

# BIBLIOTHERAPY



## WHAT IS BIBLIOTHERAPY??

According to Cornett, Bibliotherapy is "the process of reading books with a therapeutic intent as an intervention for dealing with stressful or temporary problems such as a visit to the doctor, the death of a pet, or entering a new school."

The relevant, appropriate book that the teacher chooses will help guide the student **to identification, catharsis, and insight** to their problems. The teacher should help the student relate to the fictional character.

**For example:** Katy is having a hard time making friends because she has a learning disability and tends to have trouble picking up on social rules, be impulsive, and hyperactive. Because of this, her classmates exclude her during recess and other activities. The teacher can make note of this and read the class a book that focuses on a character who is in a similar situation. This can help both Katy and her classmates gain a different perspective of how the other may feel. Katy and her classmates will come up with solutions to the fictional character's problem together which will build peer interaction. In the end, both groups will gain insight into the other's perspective and become more empathetic toward each other.



## WHY DOES IT WORK?

Bibliotherapy helps individuals or groups gain insight into personal problems. It helps students without having to single him/her out. Sometimes, students don't want others to know about their problem and may even deny the problem or refuse to receive help. Bibliotherapy allows teachers to intervene undetected.



According to Leininger, "Bibliotherapy helps students understand themselves, realize that they are not alone, and see hope in their situation" (p. 23).

**HOPE**  
HOLD ON, PAIN ENDS.

## Step-By-Step Directions for Implementation:

**Step 1:** Identify the individual student's problems (at school or at home).

**Step 2:** Choose a developmentally appropriate book with characters who have similar problems and/or behavioral characteristics that the student can relate to. Read aloud to class or small group.

**Step 3:** Guide the student to catharsis through a class or small group discussion before, during, or after reading the book. Some questions to ask:

- How would you feel in [character's name]'s situation?
- What might happen to [character's name]?
- How might things change for [character's name]?
- What could classmates and friends do to help [character's name]?

Sridhar stated that "Bibliotherapy can help troubled students understand and solve various problems while also enhancing reading comprehension" (p. 82).

## WHO CAN BENEFIT FROM BIBLIOTHERAPY?

### Students with:

- Communication disorders
- ADHD
- Emotional Disturbance
- Learning Disabilities
- Other Health Impairments
- Dyslexia
- OCD
- All ages (adjust book according to their reading level)

Bibliotherapy can be used for all students in a general education or inclusion class because it will teach social skills, promote creative problem solving, strengthen empathy, enhance self-esteem, and improve literacy and interpretation skills.

*It gives students the opportunity to form friendships by working with their peers to solve problems. It may help the student realize that their peers understand and may help them feel accepted.*

It has also been shown to develop assertiveness, attitude change, self-development, and therapeutic gain.



### \*\*\*\*\*CAUTION\*\*\*\*\*

- The teacher should use **DISCRETION** when choosing topics for bibliotherapy.
- The teacher should keep parents, counselors, and other relevant administrators **AWARE** of topics being approached through bibliotherapy.
- The teacher should always make sure parents are **COMFORTABLE** with topics being discussed.
- Keep in mind; **TIMING IS EVERYTHING!** The topic may not apply to that student a month later. At the same time, too soon may make the student become more withdrawn. For example, when dealing with death. Wait until you think the student is ready or can handle talking about a similar situation to their own.



## REFERENCES

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