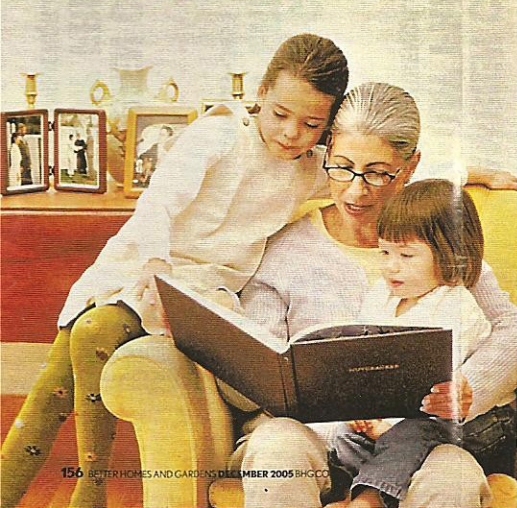


THE MAGIC OF reading together

Make the most of the holidays—when books are often shared—by taking advantage of the *Better Homes and Gardens®* Reading Club for fun activities. BY JEANNE AMBROSE



As extended families gather this season, the simple act of reading together can connect them ever more tightly. It's that time of year when cozying up with grandma or grandpa and a stack of well-loved books makes perfect sense.

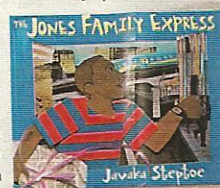
In addition to the fuzzy-warm feeling of flipping pages with loved ones snuggling close, sharing books can become a treasured tradition. Focusing on books about extended family members and generations (see our reading list, *page 161*) builds emotional connections that link young and old.

With the theme of extended family in mind, the *Better Homes and Gardens®* Reading

Once upon a time there was a comfortable lap. But the lap was empty. Suddenly, a book full of stories appeared, and as if by magic, the lap began filling. The books were read out loud and everyone lived happily ever after.

CLUB >> from 156

club) has collected lists of 1 ideas for activities and projects even more porate any of ven up your lidays. nded family age groups, e books for a er than on ryone from s will enjoy more difficult to get teens such dividends," says Sharon ational Center for Family om their childhood. Even tr eyes, don't leave them out



FACES OF LOVE Photos of family members peer from windows cut from a homemade train. Send it chugging along the center of a table as a runner—or fasten it to the wall at chair-rail height, adding cars as your family grows.

(such as "mitten"). Whenever that word is read aloud, each person passes his gift-wrapped book to the person sitting on his left, repeating the passing process until the story is finished. Each person gets to keep the book he is left holding.

MAKE A MITTEN READING PILLOW. Inspired by *The Mitten* by Jan Brett, this heart-adorned chenille pillow (*bottom left*) has cuddly soft lining and cuff. Mitten shapes are cut from fabric, sewn together, and stuffed. For a pattern and detailed instructions, visit bhg.com/readingclub.

PLAN A PERFORMANCE. Find a lively story or lilting verse. Let each person practice reading a part of the book. At the end of the day, after a little rehearsal, have the group gather for a reading performance. Or think about sharing the performance with a neighborhood family or residents of a nearby retirement center.

DECORATE A PLAIN TABLECLOTH OR PLACE MATS.

Link the project to a particular book, then use the cloth or mats for serving snacks or dessert (see photo, *page 160*). After reading a book, hand out fabric markers or puffy paints and ask everyone to draw a character or scene from the book onto the cloth or mats. Reading *Stone Soup*? Start a simmering >> on 160

HOST A BOOK SWAP. Have everyone wrap up a favorite old book to give away. (Sunday newspaper comic sections make colorful—and readable—wrapping paper.) Sit on the floor in a reading circle. Choose a fun book to read out loud, such as *The Mitten*, by Jan Brett, a whimsical retelling of a Ukranian tale. The wildly improbable story is beautifully illustrated with woodland creatures who scootch and squirm their way into a lost mitten one snowy day. Find a word that repeats through the book

MITTEN READING PILLOW. A small hand or a secret treasure can be tucked inside the downy-soft pocket at the cuff of this huge mitten that doubles as a petite pillow.



SEASON OF READING

Share a new book with children who may not have many books at home. The National Center for Family Literacy is coordinating a book drive to collect books to give to families across the country. For details on donating, visit NCFL's Web site at familit.org or call 800/584-9633, ext.131.