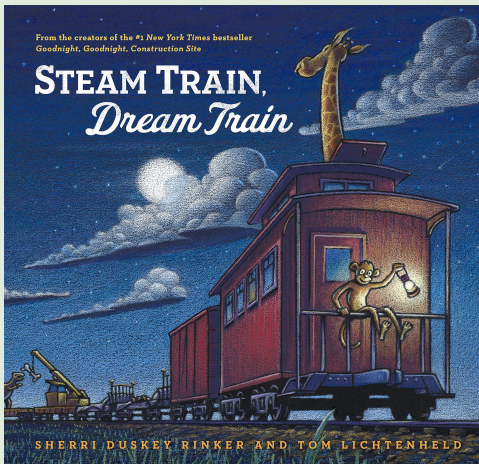


Book Nook

This month's Book Nook topic is...



Building Vocabulary with *Steam Train, Dream Train*

Vocabulary is an essential part of emergent literacy. The more words a preschooler understands, the better her reading comprehension will be. In this Book Nook, we'll explore some helpful tips for how to introduce new words to your child in a way that helps her understand what the new words mean.

Let's get started!

The book

Steam Train, Dream Train by Sherri Duskey Rinker, Illustrated by Tom Lichtenheld

What it's about

This beautifully illustrated book is about a "dream train" pulling into the station. One by one, the train cars are loaded by various animal crew members. Once the cargo is safely loaded, everyone can safely go to bed.

Why we picked it

This book offers lots of opportunities to build vocabulary because there are interesting words on each page that may be new to your child (for example, "mighty", "wonderous", "grind" and "squeal"). The rhyming words also make it fun to read!

Picking appropriate words

Once your child understands basic, everyday words (such as “blue”, “special”, “pretty”, etc.), we want to start “stepping up” her vocabulary by introducing less frequently occurring words (think of “azure”, “extraordinary”, “exquisite”). Ideal words are those that:

- can be used frequently in many different situations
- can be related to your child’s life

Books are a great source for new vocabulary, because they often contain words we don’t use every day and because the context of the story can help explain new words. Introducing those words to your child as you encounter them in books will help build her vocabulary and will help her understand more of the story.

A word that appears in *Steam Train, Dream Train* is **haul**. This is a more sophisticated word than “pull” or “carry”, and most preschoolers have probably had the experience of trying to *haul* large toys or objects.

Shoot for the SSTaRS

In the Hanen ABC and Beyond and I’m Ready! guidebooks, we talk about making new words “sparkle”, or stand out, by using a strategy called “Shoot for the SSTaRS”. It’s an acronym that stands for: Stress, Show, Tell and Relate, and Say it again. Let’s shoot for the SSTaRS with **haul**.

Stress

Make **haul** stand out from the other words by saying it louder and slower than the rest of the text. You can also pause before and after saying the word.

Show

You can show what a word means in a variety of ways. The easiest way is to point to an illustration in the book that demonstrates the word. Several of the pictures in *Steam Train, Dream Train* show the animals carrying large objects into the train cars.

Tell

Give a short definition of the word. For example, you could say something like “**hauling** means you’re pulling or carrying something that’s heavy and hard to move.”

and Relate

Relate the new vocabulary words to other ideas or experiences. This will help your child associate the word with other situations, and will make the word much more relevant to her. You could relate this word to other experiences by saying something like, “Remember when you tried to **haul** your giant teddy bear to the park so you could push him on the swing?” Or, “Have you ever had to **haul** something?” You can also share your own experiences of **hauling**.

Say it again...!

Repeat the word by re-reading the book, and saying the word again in other situations. *Steam Train, Dream Train* is written in rhyme so it's easy to re-read and may become a quick favourite! Shoot for the SSTaRS with **haul** and other rare words every time you read.

You can also repeat **haul** in many other situations with your child. For example, if you need help bringing in the groceries you could say, "Can you help me **haul** the groceries into the kitchen?"

The first time you read the book

Introduce new vocabulary words by **Stressing**, **Showing**, and **Telling** the words. Try to keep your explanations short so that you don't interrupt the flow of the book or take away from the overall storyline.

The second time you read the book

Now that your child has heard the whole story, you can go deeper into your conversation about **haul**. This is a great opportunity to **Relate** the word to your child's experiences.

The third time you read the book

Relate the word to other experiences or situations, or act out a scenario where one of you has to **haul** something heavy! Also, you can start introducing other rare or new words to your child. The more times you read the book, the more "Shooting for the SSTaRS" you can do! Over time, your child will understand (and hopefully use) many of the words in the story.

Also, make a point of using the new word during everyday conversations. This will expand your child's understanding of the word and help her use it on her own in different situations. You'll know it's working when, one day, your child says, "Can you help me **haul** my toys downstairs?"

Happy reading!