

10.26.00

Dear Laura & Klemens,

I'd like you to know from time to time what I have been reading to the children, what I think is the use of the considerable thought and effort, physical and emotional, that I put into the child care segment of my life. I never think of the time I spend on these efforts as simply "watching" them - well almost never. When the Harry Potter tapes are on, or ~~they~~^{the children} are listening to the radio, as has happened a good deal during the last few months, I am simply "watching" and trying to compensate for the lost phrase. ^{the} disappointment of having no real exchange with them, by reading N.Y. Times obituaries or how other more successful people spent their lives. You might be surprised to know how many books I have for reading about this summer, returned to the library after the time had gone by without any chance to do what I had planned. My personal disappointment^{ment} is the least of the loss. It is their loss that you should consider. Their education in school is O.K., but it lacks a great deal in scope, depth and imaginative flavor.

You don't have to buy private school education to supply what is missing, but you should foster the reading aloud of very good books, a wide variety of them, discussion of words - and poetry. What I try to do with the children needs your support and your effort. If you find and copy a few good poems, read them aloud, say them, as Leah and I sometimes do, you make the ideas and language part of their individual and shared experience, not just Grandma May's eccentric side show.

Before Klausen went off to work this morning, he did a magical trick that saved the disappearance of the Harry Potter tapes for a few valuable hours. Leah recited some of the poems on the Kitchen wall, I recited The Owl and The Rosy rat and part of The Jumbies, and a little of Frost's poem on Deliberation. Then she asked for The Willow Whistle. I read about 40 pages, explained words that she did not know: perplexity, crouch (as in "crouch the gate of the saddle"), knoll, dun (colored), jeer at, laurel. She wanted to relive earlier incidents in the book, flipped through the pages looking at the pictures to recall what happened.

Take note also of these perhaps minor achievements: Klausen must have ^{been} pleased by the interest in his discussion, the suggestions I made

and Jordan's help when I asked him to come over to fasten the rope for the diagram well to the top of the box. Anyway, at my suggestion he read two letters on the NY Times editorial page about Roger Clemens's bad behavior. Jordan helped me bring my book bag in this morning. I made his bed with good humor.

Benjamin listened with attention to The Willow Whistle, asked questions about words. When we took an evening walk recently and I commented on interesting smells from signs posted in the houses we passed, he asked me whether I remembered Jack Rankin. He had to remind me of the protagonist in The Janitor's Boy, whose keen nose detected the variety of odors in his school building: ranging from the cleaning compounds to food in preparation for lunch, to the school searchlight perfume - not to mention all the various brands of chewing gum in use by the other kids.

Here are some suggestions of what you can do to enhance your children's intellectual and emotional growth:

- (1) Spend a few minutes looking at certain things: The Willow Whistle, perhaps with Rankin who might tell you some of the story by referring to the pictures

3) It is a somewhat idealized account of several months of the life of a family on the prairies, their relationship with the wandering tribes of Sioux and Arapaho Indians. It is about real people, not witches or wizards. The climax involves the preservation of the schoolhouse from Indians who fear that the white man's magic ("medicine") emanating from the "medicine ledge" (schoolhouse) will destroy them. There are some valuable "Vocabulary Words" in the book. From a practical point of view, you should take every opportunity to make use of such ^{occasions} ~~opportunities~~ to enlarge their active vocabulary as well as their general comprehension.

Choose a couple of new poems and give them chances as to what to memorize. Here are a few suggestions: (pages in New Oxford Book of N. Verse)
The Owl and the Pussycat by Edward Lear (46)
The Last Word of a Bluebird R. Frost (134)
The Blackbird by H. Wolff (159)
Dark brown is the River R.L. Stevenson (162)

Decide on a poem to memorize yourself and do it!

I have more ideas, but I'll ~~stop~~ stop here in the hope that you might think about the more if I say less than I feel.
Mrs. Post