

Let's get bookish

Encourage children to read



How can you do this?" asked the grumpy old man angrily, his big eyes red like balls of fire. With wrinkles crisscrossing his face, he looked even more scary. But little Bhavya stood her ground, her face calm, belying her age. She replied, "because I know it's right." Now relax

and recapture what you saw when you were reading the above

lines — what you saw not with your eyes but with your mind. That's the power of the written word. It fuels your power of visualisation and as you read, your mind shows you scenes and people. You feel the textures. You smell the scents. The picture that is so absolutely vivid and clear in your mind would be absolutely different from what your friend sees through his or her mind's eye. Same sentences but different visualisation. So different yet so similar. Now compare this to a similar scene on television. When you see the grumpy old man on screen, you notice him but do not see him. The redness of his eyes need not be imagined anymore. There is no need for you to see beyond what is being shown. Everything has been spoon-fed. While this does not imply that television is bad, it does strongly say that not reading is certainly not good.

Children follow their parents and their elder siblings. So, the habit of reading should be inculcated in children right from the very beginning. Help them enter into their own imaginary worlds by reading and listening to stories; just as you entered into yours when you were their age by listening to stories from parents and grandparents — stuff which makes for fond memories now.

Gift your children such moments — moments when you read stories to them, moments when they read themselves. But remember, Papa and Mama don't preach, just read a lot yourself. Children will follow.

Read together. Have a lot of books around you, just be aware of their proximity; be aware of how a book feels; how it smells and you will find yourself falling in love with them. Start at the New Delhi World Book Fair-2006 that will focus on the youth and children and will include a special pavilion for kids. Happy reading.

Shobit Arya

— Arya is the publisher of *Wisdom Tree*