

Boys and Reading

By Ian Lillico

It is important to get boys interested in reading when they are young. Many boys' peer groups give boys the feedback that reading is a non-masculine pursuit. This doesn't have the same impact on your son and he tends to deal with this peer pressure if he is already an avid reader by the age of 12.

A lot of research in Australia and overseas points to the fact that books must be an important part of children's lives by the age of five if they are to be successful readers as adults. This means that a home library is essential, book presents should be part of birthday and Christmas presents and (even more importantly) that Mum and Dad are seen by their children reading on a regular basis. Being read to as a child is a critical thing for parents to do. Saturday morning book reading in bed before breakfast used to be a ritual in my home when I was growing up and book series like Enid Blyton's Famous Five or Secret Seven books are an excellent way to get younger boys hiked on reading. The reason that my middle son is such an avid reader of fiction is because my wife and myself really concentrated on reading to him the Enid Blyton series every weekend without fail during his Primary School years.

Boys like collectibles and gradually buying them new books in a book series is an excellent way of developing the love of reading (and collecting) in them. There are many other strategies that can be used to improve boys' reading habits and Tim Hawkes in his book *Boy Oh Boy* points out techniques such as:

Using magazines, using technology to review books on the Internet, keeping journals on camps and family holidays, touching boys' emotions in books selected, collecting vocabulary and phrases in a book or in a computerised word folder and continually adding to this.

There are some technology based reading schemes such as Iread by Ashton Scholastic and others which improve speed and comprehension, but it is important that material is chosen that the boy can relate to and that he finds interesting. Again it is necessary for parents to model reading in the home and Dad must read more than just non-fiction as many males tend to do. If boys start High School with a good reading habit they are not daunted by having to work more independently from textbooks as they progress through Secondary school.