of her favorite titles by heart.

"Sorry, I had to shower first," I told her. "Can we still read some books together?"

A smile lit up her face. "Of course we can!" she exclaimed. "Let's start with this one."

## Sources

Various studies underscore the multifaceted impact of education and reading on individuals across different life stages.

Melissa Lee's article in *The Washington Post* (1994) delves into the intricate relationship between academic achievement and salary.

Rogot et al. (1992) contribute insights from the National Longitude Mortality Study, examining life expectancy based on employment status, income, and education.

Pfefferbaum et al.'s quantitative MRI study (1994) highlights changes in brain morphology from infancy to late adulthood.

Massaro (2017) emphasizes the benefits of reading aloud to children for acquiring literacy before formal schooling.

Additionally, sources such as the [Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University](#) (2020), Kok et al. (2015), Kuhl et al. (2014), and Horst et al. (2011) explore the impact of early parental sensitivity, serve-and-return interactions, and contextual repetition on child development and learning. Razdan's tips on [HealthyChildren.org](#) (2023) and Burrows' insights from [CS Mott Children's Hospital](#) (2017) further emphasize the importance of fostering a love for [reading and literacy in children](#). These collective findings underscore the interconnectedness of education, brain development, and literacy, shaping individuals across their lifespan.

# Love Books, Love Learning

*A mother's mission to proactively use books to maximize language acquisition.*

## By Tanya Saunders

“Your daughter may learn to read before she can say the words she’s reading,” said our auditory-verbal therapist. Our profoundly deaf daughter was four years old, and we were teaching her to speak. She had always been fascinated by books — it was as if she knew a secret code hidden in those squiggly lines on each page. Her ability to read before being able to articulate words was an early indicator that learning would follow a unique path for our family. And indeed, while our typically hearing daughter learned to speak several years before her twin, both girls learned to read at the same time. With a deaf child, early language acquisition needs to be supported much more deliberately than with a typically hearing child. Still, many of the strategies I used for purposefully supporting my deaf daughter’s language development are equally valuable in any child’s language learning.

I knew using books would be central to our daughter’s progression as she learned to speak, especially as it tapped into an existing fascination, but it bothered me that so few children’s books featured characters with hearing loss. I was sure my daughters would respond more keenly to books if they featured families like ours, where dealing with hearing loss is a part of everyday life. I began writing homemade books to fill this gap. They starred a pair of twin teddies, one of whom had hearing loss and used cochlear implants. I integrated specific language development strategies into each story. When our auditory-verbal therapist saw my books, she suggested publishing them so more families could use them.

I eventually launched AVID Language to publish inclusive books for children with and without hearing loss.

AVID Language represents a range of authors, all writing books that provide “mirrors and windows” for deaf children and their families, classmates, and teachers. It’s rewarding to see my daughters’ responses to these books and receive messages from other parents describing their children’s reactions, pointing with joy and recognition to their own listening devices when they see our fun, aspirational characters with cochlear implants or hearing aids. Others react similarly when they see our protagonists communicating in sign language (not all families with deaf children wish to communicate through spoken language; some prefer sign language or a combination of both).

Seeing themselves and their experiences reflected through books helps children build self-esteem, self-confidence, and a strong sense of identity and belonging. It also provides a powerful incentive to keep reading, discussing, and comparing experiences.

As a parent, I also use books to open windows to other worlds, exposing my children to situations beyond their own experiences.

# Love Books, Love Learning



## By Tanya Saunders

“Through books, they can journey far into make-believe lands, but they can also explore the real world, witness people experiencing life in different ways, and learn how other people think and feel. My own experience leads me to look at the representation of differences from the perspective of the parent of a deaf child. I hope people start to see abilities instead of disabilities, but I believe it has broader relevance, too. Learning about people who walk different paths through life can help shape young minds to become more aware, tolerant, and compassionate.

The strapline for my publishing venture is “Inclusive books for children with (and without) hearing loss” because I believe all children—and society at large—can benefit from a look into other people’s experiences. Reading a wide and varied selection of books can help children grow up to become open-minded adults, capable of seeing situations objectively and relating to people from different backgrounds.

Since learning to speak and read, my daughters have continued to be avid bookworms. Both girls have a broad vocabulary, and I’m sure this is due to their prolific reading and how we used books as the launchpad for play-based learning in their early years. Two-way engagement is vital for developing strong language and communication skills in young children, and reading books together is a nurturing way to build a communication connection. No app can replace your lap.

I learned early on not to be too rigid when reading with my girls, instead interacting with books in whichever way that day took us, using books as a springboard to language-rich directions. One day, we might never get beyond the first page because something in the book sparked a new thought. On another day, we might read the same book from beginning to end, pausing at times to guess what might happen next or to remind ourselves of the meaning of a particular word. In terms of language acquisition, both interactions are equally valuable.

Encouraging children to proactively engage with books instead of being passive listeners can also boost language learning. Many parents are familiar with having to read a favorite book over and over again. While this can feel exasperating, it also offers opportunities for initiating active participation from the child by practicing auditory closure (when the adult reader pauses midway through a familiar sentence and waits for the child to complete it). This can incentivize and encourage reticent children to use their voices in an environment where they feel safe and confident. Over time, their growing confidence will allow them to participate more actively at school and beyond.

As my children learned to read, we would take turns reading aloud, which was always entertaining and encouraged them to read clearly and expressively.



# Love Books, Love Learning



## By Tanya Saunders

“Making a mistake when reading aloud was another effective (and hilarious) way to check comprehension and keep my children actively engaged in the story because they liked nothing more than correcting me when I said something wrong.

Having two children of the same age with a marked differential in language level could be a challenge when choosing books to read together. I’m sure parents of siblings of different ages can relate to this, too. To keep it fun for everyone, I looked for ways to engage my twins in the same book to help them access the story at their own level. Many of these activities also helped strengthen their social skills and emotional intelligence. These games allowed my twins to continue learning from each other because while one daughter had advanced spoken language skills, the other had different but strong expressive and receptive skills. Being highly visual, my deaf daughter often noticed subtle details that the rest of us had missed in a book’s illustrations.

Role-playing the story is a fun way to actively engage children in a familiar book. Acting out different roles enables each child to use language at their respective level. Hearing more sophisticated language from an older sibling can help to expand a younger sibling’s understanding and eventual use of similar language. Swapping roles can also yield rich learning rewards. It encourages children to see a situation from a different character’s point of view while learning and practicing different vocabulary and language.

To extend the benefits of role-play, I made puppets by printing out characters from books, laminating them, and attaching them to lolly sticks. My children loved acting out stories, switching puppets back and forth to assume different roles. Designing stage sets for puppet shows was also a creative extension activity and showed whether my children had absorbed details from the story.

While a good book automatically encourages children to use their imagination to extend its story into their everyday play, I found that when they were younger, making simple puppets incentivized my children to make up their own stories, using a book’s characters but extending the plot. This type of imaginative and interactive play expanded each child’s language and two-way communication skills in a fun and highly motivating way, irrespective of their disparate language levels at the time.

Puppets can also be used to initiate games focused on any specific learning goals young children may have. To help my deaf daughter at school in the early years when her language was just emerging, we used to pre-read the books that her teacher was planning to use next, which would allow her to engage fully in all book-based classroom activities. To make this pre-learning fun, we would first read the book together. Then, I made puppets of the main characters and, separately, colorful labels with snippets of information about each character.

# Love Books, Love Learning



## By Tanya Saunders

To extend this activity further into learning about feelings and emotions, I created speech bubble labels, which, again, my daughter had to match to the right puppet. This encouraged her to step into each character's shoes and think about what they might be feeling and why. A builder's speech bubble might say, "I feel tired because I have been working hard all day." These are all simple but fun ways to learn vocabulary and language and start thinking about feelings and emotions. Keeping things play-based is much more effective for young children than a rigid methodology.

None of us wants reading to become a chore for our children. We don't want them to grow up fearing or avoiding books. That's why I believe it's essential to find ways to enable our children to access books in whichever way works for them. If we encourage our children to become active participants and not just passive listeners, we can make learning from books fun and enticing. This will empower our children with an enduring love of books, language, and learning, which will help them in whichever direction their life ultimately takes them.

### Links:



Website: [www.avidlanguage.com](http://www.avidlanguage.com)  
Instagram: [@avid.language](https://www.instagram.com/avid.language)



# Lucky Me

By Rory Grady



## READING WITH YOUR KIDS

### Podcast

“I just don’t understand,” I said. “It doesn’t make any sense.”

“We do this every year, Rory. It’s just a nice thing to do.”

Thank you notes have always been a non-negotiable institution in the Grady family. Each year, the day after Christmas or birthdays, my mom would sit my sister and me at the dinner table to fill out our cards, and each year, I protested. Isn’t the spirit of the holidays to give without expecting something in return? Wouldn’t a warm thumbs-up at the next family gathering suffice? Each appeal was met with appropriate disapproval. My parents, like most adults in polite society, are traditionalists in their belief that nothing can replace a handwritten thank-you note. And I, like most children in impolite society, wanted to spend the day after Christmas playing with my new stuff. My mom would come into my room, asking nicely a few times before dragging me downstairs to write my letters.

On my way to the kitchen, I’d pass my sister, her hands full of freshly stamped envelopes, on her way back upstairs.

“Have fun,” she’d say, smirking as she returned to her toys. I began a tradition where I’d narrate my writing as my mom slowly lost her patience from across the room. My formula was simple: a few sentences thanking them for their gift, followed by a list of vices I promised not to spend it on.

“Dear Grandma,

Thank you for your generous gift. I appreciate you thinking of me at this wonderful time of year. I promise to spend it wisely, and I’ll be sure not to squander it on pimp-coats and three-card-monte.

Love,  
Rory”

# Lucky Me by Rory Grady

I've always been a smart-ass. That much may be evident from my monthly column on the indignation and bitter ironies of childhood. One need not look further than the title to know I have a taste for sarcasm. This year, Thanksgiving falls on my mom's birthday, and in the spirit of the holiday, I'd like to write something genuine — as genuine as I'm capable of being, anyway. This month's edition of "Lucky Me" will be a thank-you note, though perhaps a sort of abstract one.

By any non-Irish standard, my family is obscenely large. On my mother's side, my grandmother comes from a family of fourteen children, while my grandfather was one of a comparatively scant twelve. Each year, for Thanksgiving, we get together with a few families who have settled in the Bay Area, taking turns hosting on a tri-yearly basis. Thanksgiving 2003 was my grandmother's turn to host. 2003 was notable in that it would feature not only the usual suspects but also several Irishmen and their families who had flown in from the homeland for the holidays.

Just before the guests arrived, my mom got word that her childhood neighbor was in the last stages of her battle with cancer, and she didn't have much time left. My grandma said she'd watch my sister and me if my mom wanted to say goodbye.

While vigilant at first, my grandma became quickly occupied by entertaining, and, house full of distracted Paddys, I had free range to get into mischief. I moved for the garlic bread, housing one piece, then another, loaf after loaf, until it was gone.

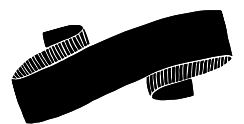
My parents soon got back to the party, chatted with relatives for a bit, and decided to call it a night.

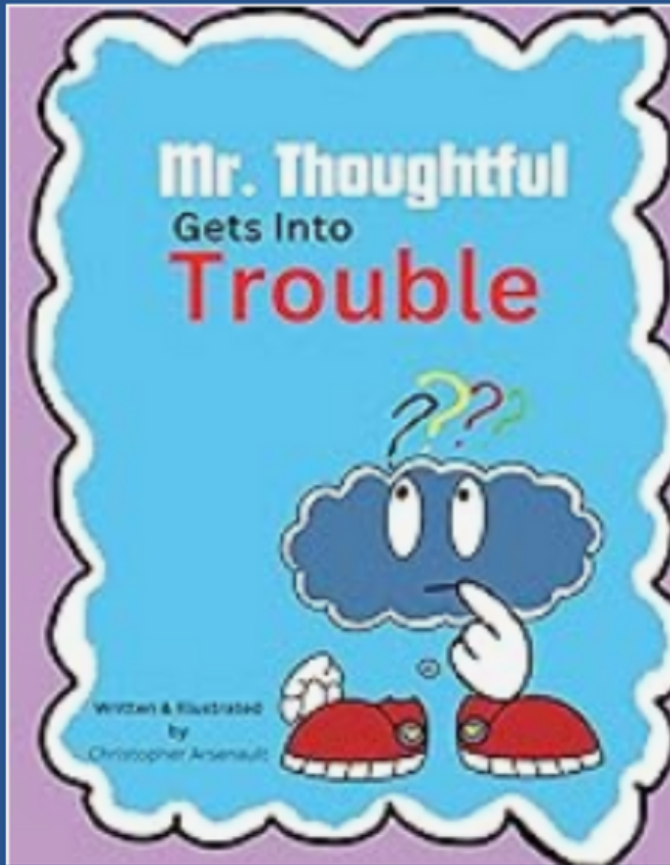
On the ride home, my stomach began to turn, bread and acid rapidly swelling in my small, three-year-old abdomen. My parents brought me to bed, but I quickly ran to their room to alert them of my ailment.

"Mom, I don't feel so good," I said. No sooner had the words left my lips than they were followed by garlic-tinged ejecta. My shame lay chunky and warm upon my parents' white carpet. My mom, who had held it together for the party, said she was just getting ready for a good cry when I walked in. She instead spent the rest of her night tearfully scrubbing sick from carpet fibers.

The story represents my relationship with my mother well. No matter how bad a situation is, my mom is always willing to put her own feelings aside to help make it better. Every month, I use my mom as a comedic foil in my exaggerated retellings of childhood stories to seventy-five thousand strangers, and every month, my mom goes along with it. She likes my stories, but that's beside the point. I appreciate my mom for putting up with my crap just as much now as she did twenty years ago. This Thanksgiving and every Thanksgiving, I'm thankful for my mom.

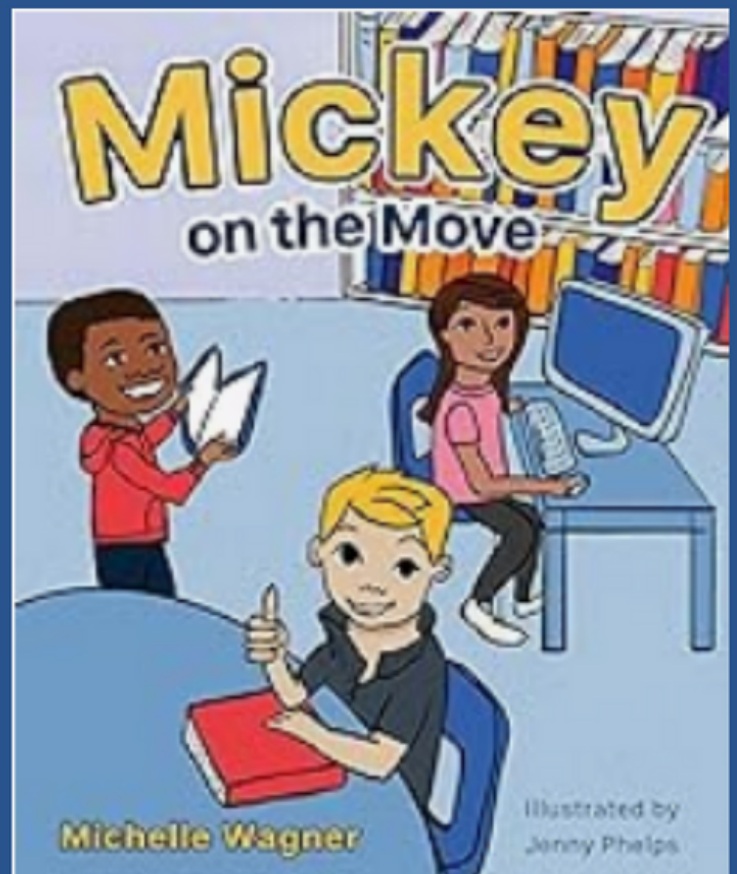
Happy birthday, Mom.

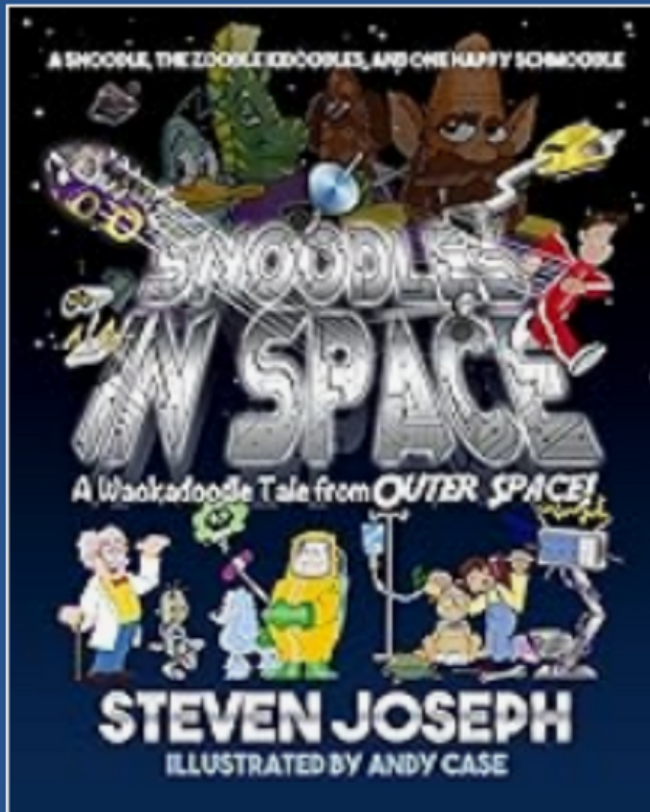




**MR. THOUGHTFUL  
GETS INTO TROUBLE  
BY CHRISTOPHER  
ARSENAULT**

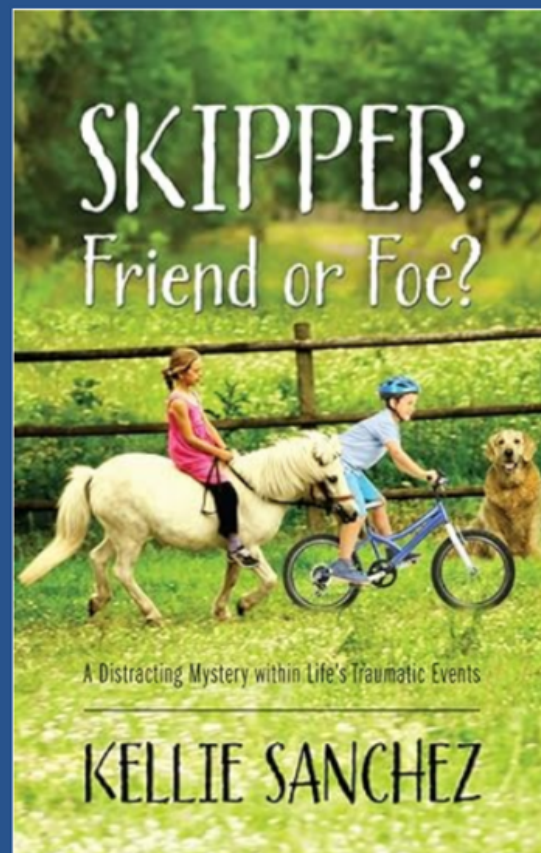
**MICKEY ON THE MOVE:  
AN INSPIRING STORY  
ABOUT A BOY WITH  
COCHLEAR IMPLANTS  
BY MICHELLE WAGNER**





**SNOODLES IN  
SPACE  
BY STEVEN  
JOSEPH**

**SKIPPER  
FRIEND OR FOE  
BY KELLIE  
SANCHEZ**



# *A is for Always*

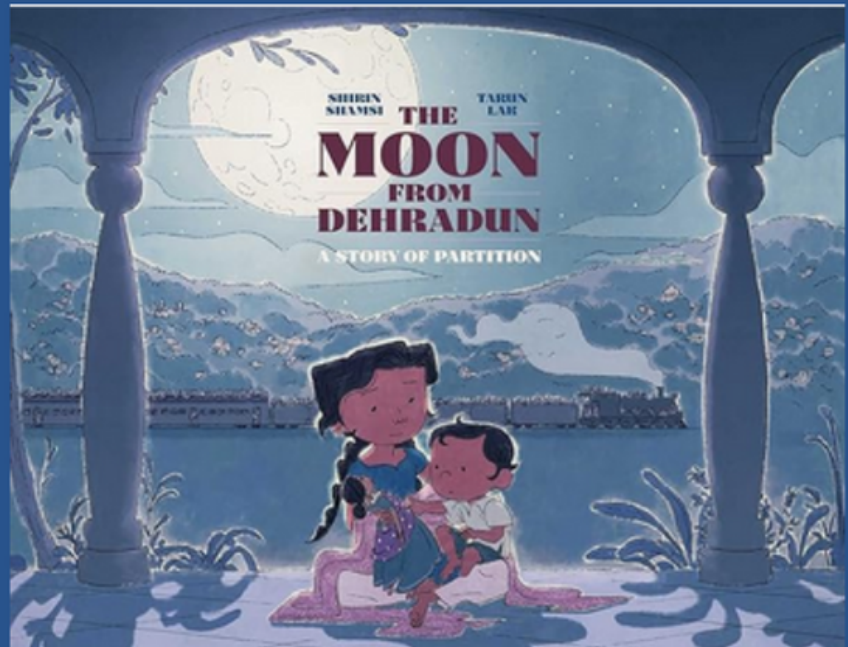
AN ADOPTION ALPHABET

by Linda Exelbire Cutting  
Illustrations by Debbie Lee Lee



**A IS FOR ALWAYS**  
**AN ADOPTION**  
**ALPHABET**  
**BY LINDA CUTTING**

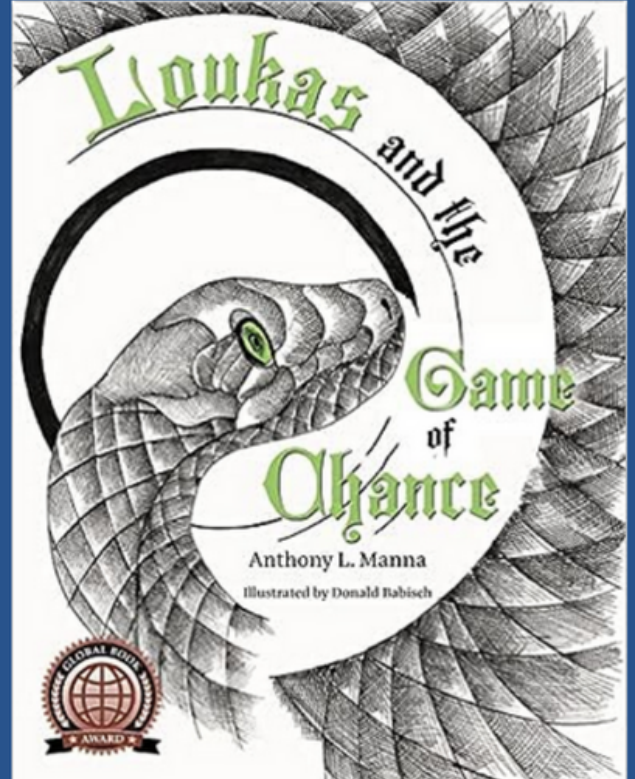
**THE MOON FROM**  
**DEHRADUN: A**  
**STORY OF**  
**PARTITION**  
**BY SHIRIN SHAMSI**





**AT NIGHTTIME WE  
ARE ALL THE SAME  
SIZE  
BY MURRAY  
SAWCHUCK**

**LOUKAS AND  
THE GAME OF  
CHANCE  
BY ANTHONY  
MANNA**





# Reading with Your Kids