Literacy Lava supports your kids’ reading, writing and communicating with creativity.

In this sixth edition of Literacy Lava, you’ll find ideas for revving up reluctant readers, using poetry to support literacy, ways to tell tales with story stones, how to unlock the mysteries of early readers, ways to get the most from travel with children, how to get started with a father/son book club, using newspapers to build literacy, and lots of fun learning activities with buttons and bottle caps. Don’t forget to check out the Online Extras page, and the Activity page for kids.

Sometimes the simplest ideas are the best. Whether you use stones, string, buttons or books, learning and enjoyment are the keys. Have fun with the ideas in Literacy Lava 6, while helping your kids build the skills they need to read, write and communicate successfully. Why not spread the word about the magic of children’s literacy by sharing your copy of Literacy Lava with a friend?

I encourage you also to follow the links to contributors’ blogs and websites. Our writers are a diverse group, but all have this in common: a passion for children’s literacy and a genuine desire to share their own love of learning. If there’s something special you would like to see in the next issue of Literacy Lava, something you want information about, or to give some feedback, you can always contact me via The Book Chook blog.

The Book Chook, editor.

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You know you’ve read a good book when you turn the last page and feel a little as if you have lost a friend. ~Paul Sweeney

Literacy Lava Issue 6 September ’10
**SquiggleMum**

Catherine Oehlman shares ideas and inspiration for raising kids on her blog at [SquiggleMum](http://www.squigglemum.com). She is a mother, teacher, writer, picture book lover and award winning blogger. You can find Cath squiggling about literacy and other topics close to her heart in many online and print publications.

**A Peaceful Day**

Jeanne Grant Webb is an Aussie mum who homeschools her daughter, Jemimah, using the methods developed by English educator, Charlotte Mason. Instead of school at home, Jemimah learns through literature, not textbooks. Her days are filled with music and art appreciation, nature study, poetry, foreign language and Shakespeare, along with many hours each day spent outside.

Jeanne’s blog, [A Peaceful Day](http://apacelifewithjeanne.blogspot.com), allows her to indulge her all-consuming love of children’s literature – particularly Australian literature – as well as writing about all the other things that help children love to learn. Come and join the conversation!

**The Book Chook**

The [Book Chook blog](http://thebookchook.com) shares snippets from the wonderful world and words of kids’ literacy and literature. You’ll find tips for parents, book and software reviews, ideas for developing reading, writing and communicating skills with children, and the occasional rant!

The Book Chook’s real name is Susan Stephenson. I am a writer, teacher, reviewer, and editor of Literacy Lava. Find more information about me at my [website](http://www.susangrace.com), or a list of my published writing credits at [Coffs Coast Writers](http://www.coffscowriters.com).

**Links to Literacy**

Dawn Little is the founder of [Links to Literacy](http://www.linkstoliteracy.com), an educational consulting company dedicated to providing interactive learning experiences for children and families. In addition, Dawn runs two blogs: Picture This! Teaching with Picture Books where she provides educators and parents with picture book resources to teach reading comprehension and writing strategies, and Literacy Toolbox where she offers tips and tools for educators and parents to enhance the literacy lives of children.

**The Almost Librarian**

[The Almost Librarian blog](http://thealmostlibrarian.com) celebrates and promotes early childhood education, early literacy and family by providing on-line resources, book and music recommendations, and activity ideas for parents, caregivers, librarians and teachers.

**Moms Inspire Learning**

Dawn Riccardi Morris started [Moms Inspire Learning](http://www.momsinspirelearning.com) in order to share her love of learning and reading. She has a special interest in picture books, and loves to research themes relating to math and cultural awareness. A librarian at heart, Dawn is the parent of a tween and a teen, so she regularly shares some of their favorite books. She also writes about healthy living, education, and literacy. Dawn is a Certified Public Accountant, and holds a graduate degree in elementary education.

**Getting Kids Reading**

Joyce Grant is a freelance journalist and editor. She also blogs about children’s literacy at [Getting Kids Reading](http://gettingkidsreading.com), which offers fun games, ideas, books, research and practical ideas to help get kids reading. Joyce is the mother of an eight-year-old boy who is a voracious reader, and strongly believes that every child can become a great reader, too.

**teach mama**

Amy Mascott is the creator of [teachmama](http://teachmama.com), where she shares the ways that she sneaks a little bit of learning into her children’s every day. As a Reading Specialist and former high school English teacher, Amy’s focus for teachmama is to empower parents by providing them with the tools and resources they need to be the best teachers they can be for their children.
How about kids who don’t much like to read? I don’t enjoy competitive sport. My parents didn’t play it, I didn’t play it as a youngster, I only ever saw it as something boys and elite athletes did. Perhaps if my life had been different, competitive sport would now be a fulfilling part of my life. (Anyone for Book Chook badminton?)

Even if I’d been surrounded by competitive sport as a child, isn’t there a chance I’d still have disliked it? Perhaps my nature, or something in my environment, or a combination of both, might have led me to reject it. Similarly, with children who don’t like to read, isn’t there a chance they are just not that into it?

It’s a logical conclusion. But reading is so important to a child’s education, I believe we owe it to our kids to do everything in our power to turn them on to reading.

So how can we rev up reluctant readers? Give these ideas a try:

**Surround your kids in print**
Make sure there all sorts of printed materials in your home, and in places that are available to your kids. Leather-bound classics on high shelves do not work. Fiction, non-fiction, poetry, plays, picture books, chapter books, caption books, comic books, library books, dictionaries, encyclopedias, board books, books with audio tapes, home-made books, joke books, text books, e-books, iPhone apps - you never know when a particular format or genre will appeal to your child.

**Give children choices**
I am old-fashioned enough to believe we cannot always get to choose. There are some things in life we just must do, like stop at red lights. Unfortunately, that can apply to reading, particularly at school. But if you want reading to be associated with fun, with enjoyment, then allowing your child to choose his own reading material for home is a great idea. If you’re at the library, and you think a book is too difficult, I think it’s better to let your child find that out for himself, than make the choice for him. Same goes at book stores, garage sales etc - a little gentle guidance doesn’t go astray, but it comes down to balance. Encouraging kids to make choices gives them a feeling of independence, teaches them consequences and allows them to have a measure of control in their lives.

**Ensure kids see you read**
If you only ever read when your kids are asleep, they don’t get to see you as someone who values reading because you enjoy it yourself. Boys in particular need to see that reading is a significant and valuable activity for their dads. Youngsters copy what they see adults do.

**Share the fun**
Sometimes kids associate reading with a bad experience. Maybe someone has belittled their reading ability, or it has become a dreary chore for them, struggling with unsuitable material. In some cases, I advocate backing right off. Don’t abandon a daily reading schedule - but change it. Consider different approaches. Could you share the reading? By that, I mean read aloud together. No correcting, so that removes the whole ‘right/wrong’ attitude, and it becomes two people making meaning from print. Could you read most of the book aloud, and just ask your reluctant reader to join in at certain places? Work on reinforcing what he does know, and slowly introduce new material. Reading can be such fun - try to find material your child will enjoy, and read to him or with him. Maybe it’s a review of a movie he might like, or a book starring his favourite toy. Find the key that will rev him onto reading.

**Read aloud**
This is linked to several points above, but can’t be emphasized too much. Read aloud snippets from the newspaper, a riddle, a great line from a poem, an interesting snippet from a magazine. Read aloud to your children at least once a day, and do your very best to make your performance entertaining.

If we surround kids with all different kinds of print, give them choices, model reading to them, share the fun of reading, make reading aloud a daily habit at the very least - and they still don’t like to read, well, we’ve done our very best.

And in the end, that’s all a parent can do.
I fondly remember the days back when I was teaching 9th and 10th Grade, that I’d introduce one of my favorite units of all—poetry. Half of the class would openly groan, pretend to be sick, or throw their heads on their desks, while the other half perked up, sat a little straighter, and had a twinkle in their eyes.

It seems the same dichotomy exists today when I mention to my friends, family, or fellow teachers the benefits of reading poetry to children or even taking it a step further and using poetry to support early literacy. Some people shake their heads and immediately shut down, mumbling ‘poetry-schmoetry’. They say that poetry is for older kids, for dreamers, or for really strong readers and writers. Others, however, want to hug me, dance around, and will recite their favorite poem right on the spot. Call the poem a nursery rhyme, and it's a different story. But is it? Not really. Nursery rhymes are poems—poems sung or recited in the nursery, to our babies. And we do it for a reason; even from birth children begin pick up on the rhythms of our language and will eventually commit to memory the rhyming verses we sang while we rocked them to sleep.

So let's play on what our kids already know and then introduce some new ways that poetry can support early literacy:

**Recall then Read**: Occasionally bring back some of those 'oldies but goodies' that you once sang in the nursery. Recite the rhyme as you’re pushing your little one on the swing, in the stroller, or as she’s jumping rope. Then write the rhyme on a large piece of paper, underlining or highlighting one or two words—Twinkle, twinkle, little STAR, . . . Like a diamond in the SKY. Point to those two or three words as you recite the poem. Your little one will feel empowered to “point and read” on her own in a few days.

**Which Word?**: Do the same thing as above, but remove the words you’ve been focusing on for the last few days. Write the words on cards and ask your child to show you which word belongs in the spaces. Say, Twinkle, twinkle, little . . . oh no! The word is missing! Which of these two words fits? (Point to each word on the card as you go.)

**Nighttime Poems**: Grab a new-for-you children’s poetry book from the library and make that your before-bed reading once or twice a week. Use easy reading comprehension strategies to help your child remember and connect to a poem or two. Talk about which little stories, characters, or ideas he can picture in his head, which ones he can connect with, or which ones he has questions about.

**Musical Poems**: If your child is music focused, choose a favorite poem and go on a hunt for a song that reminds her of the poem. Talk about what similarities the song and music have and why she found a connection.

**Poem Picture**: Depending on a child’s age and abilities, creating a drawing, a photo, or a diorama of the ideas in the poem can really bring the poem to life. Explain to your child how a dreamy watercolor of a sunset reminds you of your favorite poem, or work together to create a collage of magazine photos to represent another poem you both enjoy.

I understand why some fear poetry; their own poor experiences with learning—or teaching—poetry can be enough to color the whole idea forever. But right now, there is such an amazing wealth of rich, worthwhile poetry out there that I wish more people would consider using it to support emerging readers. The outcomes can be incredible!
Stones and rocks have been used in different cultures throughout the ages to tell stories to children and adults alike. Why not have a go at making some simple story stones of your own? Then head outside to enjoy some outdoor story telling.

Make your story stones by putting small pictures onto pebbles. Smooth pebbles work best as they are easy to paint, draw or glue onto. With a fine brush and craft paints you can paint directly onto the stones. Permanent markers or paint pens will easily draw straight onto light coloured pebbles too. If necessary the stones can be sealed with clear lacquer or even a coat of PVA glue.

Try these ideas for story stones with your kids:

**Nursery Rhyme Rocks**
Nursery rhyme rocks are just wonderful for young children. There are limited characters and objects in nursery rhymes, so you don’t need to make too many stones! For example, to tell the story of Little Miss Muffet with your child you would need to make a stone with a girl’s face, and a stone with a spider. Then simply sing and act out using the stones as characters. For Humpty Dumpty, try making a stone with a face on each side: one side happy, and one side cracked and sad. You just need a wall in the garden to topple him off! If you have a hill you could try making Jack, Jill and a bucket to roll down as well.

**Telling Tales**
For slightly older children try retelling a favourite story with stones. Pick a simple story that your child knows well, preferably without too many characters. Retelling a story in sequence is an important skill. To retell a classic picture book like Eric Carle’s “The Very Hungry Caterpillar” you might just make four stones: an egg on a leaf, a caterpillar, a chrysalis and a butterfly. You could innovate on the text too as you retell, by varying the foods the caterpillar eats according to what is in your garden. (For example: On Monday he ate through one flower, but he was still hungry. On Tuesday he ate through two pieces of bark...) Of course, these stones can be used to tell your child’s own made up stories as well.

**Spelling Stones**
Depending on your child’s age you might like to include words and letters in your stone collection too. Putting your child’s name on one side of a pebble, and their face on the other makes a lovely addition to any set of stones. Children can literally “put themselves” into a story. Alternatively you might like to make a stone for each letter of their name. For early readers you can even add high frequency sight words to your collection. If you have a child who doesn’t like to sit at a desk to practise spelling homework, how about a whole alphabet set of stones to make words with outside?

Whatever your child’s age and level of development, take literacy outdoors with story stones!

*For more elaborate stones try this tutorial from Red Bird Crafts which involves gluing pictures and shapes cut out of fabric. You can find some beautiful examples of painted stones at Creative Star Learning and at Childhood 101 too.*
Unlocking the Mysteries of Early Readers

by Valerie Baartz, The Almost Librarian

Finding appropriately leveled and interesting books for your beginning reader can be a tough challenge. With so many publishers out there, it’s hard to sort through the mediocre books to find the quality gems. Filled with short, simple sentences and illustrations that support the context, early readers are some of the first books that children will tackle to read independently.

Early readers are written using a controlled vocabulary which means that they contain only words that are included on the publisher’s list (and each list will vary by publisher). These lists are made up of sight words, words that can be sounded out phonetically, some compound words, lots of rhyming words and alliterative words, and a few contractions. And while it sounds like it would be easy to create and author a book using a given list of words, it’s actually quite difficult! A good early reader book is interesting to the reader and tells a solid story while using only the simple vocabulary available.

Early reader books should contain illustrations that support the context of the writing. The illustrations should show actions and scenes that correspond to the words, offering support and extension to the meaning. Beginning readers should be able to use the illustrations to help them decode the words on the page. For example, if the child has just read a sentence with an exclamation point, the illustrated characters’ expressions and actions should support the emphasis.

Many publishers level their books such as Step 1, Step 2, etc or Level 1, Level 2, etc. They frequently include a basic description of their leveling system on the back of the book to give you a guideline. However keep in mind these levels are not necessarily consistent across publishers. So, for example, a Level 1 does not necessarily equate to a Step 1.

The first level of early readers will contain very short sentences – usually a few words to each sentence and one or two sentences per page. The font size should be large, clear and set at the same place on every page (usually at the bottom). Early readers are helping children develop the sense of reading from top to bottom and left to right. As the levels increase, the number of words per sentence will increase, as will the number of sentences per page. Ultimately, you will find pages with a whole paragraph or two and some dialogue.

The more advanced early readers will also be divided into “chapters” and the number of illustrations will start to decline. These very early chapter books take two forms. The first kind is more a collection of stories. Each chapter is like its own contained story with a beginning, middle and conclusion. The stories are usually related and contain the same characters, but each can be read independently and even out of order. These early readers will then extend into true early chapter books in which a single story is carried out over the course of multiple chapters.

Sorting through all of the early reader options can be overwhelming, so turn to your local librarian or bookseller for recommendations of quality early reader authors and series. They would love to help you discover future favorites for your beginning reader!
My family is a tribe of peripatetic lemmings – not because of our propensity for death in a watery grave – but because we’re constantly rushing to the ends of the earth. The Wanderlust Bug has bitten us hard. We love to travel. Most of our adventures are local: weekend jaunts to the City, day trips to Provincial towns, quick interstate visits, and the annual ski trip. But this sort of travel isn’t enough for the lemmings.

Bhutan and Thailand; France and England; Yemen and Dubai; Hong Kong and Japan. My daughter has been to them all, and she’s only eight.

And what does this mean for Jemimah’s education? I hazard a guess that her knowledge of the geography of Asia and the Middle East might be better than that of many adults. To begin with she can find Bhutan and Yemen on a world map. Can you?

Jemimah has an intimate knowledge of the lives of Muslims, Buddhists and Shintoists. She has eaten Bhutanese Emadatse, Thai Curries, French Cassoulets, and Yemeni Salta. She has climbed in the Himalayan Mountains and explored the hedgerows of Hereford. She knows what it’s like to be stared at for being different. She knows how to adapt and change to her surroundings. She has friends who live differently to her, and she knows that ours is not the only way. She can appreciate cultural diversity.

We don’t need to do much planning for our kids to learn while they travel. When a child is exposed to new sights, experiences and foods, they will learn. Lots. We are a learning family. To us, learning can and does happen everywhere. It’s an integral part of life. Learning is fun.

I feel sad when I see children’s learning over-structured on holidays. It’s not necessary, nor desirable, for children to work during their vacations. They don’t need to fill the gaps in pages of prepared worksheets, or be made to maintain a travel diary. To some kids this is fun, but to others it can take a significant shine off new experiences when they know they must write screeds about it afterwards.

To us the best time to include educational experiences in a vacation is before we go, not during. Here are some suggestions:

Read books!
Reading stories that take place where you’re planning to visit is a great way to prepare your kids. Traditional Folk and Fairy Tales not only introduce them to a new culture, names and places, but will also give them something in common with the local children when they arrive. In many countries, these folk tales are important enough in the culture of the people that references will be easy to find during the trip. It’s so exciting to find a painting of a story you’ve just read.

Start learning the language
If you’re travelling internationally, buy a phrase book – or better still a children’s book designed for the purpose of introducing language to small people. There are some great ones around. Learn ‘Please’, ‘Thank you’, ‘Good Day’, and the numbers from 1-10. You will use them and add new ones while you’re away.

Do some geography
Help your kids find their destination on a map and plot their travel route. Look at things like datelines and the equator, and discuss what that will mean for the climate and lifestyle of the people. Find pictures of significant landmarks, especially if you will be visiting them during your trip.

As you travel, talk about what you can see. Talk about the terrain, the costumes, the food, the architecture, the places of worship, the eating houses, and the flora and fauna. Be ready to answer their millions of questions. Encourage their curiosity.

Make a trip journal
A journal is not a diary. A trip journal is whatever you want it to be. My trip journal of our recent visit to Japan is a collection of quotes, haiku poetry, and drawings of interesting patterns I observed. Jemimah’s is more like a scrapbook cut from travel brochures, as well as a collection of cute stickers and stamps. Don’t make them do anything special with their scrapbooks – encourage them to make it a special book.

Take photographs
Kids will take completely different pictures of your trip. Make sure you print some of them for their trip journals.

Don’t overeducate
Kids do not need to visit every museum, art gallery, landmark, church and temple to learn. Be discerning. Maybe your comic obsessed teenage boy would prefer the Manga Museum to the Art Gallery, or an historical theme park to the museum.

These ideas don’t work only for the big overseas trip of a lifetime; they work for the trip interstate or a different city as well. Travel to new and exciting places is a wonderful experience for kids. And travel with kids can be a wonderful experience for parents.

I think we should get out of our comfort zones. Travelling with our children means having fun and learning together. Best of all, it means we create wonderful memories to share.
Activity Ideas:

• Read about the history of a favorite sport and then play that sport. As you play the sport, discuss the reading. Tie discussion into the rules of the game (i.e. for every goal made in soccer or every basket made in basketball, a discussion point is made).

• Choose a specific topic (i.e. the history of tools). Take the opportunity to teach the boys about the topic, through discussion and hands-on activities (i.e. the proper way to use tools).

• Read a newspaper article (or online news) with the boys. Discuss current events. Determine ways the boys could get involved in a community or civic event.

• Read graphic novels or comic books. Then have the boys create their own.

Did you know that boys need male role models in reading? Fathers have a great influence over their child’s education and how well they perform. If a male role model values reading, boys will learn to value reading as well. With this in mind, consider starting a Father/Son Book Club. Consider it the new age “boys club.”

Here is how to get started:

• Gather your son and several of his friends (no more than 5 boys total) and their fathers.

• Determine a meeting place and time (monthly seems to work well). Rotate from host to host.

• The host and his son choose the text for the month they host.

• Provide snacks!

• Provide a guideline for discussion. Or if you prefer, keep it casual, but the host should be able to move the discussion along.

• Boys and their fathers should read the text together ahead of the meeting. Or, if the reading for the month is short, consider setting aside time at the meeting for fathers and sons to read together.

Boys typically tend to enjoy short articles and graphic based texts. Often times, they also prefer “real-world” information vs. fiction or story type novels.

Text Ideas:

• Graphic Novels

• Magazine articles (Boys Life, Sports Illustrated for Kids, Kids Discover, National Geographic for Kids, Ranger Rick)

• Articles of interest from the Internet

• Newspaper articles (or online news sources)

Boys are normally very active! Tap into that natural curiosity and exuberance in your book clubs. Provide activities that require thinking and movement in relation to the text you read.

At the end of the day, a Father/Son Book Club provides an opportunity for fathers and sons to spend quality time together while reading. Consider keeping a father/son book journal. Write about favorite books you’ve read together and the activities that you did with it. Years from now, you’ll have a lasting memory of a childhood spent together and the enjoyment both father and son felt!
Children are fascinated by the “real” world around them and they’re desperate to be a part of it. Newspapers tell them what’s really going on, and help them see how they can make a difference.

Newspapers aren’t just for adults. They can be an important literacy tool for kids of all ages and reading levels. Boys in particular are drawn to facts, given in short bursts, with accompanying images. Sound like a newspaper to you? The Front Section is built specifically in that way. Girls love to read about people’s emotions, the drama of relationships and they are often interested in celebrities. The Entertainment Section or Lifestyle Section will contain juicy gossip and lots of celebrity business. For kids who are fixated on a particular sport, have them follow their favourite team or player in the Sports Section. They’ll have insights their friends don’t have, which will make their conversations at school the next day that much more interesting.

Reluctant readers may be drawn in by the Comics, which tends to have more reading than you’d think. With comics, you also have to do a bit of analysis about what’s going on in order to find the funny. Reluctant readers may also like the Horoscopes. Your technology geek can follow news stories online, since most newspapers have their own website. Older kids can build their own news page with iGoogle, which lets them subscribe to various online media, posting feeds from their favourite news sources on their homepage.

How to get started

Don’t just hand your kid a newspaper and expect them to love it. Newspapers have to be explained. First of all, unlike a book, in which you read every word, newspapers are designed to be skimmed. Explain to your child what a headline is for and why they tend to break grammar and punctuation rules (mostly for space and impact.) Show him the various sections and how the stories are positioned from most important to least important; explain how stories are “turned,” or “continued” from the front pages to the back pages (ie, See Federer S8). Show him how to find the continuation of a story.

Great activity for beginning readers

Find an interesting story that’s not scary or inappropriate for your child. Sit down together with the newspaper and summarize the story for her. “Our mayor wants to build a new zoo in our neighbourhood. She says it will bring a lot more people to the city.” Over the next few weeks, follow the story as it unfolds. “Remember that zoo idea the mayor had? Well, everyone is going to vote on it tomorrow. I wonder what will happen.” As the days pass and the story develops, you’ll be able to explore new concepts that arise and answer her questions about what’s going on. You’ll be surprised when she’s walking by the TV one day and casually astonishes your husband with, “Oh, that’s our mayor. She wants to build a zoo in town.”

Encouraging your child to read a newspaper will not only help them with their reading skills, but it will encourage a lifelong curiosity about the world around them that will stand them in good stead throughout their life.
What came to mind when you saw all of those buttons? The first thing that popped into my head was a bear named Corduroy. Do you remember Don Freeman’s famous picture book character?

Poor Corduroy was sitting on the shelf, waiting to be bought. If only he wasn’t missing a button. He would be so excited if he discovered this stockpile of buttons! And so might a child, don’t you think?

Here are some fun activities which might spring out of your button box after reading Corduroy.

Making up a story: Take out some stuffed animals, dolls, figures, or even old clothes with buttons and encourage your child to tell, write, or act out a story about them.

Creating any kind of art: Whether it’s sewing, using buttons to design people or animals, or even decorating a shoe box for the collection, buttons can get those wheels of imagination spinning!

Collecting objects: Just seeing the buttons might spark an interest in collecting all sorts of objects. A great math extension would be to collect coins of different values, designs, and currencies.

Sorting the buttons by color, size, shape, texture, or design: It may sound simple, but this activity could keep children busy for quite a while! Sorting is also an essential skill, and what a great way to introduce the concepts of organization and classification.

Creating patterns: (for example, yellow-blue, yellow-blue, yellow-blue or square-circle-circle, square-circle-circle) An understanding of simple patterns will provide a strong foundation for the study of more complex patterns found in numbers, nature, and art.

Counting buttons in total and by attribute and discovering which you have the most/least of. Concepts of greater than/less than, addition, and subtraction could spring out of this activity.

Skip counting buttons by arranging and counting them in multiples of 2, 5, or 10. A 100 chart will make the process a lot easier to keep track of, and the patterns will be easier to see. If the buttons are too big, you might consider using stickers or cereal (shaped like circles or squares, for example), or having your child draw simple designs in the boxes instead.

Creating word problems: Integrate writing and math by suggesting that your child come up with simple addition or subtraction problems with the buttons and dolls.

A bucket full of assorted buttons is full of all kinds of learning possibilities, even if your child just plays with them by herself. So, as long as they don’t pose a choking hazard, it’s a good idea to just let your child play around with them before you gently guide her toward any of the above activities. You might be surprised by what she comes up with.

I hope you enjoy connecting the buttons with Corduroy! When your child first sees them, I wonder what will come to mind first?
A Greener Alternative to Buttons: Collect and Reuse Plastic Bottle Caps!

Did you know that bottle caps are not necessarily recycled along with bottles? If you collect and reuse them, you’re really helping the environment.

Bottle caps come in many different shapes, sizes, and colors (larger ones pose less of a choking hazard to toddlers, which is a concern with most buttons), and parents, teachers, and children can draw their own designs on them. Why not get creative with shapes, figures, letters, numbers, or other symbols?

You can find some great ideas at Education.com.

More Math Ideas: 🎨🎨🎨🎨🎨

Halves: Have 2 children share 10 bottle caps by dividing them up like cookies. Then they could try it with different colors, sizes, or designs of bottle caps to see if the answer comes out the same. Later on, you can change the total number of bottle caps and repeat (older children can use this exercise to practice equivalent fractions, such as ½ and 4/8).

Pairs: Ask children to think of things which come in pairs. Then, you can draw those items on the bottle caps and have them match them up.

How many arrays can you make with a set number of bottle tops?

For example, with 10 bottle tops, you can make one row of 10, 10 rows of 1, 2 rows of 5, and 5 rows of 2. It’s a great way to practice factors, addition, multiplication, and even fractions.

So, why not start a bottle cap collection at home or at your school? It’s a great way for family members or students to make a difference.
# Online Extras

Here are nine great free resources that might be just the thing to help your family’s reading, writing, communicating and creating needs.

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<tr>
<th>Read</th>
<th>Write</th>
<th>Create</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Find all sorts of games and reading related activities at <a href="#">Ed-U-Smart</a>.</td>
<td>4. Practise your spelling at <a href="#">Spelling Bee</a>. Listen to stories then spell the missing words.</td>
<td>7. Make interesting pictures with online drawing tool, <a href="#">Flockdraw</a>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Download activities based on great children’s books from <a href="#">Harper Collins</a>.</td>
<td>5. Make your own Goosebumps comic at <a href="#">Scholastic</a>.</td>
<td>8. Create fascinating art works by using the ideas at <a href="#">Art Attack</a>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Read funny poetry online at <a href="#">Poetry4Kids</a>.</td>
<td>6. Create a digital story at <a href="#">ZooBurst</a>.</td>
<td>9. Interact with the early learning activities at <a href="#">Toy Theater</a>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**~Our Philosophy~**

We encourage our children to be involved in activities that support their literacy.

We read to our children every day, because it is one of the very best things we can do for them.

We talk with, read with, sing to, dance with, love and respect our children.

We help our children learn to read so they can read to learn.

We create a rich and varied literacy environment for our children.

We let our children catch us reading, writing and creating in our everyday lives, so they can see it is both natural and fun.

We believe that stories encourage dreams, and reading helps kids make their dreams come true.

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*Want more Literacy Lava? Please leave a comment on [The Book Chook blog](#). We'd love to discover what you valued, and want to see more of. If you and your children enjoyed an activity or suggestion from this issue, or you have a question we might be able to help with, let us know!*
Collective Nouns

A collective noun is a fancy name for a group. Some words, mostly animals, have special names when there’s a group of them. See if you can think of each one.

| A group of fish | A group of crows | A group of bees |
| A group of geese | A group of cattle | A group of lions |
| A group of whales | A group of penguins | A group of locusts |
| A group of acrobats | A group of eggs | A group of toads |

To check your answers, try your library or a search engine.

Can you draw a picture of each group?

Some people enjoy creating collective nouns - what would you call a group of monsters, a group of fairies, a group of transformers or a group of fireworks?