

Digging into the summer reading treasure chest

Our sons are lucky to have two aunts who are librarians—and one of them is a children’s librarian. Somehow the latest and greatest books always find their way into our boys’ hands. When Leo says, “Mama, we haven’t read *The King’s Stilts* in a while,” or when Daniel wants more books about fire engines, we can make that happen.

When summer comes around, we always sign up for the free summer reading program at their aunts’ library, the Enoch Pratt.

We would be reading several books a day even if there weren’t a free T-shirt on the line.

And we would keep on reading even if the boys didn’t get to go dig through a treasure chest of prizes.



But I like that the summer reading program compels us to make a list of books each of the boys is reading—or in our boys’ case, sitting and listening to—and we can hold onto those lists to remember some of their favorites.

This is Leo’s third year of summer reading. And even though we still have the whole summer ahead of us, once we’ve listed enough books for a shirt and a prize, Leo is ready to jump in the car and drive to the library. As soon as the lists were ready, we picked a good day and stopped by the Pratt branch where their aunt is the children’s librarian, and headed inside.

What is it about a new T-shirt that gets children excited?



Daniel and Leo were giddy.

Then they had the choice of accepting a rubber duck wearing pajamas or digging into a treasure chest of prizes. The chest was irresistible.

They picked every item in the chest three or four times, deciding among fish clappers and star slinkies and beach balls. In the end, Leo picked a foldable Frisbee and Daniel picked a pack of Go Fish cards.



Then, because each realized he would rather have his brother's prize, they traded in the car on the way home.

Reading is its own reward, of course. There are lines in *Arthur's Funny Money* and the *Frog and Toad* books that leave Leo giggling so much that we have to stop and laugh together before we can go to the next page. When Daniel requested *Go Dog Go* tonight, he proudly finished some of the lines for me. So I feel confident they'd ask for their favorite books even if there were no extra incentives.

But I do love that something as simple as a pack of cards can help our boys understand that reading should be celebrated and treasured. And I really love those free T-shirts.