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# Reading Matters

## Supercomputer! Celebrating Children's Books About the Brain by Jean Dugan

Can you sing the Alphabet Song all the way through, from A to Z? Of course you can! Now, can you sing it backward without singing it forward in your head first? Now stand on one foot and count to 20. Easy? Now do it again with your eyes closed. Not so easy!

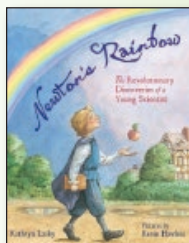
Jean Dugan, a long-time friend of *Exchange*, has been connecting kids with books for over 40 years. She helped establish a library program in the elementary schools of Gloucester, Massachusetts, and later brought her love of children's literature to the public library there. This is one more opportunity for her to share the best new books with children and those who care about them.



**Brain Games** is based on the National Geographic Channel hit of the same name, and the book, like the television show, is filled with information about all the fascinating things that happen in the brain, and why. Each full-page spread describes a challenge, like singing the Alphabet Song backward, or standing on one foot with your eyes closed and explains the how, why, and exactly what is going on in which part of the brain as we decide, react, observe, and use "the most powerful and complex supercomputer ever built." I learned a lot from this fascinating book filled with games, brain maps, websites, and a great glossary and index.



**Brain Games: The Mind-Blowing Science of Your Amazing Brain** by Jennifer Swanson (National Geographic Society, 2015.) Ages 6 – adult.



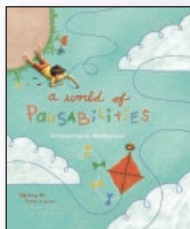
From the time he was a tiny child, Isaac Newton was a thinker and a questioner. He was always behind in his schoolwork because every question led to reading, to experimentation, and then to more questions. As a student at Cambridge, Newton was essentially self-taught in his studies of mathematics, light, motion, and gravity. In **Newton's Rainbow**, Kathryn Lasky takes the scientist from the bottom of the class at his grammar school, through his years at Cambridge, the time of the Plague and the Great Fire, to cantankerous old age, and in this lively biography we learn about many of Newton's discoveries, including what might have happened with that falling apple.

**Newton's Rainbow: The Revolutionary Discoveries of a Young Scientist** by Kathryn Lasky, illustrated by Kevin Hawkes (Farrar Straus Giroux, 2017) Ages 6 – 10.

Where do ideas come from? Well, they're all around, according to Philip C. Stead. In this exploration of creativity, appropriately titled **Ideas Are All Around**, Stead begins, "I have to write a story today. That is my job. I write stories. But today I don't have any ideas." Heading out for a walk with his dog, he observes: a blob of paint that looks like a horse, passengers on a train, cloud formations, the "clak-clak-clak" of a typewriter, and a turtle named Frank. You never know what you'll find when you take your brain for a walk!



**Ideas Are All Around** by Philip C. Stead (Roaring Book Press, 2016) All ages.



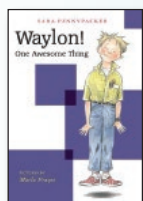
**A World of Pausabilities: An Exercise in Mindfulness** reminds us to take a breath and enjoy the moment, because as we know, even the youngest children can be overwhelmed. A group of kids and parents together explore ways to avoid stress and find meaning in the simple details all around: "Be good to your body and to your brain. Take the time to listen to the sound of the rain." In an afterword, the author offers his professional suggestions for being mindful, and for sharing that practice with children — children will have their own ideas for opportunities to "take a pause."

**A World of Pausabilities: An Exercise in Mindfulness** by Frank J. Sileo (Magination Press, 2017) Ages 4 – 8.

Perhaps children can more readily focus on the present than adults can. Antoinette Portis is the author of the wonderfully inventive **Not a Box** and **Not a Stick**, and in **Now** she celebrates the moments in which a little girl finds joy — right now. Her favorite cloud is the one that she is watching, her favorite song is the one that she is singing, and her favorite tooth is, of course, the one that just fell out. Portis expresses, in just a few words and pictures using simple brush strokes, the everyday experience of being a child.



**Now** by Antoinette Portis (Roaring Brook Press, 2017) Ages 3 – 7.



Waylon is a bit of a science nerd who is learning to navigate fourth grade where it seems the lines are too clearly drawn between the Brain Team and the Jock Team, the Others and the Shark-Punchers. But Waylon doesn't want competition, he looks for connections between people instead, especially with his beloved teenage sister Neon, with a classmate who may be a criminal, and with the charismatic leader of the pack. An adventure with a raggedy mutt brings all the kids together and the "scienciest" boy in school finds himself making connections with more friends than he knew he had.

**Waylon! One Awesome Thing** by Sara Pennypacker, illustrated by Marla Frazee (Disney, 2016) Ages 6 – 10.