

Western Kentucky University

From the Selected Works of Roxanne Myers Spencer

Fall October, 2011

Using Bibliotherapy, Poetry Therapy & Journaling

Roxanne M Spencer, *Western Kentucky University*



Available at: https://works.bepress.com/roxanne_spencer/5/




Using Bibliotherapy, Poetry Therapy & Journaling

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October 2011

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Educational Resources Center (ERC)

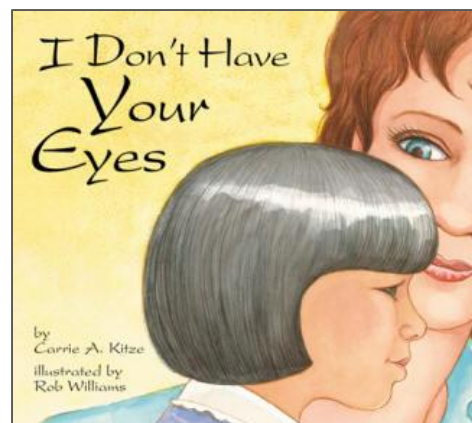
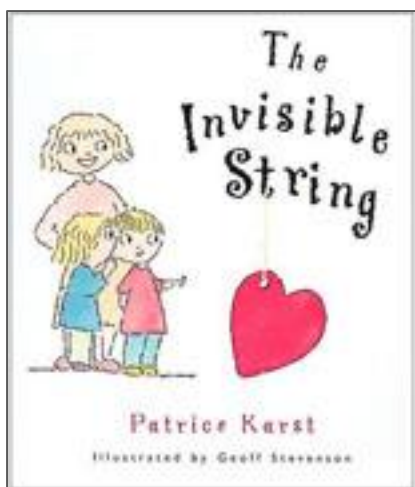
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Bibliotherapy — Holistically

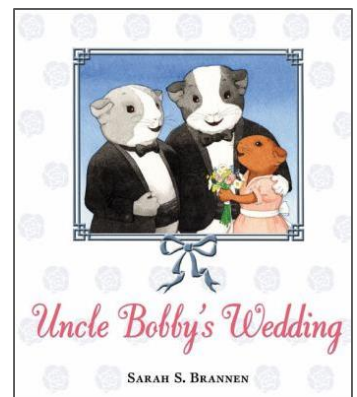
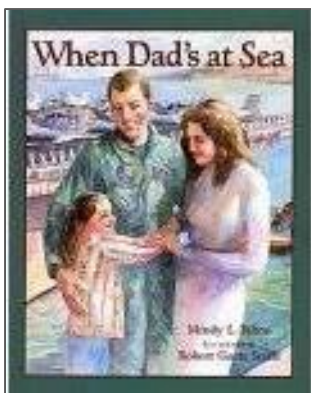
- Bibliotherapy, as a whole, encompasses the use of reading and writing, fiction and nonfiction, poetry and prose, as an aid to problem-solving, dealing with crises, healing from loss, gaining new perspectives on others' difference, amid a host of other beneficial goals.
 - This overview will look at bibliotherapy holistically, slightly emphasizing reading for healing.
 - The perspective is from the classroom teacher and school librarian's viewpoint, with opportunities for collaboration, as needed, with parents or guardians, school guidance counselors and school psychologists, to bring students a variety of opportunities to engage in meaningful interaction with text and visual images for dealing with life's everyday, yet so often daunting, challenges.
- 

A few working definitions....

- Bibliotherapy:** The simplest expression of bibliotherapy is “reading to heal.” Selected reading materials, fiction or nonfiction, can be used to guide readers to greater self-understanding, self-reflection, and comfort when faced with problems, loss, disabilities, illness, and other challenges.



- Bibliotherapy encompasses most of the written forms of using specific texts as a guide toward coping and healing. There are other forms of creative therapies: drama, play, and art are practiced by mental health therapists trained in creative arts therapy. Bibliotherapy can be practiced by helping professionals as well as by teachers and librarians

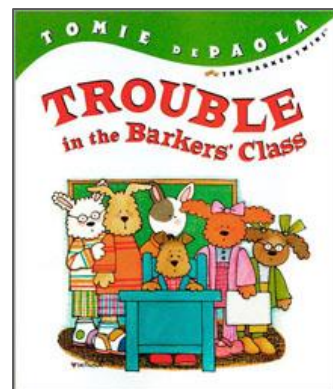


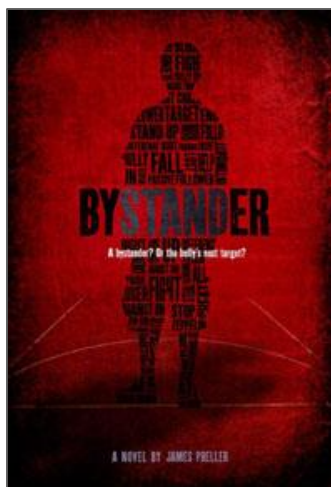
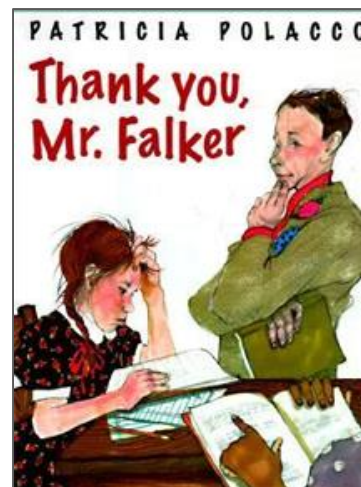
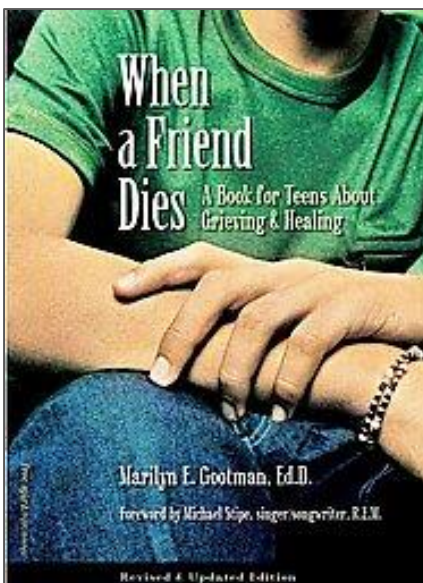
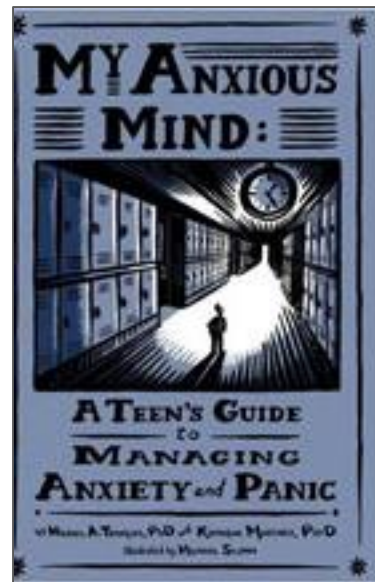
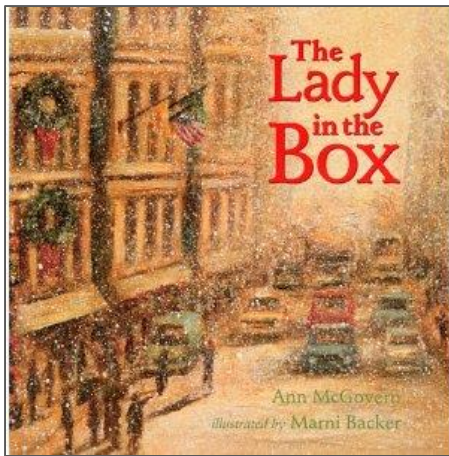
A few working definitions (cont'd)

- Poetry Therapy:** Poetry therapy primarily uses existing and created poetry as a means of exploring and identifying with difficult situations to gain awareness, understanding, acceptance, and comfort.

- For this overview, we will look primarily at autobiographical, original poetry for self-reflection.

- Creative Journaling:** The use of a handmade or virtual personal journal, using the written word, drawing, collage, photos, video, audio, scrapbooking, etc., for self-expression, exploration, reflection, and creativity to address problems.





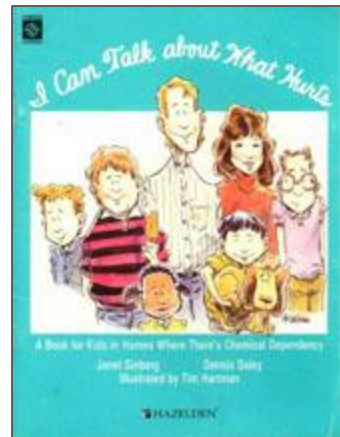
- For older readers, fiction, nonfiction, and, often, picture books, can offer comfort and guidance.
- Indirect approaches, such as posters or displays, give older students the ability to choose titles for themselves.

A few working definitions (cont'd)

Who practices bibliotherapy?

- **Clinical Bibliotherapy** is implemented by trained helping professionals dealing with significant emotional or behavioral problems.
- **Helping professionals include:** psychiatrists, guidance counselors, psychologists, psychiatrists, nurses, therapists, social workers, etc.

Bibliotherapy is often used to address social and emotional issues in the context of story for younger children



Definition adapted from Bibliotherapy Education Project:
www.library.unlv.edu/faculty/research/bibliotherapy/

A few working definitions (cont'd)

- **Developmental Bibliotherapy** may be used by teachers, librarians or lay helpers to facilitate normal development and self-actualization with an essentially healthy population.
- **Developmental bibliotherapy** is practiced by teachers and librarians to help students address issues or situations that affect their learning and behavior in the classroom.



Image from <http://www.flickr.com/photos/judybaxter/2314600835/>

Potential Benefits

“Developmental bibliotherapy is designed to be used as a proactive approach to address challenging behavior or to facilitate solutions to specific situations” (Cook, et al, 2006).



Cook, K. E., et. al. (2006). Bibliotherapy. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 42(2), 91–100.

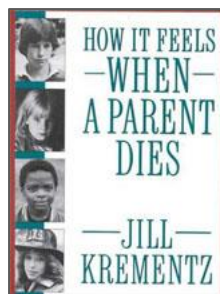
Bibliotherapy in a School Setting

- Academic skills:** Improved reading and writing skills, comprehension, vocabulary, use of language, deeper thinking, attitude toward reading and writing
- Social skills:** Identification, awareness & understanding, acceptance, attitude, empathy, response to others, improved personal relationships
- Problem-solving:** reasoning, coping, thinking of new solutions, understanding consequences



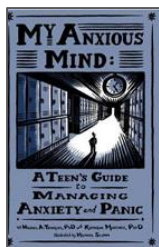
Developmental bibliotherapy can be used to assist students in several ways, covering a variety of life challenges:

- Grieving/Loss:** death of a loved one, divorce, serious illness, etc.
- Differences:** become more aware of , understanding of, accepting of: different cultures, religions, abilities
- Adjustments/Coping:** new family member (adoption, step-family), moving, medical diagnosis needing care (asthma, diabetes, etc.)
- Growth skills:** self-awareness, self-esteem, learn techniques to monitor feelings, reactions, and actions; thinking situations through and choosing better responses

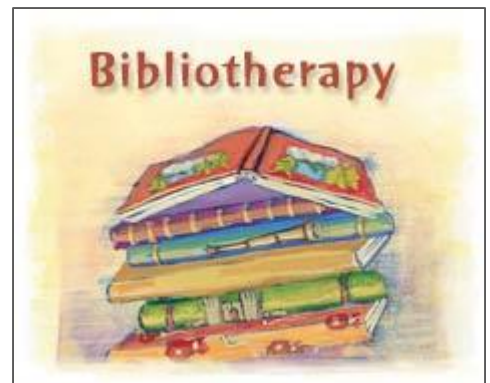


Collaboration is a key benefit of bibliotherapy in a school setting:

- Teachers, librarians, and school counselors know and understand their students' academic, social and emotional needs (Davis & Wilson, 1992).
- School library media specialists can help classroom teachers identify appropriate literature, both fiction and nonfiction.
- School counselors can provide insight and guidance for planning bibliotherapy lessons.



Davis, K., & Wilson, T. L. (1992). *Bibliotherapy and children's award-winning books*. ERIC: ED 354-470



Goals of Bibliotherapy

Pardeck (1995) established six potential goals for bibliotherapy:

1. To provide information.
2. To provide insight into a specific experience or situation.
3. To provide alternative solutions to the problem.
4. To stimulate a discussion of what the actual problem is.
5. To communicate new values and attitudes with regard to the problem.
6. To help students understand that they are not the only one who has experienced this problem.

Pardeck, J. T. (1995). Bibliotherapy: An innovative approach for helping children. *Early Child Development and Care*, 1(10), 83–88.

How Does Bibliotherapy Work?

There are four stages that the student is believed to experience during bibliotherapy (Pardeck 1994; Stamps, 2003).

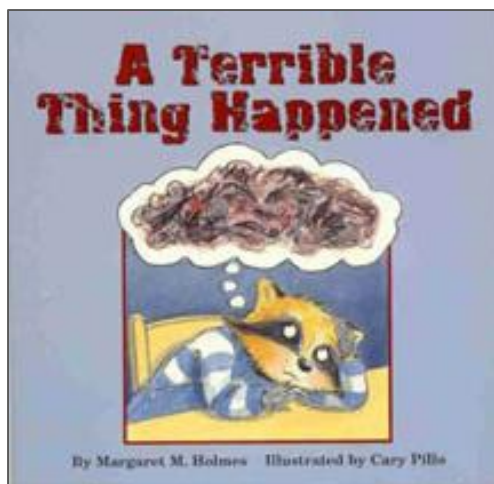
- 1) **Identification**, when a student identifies with a character
- 2) **Catharsis**, in which the student experiences a release of emotions as he/she “follows” the character
- 3) **Insight**, at which point students connect their lives to the lives of the characters in the book
- 4) **Universalization**, the stage in which students realize people all over the world face similar life changes.

Adapted from: Cleveland, A. S. (2011). Bibliotherapy for all: Using children's literature about loss and grieving to increase awareness, develop coping skills, and build community among elementary school students. Retrieved from www.webster.edu/education/documents/adrienne_cleveland_thesis.ppt



What Bibliotherapy Is *Not*...

- **A quick fix:** “Read two books and call me in the morning”
- **A cure-all:** “If you read these books and write down your feelings, everything will be better”
- **Instead of:** To be used in place of seeking professional attention for more serious situations
- **A novelty:** Something to be undertaken lightly or haphazardly, without planning and preparation



Introducing Bibliotherapy in the Classroom

According to Forgan (2002), bibliotherapy lessons should include the following elements:

1. pre-reading,
2. guided reading,
3. post-reading discussion, and
4. problem-solving and reinforcement activities.

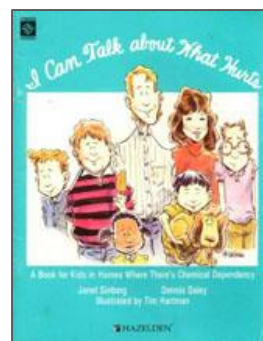


Forgan, J. (2002). Using bibliotherapy to teach problem-solving. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 38(2), 75-82.

Image from http://hill.troy.k12.mi.us/staff/bnewingham/myweb3/guided_reading.htm

Applying Bibliotherapy in the Classroom

- Many teachers practice bibliotherapy in some manner, perhaps not by name.
- Effective follow-up activities, thoughtful questions, and focused require careful evaluation and preparation.
- Bibliotherapy may be used individually, with small groups, or with an entire class, depending on the need.
- Teachers may also consider involving parents in the reading and follow-up activities.
- As with most teaching strategies, bibliotherapy is a tool to be modified and adapted to a particular context.

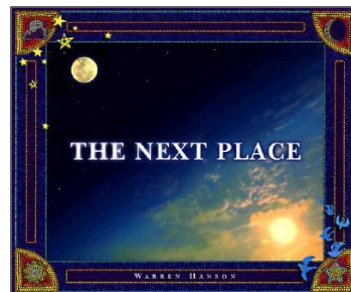


- Begin the process by identifying the need of the students and selecting appropriate reading material.
- Teachers should seeks books that are appropriate to reading level, interest, and subject matter.
- It is essential that teachers read the entire text and consider if any subjects addressed might require parental consent.
- A written bibliography or classroom library of titles about common topics for that grade level is helpful.
- Media specialists, librarians, school guidance counselors, and other grade-level teachers may be useful collaborators.*



Adapted from: Fries-Gaither, J. (2009). Beyond penguins: Helping students one book at a time. Retrieved from beyondpenguins.ehe.osu.edu/issue/polar-oceans/bibliotherapy-helping-students-one-book-at-a-time

- It is important to evaluate titles for bibliotherapy, and sometimes trial and error are the only way to gauge the success of a particular title or topic in the classroom.
- There are many resources that offer suggestions for bibliotherapy titles, with a few resources listed below.
- In the accompanying handout, there are bibliotherapy articles and websites listed that include a wide variety of title selections that may be appropriate for your classrooms.



Example of a Bibliotherapy Evaluation Tool

Appendix A: Children's Literature Evaluation Tool for Individuals/Small Groups

Criteria	Rating				
The book is age-appropriate, developmentally-appropriate, and at an appropriate reading level for elementary school children.	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
The book is enjoyable and contains an interesting, well-crafted story line. It may also include interesting illustrations.	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
The main character is a positive model, demonstrating good coping skills/problem-solving skills.	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
The problem/solution and plot are realistic . There is no sense of false hope from a child's point of view.	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
There are no factors in the book that would further upset, confuse, or hurt a child.	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
Valid information is shared to help the child gain knowledge around the subject.	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
The book lends itself to deep and thoughtful discussion.	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
A child can easily relate to the main character.	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
The book is comforting/reassuring to a child.	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree

Cleveland, A. S. (2011). Bibliotherapy for all: Using children's literature about loss and grieving to increase awareness, develop coping skills, and build community among elementary school students. Retrieved from gradworks.umi.com/1490023.pdf

Not on screen

Cleveland (2011) provides examples of titles dealing with divorce, military deployment, death, and incarceration, with significant differences in reception from the children in the study.

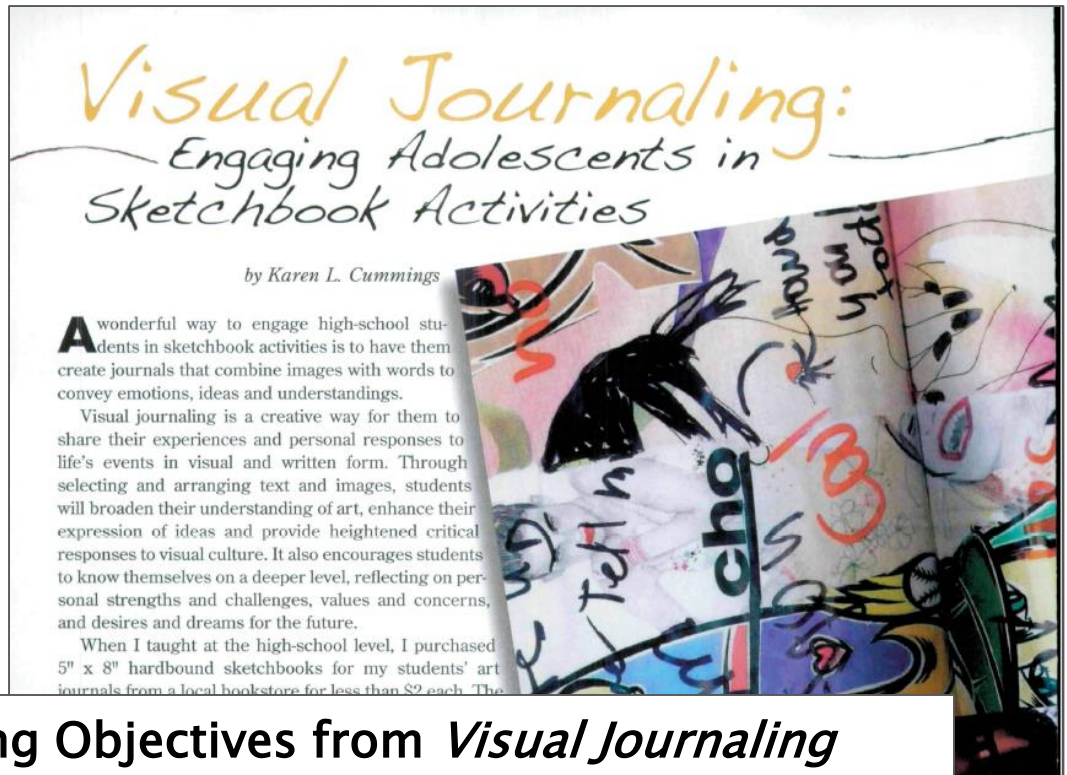
“It was found that certain texts may be more valuable and effective than others when conducting bibliotherapy. There were significant differences in the ratings of the books on each of the four topics; for dealing with divorce the preferred text was *Was it the Chocolate Pudding?: A Story for Little Kids about Divorce*, for death it was *Everett Anderson's Goodbye*, for incarceration it was *Mama Loves Me From Away* and for military deployment it was *Love, Lizzie: Letters to a Military Mom*. While several therapeutic texts were found to be appropriate to use in a whole-class setting, certain texts were found to be more appropriate in an individual or small group setting.”

Cleveland, A. S. (2011). Bibliotherapy for all: Using children's literature about loss and grieving to increase awareness, develop coping skills, and build community among elementary school students. Retrieved from www.webster.edu/education/documents/adrienne_cleveland_thesis.ppt

Selected Bibliotherapy Lists

- Bibliotherapy Education Project: Resources:
www.library.unlv.edu/faculty/research/bibliotherapy/resources.php
- Library Booklists: librarybooklists.org/fiction/children/jbibliotherapy.htm
- Teachers' Net Gazette (05/09): teachers.net/gazette/MAY09/bundrick/
- Steve Barancik's Best Children's Books: Bibliotherapy:
www.best-childrens-books.com/bibliotherapy.html
- Monroe County (IN) Public Library Booklists:
www.monroe.lib.in.us/childrens/booklists/children_booklists.html
- Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh (PA):
clpgh.org/research/parentseducators/parents/bibliotherapy/
- Education Week Teacher: Unwrapping the Gifted Blog:
blogs.edweek.org/teachers/unwrapping_the_gifted/2009/03/using_bibliotherapy_with_gifted_children.html
- Books that Heal Kids Blog: booksthathealkids.blogspot.com/
- Amazon.com's Listmania! pages. Search bibliotherapy for lists:
amzn.to/ta4Aic
- Magination Press (from APA): www.apa.org/pubs/magination/index.aspx
- Compassion Books (distributor): www.compassionbooks.com/
- Chase, M., Son, E. H., & Steiner, Stan. (2010). A dozen great books: Taking action in the face of adversity. *Journal of Children's Literature*, 36(2), 57-61.
- Collins, M. (2005). *It's ok to be sad: Activities to help children aged 4 to 9 to manage loss, grief or bereavement*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing.
- Cook, K. E., Earles-Vollrath, T., & Ganz, J. B. (2006). Bibliotherapy. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 42 (2), 91-100.
- Gavigan, K. W., & Kurtts, S. (2011). Using children's and young adult literature in teaching acceptance and understanding of individual differences. *Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin*, 77 (2), 11-16.
- See handout for additional resources.

Visual Journaling as Bibliotherapy



Learning Objectives from *Visual Journaling*

High-school students will ...

- discover more about themselves through the inquiry of social and personal issues.
- become actively engaged in their learning through decision-making and reflection.
- communicate individual perspectives to inform and persuade others through their artwork.
- demonstrate how art can be a reaction to findings/ideas and a means of self-inquiry (Cummings, 2011, 29).

Cummings, K. L. (2011). Visual journaling: Engaging adolescents in sketchbook activities. 28–29, 38. Retrieved from www.artsandactivities.com

Reflective Journaling: Using Writing to Help Heal

- Reflective writing is not new in education—pre-service teachers use reflective writing during their training, and students are encouraged to keep journals monitoring their scholastic progress.
- Kremenitzer (2005) discusses reflective journaling as a tool in increasing emotional intelligence for the pre-service through veteran early childhood teachers facing classroom challenges, which can be adapted to all grade level educators:

“It is important for early childhood teachers to periodically challenge their own practices to make sure that they are consistently serving as good role models for regulating emotions particularly under stressful circumstances. Emotional intelligence abilities can be assessed through reflective self-journaling and this method is a productive way to analyze ones own behavior and to make modifications if needed. Early childhood teachers can use a method that is typically part of pre-service teacher training to help to ‘refresh’ their own practice” (Kremenitzer, 2005, 8).

Kremenitzer, J. (January 2005). The emotionally intelligent early childhood educator: Self-reflective journaling. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 33(1), 3–9.

Potential Benefits of Journaling

- Journal-writing reinforces reading
- Gives students a “placeholder” for memories
- Can be a powerful tool for changing thoughts and feelings.
- Over time, students can see their progress on a personal level, not just a scholastic level.



If creative expression is a goal in journal keeping endeavor, one can greatly enhance creative growth and expression through risking trying out a variety of media, color, and journal entry techniques (Hammond, in Demers, 2011)

YOU ARE DESCRIBING CREATIVE INTERACTIVE SITES

- The many interactive online resources that engage students' attention and creativity can be used as journaling tools. A few examples include GlogsterEDU, Penzu, StoryStarter or Poetry Idea Engine (Scholastic), PicLits, Storybird, Animoto, Kerpoof, StoryStarters, LightningBug, iDiary (app), Current, WallWisher, as well as the useful resources through ReadWriteThink.





When My Name Was Keoko

by [shannonhady](#) Last updated 5 months ago



[Tweet](#) 0

Public for all



From GlogsterEDU: shannonhady.edu.glogster.com/when-my-name-was-keoko/

Nature Journaling as Self-Help

Journaling can help students grapple with math problems, and as another aspect of literacy across the curriculum, nature journaling can be an integral part of bibliotherapy.

McMillan and Whelan (2007) explored the use of natural journaling, integrating nature studies with language arts instruction for middle school students, based on the work on Anne Botsford Comstock. Their conclusions are inspiring for an overall bibliotherapy approach:

“...we entered this project with a tentative belief in the potential of directed nature studies to transform the lives and literacy abilities of adolescent students. At this study’s completion, we were further convinced that nature observations and writing hold great promise for the identity and literacy formation of adolescents (McMillan & Wilhelm, 2007, p. 376).”



McMillan, S., & Wilhelm, J. (2007). Students' stories: Adolescents constructing multiple literacies through nature journaling. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 50(5), 370-377.

Adapting: Poetry Therapy

- George Ella Lyon's "Where I'm from"—the poem that has circled the globe, is a popular springboard for poetry therapy, using traditional or virtual creative media for self-exploration:

www.georgeellalyon.com/where.html

- Other examples of autobiographical poems for self-reflection could include adaptations of NPR's "This I Believe" series:

<http://thisibelieve.org/educators/>

- Poetry/180 Library of Congress:

loc.gov/poetry/180/

- ReadWriteThink:

- Creating Classroom Community by Crafting Themed Poetry Collections: bit.ly/sUd9r4

- Put That on the List: Collaboratively Writing a Catalog Poem: bit.ly/tU5P3g

- AlphaPoems Journaling Tool: bit.ly/tx8BYU



George Ella Lyon | WRITER & TEACHER

HOME

MY STORY

BOOKS

SCHOOL &
LIBRARY VISITS

WORKSHOPS
FOR WRITERS

FAMILY LITERACY
PRESENTATIONS

ACTIVISM

FOR TEACHERS
& LIBRARIANS

STRANDS

WHERE I'M FROM

[Sign up for E-news](#)

Where I'm From

Where I'm From

I am from clothespins,
from Clorox and carbon-tetrachloride.
I am from the dirt under the back porch.
(Black, glistening,
it tasted like beets.)

I am from the forsythia bush
the Dutch elm
whose long-gone limbs I remember
as if they were my own.

I'm from fudge and eyeglasses,
from Imogene and Alafair.

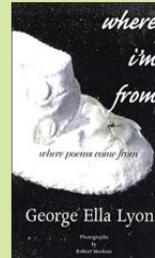
I'm from the know-it-alls
and the pass-it-ons,
from Perk up! and Pipe down!
I'm from He restoreth my soul
with a cottonball lamb
and ten verses I can say myself.

I'm from Artemus and Billie's Branch,
fried corn and strong coffee.
From the finger my grandfather lost
to the auger,
the eye my father shut to keep his sight.

Under my bed was a dress box
spilling old pictures,
a sift of lost faces
to drift beneath my dreams.
I am from those moments--
snapped before I budded --
leaf-fall from the family tree.

[Listen to George Ella](#) read the poem.


[Check out the book *Where I'm From*, *Where Poems Come From*.](#)



[Click here to see an inventive video](#) featuring George Ella's reading of "Where I'm From" on *The United States of Poetry* episode "The Land and the People."

From George Ella Lyon:

www.georgeellalyon.com/where.html



A public dialogue about belief — one essay at a time

home RSS

This I Believe Life Lesson and CD make the perfect

explore write participate listen educate

This I Believe in the Classroom

Thousands of teachers around the world—in every U.S. state and more than 50 countries—have embraced This I Believe as a powerful educational tool. Many have told us that our project was the most enriching writing assignment they have given in many years of teaching.

If you have used This I Believe in any educational setting, we would love to [hear from you](#).

Resources for Using This I Believe with Students

To help teachers guide students through exploring their beliefs and composing personal essays about them, we offer the following tools.

Educational Curricula

These educational curricula were designed to help educators guide students in the writing of a This I Believe essay appropriate for inclusion in school writing portfolios. The curricula help students understand the concept of belief, explore their own values, and craft them into a well-written essay.

These curricula are available for a small donation to This I Believe, along with several other documents that have been prepared for houses of worship and community groups.

- [Download the Middle School Curriculum \(PDF\)](#)
- [Download the High School Curriculum \(PDF\)](#)

The Library of Congress

Poem # GO

P	O	E
T	R	Y
1	8	0

Poetry 180

a poem a day for american high schools


[list of all 180 poems](#)
[poetry and literature center](#)

[Print](#) [Subscribe](#) [Share/Save](#)

Welcome to Poetry 180. Poetry can and should be an important part of our daily lives. Poems can inspire and make us think about what it means to be a member of the human race. By just spending a few minutes reading a poem each day, new worlds can be revealed.

Poetry 180 is designed to make it easy for students to hear or read a poem on each of the 180 days of the school year. I have selected the poems you will find here with high school students in mind. They are intended to be listened to, and I suggest that all members of the school community be included as readers. A great time for the readings would be following the end of daily announcements over the public address system.

Listening to poetry can encourage students and other learners to become members of the circle of readers for whom poetry is a vital source of pleasure. I hope Poetry 180 becomes an important and enriching part of the school day.



Billy Collins
Former Poet Laureate of the United States

[more about this program](#) [how to read a poem out loud](#) [read our legal notices](#)

 like
Join us on Facebook and conversations about This I Believe.

 follow
Follow us on Twitter to see what's happening right now.

 gift
Send a gift to a friend.

Summary

- However it is practiced, developmental bibliotherapy, encompassing reading, journaling, and poetry, can be a tool for healing, addressing life's difficulties, exploring differences and disabilities, and help with overcoming prejudice and loss.
- Teachers are in the unique position of building on literacy skills in writing and reading and information-seeking while providing opportunities for children and teens to reflect, understand, cope, and grow through guided reading and creative exploration.
- With careful planning, bibliotherapy can build community within small groups, classrooms, and school-wide.
- Take advantage of the many resources available to encourage student self-reflection.

Thank you for your time today and I hope the information and handouts are helpful!

