A review of children's literature found relatively few books for elementary school children depicting working mothers—an average of about eight per year out of the thousands published for children annually. The working mothers who were depicted were generally shown in a positive manner and were well-adjusted to employment. Children in the stories had positive attitudes about their mothers working, and had good relationships with them. This bibliography annotates 85 realistic books about working mothers; it provides a bibliographic citation, appropriate grade levels, a brief annotation, the mother's occupation, and the type of family configuration. (SLD)
WE DON'T WEAR APRONS ANYMORE:
AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF
WORKING MOTHERS IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE.

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."
Currently in the United States 69 percent of all women from the ages of 18 to 64 are working. Of these, 16.8 million are working mothers and over half of them have children under the age of 6 (Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1993). Given this preponderance of working mothers, I expected to find the depiction of working mothers in children’s literature a common thing. After all, don’t we want our sons and daughters to grow up thinking that it is okay to have a working mom? Surprisingly, there are not that many books depicting working mothers. After looking at the last fifteen years of children’s literature, I found only 117 books with working mothers for children in the grades K-6. That averages out to be only about 8 books a year out of the thousands published for children each year.

On the positive side, most of the mothers were depicted in a positive manner and were well-adjusted to their employment. The children in the stories, on the whole, had positive attitudes about their mothers working and good relationships with their mothers. I found 35 different occupations and different family configurations including nuclear, dual income and single-parent.

The following bibliography annotates 85 of the books I
read about working mothers and includes the mother’s occupation and the family configuration.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY
OF REALISTIC FICTION
CONTAINING WORKING MOTHERS
1976-1992

Sequel to Spilt Sisters. Case (12 yrs) notices the new babysitter is behaving very oddly with her new three-month old sister Meredith. Case’s Mom is a working mother, dealing with a new job and a colicky baby. 
Mother’s occupation: Assistant finance manager.
Dual income family.

Case’s mother decides to try a job in New York and takes Case’s older sister, Jen, with her. Case stays home with her father and tries to figure out a way to keep the family together. Mother’s occupation: Business manager.
Dual income family.

Thirteen-year-old Gilda’s parents are getting a divorce, and she is trying to keep her family together. She thinks her mother is a workaholic and doesn’t spend enough time with her younger brother and sister.

Mother’s occupation: Dress shop owner. Dual income then single parent family.


Basically a photo essay about Sonya’s adjustment to her mother’s employment. Sonya is worried that her mother will not be home for her birthday due to a business trip.

Mother’s occupation: Public relations. Dual income family.


Eleven-year-old Amy finds out about making friends and adjusting to life without her father.


Jenna and her little brother Corey adjust to a working mother and a new home. Jenna objects to her mother’s new boyfriend, a wacky weatherman.
Mother's occupation: Zit zapper in a school photo lab.
Also artist. Single-parent family.

A child points out the good and bad things about a mother's job that takes her away from home frequently.

Mother's occupation: Unknown probably business.
Dual income family.

Diana must go to England with her mother for a year. She dreams of meeting her name sake, Princess Diana. Mother and daughter become closer after a confrontation about work.


Allie hates endings and the goodbyes she must endure, because her mother runs a boarding house. One summer her friend, Ms. Lenya, teaches her that some things can't ever be lost.


When Megan’s mother, the librarian, cannot read to the children at a story hour, Megan takes over the job.
Mother’s occupation: Children’s librarian.
Dual income family.


Although his teacher, mother, and older brother are sympathetic, Barney knows he’ll have to find his own way to deal with a bully.
Mother’s occupation: Real Estate.
Single-parent family.


Eleven-year-old Minda, one of several latchkey children in her neighborhood, forms a group to watch for a burglar, who is robbing houses in the neighborhood. Adjustment to a new home and mother working.
Mother’s occupation: Temporary secretary.
Single-parent family.


In his letters to his favorite author, and then his journal, ten-year-old Leigh reveals his problems coping with a new home, new school, his parent’s divorce and his
mother’s new job.

Mother’s occupation: Caterer.

Single-parent family.


Ramona wishes her mother could stay home like she used to. Adjustment to school and being the youngest child.

Mother’s occupation: Receptionist in doctor’s office.

Dual income family.


Ramona, now in the third grade, adjusts to her dad going to school to become a teacher.

Mother’s occupation: Receptionist.

Nuclear family: Mother working, father in college.


Sequel to *Dear Mr. Henshaw*. Leigh finds a dog, Strider, who keeps him company while his mom works nights as a nurse.

Mother’s occupation: Nurse.

Single-parent family.


Nine-year-old Robby loves his noisy and somewhat unconventional family, but unwanted attention from a counselor and a bully at school make him self-conscious.
about his house husband dad.

Mother’s occupation: Graphic artist.

Nuclear family: Mother works; Dad stays at home with babies.


As a result of his parents’ separation and divorce, sixth-grader Benton Arrow grows more independent and forms a friendship with the school bully.


A child "in charge" while both parents work attempts to overcome some difficult situations he creates.

Mother’s occupation: Business

Dual income family.


Nikki needs reassurance that her mother won’t forget her when she goes to work.


What is a boy to do when his teacher-mother’s historical novel is given as an example of the kind of "pornography" that should be banned from schools and libraries?
Mother's occupation: Teacher and writer.

Single-parent family.


Eleven-year-old Robert, tired of being considered nice, starts a campaign to become "wretched," and gain more attention from his working mother.


Seventh grader, Samantha (Sam) Gold has a hard time adjusting to her mother's new life after she writes a spicy adult novel.

Mother's occupation: Writer. Dual income family.


Eleven-year-old Kim tries to keep a puppy in secret, mind her younger brother and adjust to sixth grade when her mom goes back to work.

Mother's occupation: Assistant Personnel Manager.

Dual income family.


Her best friend's family helps to cushion the blow when Al must sacrifice a summer visit to her father's farm in order to take care of her sick mother.
Mother's occupation: Sales clerk in department store.
Single-parent family.

The meeting between an eleven-year-old boy, Adam, and Sproggy, his English step-sister, who comes to New York City, is less than idyllic, but, time, events and Adam's mother help to change that.


Drucilla longs for a more modern family, but when her mother works and her family becomes more like everyone else, she decides tradition is a good thing.

Mother's occupation: Librarian. Dual income family.

An antique doll helps Miranda combat loneliness while her mother works.


An eight-year-old girl wonders if her red hair is the cause of all her problems, and tries to convince her hairdresser mother to dye her hair.


As author Jessica and artist Daphne collaborate on a picture book for a seventh-grade English class contest, they become close enough for Jessica to find out about Daphne’s troubled home life.

Mother’s occupation: Librarian. Single-parent family.


Almost twelve-year-old Marlee tries to adjust to her parents’ separation and even tries magic to get them back together.

Mother’s occupation: Librarian. Single-parent family.


During the summer while she is on her own, eleven-year-old Heather forms a friendship with an old, reclusive man who spends his days tending his garden.

Mother’s occupation: Store owner. Single-parent family.


Amy experiences some scary moments when she finally gets a chance to stay home alone after school.

Mother’s occupation: Business. Dual income family.

Emily accompanies her mother to the office for a day. She compares her work at school to Mommy's work at the office.

Mother's occupation: Advertising executive. Family type unknown.


Because his family is going through "tight times", a little boy can't have the puppy he wishes for.

Mother's occupation: Unknown. Dual income family.


Sixth grader Maggie feels burdened by her seven-year-old sister, Hannie, who is slightly brain-damaged and her brother while her mother is at work.


Fitzi, the child of traveling entertainers, is envious when her show biz friend Pip retires from entertaining and lives a "normal life". She hopes her parents can get a steady job in a theater so she can do the same.

Mother's occupation: Actress and mime. Dual income family.
June finds sharing a house with her mother and her foster grandfather requires a difficult adjustment to his forgetfulness and crabby remarks. She worries about her mother, who is recovering from a serious illness.


A young girl wins a pony in a contest, and then must find a way to keep him in a suburban neighborhood.


A mother struggles to feed, clothe, and protect her two sons using whatever resources she can muster, including stealing. Her oldest son worries how to help her get a better job and stop stealing.


The sequel to Mama, Mark is relieved that his mother now holds a steady job at a laundry and no longer steals. He introduces his mother to his teacher at school and his family gains a father.


Sexually abused by her father, while her mother is working, and fearing for her younger sister, Gilly looks for the courage to tell someone what is happening.

Mother's occupation: Nurse. Nuclear family, father unemployed.


A year after her father has left home, fifth-grader DeDe helps her mother cope with the realities of life after divorce.


Libby must make a big adjustment in her life when her grandmother moves out and her mother starts working as a lawyer.

Mother's occupation: Lawyer. Dual income family.


Deeply resentful of having to move from Chicago to rural Wisconsin after her father's death, teenage Emily struggles
to understand her seemingly calm hard-working mother.


The three Sweeney children face their first day at a new school and their first afternoon of taking care of themselves while their mother is at work.


Samantha's eleventh year includes losing her last baby teeth, towering over every boy in dance school, and being mortified by everything her mother does.

Mother's occupation: Writer. Dual income family.


Eleven year old Lucy has many adjustments when her mother becomes a "working lady."

Mother's occupation: Journalist. Dual income family.


Anastasia's 10th year has some good things like falling in love and really getting to know her grandmother and some bad things like finding out that her mother is pregnant.

Mother's occupation: Artist. Dual income family.

Her family’s new organized schedule for easy housekeeping makes 13 year old Anastasia confident that she can run the household while her mother is out of town, until she hits unexpected complications.

Mother’s occupation: Artist. Dual income family.


When their mothers starts to date the mystery man on the fifth floor who has been instructed by his agent to "Eliminate the children by the first of May, eleven-year-old Caroline and her older brother figure they’re targeted to be the victims.


An eleven-year-old cellist learns about life from her eccentric family, her first boyfriend, and Mozart.

Mother’s occupation: Writer. Dual income family.


A fourth-grade girl tries to think of ways to get rid of her troublesome younger brother.


Betty Ann's (Turkeylegs) childhood ends abruptly when her father abandons the family and her mother goes to work, leaving her responsible for her younger brother and sister. Mother's occupation: Unknown. Single-parent family.


A remarkable grandmother helps 12-year-old Marty resolve her feelings about her taxi driving mother and growing up without a father. Mother's occupation: Taxi driver. Single-parent family.


Cathy's humiliation over her suspension from school and her mother's new job as a cleaning woman helps her come to a better understanding of her own worth and her relationships with others. Mother's occupation: Cleaning lady. Dual income family.

Grades K-2.

A young child with a working mother, who spends each day after school with someone else, needs Mommy's reassurance of understanding and love.


Ten-year-old Lorraine's behavior problems at school are aggravated by her parents' divorce and her mother going back to work. Her understanding teacher helps her to adjust.


A twelve-year-old's perfect life changes when her best friend has serious family problems and her older brother leaves home to attend school in a different town.

Mother's occupation: Medical technician. Dual income family.


Rebecca, who is eight years old has an ongoing war with her babysitter, Mrs. Galloway. One day when Rebecca's cat has kittens, they come to an unexpected truce.


This book contains two working mothers, both Fanny’s mother and Bertha’s mother work. When Bertha’s father vanishes over the Bermuda Triangle, and Fanny’s theater agent parents are secretly divorced, the girls decide to teach Fanny’s triplet brothers to tap-dance to raise money. Mothers’ occupations: Fanny’s mother: Cook and Pizza maker. Bertha’s mother: Talent scout.


Another book with two working mothers. Jenny thinks she prefers life in Laura’s home to her own until changing circumstances help her to understand her mother better. Jenny’s mommy goes to work and Laura’s mommy becomes her childcare provider. Mothers’ occupations: Jenny’s mother: Unknown. Laura’s mother: Childcare provider. Dual income families.


Though Meredith goes to child care and her mother goes to work, they think of each other during the day and look forward to their time together. Mother’s occupation: Unknown. Single-parent family.

Her mother’s decision to take a new job causes anxiety for a young girl.

Mother’s occupation: Unknown. Dual income family.


A young boy spends his first afternoon alone at home while his mother is at work.


Mortimer is proud of his TV reporter mom, but he finds everything his father does embarrasses him. Until one day he enters a baking contest in Mortimer’s class.

Mother’s occupation: TV Reporter. Dual income family.


The bad dreams Lotty has involve her mother returning to work and attending a new school. She adjusts to both with the love and support of her family.

Mother’s occupation: Magazine editor. Dual income family.


Martin doesn’t like coming home to an empty house when
his mother goes back to work.


Twelve-year-old Henry takes charge of the family for two weeks to allow his mother uninterrupted time to work on an art portfolio and find a job.


A friendless, overweight 12-year-old with an overprotective mother begins to change the pattern of his life.


A young girl describes the changes in her life since her mother got a job.

Mother’s occupation: Unknown. Dual income family.


Moving to a new neighborhood following his parents’ divorce, Mark has trouble making new friends and coping with his mother’s new job and his father’s absence.

Mother’s occupation: Secretary. Single-parent family.

From the day twelve-year-old Rhiannon spots a lost white Arabia: gelding in the woods near her small Pennsylvania mining town, her life finds a focus as she learns to deal with family problems.
Mother’s occupation: Factory worker and store clerk.
Mother working, father unemployed.


When Tina asks her mother for help in first-grade reading, she discovers to her shock that her mother can’t read. A concerned teacher helps them find tutors and they both learn how to read.


Tory and her friends start a club for latchkey kids to convince Tory’s mother she can be home after school alone.


Ben and Daddy fend for themselves while Mommy is on a business trip.
Mother’s occupation: Unknown. Dual income family.

Erin relates the events of the summer when she and her friend, Heather, discover the "real" Tarzan and she comes increasingly aware of the family problems caused by her father's drinking.

Mother’s occupation: Secretary. Mother working, father unemployed.


Eleven-year-old Callie tries to cope with her new responsibilities when the family’s changed circumstances force them to move to a new San Francisco neighborhood and leave her in charge of her younger brother.

Mother’s occupation: Works in a bank. Dual income family.


When fourteen-year-old Jenny Skinner’s mother goes on strike for better working conditions in the home, and as a result polarizes much of their community, Jenny, her three younger siblings, and her father come to some surprising conclusions.

Mother’s Occupation: Librarian. Dual income family.


Ten-year-old Josh, who finds his private school
unbearable, joins forces with an elderly man in tending injured birds.

Mother’s occupation: Artist. Dual income family.


A young boy and his sister adjust to spending more time with Dad when he decides to return to school and Mom returns to work.

Mother’s occupation: Unknown. Mother works, father student.


Mitzi isn’t sure she wants her mother to marry Walter, whose younger son is a three-year-old genius who thinks he is a dinosaur.

Mother’s occupation: College professor and anthropologist. Single-parent family.


A child, her waitress mother, and her grandmother save dimes to buy a comfortable armchair after all their furniture is lost in a fire.


Sources:


