

# Bibliotherapy

Middle School

High school

Elementary Education



## Intervention Overview

Bibliotherapy helps students to develop positive emotions, a sense of belonging, and resilience by relating their story to that of characters who are going through similar challenges. Students can see how the characters overcome difficult situations and cope with negative emotions in a positive way. Bibliotherapy is “getting the right book to the right child at the right time” (Sisk, 1982, p. 224). Among other things, bibliotherapy can help students become more positive, empathetic, and accepting of others. Bibliotherapy is not restricted only to books, but other forms of media such as poetry, film and storytelling can also be used (McCulliss & Chamberlain, 2013).

Bibliotherapy can be used to help individual students or the entire class flourish and thrive. There are a few important tools that can help teachers plan a successful bibliotherapy intervention. First, you must have a specific emotional issue or goal in mind (Maich & Kean, 2004). For example, you may wish to improve your students’ empathy or optimism. You will also need an appropriate story to address your goal (Maich & Kean, 2004). A list of potential stories for different grade levels is listed below. Having a reinforcement activity is important to guide students in their understanding of the story and its application to their individual lives (Maich & Kean, 2004). For example, after selecting a title that interests the students while providing an opportunity to discuss moral principles, the teacher can guide them in a group discussion. The group discussion can, but do not need to, include activities such as celebrity interviews, you speak/ I speak, and I can only yes/no you (Sisk, 1982, p. 226).

Sample Bibliotherapy Questions:

- Are you like any of the story's characters?
  - Do any of the characters remind you of someone?
  - Who would you like to be in the story?
  - Is there anything you would like to change about the story?
  - How would you change the characters, what happened, or how the story ended?
  - What is your favorite part of the story?
  - Did anything in the story ever happen to you?
  - What do you think will happen to the characters in this story tomorrow, in a few weeks, or a year from now?
- (McCulliss & Chamberlain, 2013).

## Book Guides

[Grades Pre-K through 6th](#)

[Grades K-8+](#)

Most public libraries have a list of recommended books for bibliotherapy on a variety of topics such as bullying, LGBTQ+ belonging, anxiety and depression disorders, grief, physical disabilities, etc

## Intervention Guide

Grade Level:	All
Materials:	Book of choice, paper, pencil
Duration:	A few weeks, as needed.
Implementation:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Identify the student/reader's concerns.</li><li>2. Select a book and pre-read it to meet reader's needs.</li><li>3. Present the book to the student(s) and provide a guided reading plan.</li><li>4. Follow up on what the reader gained from the book. (Pardeck &amp; Pardeck, 2013)</li></ol>

## Does it work?

Tijms et al. (2018) assessed the effects of a bibliotherapeutic book club on the promotion of literacy and social-emotional skills in public secondary schools with a low socio-economic status. These researchers observed seven small groups of about six students assigned to the intervention book club, with 50 additional students acting as a control group. All of the students in each group read the same book and participated in 8-10 sessions to discuss the book and relate the story to their own life experiences. Each session was facilitated by an entry-level psychologist. At the end of the book club, students from the intervention group reported greater self-confidence in their social skills and ability to do well in school (Tijms et al., 2018).

## References:

- Maich, K. & Kean, S. (2004). Read two books and write me in the morning: Bibliotherapy for social emotional intervention in the inclusive classroom. *TEACHING Exceptional Children Plus*, 1(2). <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ966510>
- McCulliss, D. & Chamberlain, D. (2013). Bibliotherapy for youth and adolescents- school-based application and research. *Journal of Poetry Therapy: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Practice, Theory, Research and Education*, 26(1), 13-14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08893675.2013.764052>

Pardeck, J. T., & Pardeck, J. A. (1993). *Bibliotherapy. A clinical approach for helping children*. New York, NY: Gordon and Breach Science.

Sisk, D. A. (1982). Caring and sharing: Moral development of gifted students. *The Elementary School Journal*, 82(3), 221-229. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1001572>

Tijms, J., Stoop, M.A. & Pollock, J.N. (2018). Bibliotherapeutic book club intervention to promote reading skills and social-emotional competencies in low SES community-based high schools: A randomised controlled trial. *Journal of Research in Reading*, 41(3), 525-545. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9817.12123>



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