

# 12 Tips

## Building a Reading Tradition in Your Family

Reading together as a family over the holidays and through the whole year is a great way to encourage literacy and build closer bonds. Intergenerational researcher, educator, and National Chair of the *Something to Remember Me By* Legacy Project Susan V. Bosak, MA, runs workshops with families across the country. Here are her top tips for family reading and her holiday intergenerational storybook suggestions. For more tips, information, resources, and activities, visit [www.somethingtoremembermeby.org](http://www.somethingtoremembermeby.org).

① **No Age Limits:** Read aloud to young and old – from babies to teenagers to older adults. Picture books are great for everyone, especially if you're reading to a variety of ages at one sitting. Different ages will get different things from a story. Make sure everyone can see the illustrations, or has a book in front of them.



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them more involved in the story. If there is repetition in the story, say these phrases together. If the story is a favorite one, let a child finish familiar sentences. Occasionally ask, "What do you think is going to happen next?" When children are old enough, take turns reading parts of stories.

② **Make Books a Big Deal:** Begin reading to children as young as possible. Surround them with books of all kinds. Take them on frequent trips to the bookstore and library (get them their own card).

③ **Read Often:** Set aside at least one traditional time each day for reading aloud, like bedtime. At other times, read together as often as you can.

④ **Offer Variety:** Have a shelf filled with a variety of book choices – different lengths, subject matters, moods, and illustration styles. Grandparents can set up a book corner in their home for when grandchildren come to visit.

⑤ **Roll Credits:** Even if you've read a book before, read aloud its title, author, and illustrator. Children come to understand that there are people behind the words and pictures.

⑥ **Have Patience:** You're not only teaching children to read, but to listen. Listening is an ability that develops over time. Even if children don't seem to be paying attention at first, they are learning.

⑦ **Encourage Involvement:** For very young children, even getting them to help turn a book's pages gets

⑧ **Be Creative:** Reading aloud doesn't come naturally. Be easy on yourself, practice, and enjoy the process. Use plenty of expression when reading. Be dramatic! If possible, change the tone of your voice for different characters. Adjust your pace to suit the action. And don't read too fast. Allow children to build a mental picture.

⑨ **Lead by Example:** Let children see you reading for information and pleasure. Don't read stories you don't enjoy yourself – children will pick up on it and it will defeat the purpose.

⑩ **Involve Everyone:** Encourage older children to read to younger ones. Parents should read to children, as should grandparents, aunts, and uncles.

⑪ **Cuddle, Cuddle, Cuddle:** Make children feel secure and the reading experience a pleasurable, nurturing one. Find a comfortable chair or couch to cuddle up on. Don't forget to give a child an extra squeeze during a scary or tender part of a story.

⑫ **Holiday Favorites:** Set aside some traditional stories you read each holiday season, perhaps with some special traditions like making popcorn or hot chocolate.

# Some Intergenerational Storybook Suggestions

- Aliki. *Christmas Tree Memories*. HarperTrophy, 1994. Sharing a bedtime snack on Christmas Eve, a family reminisces about their tree ornaments, each laden with family history.
- Atwell, Debby. *Pearl*. Houghton Mifflin, 2001. Beginning with the time her grandfather was scooped out of a crowd to ride alongside George Washington in his Inauguration Day parade, 98-year-old Pearl tells the fascinating story of her life, which intersects with many significant historical events and people.
- Bosak, Susan V. and Laurie McGaw illus. *Something to Remember Me By: An Illustrated Story for Young and Old*. The Communication Project, 1997. In this heartwarming story about love and legacies, a grandmother and granddaughter share many special gifts through the years. This bestseller inspired the national *Something to Remember Me By* Legacy Project. Visit [www.somethingtoremembermeby.org](http://www.somethingtoremembermeby.org).
- Cohen, Steven A. (ed). *The Games We Played: A Celebration of Childhood and Imagination*. Simon & Schuster, 2001. A collection of childhood reminiscences from Bill Clinton to Al Roker to Jackie Collins about bottle-cap soldiers, lollipop gardens, and stoopball that will evoke memories and storytelling.
- Cooney, Barbara. *Miss Rumphius*. Viking, 1985. A beautiful, inspiring book about an older woman who, as a young girl, vows to see faraway places, live beside the sea, and do something to make the world more beautiful. She does all of these things, with the last one being most important of all.
- Devlin, Wende and Harry. *Cranberry Christmas*. Aladdin, 1991. Part of a series, this book finds Mr. Whiskers facing a gloomy Christmas until Maggie and her grandmother help him out with both his sister Sarah and his grumpy neighbor old Cyrus Grape.
- Forest, Heather. *Wisdom Tales from Around the World*. August House, 1996. From simple truths to common sense to the wisdom that comes from past generations' experience, this is a book for young and old to share.
- Graef, Renée. *Rodgers & Hammerstein's My Favorite Things*. HarperCollins, 2001. The popular song is given new meaning through illustrations of a loving family and their life through the course of a year. Score is included at the end.
- Greer, Colin and Herbert Kohl (eds). *A Call to Character: A Family Treasury*. HarperCollins, 1995. A wonderful reader for parents and grandparents to share with children. Includes stories, poems, plays, proverbs and fables which will prompt discussion and help develop character and values.
- Moore, Clement Clarke and Raquel Jaramillo illus. *The Night Before Christmas*. Atheneum, 2001. Photos illustrate this scrapbook-like telling of the famous poem.
- Moorman, Margaret. *Light the Lights!: A Story About Celebrating Hanukkah and Christmas*. Scholastic, 1999. Every December, Emma and her family celebrate two special holidays, first with candles in the menorah and then with lights on the Christmas tree.
- Morck, Irene, Ken Setterington and Muriel Wood illus. *Apples and Angel Ladders: A Collection of Pioneer Christmas Stories*. Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 2001. Holiday tales about homesteading life in the West.
- Morninghouse, Sundaira and Jody Kim illus. *Habari Gani? What's the News?: A Kwanzaa Story*. Open Hand, 1992. Explanations of Kwanzaa and its seven guiding principles are woven into the story of seven-year-old Kia and her family, emphasizing that cooperation, community service, and family are important every day of the year.
- Polacco, Patricia. *Welcome Comfort*. Philomel, 1999. Welcome Comfort is a lonely foster child who becomes friends with the school custodian and, as a legacy is passed down, finds the answer to the eternal question, "Who is Santa Claus?"
- Rosales, Melodye Benson (illus) and Clement C. Moore. *Twas the Night B'Fore Christmas: An African-American Version*. Cartwheel, 1996. A retelling of the classic holiday poem with lavish illustrations of an African-American family at the turn of the century.
- Schulman, Janet (ed). *The 20th Century Children's Book Treasury*. Alfred A. Knopf, 1998. Holidays are a great time to cuddle up and read. This collection of 44 read-aloud classics from *Goodnight Moon* to *Stellaluna* is perfect for sharing with young children.
- Schulman, Janet (ed). *You Read to Me & I'll Read to You: 20th Century Stories to Share*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2001. If your children are too old for the collection above, this one offers you much to share together (because children are never too old to be read to!). 26 read-aloud classics from *The Piggy in the Puddle* to *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs*.
- Stillerman, Marci and Pesach Gerber illus. *Nine Spoons: A Chanukah Story*. Hachai, 1998. Oma tells her grandchildren the true story of the treasured little "Children's Menorah" miraculously created out of self-sacrifice by the women in a Nazi concentration camp.
- Zolotow, Charlotte and Yan Nascimbene illus. *The Beautiful Christmas Tree*. Houghton Mifflin, 2001. Mr. Crockett, described by his neighbors as "a peculiar man," nurtures a small little tree until it becomes a majestic pine, the glory of the neighborhood.