

Summer holidays

The summer holidays have always been popular with children. All those warm 'no work' days were an escape in an age when school was boring. But school has become a more stimulating environment for most children. Today, it is not uncommon for parents to find themselves surrounded by young minds looking for stimulation on school holidays.

"Mum! Dad! What are we doing today? I'm bored!"

"Bored?" you say. "Bored is a piece of wood drilled full of holes. You are not a holey bit of wood. You are on holiday – things to do, a brain to keep busy!"

But what keeps young minds stimulated and away from the vortex of boredom? What are children interested in? Just about anything, really, from the micro to the macro. So you visit the zoo and meet the amazing animal world. You visit the museum and see the world of natural history. You visit the art gallery and see the world of imagination. You go to a playground and enter a world of physical challenges.

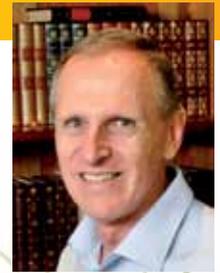
Each world brings with it a different adventure with words and stretches the vocabulary of young children. A mummy in the museum is different from a female animal caring for its young at the zoo. A whale skeleton at the museum is different from an 'X-ray' fish in Aboriginal art at the gallery. A picture frame in the gallery is different from a climbing frame in a playground. Words move among different worlds.

Like no generation before, today's child has another world. Your digital native has a virtual world – zoos and museums that can be surfed online. And more than ever before, today's child has a virtual library online. Local libraries now provide interactive books for young (and not so young) children via the internet – free and accessible from the comfort of your home if you are online, and on computers at the library if you are not.

The word *book* was originally not far from the idea of 'a holey bit of wood'. In Old English, *bece* meant 'beech' (the tree). Early English writing was runes scratched or carved into beech tablets. *Bece* became *boc* and then *book* (around 1100) 'a written document'.

Today we have eBooks. Perhaps in time we'll take for granted their electronic nature and just revert to the word

MY WORD with Rodney Martin



Holiday

In Old English, *holiday* was two words, *halig dæg* 'holy day', a day for a religious festival, which of course meant 'a day of no work'. *Halig dæg* became *haligdæg* and then *holiday*. Naturally 'no work' days became popular, so popular that we now have holidays for not so holy reasons – even horse races!

books? The kind on paper may become collectors' items.

In the meantime, holidays are an excellent time to let your children explore the world of books online – free at your local library. They have a natural appeal to today's young minds and, like any other 'world' they visit, it will stretch their imaginations and vocabulary.

It's amazing how busy young minds can be on 'no work' days!

Rodney Martin, a primary teacher in former life, is now a children's author and educational publisher. His SA family business, Era Publications, has been creating online interactive children's books (see www.erapublications.com/south-kids) now available in many public libraries.