

The Joy of Winter

Aristotle wrote that the aim of art is to both entertain and enlighten. In an age when the progress of our children is closely scrutinized, when we measure not only their personal reading prowess, but also the achievements of their classrooms, grades, and schools, it helps to remember that enlightenment and education can also come to them through delight.

While we at the library make every effort to meet the educational needs of our young patrons, the Winter Reading Program, now in session, is an opportunity for us to remind children how much fun they can have between the covers of a book. For two months, we get to forget reading levels and test scores and encourage kids to read for the sheer joy of it.

This is the time when kids bring in their stacks of books, slam them proudly onto the reading club table, and wait to see how many points they've earned. We congratulate them on their accomplishments, and send them back into the stacks for more. We don't have to implore them to avoid books that are above or below their reading level. All they have to do is go where their interests lie. "Follow your bliss, kids! It's the Winter Reading Program!" And we help them. Once we've learned which way their interests are pulling them, the hunt begins. One of the most rewarding aspects of our job is matching the right kid with the right book. Reluctant readers, in particular, are our specialty.

We even sweeten the deal with a variety of goodies.

This year we decided to face the chill of winter with a reading program awash in warm western skies and hot, dusty trails. Our theme is Saddle Up and Read, Bookaroo, and we're heading into the sunset with cowpoke story times and a wide range of prizes.

I should take a moment and also mention that we have plenty of incentives for adults as well. In a fast paced world (especially one that's as cold as a Wyoming blizzard) we like to remind our fellow elders to sit down and warm up with a good book. So if you get the chance, old timers, mosey on upstairs and take advantage of the adult and teen Winter Reading Program.

The program lasts until March 3rd, so rustlers young and old still have plenty of time to mount up and head out into the wide open spaces of their imaginations. Saddle Up and Read, Bookaroo!

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