

Drop Everything and Read by Ruth Gilbert

April 12 is Beverly Cleary's birthday! This special day is also known as "Drop Everything and Read" (or D.E.A.R.) Day. As a student, D.E.A.R. was my absolute favorite activity. My elementary school did it collectively, which meant that an announcement over the PA system told everyone in the school that it was time to stop whatever you were doing and pick up a book for fifteen minutes. Knowing that everyone in the building was reading at the same time made it feel like a little holiday in the middle of the day.

Your family can do D.E.A.R. anytime! It's a great way to make books fun for more reluctant readers, or just reinforce the idea that reading every day is important and easy. To get them excited, try sharing a really funny interactive book with your kids. Interactive books have characters that talk directly to the reader and often ask you to do things to help the story progress. There are so many to choose from these days, but here are some favorites.

"The Book That Can Read Your Mind," by Marianna Coppo is a game and a magic trick in a picture book. A bunny magician instructs you to look at a picture of an audience full of interesting and strange characters and to pick one. On the following pages the bunny will guess the one you've picked every time! Kids will have fun reading this one over and over.

"I Do Not Eat Children," by Marcus Cutler, is narrated by a monster who claims to have no interest in consuming young people. He talks directly to the reader to try to make his case, but the illustrations in the book start to suggest otherwise as the children in the pictures begin to disappear. This one also has a great surprise ending.

"This Book Will Get You To Sleep," by Jory John and Olivier Tallec is another laugh-out-loud picture book with a title that doesn't quite match the story. Your first clue may be the orange kangaroo holding a megaphone on the cover. Throughout the book, this kangaroo does things to try to get the reader to sleep, including busting out some electric guitars and shouting a lot. Why aren't you sleeping yet?

"Endlessly Ever After: Pick Your Way to Countless Fairy Tale Endings!" by Laurel Snyder and Dan Santat is a gorgeously illustrated choose-your-own-adventure story that puts funny twists on classic fairy tales. You'll help a girl named Rosie decide what to do, starting with helping her choose a fur coat or a famous red cape to wear to her grandma's house. There are countless silly adventures to be had in one book.

"Adventuregame Comics: Leviathan," by Jason Shiga, is a game, comic, and puzzle all in one! You're on a mission to defeat a giant sea creature called the Leviathan. As you choose your adventure by following paths to different comic panels, you'll learn about the backstory and find clues to reaching the end of your adventure. This one is great for older fans of graphic novels and puzzles.

"Tap the Magic Tree" by Christie Matheson is one of my favorite interactive picture books for preschoolers. It asks the reader to help an apple tree grow by tapping branches, blowing away leaves, and shaking down apples. You'll learn how the tree changes through the seasons, and have fun helping the flowers blossom in the spring and leaves turn orange in the fall.

"Press Here" by Herve Tullet is one of the most magical interactive books for young children. The only illustrations in this picture book are simple painted circles. The reader makes them multiply, change color, move around, and grow by doing the actions suggested in the book. You start with one yellow circle, and you'll end with a whole page full of circles that you make grow by clapping.