

HOW TO MAKE READING MORE VALUABLE

For those who have a passion for reading, and want the experience to be more valuable – either for themselves or for the community – here are a few tips from Words Alive founder Leslye Lyons:

- **Read and share the reading experience.** “The forces against reading are strong, and we need to fight those forces,” Lyons says. “We need to help create and nurture a culture of reading in the community.”
- **If there’s a child in your life, read to him or her.** If this seems awkward, Lyons suggests re-evaluating the books you are choosing to read aloud. After working with volunteer readers for the past 10 years, the Words Alive founder said she has realized there are different kinds of readers. People get attracted to different kinds of books. While Lyons says she loves rhyming books, another might love picture books and still another will feel the story is the most important part of the experience. So when choosing books to read aloud to children, know what your interests are and find books to match.
- **If there are teens in your life, ask them what they are reading.** “Put the focus on them and their interests,” Lyons suggests. One book that time and again has proven successful for teen book groups is “The Giver” by Lois Lowry. Others that Lyons suggests teens will want to discuss are “Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl” and “To Kill a Mockingbird” by Harper Lee.
- **If you are involved with a book group, try to avoid “women in distress” syndrome.** There are so many books and the list of recommended book group books changes so often, Lyons says it is hard to make on-the-spot suggestions. Here are a couple of new books to consider: “The Help” by Kathryn Stockett and “In the Heart of the Canyon” by Elisabeth Hyde, which will be available July 14.

The best tip Lyons says she can give book groups is to choose variety or risk falling in the rut of the “women in distress” syndrome. To keep things as interesting as possible, she says change the perspective of the narrator, the setting/time period, the subject and the gender of the author. Here are a few books Lyons feels have proven effective over time for book groups: “The Things They Carried” by Tim O’Brien, “A Fine Balance” by Rohinton Mistry, “The Kite Runner” by Khaled Hosseini, and “The Poisonwood Bible” by Barbara Kingsolver. For more ideas and to subscribe to Lyons’ book group newsletter, email her at: thereader@san.rr.com.