

ED436008 1999-12-00 Using Literature To Help Children Cope with Problems. ERIC Digest D148.

ERIC Development Team

www.eric.ed.gov

Table of Contents

If you're viewing this document online, you can click any of the topics below to link directly to that section.

Using Literature To Help Children Cope with Problems. ERIC Digest D148.	2
IMPORTANCE OF USING LITERATURE TO HELP CHILDREN COPE WITH PROBLEMS.	2
SUGGESTED CRITERIA FOR SELECTING LITERATURE TO HELP CHILDREN.	2
GUIDELINES FOR USING LITERATURE TO HELP CHILDREN COPE WITH.	3
RESOURCES FOR MATERIALS SELECTION.	4
SELECTED ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHIES:	5
DISABILITIES AND ILLNESS.	5
DISASTER.	6
SEPARATION AND DIVORCE OF PARENTS.	6
VIOLENCE.	7
REFERENCES.	7



ERIC Identifier: ED436008
Publication Date: 1999-12-00
Author: Tu, Wei

Source: ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading English and Communication Bloomington IN.
Using Literature To Help Children Cope with Problems. ERIC Digest D148.

THIS DIGEST WAS CREATED BY ERIC, THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER. FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ERIC, CONTACT ACCESS ERIC 1-800-LET-ERIC

"Am I? Am I going to catch AIDS from Uncle Tim?" Dad shook his head... "I go to Uncle Tim's a lot... I hug him. Sometimes we have dinner together"... "It's safe for you to be with Tim," he said. "...Mom and I asked Tim's doctor how safe it is for us to be close to him. The doctor said you can't catch AIDS just by taking care of someone"... My Uncle Tim died the next day... "I wish dying was like sunset"... "I wish Uncle Tim would come back again in the morning." (Jordan, 1989)

The paragraph above, from "Losing Uncle Tim" (Jordan, 1989), reflects a young boy's confusion and sadness on learning that his favorite relative is dying from a disease called AIDS. People in all times and places need to cope with problems about birth, separation, illness, and death. Children cannot escape from these problems. Through literature, children can perceive how others have encountered and resolved problems that cause sadness, stress, fear, and uncertainty. More importantly, children learn how to use conflict resolution strategies to deal with these problems.

IMPORTANCE OF USING LITERATURE TO HELP CHILDREN COPE WITH PROBLEMS

The use of literature to help children cope with problems can be an important part of teaching. Through literature, children can understand that they are not alone in encountering problems. In using literature to help children cope with problems, teachers recognize that children today encounter many problems and they can then better understand and relate to children's feelings about these problems. Teachers can guide children in discussing their problems more freely. Through discussion, teachers and children can share their feelings, which will help teachers and children relate better to one another. From the literature, teachers and children work together to find different solutions for problems.

SUGGESTED CRITERIA FOR SELECTING LITERATURE TO HELP CHILDREN

COPE WITH PROBLEMS Burnett (1997), Huck, Helper, & Hickman (1993), Ouzts (1991), and Rudman (1995) recommend that literature to help children cope with problems should have these features:

- * Be well written and appropriate to the child's developmental level.
- * Provide stories using language familiar to children that is realistic in terms of their life experience.
- * Honestly portray the condition and future possibilities for the characters. Illustrations should also portray problems in an honest and straightforward manner.
- * Present multidimensional characters experiencing legitimate and relatable emotions.
- * Offer potential for controversy.
- * Explore the process of working out problems.
- * Demonstrate clear channels of communication and responses to children's questions.
- * Offer situations which generate genuine enthusiasm in the reader.

GUIDELINES FOR USING LITERATURE TO HELP CHILDREN COPE WITH

PROBLEMS Literature can be used as an effective tool to help children deal with emotional and social problems. Through discussion of the problematic issues embodied in the literature, teachers can help children grapple with the issues presented. When using literature to help children cope with problems, educators should consider the purpose of the learning task, decide who will participate, and plan to relate the story character's problem to children's lived experiences (Jalongo, 1983).

Susan Miller (1997) proposes the following guidelines for teachers using literature to help children identify problems, and develop and implement solutions:



* Identify --- Determine and discuss the problem. It should be meaningful, interesting, and appropriate for children.



* Brainstorm --- Encourage children to think about possible solutions. Listen to and respect all of their ideas. Keep a record of the solutions suggested in case the children want to try more than one.



* Select --- Help children examine the advantages and disadvantages of various solutions and then choose one that seems workable.



* Explore and implement --- Let children gather the necessary materials and resources and then, if it is feasible, implement the solution they select.



* Evaluate --- With the children, observe and discuss whether the solution to the problem was successful. If appropriate, help the children think of changes in the solution implemented, or encourage them to explore new solutions.

RESOURCES FOR MATERIALS SELECTION

In addition to the criteria and guidelines for selecting and using literature to help children cope with problems, teachers should have access to resources for selecting materials. Specialized selection sources:



* Cecil, N. L., & Robert, P. L. (1992). Developing resiliency through children's literature: A guide for teachers and librarians, K-8. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co.



* Dole, P. P. (1990). Helping children through books: A selected booklist. Portland, OR: Church and Synagogue Library Association.



* Rasinski, T. V. (1992). Sensitive issues: An annotated guide to children's literature, K-6. Phoenix: Oryx Press.



* ResilienceNet Webmaster: Information for helping children and families overcome adversities. (1999). <http://resilnet.uiuc.edu/> [1999, December 12]



* Rudman, M. (1995). Children's literature: An issues approach. (3rd edition). White Plains, NY: Longman.



* Vanderbilt's selected list of bibliographies on sensitive issues. (1999). <http://www.scils.rutgers.edu/special/kay/bookssen.html> [1999, December 12]

SELECTED ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHIES:

Death



* Children's books on death and dying. (1997). http://www.penpages.psu.edu/penpages_reference/28507/285072304.htm [1999, December 12]



* Sullivan, A. (1993). Death in literature for children and young adults. Focused access to selected topics (Fast) Bib No. 62. Bloomington, IN: ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills. [ED 356 485]



* Smith, A. G. (1989). Reading guidance: Death and grief. *Journal of Poetry Therapy*, 3 (1), 23-28

DISABILITIES AND ILLNESS

* Cothorn, N. B. (1993). A bibliography of children's and young adult's books about

illness issues. [ED 355 532]



* Cothorn, N. B. (1994). Healing with books: Literature for children dealing with health issues. *Ohio Reading Teacher*, 28 (2), 8-15. [EJ 504 787]



* English, J., Pyles, A. A., & Wicker, A. (1991). Drug education through Literature: An annotated bibliography for grades K-6. Portland, OR: Western Regional Center for Drug-Free Schools and Communities. [ED 338 937]



* Kupper, L. (1994). A guide to children's literature and disability: 1989-1994. Washington, D.C.: National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities.



* Orr, L. E. (1997). Exploring developmental disabilities through literature: An annotated bibliography. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 29 (6), 14-15. [EJ 549 100]



* Teasley, A. B. (1993). YA literature about AIDS: Encountering the unimaginable. *Alan Review*, 20 (3), 18-23.

DISASTER

* McMath, J. S. (1997). Young children, national tragedy, and picture books. *Young Children*, 52 (3), 82-84. [EJ 544 876]

SEPARATION AND DIVORCE OF PARENTS

* Rudman, M. (1993). Books to help children cope with separation and loss: An annotated bibliography (4th edition). New Providence, N.J.: R.R. Bowker.



* Woodman, L. (1993). Annotated bibliography for preadolescents from divorced families and their parents and teachers. Plymouth State College. [ED 360 621]



* Books for children about divorce. (1999).

http://kidshealth.org/parent/community/resource_divorce.html#child ren_book [1999, December 12]



* Seattle Public Library: Children's books about divorce. (1998).
<http://www.spl.lib.wa.us/children/divorcebks.html> [1999, December 12]



* Divorce books for children. (No date).
http://www.hooked.net/~franalán/Divorce_Assistance/books.html [1999, December 12]

VIOLENCE

* Rudin, C. (1998). Children's books about the holocaust. A selective annotated bibliography. Bayside, N.Y.: Holocaust Resource Center & Archives.



* Letvin, A. Z. (1996). Literature for children and young adults: Examining Issues of violence and conflict resolution. http://www.civiced.org/bibliography_violence.html [1999, December 12]



* Banaszak, R. A., & Banaszak, M. K. (1997). Trade books for reducing violence. *Social Education*, 61 (5), 270-71.

Using children's literature as a tool for problem solving is a meaningful way for teachers to understand and help children with problems. Through the exploration of stories, discussion, and reflections on their own experiences, children can begin to perceive the complexities of the world in which they live.

REFERENCES

Burnett, J. (1997). Opening the world to children: Using books to develop problem-solving strategies. Portland, OR: Annual International Conference of the Association for Childhood Education. [ED 414 565]

Huck, C. S., Hepler, S., & Hickman, J. (1993). Children's literature in the elementary school. Forth Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace.

Jalongo, M. (1983). Bibliotherapy: Literature to promote socioemotional growth. *The Reading Teacher*, 36, 796-802. [EJ 276 258]

Jordan, M. (1989). *Losing Uncle Tim*. Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman Miller, S.
(1997). *Problem solving safari - blocks*. Everett, WA: Totline.

Mohr, K. A. (1993). Metamessages and problem-solving perspectives in children's literature. *Reading Horizons*, 33 (4), 341-346. [EJ 462 347]

Ouzts, D. T. (1991). The emergence of bibliotherapy as a discipline. *Reading Horizons*, 31 (3), 199-206. [EJ 421 420]

Riecken, T. J., & Miller, M. R. (1990). Introducing children to problem solving and decision making by using children's literature. *Social Studies*, 81 (2), 59-64. [EJ 413 991]

Rudman, M. (1995). *Children's literature: An issues approach* (3rd edition). White Plains, NY: Longman. [ED 379 684]

Digest #148 is EDO-CS-99-09 and was published in December 1999 by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading, English and Communication, 2805 E 10th Street, Bloomington, IN 47408-2698, Telephone (812) 855-5847 or (800) 759-4723. ERIC Digests are in the public domain and may be freely reproduced. Additional copies may be ordered by contacting the ERIC Document Reproduction Service at (800) 443-3742.

This project has been funded at least in part with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Education under contract number ED-99-CO-0028. The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Education nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

Title: Using Literature To Help Children Cope with Problems. ERIC Digest D148.

Document Type: Information Analyses---ERIC Information Analysis Products (IAPs) (071); Information Analyses---ERIC Digests (Selected) in Full Text (073);

Available From: ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading, English, and Communication, Indiana University, 2805 E. 10th Street, Suite 150, Bloomington, IN 47408-2698; Web site: http://www.indiana.edu/~eric_rec.

Descriptors: Annotated Bibliographies, Childrens Literature, Death, Disabilities, Divorce, Elementary Education, Emotional Problems, Natural Disasters, Problem Solving, Reading Material Selection, Social Problems, Violence

Identifiers: ERIC Digests

###



[\[Return to ERIC Digest Search Page\]](#)