

"The ABCs are for Me!"

Learning the alphabet is one of the first fundamental skills that children must master before beginning to read. A firm understanding of this important letter arrangement is vital because these components are the primary building blocks for words.

Throughout the years, I have had numerous parents come to the library in search of alphabet texts. Most of them begin their hunt in the picture book section of the Children's Room, commonly referred to as the Easy section. They are surprised, however, when I guide them over to the juvenile nonfiction area, which also contains a multitude of beautifully illustrated and well written alphabet books.

The alphabet texts found in the nonfiction collection are authored about specific subjects like animals, trucks, and dinosaurs. Each has a catchy title like Mary Anne Reihle's "A is for Airplane," Janis Campbell's "G is for Galaxy," Helen Wilbur's "M is for Meow," Steven Layne's "P is for Princess," and Marie Smith's "Z is for Zookeeper." Though these texts feature specific letters in their titles, it is important to note that all of the letters of the alphabet are equally represented because these books are indeed alphabet texts. So should a child happen to pick "C is for Cornhusker" by Rajeane Shepherd, they will not only acquire an understanding of the letter that begins the name of the world's greatest football team; they will also learn that N is for the Niobrara, P is for "Powwow...a cultural celebration of the native American Nations," U is "for the Union Pacific with their cars and freight and crew," and "R is the Red of the Husker's team and the football fans who cheer 'Go Big Red!'"

The primary advantage to selecting fun, nonfiction texts is that parents can choose books that will appeal to their little ones' interests and hobbies, which is a guaranteed way to keep the attention of active youngsters. Nonfiction books also provide young readers with facts about their favorite topics, in addition to helping them learn their alphabet.

Parents can also use the nonfiction alphabet books to help children improve their phonetic skills. A great way of doing this is to have little ones repeat the names of the letters and the sounds which these particular letters make. In no time at all, adults will notice their children easily associating the letters of the alphabet with their appropriate sounds. Parents may even assist their children in reading by helping them sound out the words on a page.

So the next time you are in search of quality alphabet books to share with your little ones, don't forget to browse through the juvenile nonfiction section at the Columbus Public Library. There are a number of great letter books in this area that will keep your children's attention and foster learning. If you have any questions regarding the wonderful texts featured or would like other quality recommendations, please contact me at (402) 564-7116 ext. 4.