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Ten Second Reviews

By Blanche O. Bush

Western Michigan University

There you are, looking at yourself in the very pages before you—a clear picture drawn by an author who never saw you.

—A. L. Porterfield

Bibliotherapy, using reading to promote mental hygiene, is one of the prime responsibilities of a teacher at all grade levels. The greater the teacher's awareness of the dynamics of reading, the more successful she will be in helping students understand themselves and the world about them. Ideally the reader's self concept is enhanced through reading by gaining insight but if his self concept is threatened the clues exposed may be of value to the instructor in understanding the reader's motives, in recognizing his defenses, and in giving him support. Not all teachers are able to extend the scope of the reading program in this direction but regardless of goals and training, the teacher must foster mental health and recognize that reading is complex and involves the whole personality. Some interesting and helpful suggestions are included in these reviews.

Adams, Bess Porter, *About Books and Children. A Historical Survey of Children's Literature*. Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1953.

Good literature, whether for old or young readers, bears the mark of truth and integrity; it carries the reader along into genuine, if vicarious, experiences; it stirs his emotions, arouses his curiosity, stimulates his mind, and gives him a measuring stick for living.

Good literature, according to the author, recalls the past, reflects the present, and prognosticates the future. It is more than a mirror, for it reaches ahead of today and beckons one into tomorrow, offering the reader new growth in wisdom, insight, and understanding.

Carter, Homer L. J. and Dorothy J. McGinnis, *Teaching Individuals to Read*. D. C. Heath and Company, Boston, 1962.

This book is designed for in-service teachers and for students enrolled in reading methods courses. The three aspects of reading, identification, interpretation and evaluation of concepts,

and the importance of background and mental content in the reading process are emphasized. Reading is regarded as a thinking process and stresses integration rather than an accumulation of isolated basic skills. Through the life histories of seven children, the authors have focused attention upon the individual and have considered reading to be a part of the total development of the child. An over-all view of the teaching of reading from the kindergarten through high school is presented. The authors emphasize the sequential development of overlapping reading skills rather than limiting certain reading skills to a specific grade level. Practical suggestions are presented throughout the book for children whose interests and reading levels vary widely. Guided activities following the text of each chapter have been planned to stimulate critical study and to help the teacher have a better insight into the problems of his students. Through understanding the child, his wishes and desires and the different mechanisms he employs to obtain these goals, a background for bibliotherapy can be attained.

Emeruwa, Leatrice, "Bibliotherapy Via Library Club," *School Activities*, 29:145, (January) 1958, 145-146.

Using literature to gain insight into personal problems is not a new educational trick despite the fancy name "bibliotherapy." Bibliotherapy is a fruitful means by which teachers can help adolescents solve some of the emotionalities while developing good reading skills. The love of reading and the ability to do critical reading, as presented in the article, seem to be important corollaries.

Jones, Jessie Orton, "Books, Children and Religion." *Horn Book*, XXX, No. 1, (February) 1954, 17-26.

While respecting the individual tastes of young readers, the author shows how adults can direct them to books and to a better understanding of themselves and of the relationship they could have with the world and God.

Newell, Ethel, "At the North End of Pooh: A Study of Bibliotherapy." *Elementary English*, XXXVI, (January) 1957, 22-25.

"Pooh was too fat and bibliotherapy was prescribed as an aid in the crisis." Using this story to illustrate her point, the author

also presents these questions to introduce her concepts. Is there real help to be found in books for personal problems of children? What kind of help and how much? How sure? The best way to give our children what he needs most, as reported by the author, is to become better informed parents, teachers and librarians. In becoming informed we learn among many other things that children are individuals and have problems. Suggested criteria for judging a "first aid book" for an individual child with individual problems are: It must be well written. The purpose must not obscure the story, and it must be written subtly so that the author avoids sentimental moods which result in a book about children rather than for them.

Porterfield, Austin L., *Mirror Mirror—On Seeing Yourself in Books*. Leo Potishman Foundation, Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, 1957.

The author presents his objectives for books as fourfold: (1) To make it easier to read for self-insight and social understanding which abound in fiction and drama and to discover that serious reading can also be exciting, (2) to help the student and teacher in the social sciences find literary sources which are useful in illuminating sociological and psychological concepts, (3) to add to the ability of the student and the teacher in literary fields to make use of such concepts in literary analysis, and (4) to supply leads for the uses of literary sources by public speakers and study groups. All add up to bibliotherapy.

Shrodes, Caroline, "Bibliotherapy," *The Reading Teacher's Reader*, Oscar S. Causey, (ed.). The Ronald Press Company, New York, 1958, 285-290.

Bibliotherapy as reported by the author is made possible by the "shock of recognition" the reader experiences when he beholds himself, or those close to him, in a story or some other piece of literature. Vicarious experiences induced by reading include (1) identification, (2) catharsis, and (3) insight. The reader will abstract from his reading only what he is able to perceive and organize. Literature in its direct and concrete representation of life engages the emotions and enables the reader to re-live his own experiences. Success in helping students find coherence and value in their lives depends to some degree

on the teacher's awareness of all the facets of the student's personalities, talents, curiosities, skills and aspirations, and the ability of the teacher to assist the students to know "who they are," "what they may become," and "how they may relate to others."

Yashima, Taro, "On Making a Book for a Child." *Horn Book*, XXXI, (February) 1955, 21-25.

As a human being the author stated that she could not help imagining that children will grow up and face many sorts of struggles that may even bring them to despair at times. To help the children live through all their difficulties Mrs. Taro expressed a desire to give them something that would help them through these problems. As the world is wide and everything in it can be used to make books for children, the author suggested that the theme of a good book should be, "This earth is beautiful. Living is wonderful. Believe in human kindness."