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Purpose of the Book

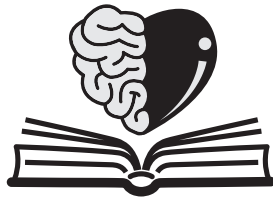
The purpose of this book is to share 48 award-winning children’s books across six areas of bibliotherapy and connect them with appropriate and powerful activities that increase listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills.

The areas of bibliotherapy presented in this book include: attachment and growth; creativity and critical thinking; bullying and building friendships; family matters (dynamics and change); poverty and social justice issues; and childhood challenges.

The books have been vetted to include diversity across social, cultural, and gender spans. Clearly, there is a cornucopia of choices in the rich offerings of children’s literature. The selections in this text were made based on the author’s experiences as a former teacher in classes for emotionally vulnerable children and her work across 27 years of teaching future teachers in children’s literature courses at the university level. A few authors are tapped more than once. This is by design, to highlight the availability of several highly recommended and reliable authors who are known for their books’ therapeutic purposes.

It is helpful to note that the categories are not mutually exclusive. Most of the selections can be therapeutic across a number of areas. The same goes for the recommended activities. They are designed to be mixed and matched throughout the book and with other books that may already be in use.

Grade levels are not recommended because the books are selected to be used across the PreK-5 continuum. They may be read aloud to a group, read with or by individual children, or sent home to be read in the familial setting. Lexile levels are provided in Appendix I for teachers’ use.



Cautions and Conditions for Bibliotherapy

Sensitivity

- Never force or coerce children to participate in bibliotherapy.
- Be prepared for emotional responses.
- Stay connected to other professionals who impact the child.

Confidentiality

- Always respect the privacy of the child and the family.
- Communicate with parents and guardians about the child’s awareness of the situation for which the book is applied.

Advisability

- Be aware of the age appropriateness of material.
- Consider the values and cultural differences connected to the subject area(s).

Section One: Attachment and Growth

I could tell you my adventures - beginning from this morning, said Alice a little timidly: but it's no use going back to yesterday, because I was a different person then. Lewis Carroll, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland



Background Knowledge for Teachers and Parents

The first section of this book is about many “firsts,” including the first day of school. The firsts in a child’s life often bring struggle and conflict, even when they are seemingly seamless! Likewise, situations that force children to grow and change in order to meet adult expectations are inherently difficult. Standardized testing, for example, is a construct of the adult world. Tests created by adults, used for adult purposes, and yet administered to children who have few mental resources to cope with the accompanying anxiety are an ideal place to try bibliotherapy. Attachment issues, those involving connections and emotional ties that are critical to well being, find a home in bibliotherapy. Many of the titles in this and subsequent sections underpin attachment issues. A child’s sense of how well he or she “fits” into a unit, whether at home or at school, can be easily manipulated (and not always for the best). In stories, children can see, hear, and feel how characters learn to adapt, adjust, and attach in healthy ways. Like Alice in the quote above, we must teach children to go forward, learning from living.

Chrysanthemum

by Kevin Henkes



Synopsis of the Story

It is the first day of school and our heroine, Chrysanthemum, is very excited. When she encounters bullying and negative attitudes in the classroom, her enthusiasm for school and her sense of self-respect begin to wilt. How will she, her family, and her teachers react to these threats?

Bibliotherapy Topics

- Dealing with bullying
- First day of school anxiety
- Appreciating differences
- Respect for others

Literacy Skills: Vocabulary and Fluency

Interesting new words and a gentle repetition of phrases describe how the main character and her family react to the challenges of beginning school and the threat of bullying.

Literary Elements: Plot and Characterization

Children follow the heroine's progress from the first day of school through time. The descriptors of feelings, emotions, and terms describing temperament bring a number of viable characters to life.

Key Questions for Bibliotherapy

- What is bullying?
- Does teasing lead to bullying? Why is teasing dangerous?
- What will you do when you notice bullying?
- Was the first day of school difficult for you?
- Why is it important to look for ways to build people up?

Activity: Flowering Friendships

Key Standard: Descriptive language

Using the reproducible flow on the next page, children should record or dictate their perceptions of the unique and favorable qualities of a classmate. Pair children for a "sharing time" during which they interview a classmate and then create the flower using attributes that describe the other person. Create a garden of "Children in Bloom" for the classroom door or a display outside in the corridor.

Name: _____

Flowering Friendships

I think _____ is special because _____.

