

Shining  
Stars

**SECOND & THIRD GRADERS**  
LEARN TO READ



HOW PARENTS CAN HELP THEIR SECOND & THIRD GRADERS LEARN TO READ

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET

You are your child's first and most important teacher. Use this booklet to help your young child learn to read.

- The story on **PAGE 1** is about the parent of a 3rd grader. As you read it, watch for ways that Jason's mother helps him learn to read, like listening to him read and reading a map together.
- Build your child's reading skills by trying activities like those on **PAGE 4**.
- Use the **CHECKLIST** on the back page to think about your child's reading skills.

# The Old Red Chair

**O**ur old red armchair has seen better days! The stuffing's coming out of the arms and one leg wobbles a bit. But Jason, my nine-year-old, has made it his special reading place, so I guess we'll keep it. I can tell it's a magic place for him. He sprawls across it, opens a book—and it's like he's in another place.

Sometimes he even seems like he's in another time. Lately he's been reading about ancient Egypt. He tells me he wants to be an archaeologist when he grows up. He wants to find artifacts from thousands of years ago. I was impressed that he knew the word "artifact." He said he found it in one of his books and his older brother Andy had helped him sound it out. It means things made by people, rather than natural things, he told me.

**His vocabulary is growing so fast!** From reading about archaeology he's added words like "excavation" and "observation." I know they're just fancy words for "dig" and "look," but they're more exact. It seems like the more words he knows, the better sense he can make of the world.

Jason's interest in Egypt started last fall. The school librarian had gone on a real "dig" over the summer, in Mexico, I think. When she got back and the school year began, she showed the students how real archaeologists work. Then the students did their own dig. They marked an area in the schoolyard, dug



*The more words you know, the more words you can say.*



it up carefully, and made a note of everything they found. Jason came home nearly bursting with excitement. He had found an old-fashioned skeleton key!

“It was so cool, Mom,” he told me. “There was so much in the dig! You know, leaves, and rocks, and bugs—and then I found this real key! At first I thought it was just another rock but I kept digging. When I found it, even Mrs. Stevens got excited. It’s a real artifact!”

The stories he made up about that key! First he decided the Pilgrims had left it, but his teacher told him that the Pilgrims didn’t travel this far west. So he decided pioneers had left the key behind on their way west. “I’m sure there’s a story about it,” he said.

**That night, I took the boys to the library after dinner.** Andy, who’s crazy about baseball, took out a biography of Satchel Paige. Jason met me at the checkout desk with a musty-looking book that turned out to be an early history of our town. “That’s a grown-up book, isn’t it?” I asked.

“Yeah,” he said. “Can you help me with it?” I told him I’d try.

The book was pretty hard reading, so the next night, I read part of it aloud to my boys. I still read to them when I can. Our days get so busy it can be hard to find any time for the three of us to be together. So I read most nights, even if it’s just for fifteen minutes.

Reading to them is like having them little again, except now they talk more! As I read about our town, Jason wanted to know where the oldest house was. Andy was amazed to learn that the early settlers just laid out the streets of our town and built a flour mill. “Just like that?” he asked.

“I think so,” I said. I didn’t know much about our town, either. The flour mill must have been torn down a long time ago. There is no sign of it anymore.

We came to a map and looked at that for a long time. The boys tried to match places on the map with places in town they know. I can see why they call it “reading” a map. They even found

the place where our house is now! It was just fields in the old days. So was Jason's school—no clues there about his skeleton key! But he decided to write his own short story about his pioneers idea and where that key came from. He just had to know!

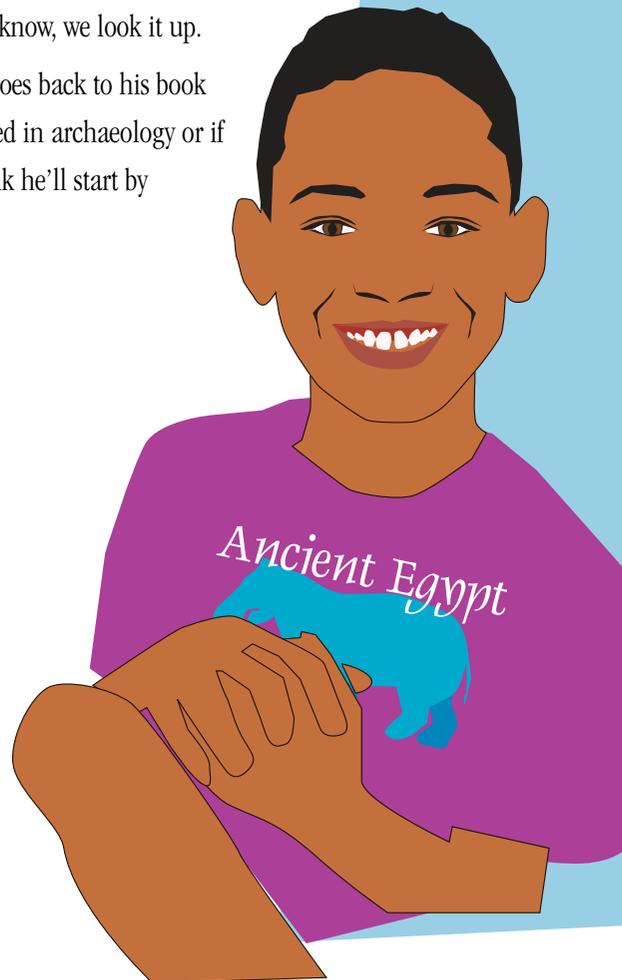
This school year will be an important one in Jason's life as a reader. His teacher said that next year, in fourth grade, students begin to “read to learn” rather than “learn to read.” That means the teachers will expect Jason to know how to read pretty smoothly so they can begin to teach more complex ideas.

**I'm sure Jason will be a strong reader by then.** He's starting to get the habits of a good reader. For example, when he comes to a word he doesn't understand, he reads me the whole sentence and tries to figure out what it means. If I don't know, we look it up.

Then he goes back to the red armchair, stretches out over it, and goes back to his book and the place he goes when he reads. I don't know if he'll stay interested in archaeology or if something else will seem “awesome” to him later. Whatever it is, I think he'll start by reading about it.

The End.

*By fourth grade,  
the students  
begin to “read to  
learn” rather  
than “learn to  
read.”*



# There's more to reading together than just saying the words.

*Try asking your second or third grader questions like these when you read together.*

## Talk about the text...

- **How does the author say the Egyptians got the idea of mummifying bodies? Does this make sense to you?**

*They noticed that bodies did not decompose in the dry sand.*

- **Why was it important to the ancient Egyptians that bodies be mummified?**

*They believed the spirit would survive if the body was preserved.*

## Talk about words and sounds...

- **Let's count out the syllables in mummification.**

*Five.*

- **What's the noun based on the word "invent?"**

*Invention.*

- **What are some other words that end in "tion"?**

*Intention, nation, reflection, etc.*

## Talk about new words...

- **What do we call a place that gets very little rain?**

*A desert.*

- **What's another word for invent?**

*Create, build, etc.*

## The Mummies of Ancient Egypt

**A**ncient Egyptians probably discovered the process of mummification by accident. Because Egypt is so arid, (it has almost no rainfall), bodies buried in the sand did not decompose, but were preserved instead. Later, the Egyptians began mummifying the bodies of kings and other important people on purpose.

To the Egyptians, a person had both a body and spirit. They believed that a person's spirit could live after the body's death, if it had a body to live in.

The Egyptians invented mummification to preserve the body so the spirit could live on.

The mummies of ancient Egypt are so well preserved that today we can have a good idea of what a person looked like thousands of years after he or she lived. The best preserved mummies date from about three thousand years ago.



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This Partnership for Reading publication describes strategies proven to work by the most rigorous scientific research available on the teaching of reading. The research that confirmed the effectiveness of these strategies used systematic, empirical methods drawn from observation or experiment; involved rigorous data analyses to test its hypotheses and justify its conclusions; produced valid data across multiple evaluators and observations; and was accepted by a peer-reviewed journal or approved by a panel of independent experts. The application of these research-based strategies will increase the likelihood of success in reading instruction. Adherence to scientifically based research in this publication was ensured by a review process that included representatives of each Partnership for Reading organization and external expert reviewers. For detailed information on this review process, contact the Partnership for Reading at the National Institute for Literacy, 1775 I Street NW, Suite 730, Washington, DC 20006.

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**National Institute for Literacy**  
The Partnership for Reading

# Checklist

FOR PARENTS OF SECOND & THIRD GRADERS

*These skills usually develop during grades two and three. Talk with your child's teacher if you have questions.*

## SECOND GRADE

- My child knows how to use the rules of phonics to help him figure out unfamiliar words.
- My child reads many sight words and regularly spelled one-and two-syllable words.
- My child reads and understands second grade fiction and nonfiction, and compares and connects information from different sources.
- My child reads for specific purposes and specific questions, and explores topics of interest on her own.
- My child answers "how," "why," and "what-if" questions, and recalls information, main ideas, and details after reading.
- My child interprets information from diagrams, charts, and graphs.
- My child takes part in creative responses to stories, such as dramatizations and oral presentations.
- My child pays attention to how words are spelled and correctly spells words he has studied.
- My child spells a word the way it sounds if she doesn't know its spelling.
- My child writes for many different purposes and writes different types of compositions (for example, stories, reports, and letters).
- My child makes thoughtful choices about what to include in his writing.
- My child takes part in writing conferences, revises and edits what she has written, and attends to the mechanics of writing (spelling, capitalization, and punctuation) in her final versions.
- My child learns new words and shares them at school and at home.
- My child uses clues from the context and his knowledge of word parts (roots, prefixes, suffixes) to figure out what words mean.
- My child is increasing his vocabulary with synonyms and antonyms.
- My child uses parts of speech (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs) correctly.
- My child learns new words through independent reading.

(over)

## THIRD GRADE

- My child uses what he knows of phonics and word parts (prefixes, roots, suffixes) to sound out unfamiliar words.
- My child reads third grade level texts (stories, non-fiction, magazine articles, computer screens) with fluency and comprehension.
- My child explores topics of interest and reads longer stories and chapter books independently.
- My child can explain the major points in fiction and non-fiction books.
- My child identifies and discusses words or phrases she does not understand.
- My child asks "how," "why," and "what if" questions and discusses the themes or messages of stories.
- My child uses information he has gathered and his own reasoning to judge explanations and opinions and distinguishes cause from effect, fact from opinion, and main ideas from supporting details.
- My child understands and reads graphs and charts.
- My child uses context to gain meaning from what she reads.
- My child correctly spells words he has studied.
- My child gathers information from a variety of sources, including books, articles, and computers, and uses it in his writing.
- My child reviews her own written work for errors and works with teachers and classmates to edit and revise her work to make it clearer.
- My child is starting to use metaphors and other literary forms in his writing.
- My child discusses her writing with other children and responds helpfully to their writing.
- My child develops his vocabulary and knowledge through independent reading.
- My child builds her vocabulary through synonyms and antonyms.
- My child uses parts of speech (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs) correctly.

This checklist is adapted from *A Child Becomes a Reader—Birth Through Preschool*. Get a free copy at [www.nifl.gov](http://www.nifl.gov).