

Readers are Leaders: Buy Your Children More Books

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We are our children's first teachers, and what we teach them makes a difference.

According to research by Betty Hart of the University of Kansas and Todd Risley of the University of Alaska, by age 3, poor children have an accumulated experience with 30 million less words than their wealthier counterparts; a greater percentage of the words that poor children accumulate were discouraging compared to their wealthier peers.

We have to read more to our children and encourage them to read more for themselves.

This year let's help reduce the 30-million-word gap by adding more books to our shopping list.

Books not only promote literacy, they also encourage our children to see themselves as an integral and valued part of the society in which they live. Walter Dean Myers, author of the critically acclaimed "Monster," asserts that culturally relevant books help young people to validate their existence as human beings.

A Guide to Purchasing Culturally Relevant Books

Birth to 7 years-old:

Children in this age

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the movie.

Through all of the improved writing of T'Challa and his world, his spectacular scientific ability has remained prominent. Wakanda continues to be a successful African nation with astonishing science and technology. Furthermore, and very importantly, T'Challa is not portrayed as an anomaly among his people in this regard. There are many great scientists and engineers in Wakanda, including his half-sister Shuri. In some accounts, she (in the continued scientist-ranking business of comics) is an even greater intellect than he is.

'If they can do it, then why not me?'

As a scientist who cares about inspiring more people — including underrepresented minorities and women — to

group enjoy books with vibrant colors, a predictable pattern, and interactive pages.

Our Picks:

1. "Please, Baby, Please" by Spike Lee & Tonya Lewis Lee describes the behind-the-scenes look at the chills, spills, and unequivocal thrills of bringing up baby.*
2. "Chicka Chicka Boom Boom" by Mill Martin Jr. uses an alphabet rhyme to race to the top of a coconut tree.
3. "Chicka Chicka 1,2,3" also by Bill Martin Jr. is the counting-themed complement to the popular "Chicka Chicka Boom Boom."
4. "Brothers of the Knight" by Debbie Allen is a modern retelling of the classic tale "The Twelve Dancing Princesses." Reverend Knight can't understand why his 12 sons' sneakers are torn to shreds each and every morning, and the boys aren't talking. They know their all-night dancing wouldn't fit with their father's image in the community. Maybe Sunday, a pretty nanny with a knack for getting to the bottom of household mysteries, can crack the case.

8 years-old to 12 years-old:

Children in this age group are familiar with story line. They under-

stand setting, plot, and characters.

Our Picks:

1. "The Broken Bike Boy and the Queen of 33rd Street" by Sharon Flake explores the meaning of being a good friend and "happily ever after."
2. "Fifty Cents and a Dream: Young Booker T. Washington" by Jabari Asim tells the story of a young Booker T. Washington, the cherished American educator and advisor to presidents, journey five-hundred mile journey to Hampton Institute immediately after emancipation. He arrived with only fifty cents in his pocket.
3. "Mr. Chickee's Funny Money" by Christopher Paul Curtis takes readers on an exciting adventure with best friends Steven, Russell, and Zoopy. Steven was given a mysterious dollar bill from Mr. Chickee, an elderly blind man in the neighborhood. When Agent Fondoo from the U.S. Treasury Department finds out about it, he wants the currency back; but the team of secret government agents may have met their match in the three best friends.

13 years-old to 18 years-old:

By this age, teens have established what they like to read, and some

engage with science, I think that if a significant portion of this scientific landscape appears in "Black Panther" it could amplify the movie's cultural impact.

Vast audiences will see Black heroes of both genders using their scientific ability to solve problems and make their way in the world, at an unrivaled level. Research has shown that such representation can have a positive effect on the interests, outlook and career trajectories of viewers.

Improving science education for all is a core endeavor in a nation's competitiveness and overall health, but outcomes are limited if people aren't inspired to take an interest in science in the first place. There simply are not enough images of Black scientists — male or female — in our me-

dia and entertainment to help inspire. Many people from underrepresented groups end up genuinely believing that scientific investigation is not a career path open to them.

Moreover, many people still see the dedication and study needed to excel in science as "nerdy." A cultural injection of Black Panther heroics could help continue to erode the crumbling tropes that science is only for white men or reserved for people with a special "science gene."

Given the widespread anticipation for the upcoming "Black Panther" movie, if it showcases T'Challa and other Wakandans as highly accomplished scientists, it should give science engagement a significant boost worldwide.



Dr. Elizabeth Primas says that we have to read more to our children and encourage them to read more for themselves.

have decided that they don't like to read at all, but with the right books, that can change.

Our picks:

1. "Firebird" by Misty Copeland tell the story of a young girl with fragile confidence who questions her ability to reach the heights that Misty has.
2. "Americanah" by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is the coming of age the story of an Nigerian-American girl discovering the meaning of "blackness" in

the United States of America. Her companion Obinze, was not able to join her in the states due to post 9/11 immigration policies and they eventually stop contact. He chose to try his chances as an undocumented person in London; as an alternative to the American dream. However, they reunite years later in a newly democratic Nigeria.

3. "Tears of a Tiger" by Sharon M. Draper uses the grief of a

young Andy to refute the belief that strong boys don't cry. After allowing the death of one of his close friends consume him, a series of letters, articles, homework assignments, and dialogue makes clear that indeed tigers do cry.

Dr. Elizabeth Primas is an educator, who spent more than 40 years working towards improving education for children of diverse ethnicities and backgrounds.



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