

1989

## Bibliotherapy: A plan for Starmont Elementary School

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## **Bibliotherapy: A plan for Starmont Elementary School**

### **Abstract**

It is recognized that all elementary students must deal with a multitude of developmental and personal conflicts and changes during their first years of school. However, a specific number of these young people have greater difficulty coping with daily behavioral and/or emotional situations in which they find themselves. These children are considered "at-risk" because they are unable to independently resolve these behavioral and/or emotional problems blocking or impeding their progress, and, thus, they cannot develop to their full academic or social potential.

Bibliotherapy: A Plan for Starmont Elementary  
School

A Graduate Project  
Submitted to the  
Department of Curriculum and Instruction  
In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts  
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

by  
A. J. Nelson  
July 1989

This research paper by: A. J. Nelson

Entitled: Bibliotherapy: A Plan for Starmont  
Elementary School

Has been approved as meeting the research paper  
requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

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Bibliotherapy: A Plan for Starmont Elementary  
School

Introduction

It is recognized that all elementary students must deal with a multitude of developmental and personal conflicts and changes during their first years of school. However, a specific number of these young people have greater difficulty coping with daily behavioral and/or emotional situations in which they find themselves. These children are considered "at-risk" because they are unable to independently resolve these behavioral and/or emotional problems blocking or impeding their progress, and, thus, they cannot develop to their full academic or social potential.

Following is an instructional development project designed specifically for use by the librarian/media specialist at Starmont Elementary School, Strawberry Point, Iowa; but it is a plan that could be adapted to fit any elementary school situation. Bibliotherapy is being recommended as one specific technique the library/media specialist will utilize with these special at-risk students so the students may acquire the additional coping skills needed to resolve identified conflicts and concerns.

### Needs Assessment

The Starmont Community School District includes children from the towns of Arlington, Lamont, and Strawberry Point plus those living on farms surrounding each community. Starmont Elementary School, located in Lamont, strives to meet the needs of all of the District's students in grades one through four. The staff at Starmont Elementary School recognizes its responsibility to provide a quality education to these elementary children and fully embraces the District's mission statement that all students of the Starmont Community School District will be empowered to learn knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for living responsible, productive, fulfilling lives.

Further, the Starmont Elementary Media Center's goal statement echoes the mission statement by promising to provide students and staff the assistance required to meet their media needs. Specific forms of assistance include but are not limited to offering media utilization, instruction, planning, production, and administrative services.

Personnel at Starmont Elementary School recognizes all elementary children deal with a multitude of developmental and personal conflicts and changes during

the students' first through four grade years of school. Personnel, also, realizes that in addition to certain general developmental needs shared by all children during these years, there are a number of concerns peculiar to only a few specific individuals.

These young people may encounter difficulty coping with any of a number of emotional and/or behavioral situations. Physical or verbal fighting, teacher/pupil conflicts, excessive daydreaming, being a transient student are examples of behavioral problems that have been identified. Emotional concerns affecting students include situations dealing with child abuse, illness or death of a family member or friend, separation/divorce of parents, handicaps, apathy, giftedness, adoption, sibling rivalry, and human relations. Low self-concept and difficulty with values clarification are additional emotional/behavioral issues with which children often struggle.

Social workers, psychologists, and other key consultants from Keystone Area Education Association assist in verifying which Starmont elementary students are in need of special assistance. Through documented observations, testing, and other related methods, children with significant emotional and/or behavioral



problems are identified and placed in appropriate programs.

In addition to these identified students, there are others who may exhibit similar problems to a lesser degree that also need help with specific coping skills. These are youngsters who may or may not be tested but are observed by classroom teachers and other special area teachers as having some difficulty with emotional and/or behavioral situations.

Both groups of youngsters are at-risk because they are unable to develop to their full potential academically or socially due to the behavioral and/or emotional problems blocking or impeding their progress. In order to provide assistance for both groups, the Starmont Elementary Media Center proposes to initiate a supplemental program for those being aided by Keystone professionals and a primary technique for others demonstrating need of assistance. The program to be developed should provide targeted students with additional coping skills needed to resolve identified conflicts and concerns.

Goal Statement

In order to provide for children at the Starmont Elementary School who have been identified as having behavioral and/or emotional problems that are blocking or impeding educational and socialization development, it is proposed that the Starmont Elementary Media Center initiate a program of bibliotherapy. Bibliotherapy will be used to assist at-risk students to resolve identified behavioral and/or emotional problems and, thereby, provide said students with a greater opportunity to achieve to their fullest academic and social potential.

### Bibliotherapy Defined

Listed below are several definitions of the term bibliotherapy offered by authors on the subject:

Bibliotherapy in the field of education is simply the reading of books which aid in the modification of children's attitudes and behavior. (Salup, 1978, p. 3)

For the purposes of this book [Using Bibliotherapy], the following definition of bibliotherapy is used:

A program of activity based on the interactive processes of media and the people who experience it. Print or nonprint material, either imaginative or informational is experienced and discussed with the aid of a facilitator. (Rubin, 1978b, p. 2 )

The writer [Artie Morris-Vann] defines it [bibliotherapy] as guidance through reading, that is, helping children resolve developmental conflicts through reading and the discussion of books. Bibliotherapy implies the potential for self-growth, self-understanding and self-actualization. (Morris-Vann, 1979, p. 2)

Bibliotherapy is a deliberate intervention with definite goals that are identified at the outset. In other words, a need must be identified, a book must be selected specifically for the need and the particular person in need, and a presentation and follow-up plan must be designed and implemented in order for reading to be called bibliotherapy.

(Cornett and Cornett, 1980, p. 10)

Bibliotherapy is defined as a specifically selected group of guided readings that assist individuals in gleaning insight and understanding into themselves and their environment. It affords the opportunity to learn through the experience of others, while developing problem-solving techniques.

(Davidson-Muskin, 1981, p. 3)

Bibliotherapy is a discussion process, guided by a facilitator, which uses literature as a catalyst [sic.] to promote insight, normal development, or rehabilitation. (American Library Association, 1988, unpagged)

Definitions for bibliotherapy quoted are only a sampling of the more recent examples found in readings on

the subject, yet there is no one official definition available. The first written definition of the term appeared in Dorland's Illustrated Medical Dictionary in 1941: "the employment of books and the reading of them in the treatment of nervous disease." (Rubin, 1978b, p. 1) It took until 1961 for a standard dictionary, Webster's Third New International Dictionary, to include a definition of bibliotherapy and until 1966 for the American Library Association (ALA) to vote to accept it as their own: "the use of selected reading materials as therapeutic adjuvants in medicine and psychiatry; also, guidance in the solution of personal problems through directed reading." (Rubin, 1978b, p. 1)

The two-fold definition was thought to help explain the fact that bibliotherapy could be used in a variety of settings and for a variety of reasons. Eleanor Brown (1975) felt the definition allowed for placing bibliotherapy on two distinct levels. The first definition would be used to define bibliotherapy as it applied to use in actual treatment of the mentally and physically ill and should be considered a science. The second part of the definition, then, could be for bibliotherapy used in situations outside of the medical field (utilized by people such as public and school

librarians, guidance counselors, clergy, etc.) and could, therefore, be considered an art.

Rubin (1978b) went one step further and divided bibliotherapy into three types - institutional, clinical, and developmental. If Rubin's divisions were to be used, developmental bibliotherapy would be the most appropriate for a library/media center setting as it uses "both imaginative and didactic literature with groups of 'normal' individuals. The bibliotherapy group is designed and led by a librarian, teacher, or other 'helping professional' to promote normal development and self-actualization, or to maintain mental health." (Rubin, 1978b, p. 5)

And so it goes. Bibliotherapy continues to be defined and redefined. The ALA was mentioned previously as voting in 1966 to accept the definition found in Webster's Third New International Dictionary; however, note the "new" definition quoted on page 7 of this paper from a recent ALA (1988) publication produced by its Bibliotherapy Forum Group. The newsletter states that this revised definition was adopted during the January 1988, Midwinter ALA Conference by members of the Bibliotherapy Forum and has been submitted to the Association of Specialized and Cooperative Library

Agencies (ASCLA) Board of Directors (a Division of the ALA) for approval and adoption.

Further, in personal correspondence to this writer from Ms. Gloria A. Waity, dated May 16, 1989, Ms. Waity, Chairperson of the Bibliotherapy Forum Group of the ASCLA Division of the ALA states:

We [assumed to mean members of ALA] have been grappling with this [definition of bibliotherapy] for years including how to deal with the use of nonprint material. While the term "literature" is used in the adopted definition most people realize that all media is included. The key seems to be the involvement of discussion which is imperative to bibliotherapy no matter what media is used.

With all of the confusion over a definition, it seems appropriate that this writer, also, describe what the term bibliotherapy means with regard to the program to be offered through the Starmont Elementary Media Center. This definition incorporates many of the ideas given in the previously listed versions. Even though it is lengthy, the definition is meant to fully articulate what bibliotherapy will mean with regard to the program to be implemented.

Bibliotherapy at Starmont Elementary School will be a deliberate intervention with definite goals identified at the outset. A need will be identified, material selected specifically for the individual in need, and a presentation and follow-up plan designed and implemented.

It will be a program of activity based on the interactive processes of media and the people who experience it. It will be a discussion process, guided by a facilitator using print or nonprint material, either imaginative or informational experienced individually or in a small group setting.

It will be guidance through use of media related materials utilized to help children gain additional insight, resolve developmental conflicts, and/or assist in modification of children's attitudes and behaviors.



### History of Bibliotherapy

Despite the ongoing problem of a standard definition for the term bibliotherapy, the practice of bibliotherapy is steeped in history. The word is a derivation of two Greek words: biblion meaning book and therapeio meaning healing (Zaccaria, Moses, and Hollowell, 1978). It is said the Library of Thebes was inscribed as "The Healing Place of the Soul" (Association of Hospital and Institution Libraries, 1971). Similar inscriptions were found in Alexandria, Egypt, where the library displayed the words, "Medicine for the Mind" and in Switzerland where the Abby Library of St. Gall proclaimed it as the "Medicine Chest for the Soul" (Salup, 1978).

Romans felt that patients could read orations to improve their mental health. And, in 1272, a Cairo physician prescribed reading the Koran for medicinal purposes. By the 18th century most European mental hospitals had established libraries for their patients while America followed suit by the middle of the 19th century (Salup, 1978).

Individuals contributing to the rise of bibliotherapy include Dr. Benjamin Rush who recommended reading Bible stories to mental patients, and John Minson Golt II who published one of the first books on the use

of library services as therapy. E. Kathleen Jones at McLean Hospital was one of the first trained librarians to establish an organized library for a private mental hospital and was said to have stated that the library was of great therapeutic value. Alice Tyler was instrumental in persuading the Iowa library committee to establish library services and supervisors for Iowa's state institutions (Salup, 1978).

It wasn't until 1916, however, that the term "bibliotherapy" appeared in print when Samuel McChord Crothers wrote an article for Atlantic Monthly quoting a man named Bagster as saying "Bibliotherapy is such a new science that it is no wonder that there are many erroneous opinions as to the actual effect which any particular book may have." (Association of Hospital and Institutional Libraries, 1971, p. 7)

During the 1930's the Drs. William and Karl Menninger of the famous Menninger Clinic supported the use of bibliotherapy, and many feel that research in bibliotherapy started in earnest with the Menninger Studies. William Menninger presented a paper on bibliotherapy to the American Psychological Association in 1937 (Salup, 1978).

However, no one study has done more for bibliotherapy than the 1949 doctoral dissertation of Caroline Shrodes. Considered a landmark publication, it was a theoretical and clinical study demonstrating the use of bibliotherapy as a treatment method in psychotherapy (Association of Hospital and Institutional Libraries, 1971).

Since Shrodes' Bibliotherapy: A Theoretical and Clinical-Experimental Study, a great many other theses and dissertations have been completed on bibliotherapy. In 1978, Rhea Joyce Rubin listed over sixty separate titles in her Bibliotherapy Sourcebook. In addition to scholarly articles, numerous books describing bibliotherapy theory and application have been written. Many of the more recent titles were consulted in preparation of this paper and are included in the bibliography. One of the most recent books Bibliotherapy--The Interactive Process by Arleen McCarty Hynes (1986), bibliotherapist at St. Benedict's Monastic Resource Center, St. Joseph, Minnesota, and Mary Hynes-Berry, a professional writer, was recommended by Ms. Waity in her May 1989 letter to this writer; however, it was not received in time for inclusion. It is suggested that the work be obtained and consulted for

other pertinent and current information that may be valuable in Starmont's implementation of a program of bibliotherapy.

### The Basis for Bibliotherapy

Bibliotherapy has been utilized as a method for therapeutic assistance to a great many troubled children. Documentation from a multitude of research studies and theses readily supports bibliotherapy as a viable option for assisting at-risk students work through a variety of developmental concerns. There are a substantial number of journal articles available that detail bibliotherapeutic applications that have produced significant, positive effects on targeted individuals. According to Zaccaria et al. (1978), not a single study in a substantial body of research found bibliotherapy to be ineffective in a school setting.

In school situations it is desirable to use bibliotherapy as a developmental or preventive tool rather than a remedial method used after a problem becomes severe. It is generally agreed that troubled children are not good learners nor do they get along well with others. Maximum growth or self-fulfillment cannot be realized if there are unresolved conflicts and unmet needs (Brown, 1975).

Cornett and Cornett (1978) are of the opinion that bibliotherapy can contribute to fulfillment of many of the universal human needs identified by Abraham Maslow in

his work Motivation and Personality. This writer concurs that with the exception of the most basic physiological needs (which if unmet may prevent children from learning), bibliotherapy can be extremely beneficial.

Chapter 4 of Maslow's work (1970) details the hierarchy of universal human needs which includes the following:

1. Physiological needs.  
Need for food, clothing, sleep, basic medical care.
2. Safety needs.  
Need to feel secure physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually.
3. Loving and belonging needs.  
Includes need to give and receive love and respect and to feel accepted.
4. Esteem needs.  
A need for self-respect and a positive self-image.
5. Self-actualization needs.  
Need to reach individual full potential and to seek personal fulfillment.
6. The need to know and understand.  
Need to seek information and satisfy curiosity.

## 7. Aesthetic needs.

Need to experience beauty and discover aesthetic satisfaction in music, art, theater, etc.

Bibliotherapy can be particularly useful in today's society as young people grope for answers, seek their own identity, and try to find their place in the world. Individual or group bibliotherapy practiced early in the school setting might prevent larger problems later on. To be effective it must begin early, at the first sign of an emerging problem; should be used in conjunction with other types of therapy when necessary; and practiced by a skilled facilitator who understands and is able to communicate with young people (Brown, 1975).

Reading, viewing, or listening to purposefully selected materials and discussing them with a caring facilitator allows for new insights and provides channels for open communication. Developing higher level thinking skills and discovering additional problem solving techniques are added major benefits.

Cornett and Cornett (1978) specifically list the following areas of affective and cognitive changes that may be effected on individuals using the bibliotherapeutic process:

Affective Changes (attitudes, values, emotions)

1. Promotes empathy
2. Creates positive attitudes
3. Produces personal and social adjustment
4. Develops positive self-image
5. Relieves emotional pressures
6. Develops new interests
7. Promotes tolerance, respect, and acceptance of others
8. Encourages realization that there is good in all people
9. Helps reader [at-risk student] to identify socially accepted behaviors
10. Stimulates the examination of moral values, which results in character development
11. Creates desire to emulate models

Cognitive Changes (intellectual, reasoning, thinking)

1. Stimulates critical thinking, such as analysis, drawing conclusions and implications, making decisions, solving problems, making judgments
2. Gives perspective to problems so that they can be put into proper proportion; reader [at-risk student] sees universality of problems
3. Provides vicarious experiences



4. Provides insight into human behavior and motives
5. Develops in the reader [at-risk student] the ability for self-evaluation
6. Challenges reader [at-risk student] to consider  
  . higher-level reasoning
7. Encourages planning before taking a course of action
8. Permits discussion on an impersonal level
9. Reveals that problems have many alternative solutions and individuals have choices in solving problems (pp. 15-16)

It must be stated that bibliotherapy is not a cure-all, nor can it be used with all individuals; but when it can, there seems sufficient evidence to substantiate that it is an effective method. Zaccaria et al. (1978) spell out possible limitations that need to be brought to the reader's attention:

1. Some people tend to rationalize or intellectualize their problems when reading about [viewing, hearing about] them.
2. Imaginative literature may aggravate attempts to help the individual by raising his defense.
3. There may be a tendency to believe that merely

reading [viewing, listening to] a piece of literature will resolve the problem.

4. Insight gained through reading [viewing, listening] may be confused with the actual working through and coping behavior required before the problem is solved.
5. In some cases, fears and anxieties are reinforced by reading about [viewing, or listening to] mental health problems and the reader may actually acquire more symptoms. (pp. 97-98)

A chapter of Rubin's Bibliotherapy Sourcebook (1978a) discusses some additional concerns regarding bibliotherapy including: Students may project their feelings on the character and use it as a "scapegoat" for their own frustrations. They may actively dislike the character because its problems remind them so much of their own unresolved conflicts. Likewise if students have not had social or emotional experiences similar to those experienced by the character, they may be unable to empathize with the character's feelings.

In spite of these limitations, bibliotherapy is seen as a potentially powerful change agent. It presents an opportunity for the Starmont Elementary Media Center to

provide additional support and assistance for the young people who are the sole reason for the media center's existence. Bibliotherapy is a very special service which will be offered to help elementary children resolve current dilemmas and become better prepared to meet future challenges.

### Project Objectives

To establish a program of bibliotherapy at Starmont Elementary School, it will be necessary to develop guidelines and procedures to be followed in the program and submit these to the Board of Education for their approval. Included will be specific information for identification of students in need of assistance, guidelines for entering and exiting the program, procedures for the bibliotherapeutic process, and evaluation procedures along with any necessary forms to be utilized.

Once guidelines and procedures are in place, the program may proceed through organizational activities including assessment of the present media collection for materials suitable for use in bibliotherapy. Weak and deficient subject areas will need to be identified and selections purchased to develop a representative core collection.

Additional objectives will include a bibliography of Starmont's bibliotherapy related materials for use by any individual needing to consult such a tool. In addition, a guide to locating other materials for use in a program of bibliotherapy will be available in the Media Center.

Key to the program is the library/media specialist who will be the facilitator. It is vital this individual learn as much as possible about the process by attending relevant seminars, conferences, workshops and the like.

Once guidelines and procedures are established, the bibliotherapy collection is in place, and the library/media specialist prepared to serve as facilitator, the bibliotherapy program will be implemented to aid these special at-risk students.

Project objectives are identified as follows:

#### Project Objectives

1. To develop guidelines and procedures for the bibliotherapy program to be presented to the Starmont Board of Education for approval.
2. To develop a bibliotherapy media collection from materials currently available in the Starmont Elementary Media Center.
3. To purchase additional titles as needed to produce a representative core collection of current and appropriate media materials for use in an elementary bibliotherapy program.
4. To develop a bibliography of materials available in the Starmont Elementary Media Center to be

used in a program of bibliotherapy for grades 1-4.

5. To compile a representative bibliography of recommended materials to be used in a bibliotherapy program for grades 1-4.
6. To provide educational experiences (i.e., seminars, training/course work, visitations) for the librarian/media specialist to become familiar with facilitating a program of bibliotherapy.
7. To implement the Starmont Elementary Bibliotherapy Program to be utilized with identified students at-risk.
8. To aid identified students at-risk, through the use of bibliotherapy, in working through life crises which create acute or chronic obstacles toward learning and social development.

### Performance Objectives of Bibliotherapy

The facilitator will have the flexibility to utilize bibliotherapy as needed according to each student's individual needs. Listed below are performance objectives that would be a part of the bibliotherapeutic process.

#### Performance Objectives

1. To encourage student to think positively, realistically, and constructively.
2. To encourage student to speak openly and honestly about concerns.
3. To assist student to better understand personal attitudes and behavior.
4. To assist student to realize there are alternate solutions to most problems.
5. To increase student's self-esteem.
6. To stimulate student's desire to develop effective coping skills.
7. To provide student with opportunity to realize others have like or similar problem(s).
8. To help student explore feelings and motivations involved.
9. To stimulate student's imagination.

10. To encourage student to increase areas of interest.
11. To provide student with vicarious experiences.
12. To provide student with opportunity to assess personal assets and liabilities.
13. To assist student to develop insight into human behavior.
14. To assist student to develop socialization skills.
15. To provide student opportunity to develop and to implement reasonable solution to problem(s).



### Learning Outcomes

Following are specific student learning outcomes that may be recognized following a program of bibliotherapy.

#### Student Learning Outcomes

Student will:

1. Demonstrate a more positive, realistic, constructive outlook.
2. Speak more openly and honestly about concerns.
3. Demonstrate improved personal attitude and behavior.
4. Verbalize an alternate solution to a given problem after alternatives have been discussed.
5. Demonstrate an increased sense of self-esteem.
6. Verbalize effective coping skills presented in media materials used.
7. Verbalize problems similar to own contained in media presented and/or discussed by others in group sessions.
8. Describe feelings and/or motivation of characters in media presented.
9. Demonstrate good sense of imagination.
10. Demonstrate an increase in interest areas.

11. Describe vicarious experiences that were included in materials read, viewed, or listened to.
12. List (or verbalize) personal strength(s) and weakness(es) .
13. Verbalize human behavior characteristic(s) included in media materials utilized.
14. Demonstrate improved socialization skills.
15. Develop and implement alternate solution to identified problem.
16. Identify behavioral and/or emotional concept(s) presented in media used.

### Bibliotherapy Methodology

Produced below are some of the basic concepts to be considered when establishing a program of bibliotherapy. The material is certainly not all inclusive but does highlight some of the basic information to be contemplated when setting up such a program. Sources are listed and the reader is encouraged to consult these texts for more detailed information.

Using Bibliotherapy: A Guide to Theory and Practice includes a beneficial list of principles of bibliotherapy to be used with elementary children. The list is recorded here verbatim. (Rubin, 1978b)

#### Principles of Bibliotherapy with children include:

1. Story telling or reading aloud may be used with children who are unable to read; audiovisual presentations are another alternative.
2. Because of the child's attention span, short stories should be used; sessions should last no longer than thirty minutes to an hour with older children.
3. The illustrations in picture books play an important role.
4. Books may be reread numerous times so that children are able to absorb and understand them.

5. Animal stories and fantasies allow the children to daydream.
6. Realistic stories about real situations must be presented directly and carefully.
7. Play therapy or the mutual story telling technique may be used before introducing bibliotherapy.
8. With younger children, the theory of bibliotherapy and the objectives are not discussed; with older children a more direct approach is possible. By the time children reach puberty, adult procedure may be used successfully. (p. 90)

Following is an abbreviated version of Cornett and Cornett's (1980) Model of Steps for Preparation and Implementation of Bibliotherapy

Preparation for Bibliotherapy

1. Identify student needs.  
Information gathering methods could include:
  - a. observations by parents, teachers, principal, counselors, and librarians;
  - b. school records;

- c. conferences with student and/or parents, teachers, counselors, librarians, and school administrators;
  - d. student writings
2. Match students with appropriate materials.
- a. [If a book is selected as the type of media to be used] Is the book appropriate for the child's reading ability? [Or should a story be read to them or other types of media used?]
  - b. Is the material at an interest level appropriate to the child's maturity?
  - c. Do the major themes match the present needs of the child?
  - d. Are the characters believable enough for the child to empathize with their predicaments?
  - e. Does the plot involve creative problem solving?
  - f. Is the setting one children can identify with, given their own background?
  - g. Does the format enhance the contents?
3. Decide the time, setting, introductory, and follow-up activities to be used.
4. Prepare materials.

### Implementation Steps

1. Motivate student(s) with introductory activities.
  - a. Create a positive atmosphere.
  - b. Capture attention and interest.
2. Provide the reading/viewing/listening experience.
3. Allow incubation time.
  - a. Time needed for information to be integrated - necessary for creative and critical thought.
  - b. Follow-up best day after completion.
4. Follow-up.
  - a. Goal is for student to achieve insight.
  - b. Questioning process to go from recall through interpretation using higher level thinking skills (from literal information, interpretation, application, analysis, synthesis, to evaluation).
  - c. Ask open ended questions and allow for wait time and silent time.  
(wait time - 5 to 10 seconds for student to ponder question asked. silent time - approximately 10 seconds after student

response to indicate response worthy of thought)

5. Conduct evaluation and direct students toward closure.

a. Facilitator evaluates what has been achieved, how might improve, what child needs next.

b. Self-evaluation by child.

Oral, written, or both.

A slightly different sequence of events is given in Once Upon a Time...A Guide to the Use of Bibliotherapy with Children which is found (paraphrased and in a much abbreviated form) below (Morris-Vann, 1979).

Steps in the Bibliotherapeutic Process:

1. Welcome - set positive, relaxed atmosphere.
2. Review any rules for group discussion.
3. Introduce activity - brief introduction about literature to be read/viewed/listened to.
4. Read/view/listen to selection.
  - a. Identification. (with character)
  - b. Experience vicariously.
  - c. Catharsis. (release pent-up emotions under safe circumstances)
  - d. Insight. (integration of mind and emotions plus possible solutions identified)

5. Discussion.
6. Follow-up activities.
7. Conflict resolved - change in attitude or behavior. (Bibliotherapeutic process is cyclic and most often must be repeated many times.)

Margaret E. Monroe (1978) lists six steps in the Bibliotherapeutic Process (Seminar on Bibliotherapy, University of Wisconsin-Madison).

The Bibliotherapeutic Process:

1. Read or view or listen.
2. Identify with an element in the situation.
3. Experience vicariously.
4. Catharsis.
5. Insight.
6. Change in attitude or behavior.

Zaccaria et al. (1978) provide listing of factors that a facilitator should consider when selecting materials.

Important factors to consider when considering materials to be used in bibliotherapy sessions:

Student factors -

1. Chronological age
2. Sex
3. Type of problem



4. Reading level
5. Past experience
6. Special disabilities
7. Familiarity with various types of literature
8. Reading/listening/viewing preferences

Literature factors -

1. Type
2. Level of difficulty
3. General plot
4. Major characters
5. Date of publication
6. Length
7. Format
8. Readability
9. Style
10. General appropriateness (p.90)

Bibliotherapy: The Right Book at the Right Time

lists the following as reasons why one might choose to do group bibliotherapy. Cornett and Cornett (1980) credit the origin of the list to Sister Miriam Schulteis from her work Classroom Teacher's Manual for Bibliotherapy.

Values of Group Bibliotherapy:

1. The sharing of common experiences may lessen anxieties.

2. Grouping may create an atmosphere of belonging.  
This may improve self-concept.
3. Attention is not focused on one individual.
4. Individual insight may happen through the  
individual's active participation in the group  
or as a result of being exposed to the  
perspectives of others.
5. Working with others may stimulate the  
individual's social development.
6. Grouping promotes the understanding of others'  
problems, empathy, and acceptance of differences  
among people.
7. Group experiences can motivate individuals to  
read. (p. 31)

Artie M. Morris-Vann (1979) also lists advantages of using bibliotherapy in a group setting. Because this lists varies somewhat from that given above, it is presented as well:

#### Advantages of Using Bibliotherapy in a Group Setting

1. Reduction of anxiety through the knowledge that others have similar problems.
2. Listening to others and talking with them stimulates the individual to recall and relive experiences that affect him.

3. New ways of approaching and solving problems are suggested.
4. The group gives emotional acceptance and support.
5. The group represents a social reality; it gives the individual an opportunity to test new behaviors and ideas. (p. 5)

Artie M. Morris-Vann (1979) delineates these qualifications for individuals seeking to be facilitators in the bibliotherapeutic process:

#### Personal Qualities

1. Humanistic

The facilitator must become involved in the child's personal development/feelings, emotions, values, interpersonal relationships.

2. Empathetic

The facilitator must be aware of and understand feelings, emotions, and behavior of the child.

3. Be a good listener

Through effective listening the facilitator must become aware of the child's feelings, perceptions, values, goals, etc.

4. Give positive verbal reinforcement

By giving a child positive "strokes" the facilitator indicates to him [her] behavior is socially acceptable.

5. Work cooperatively with others

The facilitator must work with others to aid in the bibliotherapeutic effect. Possible "team" members could include the social worker, psychologist, administrators, parents and the school librarian [media specialist].

6. Innovative/Creative

To reinforce the concepts gained from the discussion of the story, the facilitator must be creative/innovative. Follow-up activities can be developed which might enrich and enhance the child's understanding of the conflict.

### Knowledge

1. Know the child

The facilitator must know the child not only in relation to his conflict, but must know of his interests, experiences, skills, talents and emotions. This knowledge will enable the facilitator to select materials of interest to the child which will focus on his [her] problem as well.

2. Be aware of and recognize developmental conflicts.

Knowledge of developmental stages common to certain age groups is essential. These problems must be understood for their effects on the behavior, attitudes and personality of children.

3. Know and use the library [media center] resources.

For bibliotherapy to be successful the facilitator must be familiar with books [and related materials] which can be used for identified children with particular needs and ability levels. The school librarian [media specialist] is often an excellent and convenient resource person [if not the facilitator]. The facilitator may wish to collect annotated book [media] lists and bibliographies as well as make a file of their own. (p. 4)

## Evaluation

### Evaluation of Student Success

Individual student success in the program will be evaluated according to each individual's objectives for being placed in the program. Each student will, also, be evaluated on success in achieving stated student learning outcomes appropriate to the student's own unique situation.

The process of evaluation will include documented observations by the facilitator (librarian/media specialist) plus others that could include but not necessarily be limited to: teachers, administration, counselors, and parents.

Students within the program will also have an opportunity to complete a self-evaluation document. In the case of group bibliotherapy activities, each individual will complete a peer evaluation form for other members of the group.

Follow-up activities will also lend themselves to evaluating the affects that the bibliotherapy program has had on the individual and/or on the group.

### Evaluation of Project Success

1. Guidelines and procedures (including forms developed) for the Starmont Bibliotherapy

Program will be available following approval by the Starmont Board of Education.

2. The Starmont Elementary Media Center will have a bibliotherapy materials collection available for use by at-risk students. The collection will include titles currently owned plus additional purchases required to produce a representative core collection.
3. A bibliography of the bibliotherapy materials collection will be available.
4. A representative bibliography of recommended bibliotherapy media will be available from the Starmont Elementary Media Center.
5. Proof of attendance and completion of seminar, workshop, or class on bibliotherapy or related subject area by librarian/media specialist.

### Conclusion

The preceding is an instructional development project designed to utilize bibliotherapy with first through fourth grade students enrolled at Starmont Elementary School, Strawberry Point, Iowa. The project provides assistance for children identified as having behavioral and/or emotional problems blocking or impeding educational and socialization development. The program, facilitated by the librarian/media specialist, provides a useful technique to assist at-risk students acquire additional coping skills and work through life crises which create acute or chronic obstacles toward learning and social development.



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