

7 Tips on how to Spark & Feed Creativity in Your Young Storyteller



From the father of 5-year-old author of “A Halloween Story”, and founder of the new children’s book publishing company Maroma Books, Alberto Fernandez.

In spite of today’s 24-hour cartoon channels, super-mega theme parks, and even play centers with entire miniature towns, our children still crave entertainment. My mom used to say, “Only the boring get bored”—which quickly stopped my complaints of having “nothing to do.” She meant, of course, that those with a vivid imagination are never lacking in adventure, stories to tell, or games to play—regardless of whether or not they own latest X-Box version.

The best form of entertainment is a child’s own creativity on fire, and that fire fanned by parents and educators. Sometimes we big people need some tips to get our creativity flowing, on how to help our little ones on their way Here are five tips on how to do just that.

1. READ often to your child. Sometimes, let him tell you the story, or make up another version, looking at the pictures and ignoring the text.

2. CREATE SPACE FOR CREATING. Set aside a cozy corner, a special chair. If the place itself can’t be designated, a particular notebook, pens or markers, a certain place on the shelf to store your little one’s stories will assure she knows her stories are important and valued.

3. DESCRIBE. The more your language invokes the image-forming ability of the mind, the more it will encourage your child to do the same. Describe an everyday object in detail, and ask you child to draw or describe what that same article would look like, for example, on planet Zigamaloo (of their invention), 20 billion light-years away?

4. INVOLVE all the senses. Go beyond “What did [the place, character, or object] look like” and also explore, “Did it have a certain smell?” “If you were to touch it, what would it feel like?” “If someone took a bite, what would it taste like?” “What kind of sound did it make?”

5. INVENT

Invent Words. Children’s vocabulary is arguably *more* expressive than that of many of us big people. They may not have words that can be found in Webster’s, but made-up descriptions are often the best, and most creative kind. Help them to not be restrained by commonly used words. Dr. Seuss didn’t.

As long as they the words are are fun and descriptive—keep ‘em.

Invent Situations. Set the scene. In the car, or in the kitchen, give him the first few sentences to get the story rolling, and turn it over. One example from the “Your Turn” pages of our first title “A Halloween Story,” (right).

Another example: One day, Sam [the child, the cat, the bug...] was on his normal morning walk through the kitchen, when he fell into a huge bowl of [pasta salad, chicken noodle soup, Cheerio’s]. It felt like... It tasted like... It looked like...



I am _____ the mummy,
and I’m _____ years old.
One Halloween I was minding my own business
at my favorite haunting place,
when all of a sudden _____

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6. STEP INTO OTHERS' SHOES, feet, paws, fins, tentacles, etc.

Every great story has great characters. Help your child create the story's personalities by looking at things around you, helping her relate the point of view of: the family pet, an ant on the walkway, a tree in the yard. What would they say? If that doesn't get them started, start it off for them...

"George, the salamander, had the most unusual day. After he woke up and started his day as usual, eating...when suddenly..."

7. TURN OVER THE REINS, the wheel, or whatever controls your creativity vehicle has.

Once you've helped the story's journey begin, let your child decide where it goes. Refrain from corrections when it doesn't sound logical (that's what make-believe is all about!).

If the child is writing, save spelling, grammar, and punctuation corrections for later. Show them how the real authors do it—letting the creativity flow first, then doing editing revisions later.

Concentrating on content and form at the same time can be overwhelming for any of us, and interrupting a good groove to mention a missing question mark, or apostrophe could turn the little one off of writing all together.

Creativity is one of the few resources available to us and our children that is fully renewable. Actually, the more we use it, the more freely it flows. Let's encourage our children to run with theirs, and in the meantime we might be increasingly open to the reverse: having our children remind us how to find our paths back to our own sources of creativity.

Note on Maroma Books & "A Halloween Story":

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"A Halloween Story," Maroma Book's first title (ISBN 13: 978-0-9796465-0-8, 10: 0-9796465-0-2) will be available Sept. 15 to readers (and those read to) of all ages. Available to bookstores, libraries & retailers through Baker & Taylor, or directly from the publisher at orders@maromabooks.com, tel. 1 888 627 6628, or fax 1 800 525 0910.



How many 5-year olds do you know who can capture the spirit of a holiday in a story, with a great structure, a solid plot, and plenty of suspense, in 60 words or less? And in another language? A new Children's Book Publisher, Maroma Books asks, how many 5-year-olds have you asked to try?

This is exactly what young Alberto Fernandez has done with "A Halloween Story," a picture book which will be released this September. Alberto, who was born and lives in Monterrey, Mexico, wrote the story in his English class as part of a project last Halloween. His teachers, surprised by its remarkable structure, and how the story captures its audience, young and old, shared it with Alberto's parents.



Alberto's father, Alberto Fernandez, Sr., inspired by his son's story saw the book as the start of something big: thus, Maroma Books was born. ("Maroma" is Spanish for "summersault.") More about Maroma Books and "A Halloween Story" at www.maromabooks.com.

Illustrations included in this tip sheet are part of "A Halloween Story." All images included, including the photo of the author, above, are property of Maroma Books. ###