

2006

Implementing bibliotherapy: Noah & friends

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Recommended Citation

Ealy, Ryan, "Implementing bibliotherapy: Noah & friends" (2006). *Graduate Research Papers*. 578.
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Implementing bibliotherapy: Noah & friends

Abstract

For this project, I have decided to write a series of short stories. It is titled Noah and Friends. These stories will teach students about diversity, peer pressure, and role models. Reading stories can be used as a great therapeutic tool as well a unique way to teach and a fun way for students to learn. Through reading stories students can learn about themselves through characters in books that are dealing with conflicts similar to what they are currently experiencing. This allows them to gain insight about their problems as well as learn different solutions they could try to solve their problems.

Running head: IMPLEMENTING BIBLIOTHERAPY: NOAH & FRIENDS

A Research Paper

Presented to

The Department of Educational Leadership, Counseling,

And Postsecondary Education

University of Northern Iowa

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Education

By

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December 2006

Abstract

For this project, I have decided to write a series of short stories. It is titled *Noah and Friends*. These stories will teach students about diversity, peer pressure, and role models. Reading stories can be used as a great therapeutic tool as well a unique way to teach and a fun way for students to learn. According to Furner (2004) “bibliotherapy can be used as an attempt to help young people understand themselves and cope with problems by providing literature relevant to their personal situations and developmental needs at appropriate times” (p.4). Through reading stories students can learn about themselves through characters in books that are dealing with conflicts similar to what they are currently experiencing. This allows them to gain insight about their problems as well as learn different solutions they could try to solve their problems. It is also a technique used to spark interaction between a teacher and a student based on the mutual sharing of a book (Aix, 1993).

Bibliotherapy Defined

Bibliotherapy is not a new technique that has just been developed, but it has been around since the beginning of the 19th century. Crothers (as cited in Sullivan, 2002) described bibliotherapy as the process of reading books to medical patients who needed help understanding their problems. Therapists, counselors, and many health professionals use handouts and brochures to help people gain knowledge about their specific conditions. Religious leaders have used sacred texts to help them lead the spiritual and the emotional health of communities (Sullivan, 2002).

Stages of Bibliotherapy

For bibliotherapy to work there are three stages that students need to go through. Those stages are identification, catharsis, and insight (Furner, 2004). Identification is when a student identifies with the thoughts and feelings from the characters in the book, or from the story line itself (Sullivan, 2002). The characters in the story can be the same age as the student being read to, older, real, make believe, puppets or even cartoon characters.

One of the responses a student can have when he or she becomes emotionally involved in the story is catharsis. Catharsis is when a student becomes emotionally involved in the story (McIntrye, 2006). The student relates to the main characters or finds familiarity with the story and his or her life. During this time the student is building up tension. Catharsis happens when tension

releases because the student does not feel alone in facing their problems (Sullivan, 2002). Catharsis is a concept that needs to happen for bibliotherapy to work

The last stage a student may go through is insight. Through insight a student might see alternative solutions to the problems he or she is facing in his or her life. Solutions are given to the character in the books and this helps the student to identify with his or her own personal problems (Furner, 2004). In some stories solutions will not be given in the story. It is your job to then brainstorm solutions or have the students try to figure out solutions that could be used.

Phases of Bibliotherapy

Identification, catharsis, and insight are the goals for student to achieve when counselors and teachers use bibliotherapy. As a counselor teaching bibliotherapy there are four elements you need to consider to be successful. They are pre-reading, guided reading, discussion, and a problem solving or reinforcement activity at the end (Forgan, 2002).

During the pre-reading phase it is important to consider your audience or the person you are going to be teaching. You want to make sure the book is developmentally appropriate for their age and ability. It is important to select books where the student will be able to make the connection between his or her problem and the main characters. The counselor can explore the background knowledge and help link the student's past experiences to the present content of the new material (Forgan, 2002). An example of this is the topic of "bullying."

The counselor can ask the students, “What is bullying?” or “Have you ever been bullied?”

The second phase is the guided reading phase. During this phase the counselor or a teacher or designated leader will read the story. The counselor will want to read the entire story unless he/she wants to stop and cover an important point. It is important to read at the appropriate pace and volume so the students are paying attention (Forgan, 2002).

The third phase is the post reading discussion phase. During this phase it is important that the students understand the story. The counselor can have students retell the plot of the story and have the students talk about some of the characters feelings and the situations that occurred (Forgan, 2002). Along with this the counselor will ask the students content questions in regards to the story. Then they will ask personalization questions so the students can relate their lives and experiences to the topic of study.

The last phase includes implementing a reinforcement activity. During this phase the counselor will process with the students and ask the students’ personalization questions about the story. It is important to relate the story to the students’ specific problems or issues. An example of this would be, “Tell me about a time when you were bullied? How did it feel? And what did you do?” If you are doing this in a large group it allows students to hear from class mates and this helps the individual to not feel alone. The student can also learn he/she is not

alone by identifying with one or some of the characters. This is important because many students feel that he/she is the only one who is experiencing these specific problems (Forgan, 2002).

Applications

Currently, bibliotherapy focuses on developmental needs that are a part of everyday life problems, such as anger, self concept issues, divorce, and all the different problems that youth may face (Forgan, 2002). It is a relatively new technique that school professionals are using to help students solve their own problems. Bibliotherapy and its uses have been well documented. According to Aiex (1993), the following are a list of bibliotherapy applications:

- (1) To develop an individual's self concept;
- (2) to increase an individual's understanding of human behavior or motivations;
- (3) to foster an individual's honest self-appraisal;
- (4) to provide a way for a person to find interests outside of self;
- (5) to relieve emotional or mental pressure;
- (6) to show an individual that he or she is not the first or only person to encounter such a problem;
- (7) to show an individual that there is more than one solution to a problem;
- (8) to help a person discuss a problem more freely;
- (9) to help an individual plan a constructive course of action to solve a problem (p.2).

Project

Noah and Friends is a project aimed for teaching guidance to students in 1st through 4th grade. Students will develop awareness about diversity and how not to judge a book by its cover. The second story covers peer pressure and how to be a good friend. The last story covers divorce and the importance of role models. It is my goal that these stories will connect to the lives of our youth and help them solve their problems when dealing with these topics.

With this project, I have submitted a taped guidance lesson using the peer pressure story. I used sixth grade boys who read and role played the scenes in the story. I presented this story to the team three students which include third and fourth grade students.

Findings

My first finding was that the students enjoyed the format of having a story read to them as part of a guidance lesson. It was a unique and different style of teaching that students were not use to having. They really enjoyed seeing older students come down and actually be the characters. I chose these students because I have worked with them before on some of their own problems. We met in the morning and went over the script one time. Then I let them practice on their own, and they were ready to do it in front of the class room. Another reason I chose these particular students is that it gives them another opportunity to be successful in school. Some times these students have behavior issues, and giving them an

opportunity like this is something they need. In the video you will see that the students *identified* with the characters in the story. Almost every student in the class could fit one of these descriptions. Noah is a great student who takes on the role of a leader. David is stereotyped as the bad student who always gets into trouble. Justin is portrayed as a follower who makes bad choices.

By listening to the student's responses and the questions I asked you will see that *catharsis* took place in this lesson. If you remember from earlier catharsis is a concept that needs to happen for bibliotherapy to work. Catharsis is when a student becomes emotionally involved in the story (McIntyre, 2006). The student relates to the main characters or finds familiarity with the story and his or her life. During this time the student is building up tension. Catharsis happens when tension releases because the student does not feel alone in facing their problems (Sullivan, 2002). The students identified what peer pressure was and they also had an opportunity to tell about a time when they were peer pressured. This shows that the students understood how Noah must have felt when David was peer pressuring him. After some of the students talked about times when they were peer pressured this is when *insight* took place. They shared how they dealt with peer pressure and if it worked or did not work. Through insight a student might see alternative solutions to the problems he or she is facing in his or her life. Solutions are brainstormed as well as talked about and this helps the student to identify with his or her own personal problems (Furner, 2004). Having insight

gives students ideas they can use in the future if peer pressure is happening to them. Students felt not alone when it comes to being peer pressured because many students in the class shared. This shows that peer pressure happens to everyone and it is a normal issue that every student will have to go through.

I felt that *Noah and Friends* was a great story that accomplished all the goals I was trying to achieve. It was a creative way of teaching, and it kept the student's attention. They learned about an important topic and effective ways to deal with peer pressure in the future.

These stories can be used with individual students and also in small groups. They are not long stories which gives you more time to cover any questions or concerns that may come up about the topic. The stories are developmentally appropriate and they use the same language a student would use if they were with their peers.

Limitations

After giving this lesson, I could see that that were things I needed improvement on. The first thing I could improve on in my story was that I did not show my characters ways to deal with peer pressure. During the lesson I did cover the different ways students could deal with peer pressure but I went over them too fast. I think it would be beneficial for the students if I wrote down all of the strategies for dealing with peer pressure on the board. I believe peer pressure is an important topic and talking about it once is not enough. I would want to come in

and talk about it several times. I would like do some role plays and this would give the students a chance to practice their skills in dealing with peer pressure. I would also cover where and when peer pressure could take place and tailor my role plays to those situations. We covered those a little in the lesson but it was not sufficient.

My last limitation is that I had a hard time finding time for older students to come and role play my short story. In the future, I may change my characters into puppets and that way I could give the whole lesson by myself without taking students out of their classes.

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Noah and Friends

By

Ryan Ealy

Characters in the Book

Noah is the first character in the story and he is a 3rd grader. He sees everything as black or white and always does what his parents and teachers ask him to do. He is a great student and does what ever it takes to get positive praise from his teachers.

Noah has a younger brother named Justin.

David, is also a 3rd grader, and is Noah's best friend. Noah and David have grown up together. Noah does not like to follow any rules and is always pushing and testing everyone around them. He thinks everyone does not want him to have any fun and that is why they have all these stupid rules.

Justin is Noah's little brother, who is in 1st grade. He is always asking questions and does not always like to do what is asked of him. Everything is not black or white like his older brother Noah thinks. Justin tends to get into trouble because he does not make good choices.

Jarvis is the last character in the story and all we know about him is that he is a Native American.

Diversity Story

Narrator: Noah and David are best friends who have grown up together. This is the first time they have ever been in the same class. Their teacher is Mr. Olsen and both Noah and David really like him.

Noah: This is sweet we have the best teacher and we are in the same class together.

David: I know it's about time our parents let us be in the same class together. They just did not want us together because they think we will get into trouble. Now we can have just as much fun as we did in the summer during school.

Noah: Umm I thought my parents said the school picks who is in each classroom, not our parents.

David: No, they just did not want us together because we would have too much fun. That is what our parents told the school. This is going to be awesome, just you and me buddy.

1. Tell me about David. What were his personal characteristics?
2. Can you give me an example of Noah's behavior and how it fits his personal characteristics?

Narrator: Everything went normal for the rest of that school day, and both Noah and David were looking forward to a great year. The next day began and Mr. Olsen had a surprise for all of the students. We have a new student Mr. Olsen

announced and his name is Jarvis. Jarvis is from the Mesquaki Indian tribe and just transferred from an all Indian school. He is the only Native American at this school.

Noah: Hey David did you see the new kid.

David: Yes I did, but he does not look like you or I.

Noah: I know, he talks funny, is really dark, and he has a pony tail longer than most of the girls in the class.

David: He is not like you or I at all. Which means he probably is not any fun and will not like the same things as we like?

Noah: Yeah he is too different from us so he will not be our friend.

Narrator: The next day Mr. Olsen put everyone in groups of three for a group activity. Noah and David were put in a group and were really excited until Jarvis the new student was added to their group.

Jarvis: Hello guys I am Jarvis and I am your third group member.

Noah: Hello, I am Noah and this is my friend David.

David: Wow, Jarvis you are really dark. You must spend a lot of time out in the sun.

Jarvis: No not really, this is the color of my skin all of the time.

Noah: I wish I could be that dark, because I get sunburned all of the time.

David: Yeah, but then you would be more like him instead of your best friend.

Jarvis: Well what is wrong with me?

David: Nothing, besides you look different and you have a pony tail longer than all of the girls in the class.

Jarvis: I don't look different, you look different. Where I come from everyone has pony tails. It is one of our traditions.

David: Well your not there anymore you are here at our school. If you want to fit in you need to look more like us.

Jarvis: Oh yeah, well then make me.

David: I will make you.

Narrator: At this point Mr. Olsen has overheard the conversation between the boys and sent all three of them to the principal. The principal called all of their parents and made them aware of what happened. Noah's parents were very upset and when he came home he was going to be in big trouble. The next scene is at Noah's house with his parents and his little brother Justin.

Parents: So Noah tell us what happened?

Noah: Well there is a new student at our school and David was making fun of the way that he looked. I didn't do anything I just stood there.

Parents: Noah even if you did not say anything you were still there. Did you try to stop the situation or make it better?

Noah: No.

Parents: How would you feel if you were in a new school and had to leave all of your friends behind? Then on your second day some boys begin making fun of the way you look?

Noah: Well I guess I never looked at it like that. I guess if I was Jarvis that would be really hard to leave all of my friends behind. I should talk to David and we should apologize and be friends with Jarvis.

Parents: What have you learned from this situation?

Noah: If you put yourself in other people's shoes then it will help you to understand what they are going through.

Parents: That is good but we have already taught you that. Think about when you sat there and did not say anything when David was making fun of Jarvis.

Noah: I guess I don't know.

Parents: If your not part of the solution then you are part of the problem.

Sometimes you might have to stand up to your own friends if you do not agree with them. It is very hard to do, but we want you to be a leader not a follower.

This was a learning experience for you Noah, but you still need to be punished.

You will have to spend this weekend with out any T.V. privileges.

Narrator: Content and Personalization Questions

1. What was the first thing Noah and David noticed about Jarvis
2. Did they think Jarvis was like them or not like them? Why or Why not?
3. Was it fair that Noah had to go the principal?
4. What was Noah's punishment at the end of the story?
5. What lessons did Noah learn in this story?
6. What does it mean to put your self in someone else's shoes?
7. Does anyone know what discrimination means?
8. Have you ever disliked or been mean to someone if they were not like you? Tell me about it.
9. Has someone ever been mean to you or treated you differently because they thought you were different?

Friendship/Peer Pressure Story

Narrator: The first scene in this story takes place with Noah and Justin hanging out in their back yard. David is coming over and will be spending the night. Behind Noah's and Justin's back yard is a forest that they are not allowed to go into. They are only allowed to play in their back yard.

Noah: Hey David what's up?

David: I am so glad to be here because I love sleepovers.

Noah: I agree, sleepovers are the best.

Justin: This is my first one, what should we do?

David: Your house is cool, I did not know that you lived right next to the forest. Let's go in and be explorers.

Noah: It would be fun but my parents said that were not allowed to go there without an adult around.

David: What if we just went in to the forest a little bit? Would that be okay?

Justin: I think that would be okay if we went in just a little bit.

Noah: No we better not, I do not want to get into trouble.

David: Come on you chicken, your parents are watching T.V. They will not even know we went in. I am your guest and we should do what I choose to do.

Justin: Come on Noah, they will not even know we were gone.

Noah: I am not a chicken.

David: You're a chicken if you do not come in with me, and I will tell everyone at school how you were too afraid to go into the forest.

Noah: Fine let's go in and find out who the real chicken is.

1. What behaviors did David show that fit his personal characteristics?
2. What behaviors did Noah show that fit his personal characteristics?
3. What behaviors did Justin show that fit his personal characteristics?
4. At this time I am going to say a word and I want you to think about it while I read the rest of the story. The word is "Peer Pressure".

Narrator: Justin, Noah, and David are all exploring the forest but instead of going in just a little bit they went in too far and got lost.

Noah: I think our house is this way.

David: No, it is this way I am sure of it.

Justin: I am scared you guys and it is starting to get dark.

Noah: We would be safe at home if David hadn't insisted we go into the forest.

David: Well I thought since you lived right next to the forest you would know your way around it, and we wouldn't have gotten lost. Anyways you both wanted to come in here it was not just my idea.

Noah: You called me a chicken and said you were going to tell everyone that I was afraid of the forest at school.

Narrator: At this point the boys are scared and arguing with each other.

Then they here a faint voice through the trees and it is someone yelling their names. It was their parents and at that moment the boys felt relief, but they new they were going to be in trouble. Once the boys got back to the house David had to go home and their sleepover was cancelled.

Parents: We were worried sick and had no idea were you kids were. We thought someone kidnapped you. What were you thinking going into the forest when you know you are not allowed in there with out an adult?

Noah: Well David wanted to go in and he called me a chicken if I would not go in with him.

Parents: So if someone calls you a name that gives you the right to not follow the rules we have set for you?

Noah: Well no, but.

Parents: If your friends tell you to go jump off of a bridge will you do that too?

Noah: No, that is not the same.

Parents: We have rules for a reason and no matter what happens you need to follow the rules we have set for you. Do you know what "Peer Pressure" is? Peer pressure is when your peers or friends try to get you to do something you know is wrong. Peer pressure can come in many different forms. It can be not doing your homework because your friends want you to go play. Your

friends could call you names or tell the other kids at school that you are a chicken if you do not do what they say.

Noah: What if I do not do what my friends say when they peer pressure me and then they stop being my friend?

Parents: Can you tell us the difference between a good friend and a bad friend?

Noah: A good friend is some one I play with and I can trust. A bad friend is someone who is mean and does not take turns.

Parents: Well, what about friends who peer pressure you?

Noah: If a friend peer pressures me to do something I know is wrong then they are not good friends.

Parents: That is right. Noah today you have learned about peer pressure and the difference between good and bad friends.

Narrator: Content and Personalization Questions

1. What was the rule that Noah and Justin broke?
2. Why did Noah decide to break the rules?
3. Was David being a good friend? Why or why not?
4. Why are having rules important?
5. What is Peer Pressure?
6. Tell me about a time when you felt peer pressured and what did you do?
What other strategies have you heard of or have used to deal with peer pressure?
7. Tell me about some of the rules that you have and why it is important to follow them?

Role Model Story/Divorce

Narrator: This story takes place with Justin and Noah talking about a homework assignment. It is about role models, and they have to figure out who they want as their role model and why?

Noah: What is a role model again?

David: Well, I think it is someone you look up to and you want to be like.

Noah: Wow I know a lot of people I want to be like. How can I choose just one?

David: It is not going to be easy, but we can work together on it.

Noah: What about pro athletes?

David: That is a great idea. I was thinking about some one from the NBA or the NFL.

Noah: I like David Robinson from the San Antonio Spurs or I like Thurman Thomas from the Buffalo Bills.

David: I like Michael Jordan from the Chicago Bulls and Brett Farve from the Green Bay Packers.

Noah: I was also thinking about my grandpa because he always takes me places and shows me how to do cool stuff all of the time.

David: I was thinking about having my Dad as my role model.

Noah: Why would you want to do that? Didn't your Dad leave your Mom and their not together anymore?

David: They got a divorce but I still see my Dad every weekend and sometimes twice a week.

Noah: What is a divorce?

David: A divorce is when your parents are not married anymore and they are separated. It means that I share time at both of their houses. They still love me, but they do not love each other any more.

Noah: Does that mean that he divorced you to? I mean he is not like my Dad who I see every day.

David: No, he did not divorce me. Parents can not divorce their kids. Dad and Mom just did not get along together anymore and it was better if they separated.

Noah: Why did they separate? Was it your fault?

David: At first they started to fight all of the time. They would only do it at nights when I was sleeping. Then it got worse and they fought all of the time. Then they started fighting in front of me. At first I thought it was my fault that my Dad left, but they told me that it was not my fault. Dad told me that he and Mom can not get along and it will be better for me if he did not live with them anymore. They said that they did not love each other but they will always love me.

Noah: Why will it be better if your Dad does not live with you?

David: He told me so he and Mom will not fight anymore, and I will not have to watch them fight. They say it is for the best.

Noah: Do you miss him?

David: I miss him all of the time.

Noah: What do you do when you miss him?

David: Well I can do many different things. I have his phone number and anytime I feel I want to talk to him I can call him. One thing that really helps is that I will draw family pictures. I draw a picture of my Dad and me and then a picture of Mom and me. My Dad and I also made our own picture book with pictures we have taken together.

Noah: Do you wish they were still together?

David: I do wish they would get back together, but right now they have not been in a fight for a long time. This makes me feel really happy, and they both smile a lot more now.

Noah: I am glad you are happy, so do you think you are going to have your Dad as your role model?

David: Even though I like Michael Jordan and Brett Farve I am going to choose my Dad as my role model. What about you?

Noah: Well, I think I am going to choose my grandpa. I like David Robinson and Thurman Thomas but I have never met them. I see my grandpa all of the time, and I will probably never see those guys.

David: What kinds of things do you and your grandpa do?

Noah: Well, he takes me fishing and showed me how to skin a fish. He takes me to hunt mushrooms and then we cook them together. We also hunt worms and I help him sell them in his bait shop. He has taken me deer hunting, and we watch all of the Iowa Hawkeye football games together.

David: It sounds like your grandpa means a lot to you.

Noah: Yeah, I love him he is the greatest.

Content and Personalization Questions

1. What does it mean when parents are divorced?
2. What is a role model?
3. Who did David choose as a role model and why?
4. Who did Noah choose as a role model and what types of things did they do?
5. What types of things did David do to help him when he missed his father?
6. If your parents are divorced is your fault they are?
7. Can parents divorce their kids?
8. Can parents still love their kids if they are divorced?
9. Have students think of who they would choose as their role models and why? Go around the room and have students take turn answering.