Ways to use the Maria books at home

Parents are children’s first and most valuable teachers. It does not matter how little schooling parents had themselves, they can still help their children learn.

One of the most important things parents can do to help their children learn is to talk and listen to them. This can be done as part of everyday life.

Children who have heard and spoken hundreds of words will find it easier to read later on.

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Reading with your child

Look at the front cover and make predictions about what the book will be about — for example, “What do you think Maria will do in this book?”

Talk about the author and illustrator – ask questions such as “Is the writer a man or a woman?” (Kym and Barbara are women and Damien is a man)

Explain how we read from left to right and how words are separated by spaces

Point to letters, words, punctuation marks (full stops, commas, question marks, speech marks)
Talk about the pictures — name things on the page, ask your child to point to things on the page — for example, “Show me the pig”, “How many chickens can you see?”

Talk about the characters - How are the characters similar or different to you?, “Is she your age?” “How do you help at home?”

Connect the story to your lives – ask your children “How do we get ready for market?”, “What do we sell at the market?” How do we travel to the market?”
Ask your child questions about the story

A good way to think about questions are *Here, Hidden, Head and Heart.*

**Here questions** are ones that come straight from the text for example “What do Mark and Maria do during the week?” (answer ‘they go to school’).

A **hidden question** is one that is not written explicitly in the text but you can get the answer from reading between the lines, for example “Do Maria’s parents think school is important, how do you know?” (answer ‘yes because the children go everyday during the week, they don’t stay at home).

A **head question** is one that you need to use your own knowledge to answer - the answer is not in the book. For example “Do Maria and Mark walk to school?” (answer - maybe yes or no depending on where they live and how far away the school is and whether a PMV goes by and if the family has money for the PMV).

A **heart question** is one about feelings, for example “How do you think Maria feels when she counts the money for her parents?” (answer will vary – as long as the child can justify their answer then it is okay. An example might be ‘she feels proud that they have asked her to do such an important job.’)

Other reading ideas

- Ask your child to retell the story in their own words
- Read the books again and again. It is normal for children to want to listen to the same story over and over.
- Model reading (you read a sentence or page and then your child reads the same sentence or page)
- Take turns reading (you read one page, they read the next page)
- Ask your child to read the book with fluency and expression – use different voices for the different characters
Other ways to help your children learn

Developing your children’s language skills
• Talk to your child about everything and anything
• Make your sentences long, use big (complex and uncommon) words
• Point and label things: give everything a name
• Ask questions, listen to their answers and elaborate on them
• Tell stories: ones about your family and culture or make them up
• Explain things as you do them (cooking, planting seeds, harvesting crops)
• Play games with words, make up rhymes, sing songs

Helping children do well at school
You can help your child be ready for school by teaching them simple things using everyday materials. Once they are at school, you can continue these games to help their development

1. Counting – count the number of PMVs that pass by, the number of cucumbers you have to sell. Show one to one correspondence – 1 is one stick, 2 is two sticks, 3 is three sticks and so on.
2. Colours – name the different colours. Ask them the colour of the flowers, butterflies, clothes and fruit and vegetables.
3. Size comparisons – help them learn about size and length. Ask your children which taro plant is bigger? Which kaukau is smaller? Which pawpaw is the biggest? What seed is the smallest? Which bean is the longest?
4. Patterns and shapes – show and name the different shapes. Point out different patterns on leaves. Ask them to make patterns with sticks and stones.
5. Position words – ask your children to follow simple directions using position words (above, under, next to, on top of, behind, in front). For example: Put the fork next to the bowl. Put the flower on top of the plate. Put the basket behind the bucket.
6. Opposites – teach your child common words and their opposites - hot/cold, near/far, under/over, dark/light, big/small, heavy/light, wide/thin, tall/short
7. Use the five senses (touch, smell, sight, sound and taste) – describe what you see, hear, feel, smell, and taste. Use descriptive words.
8. Parts of the body – Name all your body parts and ask your child to point to different body parts.
9. Name, age and where they live – children should know their name, how old they are and where they live. They should also know all the people in their family.
10. How to hold a pencil and write their name – if you do not have a pencil use a stick and show your child their name in the dirt or sand and get them to practice copying it.