



The Read-Aloud Handbook: Seventh Edition

By Jim Trelease

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The classic million-copy bestselling handbook on reading aloud to children—revised and updated

Recommended by "Dear Abby" upon its first publication in 1982, millions of parents and educators have turned to Jim Trelease's beloved classic for more than three decades to help countless children become avid readers through awakening their imaginations and improving their language skills. It has also been a staple in schools of education for new teachers. This updated edition of *The Read-Aloud Handbook* discusses the benefits, the rewards, and the importance of reading aloud to children of a new generation. Supported by delightful anecdotes as well as the latest research (including the good and bad news on digital learning), *The Read-Aloud Handbook* offers proven techniques and strategies for helping children discover the pleasures of reading and setting them on the road to becoming lifelong readers.

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Editorial Review

Review

"This book is about more than reading aloud. It's about time that parents, teachers, and children spend together in a loving, sharing way."—*The Washington Post*

"As I read this treasure of a book, I became more and more fascinated with its contents...I give it my unqualified recommendation."—"Dear Abby"

"Reading aloud is a joyous experience for child and for parent. *The Read-Aloud Handbook* offers useful hints as to why the experience is so mutually rewarding and how to make it work."—Arthur Schlesinger

"The Read-Aloud Handbook promises to give parents, teachers, and all others who care about children, reading, and the pursuit of happiness new inspiration."—*The Denver Post*

"Fresh, vital, and inspirational...bravo for Trelease! I urge everyone who cares about literacy—and that should include people without children—to read this book."—*Los Angeles Herald Examiner*

About the Author

Jim Trelease is a frequently cited author who has spent thirty years addressing parents, teachers, and librarians on the subjects of children, literature, and the challenges of multimedia to print. His other books include *Hey! Listen to This*, for grades K–4, and *Read All About It!* for preteens and teens. He lives in Enfield, Connecticut.

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Introduction

The central task of education is to implant a will and facility for learning; it should produce not learned but learning people. The truly human society is a learning society, where grandparents, parents, and children are students together. —Eric Hoffer

In the thirty years since the first edition of this book, much has changed in the world and in American education. And so, too, this book has evolved.

Back in 1982 when the first edition appeared, there was no Internet or email, no cell phones, DVD players, iTunes, iPods, iPads, Amazon, e-books, Wi-Fi, Facebook, or Twitter. The closest thing to an "instant message" was a facial expression that exasperated mothers gave their children as a warning. "Texting" was something you did on a typewriter. The first CD player was just going on sale, Starbucks was just a coffee-bean shop in Seattle, and if you said "laptop" to people they'd have thought you were talking about a TV-dinner tray.

For all of those differences, there are some things that remain the same. In 1982, the U.S. economy was in its worst recession since the Great Depression and the nation's business leaders were looking for someone or something to blame. Sound familiar? Since S.A.T. scores had been in a twenty-year decline (because lots of average and below-average students, and not just the rich kids, were taking the tests for the first time), the

corporate executives blamed education as one of the culprits for the recession and demanded reforms and accountability at all levels—a more *business-like* approach. (“If our schools were more like Japanese schools, our economy would be more like theirs!”) This would open the doors to nearly three decades of testing mania and school reforms.

At practically the same time, the cost of college began a 400 percent rise, outpacing the increases in medical care and median family income. By 2011, student loans would be larger than either the nation’s credit card debt or the auto loan industry.

Which brings us to the present time. With all the new technology now in place and billions of dollars in testing accomplished, we’ve made a one point improvement in reading scores since 1971.

If you’re even half sane, you have to be asking yourself, “What in the world is wrong here?” I hope this book can answer that question, as well as what we can do about it, because surely there’s a better way than what we’ve done in the past.

For all that is wrong in education, there are still some positives. With the hundreds of distractions imposed on American children in the last 30 years—200 cable channels; most children with TV’s in their bedrooms (usually the lowest scoring students); more than half of teens are attached to cellphones most of the day; single-parents are raising one in four children, and a baby is born every sixty seconds to a teen mother. It’s a wonder the scores actually rose by one point and didn’t drop by ten or fifteen. If that is the case, then *something* must be working and this book will examine what really works. In fact, let’s look now at one of those “somethings.”

The Ideal (and Cheapest) Tutoring Plan

We start with the family of Susan and Tad Williams and sons, Christopher and David. Of the four hundred thousand students taking the A.C.T. exam with Christopher back in 2002, only fifty-seven had perfect scores—he was the fifty-eighth. When word got out that this kid from Russell, Kentucky (population 3,645), had scored a perfect 36, the family was besieged with questions, the most common being “What prep course did he take? Kaplan? Princeton Review?” It turned out to be a course his parents enrolled him as an infant, a free program, unlike some of the private plans that now cost up to \$250 an hour.

In responding to inquiries about Christopher’s prep courses, the Williamses simply told people—including the *New York Times*—that he hadn’t taken any, that he did no prep work. That, of course, wasn’t completely true. His mother and father had been giving him and his younger brother free prep classes all through their childhoods, from infancy into adolescence: they read to them for thirty minutes a night, year after year, even after they learned how to read for themselves.

Theirs was a home brimming with books but no *TV Guide*, GameCube, or Hooked on Phonics. Even though Susan Williams was a fourth-generation teacher, she offered no home instruction in reading before the boys reached school age. She and Tad just read to them—sowed the sounds and syllables and endings and blendings of language into the love of books. Each boy easily learned to read—and loved reading, gobbled books up voraciously. Besides being a family bonding agent, reading aloud was used not as test prep as much as an “ensurance” policy—it ensured the boys would be ready for whatever came their way in school.

By 2011, David was a University of Louisville graduate working as an engineer and Christopher was pursuing his PhD in biochemistry at Duke. Sometimes Christopher’s early reading experiences surface even

in the biochemistry department, like the day after a Duke basketball loss and he remarked to his lunch mates, “I guess ‘there’s no joy in Mudville’ today.” None of the other grad students grasped the reference to Ernest Thayer’s classic sports poem.

The Williams family experience didn’t surprise me at all because I was already familiar with reading aloud as a prep course. Tom Parker recommends it all the time. He’s the former admissions director for Williams College, now at Amherst College, two of the nation’s prestigious small colleges. Parker tells anxious parents who ask about improving their child’s S.A.T. scores, “The best S.A.T. preparation course in the world is to read to your children in bed when they’re little. Eventually, if that’s a wonderful experience for them, they’ll start to read themselves.” Parker told me he’s never met a student with high verbal S.A.T. scores who wasn’t a passionate reader, and nearly always they recall being read to. An A.C.T. or S.A.T. prep course can’t package that passion, but parents like Susan and Tad Williams have done it and so can you. Even parents who are illiterate or semi-literate can do it—and we’ll meet them later in the book, along with a father who read to his daughter just for fun—for 3,218 nights in a row, never missing a night.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Richard Hood:

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People live in this new day time of lifestyle always try to and must have the extra time or they will get lot of stress from both daily life and work. So , when we ask do people have spare time, we will say absolutely indeed. People is human not really a huge robot. Then we ask again, what kind of activity are you experiencing when the spare time coming to you actually of course your answer will probably unlimited right. Then do you try this one, reading publications. It can be your alternative inside spending your spare time, often the book you have read is The Read-Aloud Handbook: Seventh Edition.

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