
Go on a Citation Hunt



by Kate Smith

Most kids love to state their opinion, and many can do a pretty decent job backing it up. Why can't he empty the dishwasher? "Because I did it last time, and I have too much homework, and I have a headache." But when it comes to backing up written statements in reports and essays with evidence, many kids come up empty handed.

Want to help your child use his skills for good? Teach them how to find quotations from books and articles that will support an argument. Here's a fun game that will have him hustling to find quotes to back up written assertions.

What You Need:

- Your child's favorite book (you should be familiar with the plot, characters, etc.)
- Index cards or note paper
- Pen or pencil

What You Do:

1. Tell your child that you're challenging him to a citation competition, winner takes all (feel free to offer incentives for a win, such as a day off from chores, trip to the movies, or other small prize).
2. You, as the challenger, should write down 10 assertions about the book's character, plot, or theme, each on a separate piece of index or note paper. Each of these should be supported somewhere in the text. For example, if you are using *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, your assertions could read along the lines of "Harry is mistreated by the Dursleys," "Hermione is really smart," or "Ron is poor."
3. Give your child the 10 assertions, and challenge him to find supporting citations from the book. For every citation he finds that supports one of your assertion, he earns a point. For every one that he

doesn't find, *you* earn a point. To support the assertion that "Hermione is smart," for example, he might come up with the scene where Harry and Ron first meet Hermione on the train to school and she says, "...I've learned all our course books by heart, of course." Extra credit if he can find two or more citations for each assertion!

Kate Smith has been a teacher since 1997. She has taught in New York and California, with experience in all subjects and grades from 1 to 12, but the heart of her expertise lies in middle school, primarily English and Journalism. She has a B.A. in English and a Master of Science in Teaching from Fordham University.

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