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**A cooperative message from some of
America's leading children's book publishers**

BOOKSTART SUMMARY AND UPDATE

Bookstart was initiated in 1992 by Book Trust, working in co-operation with Birmingham Library Services, the South Birmingham Health Authority and Birmingham University School of Education.

BACKGROUND

Bookstart set out to explore the significance of the role of parents and carers in sharing books with very young children. While new parents receive information and advice regarding their role in their child's health and general welfare, reading with and talking to babies is often ignored. Parents need to be equipped with the appropriate information, advice and confidence to launch their child's reading development from the earliest possible age.

PILOTING BOOKSTART

The initial Bookstart pilot scheme concentrated on 300 parents/carers of nine month old babies. They were given a gift book together with advice and information about books and reading by their health worker and have been monitored (alongside a control group) over the past five years. Early results from Professor Barrie Wade and his team at the University of Birmingham indicated a substantial increase in awareness of books, sharing of books, enrollment of babies in libraries, use of book clubs and family use of books.

THE FIVE YEAR RESEARCH FINDINGS

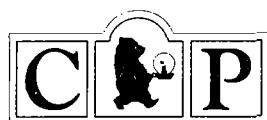
The University of Birmingham continued to monitor the original Bookstart babies as they arrived at primary school and took part in the Baseline Assessment. Indications are that the full five-year research will produce extremely exciting results: these will be outlined at the forthcoming Bookstart conference. To summarize, the Bookstart children performed noticeably better than their carefully matched peers in all 9 categories of the Baseline Assessment. They were frequently ahead on assessments for *Speaking and Listening* and *Reading and Writing* and performed better on assessments of *Using and Applying Mathematics, Number and Shape* and *Space and Measures*. Children who had had the advantage of Bookstart were clearly ahead in both literacy and numeracy.

For further information on Bookstart, please contact Alexandra Strick or Ann Newton at Book Trust, Book House, 45 East Hill, London SW18 2QZ. For information on the research, contact Professor Barrie Wade on 0121 414 4844 or Dr Maggie Moore on 0120 476 1181.

For Bookstart Conference details, call our dedicated conference hotline on 01962 885911



"Reading to children aloud everyday is as important as brushing their teeth and fastening their seat belts."—Rosemary Wells



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Dear Friends:

All of us love our children more than anything in the world. In their first years we feed them so they grow. We bring them to the doctor so they are healthy. We strap them in car seats so they are safe.

But the most important thing in the first years of life is the growth of the mind and spirit. This is when a child learns to love and trust, to speak and listen.

After a child turns two years old, these things are very difficult to learn or teach ever again. Trusting, singing, laughing, and language are the most important things in a young child's life.

And so they must come first for mothers and fathers, too. Because we can never have those years over again.

Every day, make a quiet, restful place for twenty minutes. Put your child in your lap and read a book aloud. In the pages of the book you will find a tiny vacation of privacy and intense love. It costs nothing but twenty minutes and a library card.

Reading to your little one is just like putting gold coins in the bank. It will pay you back tenfold. Your daughter will learn, and imagine, and be strong in herself. Your son will thrive, and give your love back forever.

Rosemary Wells



"Reading to children aloud everyday is as important as brushing their teeth and fastening their seat belts."—Rosemary Wells

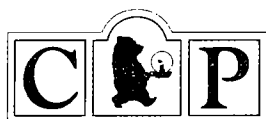
Why Read To Your Bunny?

Because it's the most important gift you can give to your child. The twenty minutes a day you spend reading with your child is much more than twenty minutes of fun, it's quality time that adds up to a lifetime of success.

The latest research in neuroscience proves that reading aloud actually stimulates a baby's brain growth and strengthens the connections in the brain that are the basis for language and learning. In fact, the American Academy of Pediatrics supports the national *Prescription for Reading* campaign with the recommendation that all pediatricians "prescribe" reading as a standard part of pediatric care.

Listed below are just a few of the benefits of reading to your child...

- ◆ When a child is read to, brain cells are "turned on" and the connections between cells are strengthened and exercised
- ◆ The development of early literacy skills through early experiences with books and stories is directly linked to a child's success in learning to read
- ◆ Reading aloud to a child provides a role model and encourages children to actively imitate the behavior and "read back"
- ◆ When parents share books with young children, they cause children to associate books, reading, and language with a loving and nurturing environment
- ◆ Reading stimulates a child to form their own pictures in their mind, nurturing the imagination
- ◆ Reading aloud provides a shared experience between parent and child leading to better bonding and caregiving
- ◆ Reading invites an active response to repeat and practice language



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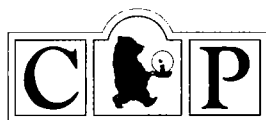


"Reading to children aloud everyday is as important as brushing their teeth and fastening their seat belts."—Rosemary Wells

**The Twenty Minutes A Day Are There—
Look For Them!**

During our busy days, we sometimes overlook the many different ways in which to find the time to read to our children. Here are just a few ideas of where those twenty minutes might be...

- ◆ Take advantage of those long family car trips and pass the time by reading to your child
- ◆ Don't just stand in those long, slow lines at the supermarket, pull your child close to you and find some peace in all that supermarket chaos by sharing a book – right then and there
- ◆ Use the time you're waiting in the doctor's or dentist's office before your appointment
- ◆ Share a snack and enjoy it together with your favorite book
- ◆ Anytime for cuddling can also be a read aloud time – just after a nap or a bath
- ◆ There's always that old stand-by (and stand-by for good reasons!): Bedtime



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Quotes from the experts

"Infants can see and hear at birth, and seem genetically programmed to prefer to look at faces and listen to human voices.... Infants perceive the world through all of their senses, and transfer information from one sense to another.... Children learn predominantly by association. If books are part of loving parent-child interactions from an early age, children will associate the presence of books with all of the positive feelings of being held and loved. Undoubtedly, these associations are encoded in a profound way in the child's developing brain. Picture books provide an ideal context for parent-child interactions that are loving and stimulating. When parents look at picture books with young children, they provide stimuli in multiple sensory modes - visual, auditory, tactile, kinesthetic (the sense of movement). Parents use more complex language when looking at books, and also language that is more attuned to the child's cues. Books also invite active participation. Active learning involves more brain areas; things learned actively are more likely to persist in memory and to facilitate other knowledge acquisition." - *Dr. Robert Needleman, Division of Behavioral Pediatrics and Psychology, Rainbow Babies' and Children's Hospital, Cleveland, Ohio*



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"Pediatricians are trained to think in terms of prevention. Growing up without books is growing up deprived and with a deprivation that puts one at risk for failure. Just like many of the other risks and deprivations that children face in poverty, growing up without books is a sad loss in itself, but also a risk factor for larger, sadder losses. Double jeopardy. If we want our children to grow up reading, we have to do everything possible, and we have to do it as early as possible.... Children either start school liking books and understanding what they are, or they start school way behind, set up for failure." - *Dr. Perri Klass, Boston Medical Center, Co-Founder of "Reach Out and Read"*

"It is important to start your kids reading at a young age. It helps develop their minds, brains, language skills. It is the most critical thing parents can do for their kids." - *Alvin F. Poussaint, M.D., Clinical Professor of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School and Judge Baker Children's Center, Boston, MA.*

"My goal is that by the year 2000 giving information about reading to children will be as routine in pediatric practice as giving immunizations. Both are critically important to promoting children's health and well-being." - *Dr. Barry Zuckerman, Boston Medical Center, Co-Founder of "Reach Out and Read"*

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"A shared moment with a good book is a memory that both parents and children can treasure forever. Reading together opens the door to a rainbow of possibilities." - *Sharon M. Draper, Author, 1997 National Teacher of the Year*

"If you want to raise readers, you must provide them with books as soon as humanly possible. This is a parental obligation on par with vaccinations." - *Deirdre Donahue, Children's Book Reviewer, USA Today*

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as important as brushing their teeth and
fastening their seat belts."**

— Rosemary Wells

*New from
Rosemary Wells*



0-590-30284-1 • \$7.95

*Your Child's First Board Books
Bunny Reads Back*



0-590-76985-5 • \$4.95

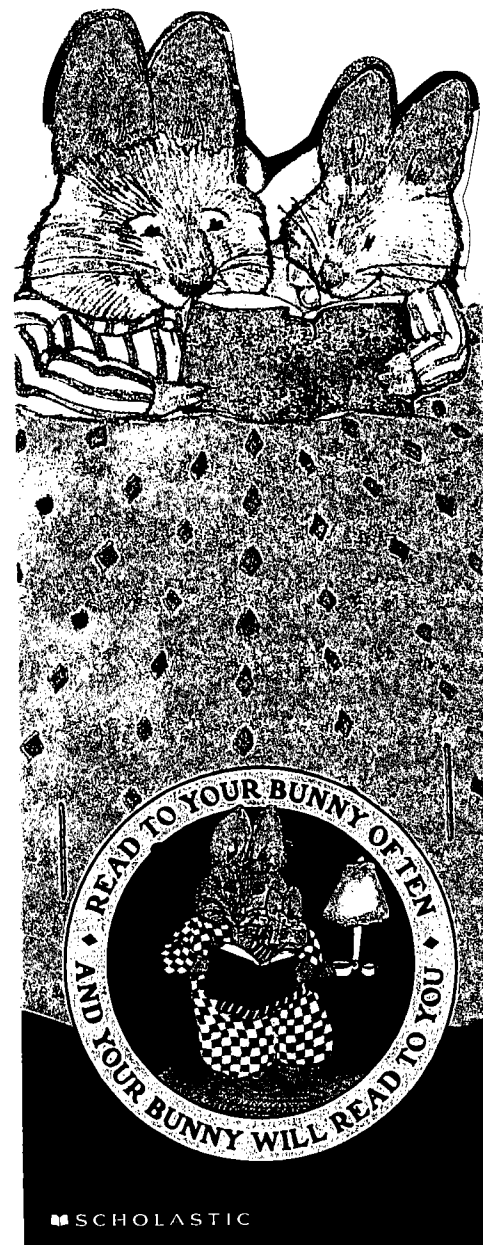
Coming in Fall 1998:

- The Bear Went Over the Mountain
- The Itsy Bitsy Spider
- Bingo!



Scholastic Press

ISBN 0-590-02731-X
Illustrations © 1997 by Rosemary Wells



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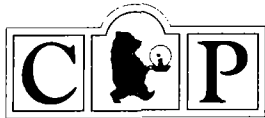


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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Kris Moran
(212) 343-7710

*Twenty old favorite minutes
Twenty minutes brand new
Read to your bunny often
And your bunny will read to you*



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**Best-selling Author And Illustrator, Rosemary Wells
Gives A Rallying Cry For Reading**

READ TO YOUR BUNNY

OLD MACDONALD: BUNNY READS BACK

Written and Illustrated by Rosemary Wells

Since the launch of the national "Twenty Minutes a Day" literacy campaign in 1994, acclaimed author and illustrator Rosemary Wells has been the initiative's most eloquent speaker. Now, with **Read To Your Bunny** (Scholastic Press; March 1998; \$7.95; All Ages), she has created a gem that is an invitation to the world of reading.



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An intimate poem that children will want to hear again and again, **Read To Your Bunny** conveys a very simple yet vital message – read to your child often, and your child will soon read to you. Recent studies show that reading aloud to children is critically linked to their success in learning to read. **Read To Your Bunny** wonderfully illustrates the most important way you can nurture your child's literacy skills. Scholastic will donate a portion of the proceeds from **Read To Your Bunny** to *Reach Out and Read*, a program which encourages parents to read to their children from birth through prenatal centers and pediatricians.



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With this goal in mind, Rosemary Wells also offers the delightful **Bunny Reads Back** books starting with the adorable debut title, **Old MacDonald** (Scholastic Press; March 1998; \$4.95; All Ages). Featuring familiar children's songs in board book format, the **Bunny Reads Back** books will get your preschoolers turning pages, looking at pictures, memorizing words, and most importantly, reading back to you in no time. Together with the colorful illustrations of Wells' trademark bunnies, these heartwarming books are a true celebration of reading!



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As Rosemary Wells so poignantly states, "Reading to your little one is just like putting gold coins in the bank. It will pay you back tenfold. Your daughter will learn, and imagine, and be strong in herself. Your son will thrive, and give your love back forever."

Rosemary Wells recently presented *Read To Your Bunny* at a White House conference on brain development. She has been writing and illustrating children's books for twenty years. Her early success came with *Noisy Nora*, now a classic, and has continued with her best-selling *Max and Ruby* books, with several million copies in print. Her most recent bestseller is *Bunny Cakes*. She lives in Scarborough-on-Hudson, New York.

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Contact: Jill Perlstein, ABA
(914) 591-2665, ext. 283

***READ TO YOUR BUNNY* BY ROSEMARY WELLS
INSPIRES NATIONAL READING PROGRAM AT LOCAL BOOKSTORES**

SPONSORED BY THE AMERICAN BOOKSELLERS ASSOCIATION
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH SCHOLASTIC, THE ASSOCIATION OF BOOKSELLERS
FOR CHILDREN, AND THE INGRAM BOOK COMPANY

(Tarrytown, NY, November 1997) More than two hundred thousand free copies of a new book, *Read to Your Bunny*, have been distributed to participating bookstores across the nation through a cooperative initiative entitled Prescription for Reading. The Prescription for Reading Partnership, an integral component of the America Reads Challenge, was launched in April 1997 by First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton on the eve of the White House Conference on Early Childhood and Brain Development. Prescription for Reading is based on the successful work of a Boston-based organization, Reach Out and Read, which corroborates that reading to very young children enhances the child's overall intellectual, emotional, and physical development.

The American Booksellers Association (ABA), in partnership with the Association of Booksellers for Children (ABC), Scholastic Inc., the Ingram Book Company, and local bookstores across the country, has designed this program to encourage parents and guardians of very young children to make reading part of a daily routine. By working with local health-care providers to *prescribe* reading during "well-baby" checkups, we can work toward meeting the goal of the America Reads Challenge and ensure that all children learn to read well and independently by the time they enter third grade.

Read to Your Bunny, a new Scholastic picture book by acclaimed author and illustrator Rosemary Wells, is a colorful, vibrant story that delivers a simple message: Reading to a child is an important part of daily activities. The book will be published by Scholastic in March 1998 (U.S. price \$7.95). Local bookstores are distributing "prescription coupons" for free paperback copies of *Read to Your Bunny* to pediatricians, well-baby clinics, and other health-care facilities, where the coupons will be given to individual parents and guardians to be redeemed at the sponsoring bookstore. Parents and guardians will also be provided with special reading lists for babies, toddlers, and pre-schoolers. The promotion will run from November 1997 through March 1, 1998.

"Your program ... is a very important step in implementing the Prescription for Reading Partnership," wrote First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton in a letter to the ABA. "We all realize that modest investments in the sound development of our children, especially our youngest children, will lay the groundwork for an American future with increased prosperity, better health, with fewer social ills, and ever greater opportunities for our citizens to lead fulfilling lives."

The American Booksellers Association, founded in 1900, is a not-for-profit trade organization headquartered in Tarrytown, New York, and on the Internet at <http://www.bookweb.org/>. Its mission includes protecting the well-being of retail bookstores and promoting the availability of books. The ABA supports its members through education, research, and the dissemination of information.

For more than 75 years, Scholastic Inc., has been committed to creating quality educational materials for students, teachers, and families. The company is one of the leading publishers and distributors of children's books, magazines, and core curriculum materials. Scholastic also publishes educational software products and produces children- and family-oriented videos and television programs. The company's international operations include Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and Mexico.

The Association of Booksellers for Children is a national membership association that offers a support network for professional children's booksellers who share the goal of encouraging quality and service within the children's book industry.

The Ingram Book Company is America's largest wholesale distributor of books, audiobooks, periodicals, and multimedia to booksellers, librarians, and specialty retailers.

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Rosemary Wells Bio

Born in New York City, Rosemary Wells grew up in a house "filled with books, dogs, and nineteenth-century music." Her childhood years were spent between her parents' home near Red Bank, New Jersey, and her grandmother's rambling stucco house on the Jersey Shore.

After finishing high school, Wells attended the Museum School in Boston. A self-proclaimed "poor student," Wells found this time in her life "a bastion of abstract expressionism...an art form that brought to my mind things I don't like to eat, fabrics that itch against the skin, divorce, paper cuts, and metallic noises." Without her degree, Wells left school at 19, married, and began her publishing career as a book designer with a Boston textbook publisher. When her husband, Tom, became an architecture student at Columbia, the couple moved to New York City, and Wells joined the staff of Macmillan as a designer in their children's book division.

It was at Macmillan that Rosemary Wells began her promising writing and illustrating career when Wells presented a small illustrated dummy of a Gilbert and Sullivan song to her editor-in-chief. Those illustrations became her first published book, *Sing A Song, O!*, and Rosemary Wells was on her way to extraordinary success.

Her children and home life have long been an inspiration for many of her books. Her daughters Victoria and Beezoo were constant inspirations, especially for the now famous "Max" board book series. Her West Highland white terrier, Angus, had the shape and expressions to become Benjamin and Tulip, Timothy, and all the other animals of her stories.

But not all of Wells' ideas come from within the family circle. She admits, "I put into my books all of the things I remember. I am an accomplished eavesdropper in restaurants, trains, and gatherings of any kind. These remembrances are jumbled up and changed because fiction is always more palatable than truth. Memories become more true as they are honed and whittled into characters and stories."

Rosemary Wells calls her prolific writing and illustrating career, which has spanned nearly three decades, a "pure delight." She adds, "I have been blessed with a small key to the world of the young." With over 50 well-loved, award-winning picture books to her credit and an endless list of awards and accolades, Wells has also written many highly acclaimed novels for teenagers including *Leave Well Enough Alone*, *When No One Was Looking*, and *Through a Hidden Door*.



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Most recently, Rosemary Wells has been a leading voice in the children's literacy campaign. Since the launch of the national "Twenty Minutes a Day" literacy campaign in 1994, she has been the initiative's most eloquent speaker calling attention to the lifelong benefits in spending twenty minutes each day reading to your child. Her latest picture book, **Read To Your Bunny**, is an intimate poem that invites parents and children to read together and share in twenty minutes of joy and love. Moreover, Wells' **Read To Your Bunny** serves as the foundation for the national **Read To Your Bunny** campaign which seeks to further spread the message of children's literacy.



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