



Tips for Parents: Censoring Your Reader?

The word “censor” instantly starts a debate in nearly every group it is uttered. We’re not advocating burning books, but we’ve heard from a number of parents that are concerned about the quality of the literature their kids are reading. How do you know what is good and bad for your child and does encouraging a love reading mean letting your kids read anything they want?

Experts Say “Read, Read, Read!”

Reading is the doorway to learning. Kids that enjoy reading learn more, have better comprehension, and further excel in other school subjects. For this reason, experts advise that we encourage our kids to read by pointing them towards genres that reflect their hobbies and interests or that spark a new passion.

Captain Underpants? Goosebumps? Do these Count?

It may be hard for other generations to fathom, but books such as *Sirfartsalot*, *Captain Underpants*, and *Goosebumps* are one appropriate way to encourage a love of reading in young kids that don’t seem interested in more “sophisticated” book choices. These types of books, along with sci-fi and fantasy choices such as *Fablehaven*, *Harry Potter*, and *Percy Jackson* capture the imaginations and interest of many of today’s elementary and middle school readers.

Some parents and teachers consider these types of book choices junk. Regardless, research has shown that for most kids, any reading is better than no reading. So don’t be surprised if you see these books in your local library or you child is reading them in their small reading groups.

Where do I Draw the Line?

What if your religious views are opposed to the magic books your child is reading? What should you do if the ghost stories and other horror books your son can’t stop reading are keeping him up all night with nightmares? What options do you have if you just can’t stand another booger book coming home in your child’s backpack?

You know your child better than anyone and as a parent you have to decide if there is a very good reason to discontinue reading a certain genre. Here are a few tips for parents on when to step in:

1. Are the books your child is reading causing inappropriate behaviors or emotions such as strong fear, swearing, a too-early interest in sex, or actions that directly oppose your family’s religion?
2. Does your child’s interest seem overly narrow or are they completely unaware of other genres that might interest them?
3. Is your child reading books that seem atypical for his/her interests and you suspect peer pressure is leading to their choices?

What you can Do

1. If you have any of the concerns above, discuss them with your child. Explain why you’re concerned and ask your child why they insist on reading these types of books.
2. Take a trip to the library and together look for other options that they find interesting and that you can both agree on. Be flexible. Don’t veto a book just because it looks silly or low-brow to you.
3. Discuss your concern with your child’s teacher. Perhaps they can suggest other books that your child may be interested in that are less offensive to you.

4. Help your child's interest expand by doing activities with them they haven't tried before. Often, kids don't know they're interested in something until they try it.
5. Remember that your goal is to encourage a love of reading and to help your child become a strong learner.
6. Think back to when you were a kid. What books then were considered "low brow?" The Hardy Boys? Were you harmed by reading them?
7. Keep in mind that you are the parent, and in serious circumstances, you may have to prohibit a certain book or genre until it becomes more age appropriate for your child. Do so lovingly, with a good explanation, and with plenty of support in finding an alternative.

For More Information:

Find age appropriate book reviews and recommendations at CommonsenseMedia.org.

You may also be interested in these related Tips for Parents:

[Tips for Parents: Encouraging Reading](#)

[Tips for Parents: Using the Library](#)

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