Building self-esteem with bibliotherapy

Jennifer L. Law
University of Northern Iowa

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Abstract
This paper offers an explanation of what bibliotherapy and self-esteem are, and how they can be connected to one another. This paper discusses who uses bibliotherapy and who it can be used with. It also describes two types of bibliotherapy and the steps in using them. The goals of bibliotherapy are explained. Children's needs in order to benefit from bibliotherapy are discussed. Advantages and limitations of bibliotherapy are also included in this paper. Self-esteem will also be defined. Finally this paper will describe how to use bibliotherapy in a school setting.
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Roberto Clemente

Date Approved

Adviser/Director of Research Paper

Michael D. Waggoner

Date Received

Head, Department of Educational Leadership, Counseling, and Postsecondary Education
Abstract

This paper offers an explanation of what bibliotherapy and self-esteem are and how they can be connected to one another through bibliotherapy. This paper discusses who uses bibliotherapy and who it can be used with. It also describes two types of bibliotherapy and its steps in using it. The goals of bibliotherapy are explained. Children's needs in order to benefit from bibliotherapy are discussed. Advantages and limitations of bibliotherapy are also included in this paper. Self-esteem will also be defined. Finally this paper will describe how to use bibliotherapy in a school setting.
Building Self-Esteem with Bibliotherapy

The term “bibliotherapy” has existed since 1916 (Pardeck & Pardeck, 1998). Books were created by the American Library Association for the distinct purpose of bibliotherapy. Still, today, counselors, psychologists, psychiatrists, medical doctors, and social workers use bibliotherapy professionally (Pardeck & Pardeck, 1998). Teachers may use bibliotherapy as well (Sridhar & Vaughn, 2000).

Bibliotherapy is the use of books to help people who are dealing with problems (Pardeck & Pardeck, 1998). Bibliotherapy can include the use of fiction, nonfiction, and self-help books, as well as articles, songs, poems, films, and videos (Pardeck & Pardeck, 1998). Bibliotherapy can be used with children, adolescents, and even adults.

Bibliotherapy

Definition

Bibliotherapy is a therapeutic way of using books to help people with problems in their lives. It is a therapeutic process in two ways. First, books are relaxing and enjoyable. This in itself is a therapeutic experience. The second way bibliotherapy is therapeutic is that it helps children in a time of crisis (McCarty & Chalmers, 1997). Reading a story about a similar situation offers children new ideas for solutions in their own lives.
Borders and Paisley (1995) offer a more complete definition of bibliotherapy. According to them, bibliotherapy is “a process or activity designed to help individuals solve problems or better understand themselves through their response to literature or media. It consists of reading, viewing, or hearing material, followed by a discussion led by a facilitator” (Borders & Paisley, 1992, p. 131). The material is used as a starting point and is one element of bibliotherapy. The follow-up activity, such as discussion, is essential in this therapeutic process.

The Process of Bibliotherapy

The process of bibliotherapy consists of three main stages. These are identification, catharsis, and insight (Bauer & Balius, Jr., 1995). In the identification stage the client identifies with the main character. He or she then expresses him or herself verbally or nonverbally during the following stage, catharsis. A release of emotion takes place during this stage (Sridhar & Vaughn, 2000). Finally, insight is achieved as the facilitator guides the client in relating to the story and applying solution possibilities to his or her own life (Sridhar & Vaughn, 2000).

Steps of Bibliotherapy

Step 1

There are four main steps to practice bibliotherapy (Sridhar & Vaughn, 2000). The first is “getting ready;” this step involves finding a book for the client.
There are many things to consider when selecting a book for bibliotherapy. The main character in the book should share similar aspects of behavior with the client (Sridhar & Vaughn, 2000). The book must be developmentally appropriate as well as at the client's reading level (Sridhar & Vaughn, 2000). Still there are more criteria to take into account when choosing a book for bibliotherapy.

**Criteria of Books for Bibliotherapy**

The counselor must accurately match the books to the student and his or her problems (Sridhar & Vaughn, 2000) and the client's reading level (Pardeck & Pardeck, 1993). If the book is too difficult to read, it will lead to a frustrating experience, and if it is too easy to read, the child may be insulted (Pardeck & Pardeck, 1993).

Pardeck also suggests that the book is more helpful if it deals with more than one issue (1993). The quality and quantity of advice in the book must be considered. A book with a number of possible solutions is important to look for (Pardeck & Pardeck, 1993). Look at how realistically the problem is presented in the book (Pardeck & Pardeck, 1993).

Characters should be taken into account as well. Books with animal characters are beneficial for children. They can relate to these characters easily because gender, age, and race are not involved (Pardeck & Markward, 1995).
The tone of the book is a consideration when selecting a book to use with bibliotherapy. For instance, the quality of humor should match the child’s developmental level (Pardeck & Pardeck, 1993). According to Stain, children’s books should be fun and not only used for discussion about dealing with problems. She says “children’s books should make us laugh together . . .” (Stain, 1992, p. 38).

When choosing a book for children, look for a book that has appealing illustrations, an interesting story with a logical sequence of events, believable characters, useful information a child can grasp, humor a child can understand, elements of suspense to keep interest, and recurring phrases that the younger child enjoys (Pardeck & Markward, 1995). One should understand a child’s needs, cognitive abilities, psychosocial crises, and moral and social development when choosing a book for bibliotherapy (Pardeck & Pardeck, 1986).

To find books for bibliotherapy, counselors may use bibliographies that index books by theme and should look for books of quality (Borders & Paisley, 1992). Books that can directly address a child’s socio-emotional difficulties while providing a character readers can relate to should be chosen (Sullivan & Strang, 2002/03). This may be accomplished with the help of a media specialist, classroom teachers, parents, and the children themselves (Borders & Paisley, 1992).
Another element to consider is multicultural perspectives. Using diverse cultural perspectives may be helpful as well as providing books on tape in the children’s native languages (Sullivan & Strang, 2002; 03). Journals such as *Hornbook* and *The School Library Journal* may be useful resources due to their lists of award-winning books (Borders & Paisley, 1992). Attending a course in children’s literature may also be helpful (Borders & Paisley, 1992).

**Steps of Bibliotherapy**

**Step 2**

Sridhar and Vaughn (2000) call the second step “what do I teach before reading?” This step involves the teacher making an introduction to the students about the topic of the book. She or he also encourages student discussion about their own experiences involving the topic. Not only this, but the teacher also leads the students in predicting what will happen in the story she or he is about to read (Sridhar & Vaughn, 2000).

**Step 3**

In step three, “during reading,” the teacher asks questions about the feelings of the character in the book as he or she reads it or immediately after the book has been read. The teacher asks students to relate their own personal experiences to those of the character in the book (Sridhar & Vaughn, 2000).
Step 4

Finally, in step four, “after reading,” the teacher leads a follow-up activity. This could include discussion about what how the character could have made different choices (Sridhar & Vaughn, 2000).

Follow-up Activities

Follow-up activities can be categorized into three different groups. These are creative writing, art, and discussion and role-playing (Pardeck, 1995). The following are creative writing ideas suggested by Pardeck. Develop a summary of the book using a different point of view; create a diary for a character in the story; write a letter from one character in the book to another or from the child to a character; write a new ending to the story; write a “Dear Abby” letter a character could have written about a problem in the story; write a news release about something that happened in the book (Pardeck, 1995). One more idea is to have students journal about similarities or differences between their own life and the life of the character in the story (Bauer & Balius, 1995).

The facilitator may also choose to use art activities. These could include making a map of story events, including details not incorporated into the story; constructing puppets and role-playing scenes from the story; creating a collage of pictures about events in the book; drawing pictures of events in order of importance; using children’s drawings or magazine pictures to create a mobile that represents important events in the story (Pardeck, 1995).
Discussion and role-play is another way to reach children in follow-up activities. Some suggestions are to have a roundtable discussion about a problem a character in the book faces; role-play an event in the story; hold a mock trial about something that happened in the story with students playing the roles of defendant, lawyers, judge, jury, and witnesses; lead a discussion about the strong and weak points of a character in the book with whom a child identifies (Pardeck, 1995).

When choosing to use discussion as the follow-up activity this sequence could be helpful. First, have students retell the story, including both their own feelings and those of the characters (McCarty & Chalmers, 1997). Next, ask questions to help students recognize feelings and to relate to characters and events in the story (McCarty & Chalmers, 1997). The third step is to help students apply the occurrences in the book to their own real-life experiences. This encourages understanding of consequences of certain behaviors or feelings (McCarty & Chalmers, 1997). Finally, the discussion activity should include time for students to make conclusions from the story (McCarty & Chalmers, 1997).

Regardless of the type of activity chosen, it should be selected according to the child's maturity level and preferences, and should be adapted to fit a particular child (Pardeck, 1995). Not only should these elements of a child be considered but so should academic learning of the child. Activities should be
chosen to help enhance academics such as comprehension, memory, listening, and language development skills (Bauer & Balius, 1995).

When working with a younger child, art activities may be most beneficial. This is because they offer a way to express oneself regardless of the developing verbal skills of a younger child (Pardeck & Markward, 1995). Written responses may be used more with older children who have the abilities to read and write. However, written responses can be adapted to younger children by letting them dictate to the facilitator (Pardeck & Markward, 1995).

Even though the reading of a book, conversation with the child, and participation in a follow-up activity may take place, one more thing needs to happen to help a child while using bibliotherapy. The people in the child’s life need to work together to help the child succeed (Bauer & Balius, Jr., 1995). This includes the child’s teacher, the therapist or school counselor, and parents or guardians.

The teacher’s role is to encourage the child to learn (Bauer & Balius, Jr., 1995). When a child can learn, self-esteem can increase. The therapist’s or school counselor’s role is to help the student learn to handle his or her emotions and how to make appropriate choices (Bauer & Balius, Jr., 1995). Finally, the role of the parents is to be involved in their child’s life. They need to stay in contact with their child’s teacher through conferences at school. They may also need to participate in family therapy (Bauer & Balius, Jr., 1995).
Types of Bibliotherapy

According to Gladding and Gladding there are two types of bibliotherapy. They call these “reactive” and “interactive” bibliotherapy (Gladding & Gladding, 1991). Reactive bibliotherapy has existed since the 1930’s (Gladding & Gladding, 1991). However, it was simply referred to as bibliotherapy. Reactive bibliotherapy is when a counselor works with a librarian to assign literature to a client to read. The client then responds directly to the literature. Catharsis, insight, or mimicking the characters’ behaviors brings about change in this form of bibliotherapy (Gladding & Gladding, 1991).

During this time the first clinicians to study the effectiveness of bibliotherapy were Karl and William Menninger. Although they conducted a five-year study, their reports were not conclusive one way or another (Pardeck & Markward, 1995).

Someone else who was involved in reactive bibliotherapy during this time period was Sadie Peterson Delaney. In the 1920’s she worked as a librarian in a hospital in Alabama. There she prescribed books for patients to read (Gubert, 1993).

Reactions to the prescribed material were how reactive bibliotherapy worked (Gladding & Gladding, 1991). It was based on the concept that clients can express their emotions by identifying with characters in the literature they read (Gladding & Gladding, 1991). The client’s reaction could be negative or
positive (Gladding & Gladding, 1991). This form of bibliotherapy does not require professional involvement during the process as interactive bibliotherapy does (Pardeck & Pardeck, 1998).

The second form of bibliotherapy was first used more recently than reactive bibliotherapy. In interactive bibliotherapy, change in the client takes place through the guided discussion about the material, not simply through reading it (Gladding & Gladding, 1991). This form of bibliotherapy is used to promote individual growth and development. It can be found in places such as schools and nursing homes (Pardeck & Pardeck, 1998).

Like reactive bibliotherapy, interactive bibliotherapy is also founded on basic assumptions. These are that bibliotherapy is an active interpersonal process; literature includes a wide variety of works; and bibliotherapy can be conducted in an individual or group level with clinical and developmental aspects (Gladding & Gladding, 1991).

How Bibliotherapy Can Be Used

Bibliotherapy can be used in a wide range of ways to help clients. It can be used to improve reading comprehension, enhance self-esteem, and improve learning and behavior problems (Sridhar & Vaughn, 2000). In fact, Gladding and Gladding believe it can be used with every grade level in school (1991).

Bibliotherapy can help a child with emotional problems by providing her or him with vocabulary as well as the chance to practice new skills through role-
playing (Bauer & Balius, Jr., 1995). With both vocabulary and practice, a child learns to identify his or her feelings as well as how to express them appropriately.

Bibliotherapy can help improve children’s ability to feel empathic towards others (Honig & Wittmer, 1996). Bibliotherapy can help children reconnect with the joy of learning (Lunsford, 2001). According to Borders and Paisley, bibliotherapy is useful for making attitude changes, improving mental health, developing self-concept, and reducing fear (1992). Borders and Paisley say that “bibliotherapy has been shown additionally to have positive effects on students’ problem-solving ability, prosocial behavior, values development, interpersonal relations, acceptance of people different from themselves, and reading achievement” (1992, p. 131).

Bibliotherapy can also be used to target specific problems in children’s lives. These include helping children cope with domestic violence, parental divorce, and family alcoholism (Honig & Wittmer, 1996). Fear of the dark, imagined anxieties, lack of social skills, and inappropriate behavior can also be approached using bibliotherapy (Stain, 1992). Pardeck and Markward suggest that bibliotherapy can also be used with drug problems, anger, attitudes, values, child abuse, grief, peers and school, self-image, sex roles, sex education, and special developmental needs (1995).

Bibliotherapy can be used with specific problems once they become present or it can even be used to prevent problems (McCarty & Chalmers, 1997).
One way prevention can occur is through helping students become equipped to make positive choices about drug or alcohol use:

_Goals of Bibliotherapy_

Although bibliotherapy can be used in many different ways, it strives to reach specific goals. These goals are to promote personal insight and self-understanding in the student, to evoke catharsis, to help children and adolescents find solutions to problems, to bring about change in the way youth interact with other people, to encourage positive relationships with others, to provide information about specific problems, and to provide enjoyment in reading (Doll & Doll, 1997). Bibliotherapy also works to stimulate discussion about problems, to communicate new values and attitudes, to create awareness that other people have similar problems, and to provide realistic solutions to problems (Joshua & DiMenna, 2000).

The facilitator is the one who works to help clients express feelings about concepts and happenings in their life. The facilitator is also trying to increase clients' self-understanding, and to help clients see themselves and their environment more realistically (Pardeck & Pardeck, 1998).

_Children's Needs to Benefit from Bibliotherapy_

For children to benefit from bibliotherapy, they need three things. They must have the ability to imagine how the character in the story feels; they must have enough problem-solving skills to apply what they learn in bibliotherapy to
their own lives. They must make a point of changing their behavior to match their new perspective (Doll & Doll, 1997). To read about a character that can solve a problem similar to that of the client, the client becomes armed with a solution to his or her own life. Applying the story-based solution to real-life and discovering real results make bibliotherapy successful.

Self-Esteem

Definition

There are two models of self-esteem according to Cigman (2001). These are basic self-esteem and reflective self-esteem. Basic self-esteem is the belief that one can be successful in what he or she does (Cigman). It may not be realistic. In fact, Cigman says it “... is not merely a sense of self-worth; it is a sense of boundless self-worth” (2001, p. 567). Basic self-esteem is formed in childhood through experiences of being loved and belonging to a family or community. It is possible for experiences later in life to strengthen basic self-esteem, however (Cigman, 2001).

Reflective self-esteem is different. It is based on attitudes and accomplishments. It is the realistic belief in our true abilities and the awareness of our limitations (Cigman, 2001). With reflective self-esteem, a person recognizes his or her limits. Understanding limitations, however, may come through comparison to others. Therefore, reflective self-esteem includes the feelings about oneself within a group (Cigman, 2001).
Another way to look at self-esteem has to do with the concept of emotional intelligence. It consists of self-awareness, impulse control, persistence, zeal, self-motivation, and empathetic and social deftness (Richardson, 2000). Research shows us that our emotional intelligence predicts about 80 percent of our success (Antonazzo & Payton, 2001). It can predict success in academic achievement, employment, marriage, and physical health (Antonazzo & Payton, 2001).

Very young children should not be encouraged to think realistically, but should instead be allowed to live on their boundless self-esteem (Cigman, 2001). This way these children can focus on their own success, and their self-esteem will increase. This will help them throughout their life (Cigman, 2001). To help build and improve good self-concepts of students, we need to help them feel successful (School Library Media Activities Monthly). They should be rewarded for their accomplishments and encouraged to continue trying.

According to Zabelski self-esteem is defined as “feeling good about yourself” (p. 100). This self-esteem develops as a child experiences positive events in life. A parent cannot teach self-esteem, but he or she can help develop it (Lewis, 2001). “Self-esteem, in particular, cannot be taught but evolves in an environment where children’s contributions are valued, where ‘little steps’ are encouraged” (Lewis, 2001, p. 99).
Promoting Self-Esteem

There are four main ways parents can help promote children’s self-esteem. The first is to let children help and learn to master chores (Zabelski, 2001). These are small accomplishments, but positive experiences because they impact self-esteem development. A parent can also let the child make decisions so they feel they are important (Zabelski, 2001). In this way children learn they have a voice, and that they are valued.

The concept of allowing children to master skills carries easily into the school environment. Children are taught in stages where a foundation must be formed before learning a more advanced skill. This happens particularly with the subject of math. For instance, understanding of addition and subtraction must be present for multiplication and division to be learned.

Another way for parents to promote children’s self-esteem is to allow children to help others (Zabelski, 2001). This may include extend family members or other people in the community. By helping, children learn they can make a difference in other people’s lives.

In school this may be found in the form of social skills with peers. According to Mervis, peer relationships play a vital part in a child’s total development (1998). Relationships provide a sense of belonging, connection, and opportunities in which students can learn interpersonal skills (Mervis, 1998). With a sense of belonging self-esteem can be strengthened (Cigman, 2001).
One more thing parents can do to promote self-esteem in children is to create orderly routines (Zabelski, 2001). When things are predictable a child learns about consequences and how to impact their one future. Self-esteem improves if a child believes he or she has some control over his or her own life. These things foster little successes which in turn lead to improved confidence and self-esteem (Zabelski, 2001). “It is never too early to encourage self-esteem in your children by giving them a chance to demonstrate how capable they can be” (Zabelski, 2001, p. 101).

In school, bibliotherapy may be used as a routine to use with students, either individually, in small groups, or with whole classes. One way to build self-esteem with the use of bibliotherapy is to overlap it into a student’s reading curriculum (Stringer, Reynolds, & Simpson, 2003). Bibliotherapy material can be used for the quality of its topics as well as its potential for helping a student learn to read. According to Stringer, Reynolds, and Simpson, “... when students lack in their ability to read, low self-esteem is certain to follow” (2003, p. 69).

Bibliotherapy can foster higher self-esteem by offering ways to handle difficult situations as well as providing a method of practicing academic skills—through reading and comprehension. Giving students the tools to use in life will lead to more successful experiences and this will lead to a sense of belonging. In turn this can help build basic self-esteem.
Advantages of Bibliotherapy

One advantage of practicing bibliotherapy is that the participant may better understand him or herself or characteristics about his or her personality (Gladding & Gladding, 1991). With knowledge of many characters, the participant may also better understand human thought and behavior of others (Gladding & Gladding, 1991).

Bibliotherapy is a way to teach that is familiar to students. It is noninvasive and friendly (Sullivan & Strang, 2002; 03). Through bibliotherapy, the participant may see new ways of living which can help encourage new interest in his or her own life (Gladding & Gladding, 1991). It can easily fit into students’ school curriculum or home life (Sullivan & Strang, 2002; 03). Bibliotherapy can help the participant enjoy reading more (Gladding & Gladding, 1991).

Bibliotherapy can also help affectively, through offering a way to free emotions the student may have been holding inside, causing barriers to constructive personal growth and interpersonal interactions (Gladding & Gladding, 1991). Bibliotherapy also works cognitively. Participants are introduced to new techniques for handling potential problems. The counselor then guides the client in processing this information and applying it to real life situations. With a problem-solving approach to use when reacting to problems, the client’s stress level decreases (Gladding & Gladding, 1991).
Bibliotherapy is a method that many people can use in the classroom. This can include school psychologists, counselors, and teachers (Sullivan & Strang, 2002/03). Another advantage in using bibliotherapy is that it can help to promote skills children need to develop their socio-emotional competence (Sullivan & Strang, 2002; 03). With knowledge of appropriate social skills students will experience successful relationships with others. This may lead to higher self-esteem. People are more confident if they have "people" skills. Bibliotherapy is one way to achieve this with students.

Limitations

Limitations may occur during bibliotherapy in the role of participant. Participants may use characters to promote their own perceptions and strategies (Gladding & Gladding, 1991). They may not relate to the characters or actually use them as scapegoats. Additionally, participants may not see themselves in a character or they may become offended (Gladding & Gladding, 1991). One more problem that may occur during bibliotherapy is that as the client reads about a problem, he or she may intellectualize about it (Joshua & DiMenna, 2000).

Bibliotherapy is most effective for students who enjoy reading (Pardeck, 1995). However, a teacher can use books-on-tape or read the book to the child if they don’t like to read (Pardeck, 1995). When using bibliotherapy with children who enjoy reading, a positive book may be helpful. It could be used as a way to "get away from it all." “One of the reasons children enjoy reading is for escape,
and a story about a supportive and loving family could be escapist literature for those children who never see one except on reruns of *Leave It to Beaver*" (Steele, 1993, p. 57).

Limitations can occur in the role of the facilitator as well. He or she may not have knowledge in developmental growth (Gladding & Gladding, 1991). The facilitator may also have only surface knowledge about literature that may be used in bibliotherapy. This could lead to assigning of material that doesn’t match the student’s ability or level of interest (Gladding & Gladding, 1991). Yet another possibility is that the facilitator could rely on the same material with several students, regardless of the particular problem or the particular student who needs help (Gladding & Gladding, 1991).

Facilitators should not use bibliotherapy as the only approach to help a child cope with a problem (Pardeck, 1995). The child should be working with multiple people such as school counselors, social workers, and others within the school system (Pardeck, 1995).

Just as the participant and facilitator may not be without faults, neither is the process of bibliotherapy itself. The process could be interrupted by a student’s lack of reading the material. A student’s unwillingness to disclose personal information about the material could also hinder the process (Gladding & Gladding, 1991). During bibliotherapy the facilitator could relay information to participants, but do so negatively through the use of put-downs (Gladding &
Gladding, 1991). One more way the process could be performed unsuccessfully is if the students and the counselor don’t work deeply into the problem or literature material (Gladding & Gladding, 1991).

The material used during bibliotherapy may be a source of problems. According to Joshua and DiMenna, research supports the effectiveness of self-help books in clinical practice (2000). In contrast, however, fiction, poetry, and inspirational readings have limited empirical support as bibliotherapeutic material (Joshua & DiMenna, 2000). This could be that behavioral- and cognitive-oriented self-help books produce results that are more measurable than do works of fiction, poetry, or inspiration (Joshua & DiMenna, 2000).

Incorporating Bibliotherapy into a School

There are four main steps to follow when implementing bibliotherapy into a school guidance program according to Gladding and Gladding (1991). The school counselor must first explain what he or she plans to do (Gladding & Gladding, 1991). This includes describing what bibliotherapy is. Also during this stage a counselor would identify who she or he plans to use bibliotherapy with (Sullivan & Strang, 2002/03).

At this stage a title could be chosen. Bibliotherapy could be referred to as “bibliocounseling” when working with individuals or groups, and “biblioguidance” when working in classrooms. The new labels could alleviate
concern brought on by the term “therapy” in “bibliotherapy” (Gladding & Gladding, 1991).

In step two, the counselor finds support in other members of the school faculty and community (Gladding & Gladding, 1991). Sources of support could be the media specialist, classroom teachers throughout the school, and parents (Borders & Paisley, 1992).

The third step is for the school counselor to define what he or she would like to accomplish through the use of bibliotherapy. According to Gladding and Gladding, these may include identification of a person within a situation, examination of how the reader and character are similar or different, and application of the information to the client’s own life (Gladding & Gladding, 1991).

Finally, in step four, the counselor must make decisions on where bibliotherapy will occur and for how long a duration it will last (Gladding & Gladding, 1991). Making operational decisions occur in this step. One must choose whether bibliotherapy will be used with individuals, small groups, or whole classes (Sullivan & Strang, 2002; 03). Bibliographic material is also chosen at this stage with criteria mentioned earlier in this paper to follow (Sullivan & Strang, 2002; 03).

Gladding and Gladding suggest bibliotherapy with individuals or small groups take place in either the counselor’s office or in the library to accommodate
easy access to materials (1991). The counselor should meet with 4 to 6 children in the primary grades for 30 minute sessions. When meeting with children in middle school or high school, groups should be 6 to 8 and should meet for the entire 50 minute class period (Gladding & Gladding, 1991).

Before using bibliotherapy, the counselor must first become familiar with the literature he or she has chosen (Sullivan & Strang, 2002; 03). The counselor may begin a classroom guidance lesson by describing the topic that will be discussed. Next, he or she reads a book or poem. Biblioguidance may also include videotapes, filmstrips, audio-tapes, or other sources of media available (Gladding & Gladding, 1991).

To start an individual or group bibliotherapy session, the counselor can be to have the student or students read a piece of literature prior to the session. The session will then consist of discussion of reactions to the reading (Gladding & Gladding, 1991). Older students may belong to a book club format and will read assigned readings before the session with a counselor (Sullivan & Strang, 2002; 03). The counselor could also ask the student(s) to share a piece of literature they choose that has impacted their life somehow (Gladding & Gladding, 1991). Following the literature should be a follow-up activity such as drawing or creative writing. This is necessary to apply the ideas in the literature to the students' own lives (Sullivan & Strang, 2002; 03).
Follow-up sessions to bibliotherapy participants should occur 3 weeks later with children 11 years and younger, and 2 to 3 months later for children 12 years and older (Gladding & Gladding, 1991).

The combination of school counselor and literature has potential for bibliotherapy to succeed the most. The counselor is the best person for the facilitator role according to Borders and Paisley because “they have professional skills in active listening, clarification of content, and reflection of feeling” (Borders & Paisley, 1992, p. 138).

Conclusion

Research shows mixed results in regard to the impact of bibliotherapy on self-concept and self-development (Pardeck & Pardeck, 1993). However, according to Pardeck and Pardeck, a number of studies have concluded that self-development can be positively impacted by bibliotherapy (1993).

Although bibliotherapy has limitations, its benefits outweigh the possible problems. Many students can be reached through bibliotherapy. It is also a technique that can be implemented into a school program without great cost. Books that can be used for bibliotherapy can be used for multiple purposes in a school library. They may be used to introduce an art project, develop vocabulary skills, or nurture love of literature. In contrast a pre-made marketed program may be costly and may only be used by the counselor.
Gladding and Gladding suggest that bibliotherapy can be used with students of all ages (1991). However, Pardeck warns that it will not work for everyone (1998). Incorporating bibliotherapy into the school guidance program does offer a way to reach many students and a multitude of problems. It may not be the way to reach everyone, but it can be a great place to start.
References


