



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
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American Children's Literature: A Bibliotherapeutic Approach

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We live in stressful times. With the many social problems and concerns of today, many of our young students deal with difficult issues on a daily basis. Reading about the resolution of similar situations and seeing themselves reflected in a book could be helpful. Furthermore, if we encourage our youngsters to read regularly, they will do better in school, which will help their self esteem and end up improving their life.

I work in New Haven as a School Library Media Specialist with Kindergarteners through Fifth Graders. My unit encompasses their reading and listening levels. The five areas of stress that are covered include: feeling left out at home, feeling left out at school, feeling left out because of a racial issue, making and keeping friends and encountering the death of a family member, friend or pet. I must caution against presenting a steady diet of bibliotherapeutic books to a class. As the school year progresses, I would only use one or two of the books in this unit with each class that visits the library media center.

My aim is that as students read the offered stories or hear them read aloud by a Library Media Specialist, classroom teacher, or other staff member, they will see a light at the end of the tunnel and find ways of coping or working out their own problems. Additionally, insight could be gained as to why another might behave in an unpleasant and anti-social manner. I have chosen books that I enjoy or have enjoyed reading to groups of children. Some excellent books get too personal or do not lend themselves to reading aloud because of a significance amount of dialogue among more than two characters. My choices hold a listener's interest and gently teach a lesson of sorts. Additionally, I looked for curriculum tie-ins. Each offering has one or more activities to extend the story and involve the students in an interesting manner.

In ancient Greece this inscription was over the door of the library at Thebes: "Healing place of the soul." Reading can heal our soul and encourage self- growth. As we read an engrossing story, we can lose ourselves as we imagine ourselves in the story. We can get to know others and become more understanding of other points of view. As Hazel Rochman in *Against Borders* expresses it: "The best books break down borders . . . They change our view of ourselves." My personal opinion is that everyone can escape into reading and forget their troubles as they gain insight, solve problems, and learn about other situations.

The word "bibliotherapy" is defined as helping with books. In 1966, the American Library Association accepted this official definition: "The use of selected reading materials as therapeutic adjuvants in medicine and psychiatry; *also* , guidance in the solution of personal problems through directed reading."

Bibliotherapy is not seen as a cure all but as an adjuvant or facilitator to treatment. Notice, however, that

more than selection of reading materials is involved: guidance is also a part of bibliotherapy. It is also important to note that the bibliotherapeutic process can be overt and conscious, subtle, self directed or stumbled on accidentally.

Because children are egocentric until approximately age nine, they often think that they themselves have caused unpleasant things such as death or divorce in their families, by something that they did or omitted to do. Instead of anger they may react with depression—a form of anger turned inward. A child may anxiously worry "Who will take care of me?" Children need help and time so they can confront and master their loss.

Memory will come into play here, too. A story that was heard and not related to may be remembered at a later date when its message is relevant and needed. A class discussion of a story helps students gain insight as well. The students may feel comfortable enough to admit that they have felt the same painful emotions as characters in the story. Readers can grasp and identify the problems and pain of others as they gain insight into their own situations. Extending the story by utilizing the suggested activity or incorporating other activities will address diverse learning styles and extend each student's learning. By bringing their own associations to a story, children can make it their own.

Children may utilize bibliotherapy on their own, and this self-motivation is beneficial. It is even more advantageous to have some adult guidance available from someone familiar with the individual child's situation.

Stress Number 1: Feeling Left Out At Home

A book to utilize with our youngest students up to grade 2 is Martha Alexander's *Nobody Asked Me if I Wanted a Baby Sister*. It tells the story of a youngster who feels that the family is fine without a new baby. There are a number of books with a similar plot, that can be used successfully. It is important to have a resolution and acceptance at the end of the story. I particularly like this choice for its child-sized format and enchanting illustrations.

After reading this book, discussion among the students can follow. A show of hands can be asked for: Who has a younger brother or sister? Who has felt like the character in this book about their little brother or sister?

An art activity to show that each of us has a place in our family tree follows. Talk about trees with the students and if possible, take a walk outside to look at nearby trees. Back inside, have pictures of trees displayed for the students to see and discuss. Have each student draw a tree. On a separate piece of paper have them draw as many leaves as there are in his or her family. The leaves are then labeled with a family member's name and glued onto their tree.

Noisy Nora by Rosemary Wells can also work well with this age group. It tells the story of a little mouse child who was the middle child and always had to wait for attention. Nora gets noisier and noisier as she waits for mom and dad to finish helping big sister Kate and little brother Jack. The repeated refrain is:

"Quiet!" said her father. "Hush!" said her mum. "Nora!" said her sister, "Why are you so dumb?"

When Nora states she is leaving and never coming back, the family shows their concern and caring for Nora. Have the students brainstorm about some other replies that the mom, dad and sister could make to Nora. Suggest that they put themselves in Nora's place. What would they like to hear? A promise that it will be her turn to read with dad, soon? A request from mom to help with the baby's bath? This story can be acted out with puppets, utilizing the new improved replies to Nora that help her feel less left out of the family circle.

Like Jake and Me by Mavis Jukes would be suitable for second and third graders. The main character, Alex, is about seven or eight years old. He does spend time with his dad, who is an entomologist, but lives with his mom, Virginia and her new husband, Jake, who is a cowboy. Alex admires and emulates big, strong, brave, capable Jake and sees himself as clumsy, unsure of himself and "chicken," in his own words. Virginia is pregnant with twins and when Alex asks his mom "If there is a boy, do you think he will be like Jake or like me?" She replies "Maybe like Jake and you."

There is an amusing section that students will enjoy when Alex, who has learned about entomology, (from his dad,) and is knowledgeable about spiders, is talking about a pregnant wolf spider that he spies on Jake's neck. Jake is gazing at Virginia and thinks that Alex is discussing her—pretty, with a big belly from carrying the soon to be born babies, wearing woolly leg warmers and in Jake's coat. When Jake realizes that there is an actual spider in the coat that he is wearing, he is terrified and appeals to his stepson to help him. "You never told me that you were afraid of spiders," said Alex. "You never asked me . . . Help!" is the answer.

Alex saves the spider and his stepdad and feels he has a place in the family now. The story ends with Jake sweeping Alex up in a dance as Virginia exclaims "It feels like the twins are beginning to dance." Alex replies, "Like Jake and me."

A Venn diagram showing how Alex and Jake are alike and how they differ would be useful with this story. The students can also discuss their relationships with their parents and other adults in their lives.

Information on the wolf spider can be garnered from a multimedia encyclopedia on CD ROM. It would be interesting to check several sources and compare the amount of information found. An Internet search would also be enhancing.

For our fourth and fifth graders I would present *Yang the Youngest and His Terrible Ear* by Lensey Namioka. This is the story of two nine-year-old boys whose families have expectations and plans for them that are contrary to their own talents. Matthew, an American is a talented violinist. His dad thinks that playing the violin is being a nerd and urges Matthew to continue to play baseball, a sport which Matthew does not particularly enjoy. Yingtao, youngest member of the Yang family newly arrived in Seattle from Shanghai learns about baseball from Matthew. As he plays baseball to fit in, Yang is discovered to have a talent at this sport, which bewilders his musical family. Although he has little musical ability, his siblings need him to play second violin in the Yang family string quartet at a recital to advertise their father's music lessons. Matthew can play that musical part well and tries to help him. The two friends figure out a solution, which almost works. In the end, all does work out. This delightful story with a happy ending also fits into the categories of racial situations and feeling left out at school.

A writing activity to accompany this story is to have the students talk about their own talents. Have them brainstorm about what they are good at and what they enjoy doing. A talent show can be planned and presented to showcase the talents of the class. A child with an interest in magic, for example can use a how-to book and perform some simple tricks. Someone who is interested in art could paint or model clay and exhibit their finished work of art. Poems can be recited, original or likewise. Some talents can be combined, for example, a student with an interest in baseball and poetry can recite "Casey at the Bat." We can put our puppet stage to use with an original puppet show also.

Michael Dorris's *Morning Girl* is set in 1492, as Columbus discovers what he refers to as the "Indies" and we know as North America. It can be read on several levels and is appropriate for fifth grade. Native American, Morning Girl sees her brother Star Boy as a nuisance and would wish him out of her family if she could. Then

when their newly born sister dies, they share deep sorrow. Morning Girl can then see that they share other emotions. As she relates to Star Boy as a person, she begins to relate to the others in her island world. She finds her place and he finds his in their immediate family and in the culture they live in.

The brother and sister each tell part of the story in a form that would work well with reading aloud by different voices. Native American culture is described along with island life which is dependent in many ways on what the weather brings. When Morning Girl laughingly describes her first view of Columbus landing she hopes that her people will get along with these new people in their funny clothes and their new ways. However Columbus comes as a vanquisher and sees the island people as potential servants. He sees no need to get along with anyone. He will overcome the natives.

Choral reading of the brother's and sister's parts would be effective with this story. A sampling of the different foods of Native Americans would add a dimension to our students experiencing this story.

Morning Girl and Star Boy are very different people with different likes and dislikes, yet they are in the same family and share the same emotions, as they discover. Morning Girl's name suits her as she enjoys early morning when no one else is around. Star Boy is curious about the stars.

Have the class members discuss their nicknames. They can talk about who gave them the nickname and why it fits. Assist those students who are uncertain, or who do not have a nickname. Using your own judgment, decide if brainstorming with the class to suggest a nickname to another student is a workable project. Stress that we are not here to hurt anyone's feelings.

Talk about the nicknames you and your own children may have. Our older son, over ten years ago, returned from camp with the nickname of Sly, short for Sylvester Stallone of the "Rocky" movies. His handsome, dark looks and feisty "I can do it, let me at it" athletic attitude earned him that name. Our younger son, also very athletic, has excelled at batting and fielding. He was referred to as Slugger, Matt the Mitt and Matt the Bat at varying times in his baseball career which has spanned over fifteen years.

For an art activity, have the students write characterizations on lined paper explaining why their nickname is suitable and appropriate. Then on art paper, using colored markers and decorative writing, have the students write and decorate their nicknames or, if they prefer nicknames of others which have been approved by the teacher.

If access to a number of computers is feasible, different colored inks and large and fancy fonts can be utilized for a different look.

Stress Number 2: Feeling Left Out at School

A story that goes along with this subject is Leo Lionni's *Swimmy*. This gently didactic tale is suitable for kindergarteners and first graders. It is a story of a fish that is a different color from all the other red fish. He sees all his fish friends get eaten by a very large fish. When he sets out to find more little fish to hang out with and be friends with the school of fish that he encounters is a very timid group. These fish have seen what happens to little fish when big hungry fish come by and they are afraid to go out in the open water to play. Swimmy gets a wonderful idea! He organizes the other fish so they will not be lunch for the bigger fish. When the other fish follow his directives and swim in formation, they appear to be a very large fish. Swimmy, the differently colored black fish, swims in the place where an eye would be on this very large fish. Other large and hungry fish are scared away from what they see as a fish larger than themselves. Further discussion on

cooperation so everyone wins can ensue. This would also fit in with a unit on racial issues.

Marcus Pfister's *Rainbow Fish* goes well with this story. Rainbow fish is beautiful with his sparkling rainbow scales, but very lonely because he does not share with the other fish and they ignore him. A insightful octopus suggests he give each fish one scale. The other fish become his friend when he shares. The students can talk about some things they have shared with others. *Rainbow Fish to the Rescue* by the same author also teaches a similar gentle lesson. Both stories can be listened to and then acted out with puppets at our puppet stage.

Judith Viorst's *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* should be shared with every child for we have all had the kind of day where everything we do turns out wrong and we would like to move away to Australia. This book can be shared with any age. I have had interesting discussions about this title with high school and college students. Present it to first and second graders and watch their faces as they relate to Alexander on a day where everything goes askew. Invite them to join you in telling the story each time you get to the often repeated refrain of "Alexander was having a Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day."

Ask the class to share a short experience that they have had similar to Alexander's. With second graders, have a writing activity of describing a very bad day or give a choice of writing about a bad day or a very good day. Tell them that the stories can be fiction or non-fiction. You may need to limit some of the more imaginative students. It can be very therapeutic to write about your trials and tribulations!

Third graders would enjoy reading aloud together *The Chalk Box Kid* by Clyde Robert Bulla. This also fits into the category of making friends. It is the story of Gregory, a new boy in school who is unnoticed or rejected by his classmates and unnoticed at home as well. His family has moved because his dad has lost his job. His parents are busy struggling to survive. Gregory has nothing of his own. Even his bedroom has to be shared by an inconsiderate and egocentric young uncle. The only place he feel at home is an abandoned lot with a shed. With chalk, he creates a huge and extraordinary garden. His artistic ability is missed by everyone, somehow. A turn of events changes that. At the end of the book, one classmate in particular, Ivy, also artistic, has become his friend and the other students look on him more favorably. His family at last sees his artistic talent and pays some attention to him. We feel that Gregory's life will finally improve.

With thick colorful sidewalk chalk, a similar chalk garden can be created by the class on the playground blacktop. Each student can be assigned a specific item to draw. Reading about what Gregory drew and recreating it will make the story come alive for the class. The class created chalk garden will only last until the first rain, if that long, but will create the flavor of the story. The happy ending can be shared out in the playground chalk garden.

For fourth and fifth graders, we will look at Bette Bao Lord's *In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson* . Shirley Temple Wong is the spunky heroine of this story. Newly arrived from China, she has some trouble fitting in at school at first, as she does not speak or understand English. This novel also works well with the racial issues category. Because age is counted differently in China, she ends up the smallest and youngest in her class. She does eventually fit in and a high point is when she meets her hero,(Jackie Robinson, of course!).

We will do some research with the question of age and the Chinese way of computing age. As we read, other questions will come up such as how and with what are different Chinese foods made. Various customs will bring up questions also. The class will be divided into research groups and each group will describe the process of doing research and report their answer to the class in a brief oral report. Each student will do a self evaluation using a teacher created rubric.

With the BIG SIX method of research, we will first ask ourselves first: What is our question? The second step is

to ask what can we use to get the information we need. Step three is to determine where we can find what we need. With step four we will read the information and decide what we can use. Step five is when we organize the information and present it to the class. Step six will involve the rubric as each student will self evaluate.

A second book for fifth graders is Elvira Woodruff's *The Magnificent Mummy Maker* . This story also fits into the feeling left out at home category, because of Jason the gifted step brother. It tells the story of Andy, who has never done anything magnificent, either at home or at school. He wonders if it is because his mother passed away, leaving just him and his dad to cope. Now his dad is married to Marie, mother to the irritating Jason.

Andy goes on a class trip to a museum and views an Egyptian exhibit. He stays behind when the class goes to the gift shop mesmerized, nearly in a trance, in front of the mummy exhibit. Suddenly he feels like a different person, changed in some mysterious manner. He catches up with his class, puzzling over his new psyche. From now on, his life is altered. He gains respect in the eyes of his classmates and family. Should we blame or credit the mummy's Ka? Is its new home deep in Jason's soul?

There are six characters with a good amount of dialogue. Ask for volunteers from the class, and have them sit in front and read their parts aloud into a tape recorder. Save time each session to play back the tape and enjoy your Readers' Theater twice!

In the book, Andy creates a magnificent mummy as a project for a class assignment. From the Demco Library and Reading Promotions catalog, we can order a Color-A-Mummy Standup that is 5 _ feet tall with an easel back. Students can take a turn coloring and decorating the mummy with magic markers. Everyone who does some of the coloring will receive an Egyptian bookmark, available from the same catalog.

Examples of hieroglyphics can be discussed and students can make up sentences for the class to decipher. This can be a group project. Each group will create a poster with a secret message that states a true fact about mummies, their Ka or ancient Egypt. The posters will be judged by a panel of teachers chosen by the class.

Reading about the customs of such ancient times sparks many questions. The class can be divided into groups and each group will have to answer a question. We will search the Internet for information. There is a super web site that will get us started at <http://www.bdd.com/teachers>.

Different books can offer knowledge also. *Mummies: Myth and Magic* by Christine El Mahdy has especially great photographs. At our school, we had a magnet resource teacher who had visited Egypt and kept an extensive scrapbook of photographs. She has innumerable souvenirs and was happy to discuss them and reminisce about her journey. Our students were enthralled and enjoyed her first hand account.

Pointing out the areas visited on a map and noticing the names of nearby countries will give a sense of where the story originated to the class.

A crafty project that the students will enjoy is to make Egyptian beads like those the mummy wears in the book. We will use glue, brightly colored magazine pages, scissors, a paintbrush handle, yarn, metal washers, straws cut to bead size, macaroni and beads. After we cut the magazine pages into inch strips and spread each strip with glue, we will roll the strips on the paintbrush handle, gluing the strip beads together as we proceed. After the beads dry, they can be strung on the yarn, and interspersed with the other materials. Dipping the yarn into the glue makes the end stiff and easy to thread onto the yarn. We will have the opportunity to make several strands of varying lengths.

Stress Number Three: Feeling Left Out Because of Racial Issues

Kindergartners and first graders will enjoy the story of *Smoky Night*, a Caldecott Award winning book by Eve Bunting. We read about neighbors from different ethnic backgrounds sheltering together. It is the story of the Los Angeles riots in 1992. Daniel and his mother, who are African American, are watching from their apartment window as crowds loot the shops below. Dramatic multimedia illustrations by David Diaz add to the excitement of this book. Each illustration is framed by a collage of unique found items appropriate to that page. On the page where the grocery store is being looted, for example, we see cereal bits, garbage bag fragments and pieces of fruit forming a collage framing the picture. When Daniel and his mother are evacuated, he cannot find his cat and tearfully leaves her behind. At the shelter, they see their neighbor, Mrs. Kim. She is an elderly Korean woman who owns the market that was just looted. Although they are neighbors, they avoid each other and never speak. That changes on that smoky night. Her treasured cat is missing also. A firefighter comes in carrying the two terrified cats. Although the cats always fought, they were found huddled together.

Their owners look at each other with more friendly eyes. They make plans to have tea together one day. We feel that they will become friends now.

Ask the class about their own pets. Do they get along with other animals? As an art activity, have the children draw themselves and their pets. Suggest that they frame their art with collages of appropriate items like David Diaz does in *Smoky Night*. A picture of a pet dog could be framed with pictures of a dog biscuit, a ball, and a water dish.

Second and third graders will gain from hearing *Dear Willie Rudd*, by Libba Moore Gray. A woman is remembering her black housekeeper, Willie Rudd, from over 50 years ago. She writes a letter of apology to this kind lady, "now surely gone to heaven, if anyone ever has." In the letter, she thanks Willie Rudd and tells her that she loves her.

She describes what she would do differently and how she would act.

A writing activity would be to write a letter to another person, either apologizing, thanking them or telling them that you love them. Have each student draw a picture to go with their letter.

Baseball Saved Us by Ken Mochizuki can be presented to fourth graders. It describes life in the internment camp where Japanese American families were sent during World War II. The families live in horse-stall barracks and have nothing to do until baseball gives them a goal. Adults and children work together to form teams, sew uniforms and make a baseball field. The narrator starts out as an "easy out" but improves and has a moment in the limelight when the score is 3 to 2, men are on base, there are 2 outs and it is his turn at bat. He hits a home run and is carried off the field on his teammates' shoulders.

Later, when the war ends, life is still a struggle for the narrator. He is still picked last when the children at school divide into baseball teams and he still hears shouts of "easy out" and "Jap." But then he is in a similar baseball game situation and is about to strike out when he remembers his triumphant game and makes a powerful connected swing, hitting a home run again and saving the game again.

We will research Japanese Internment Camps, World War II and baseball. A writing activity will be to have students write a short story, starting with this sentence: "The other team was ahead by 1, there were 2 outs and guess who was up at bat . . ."

With fifth Graders, we will look at Patricia Polacco's haunting *Pink and Say*. This is a Civil War story about Pinkus Aylee, a black soldier who saves the life of a white soldier, Sheldon Curtis, ancestor of the author, and also known as Say. It is a moving and sad anecdote. It works very well as an introduction to the Civil War.

My feeling about the story was that I wished it did not end in the untimely death of one of the main characters. The activity with this story will be to write your own ending and have it be a happy one. Students will have the opportunity to read aloud their own endings and act them out with puppets at the puppet stage.

Stress Number Four: Making and Keeping Friends

For our younger classes, kindergarteners through first graders, I would suggest the use of *Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge* by Mem Fox as a good story about friendship. It tells the tale of a young boy with four names who lives next to a home for the elderly. He is friends with each of the people there for different reasons. He is friends with Mr. Tippet because he played cricket and with Mrs. Jordon because she played the organ. Because his friend Miss Mitchell cannot do much walking, he ran errands for her. He likes the booming voice of his friend, Mr. Drysdale. However his special friend is Miss Nancy Alison Delacourt Cooper who has four names, just as Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge does. When he hears that she has lost her memory, he helps her find it, since friends help each other.

I would read this story, showing the delightful and colorful illustrations that are like caricatures. This would be followed by a class discussion about our neighbors and also about people who are older and different from us. What makes someone our friend? Why are people special to us? Then we would discuss our memories and each person's special memories about a friend.

A follow-up project would be to create a display of memory baskets. A letter would be sent home describing the project and requesting that students bring in special tins, boxes and baskets to hold memories. Request that any families with extra containers, send them in to be used by those who have none.

We would reread the story. Have each child tell of objects that bring memories of a special time. Ask them to remember, as in the story that we read together, something that is very old, something that makes them cry, something that makes them laugh, and something that makes them feel warm. Request that students bring these items in from home the next day. Then have all the children fill their memory baskets, boxes or tins. Display the baskets, along with a copy of the book for others to enjoy.

Eric Carle's *The Very Lonely Firefly* is also an enjoyable book to use with this age group. Felicity Firefly, a puppet, can tell the story. She is lonely and wants to find some other fireflies. She searches for her friends until the next to the last page. Let the class help with the story. Are these flashing lights some other fireflies? No, they are the headlights from a passing car. What about these? Audience participation will be a natural response to this irresistible tale. The last page of this book is a delightful surprise. With the assistance of a replaceable battery, triggered by turning the page just so, the fireflies signal to the lonely firefly by flashing their lights on and off. It is especially effective if the room can be dimmed. At the conclusion of this story, pass the book around and let the children gently turn the page and individually experience the welcome from the fireflies.

First and second graders will enjoy *Jamaica Tagalong* by Juanita Havill. The characters are mainly African American and Hispanic but that is not referred to in the text. The story is about a big brother who does not want his sister, Jamaica, tagging along when he goes to play basketball with the guys. He tells her, "You're not old enough." She sneaks after him and tries to play but is sent away. At the nearby playground, a younger

boy, Berto, wants to play with Jamaica, as she makes a sand castle. When she hears his mom tell him, "Big kids don't like to be bothered by little kids," she remembers that is what her brother always says to her. She reflects on her hurt feelings. Then she begins to show Berto what to do to help her. When her brother's basketball game is over, he comes over and admires the huge castle she made with Berto. When he offers, "Need some help?" Jamaica replies, "If you want to." This will spark discussion on how we should treat each other nicely and not hurt each others' feelings.

E. B. White's *Charlotte's Web* can be effective with second and third graders. This book is very popular with students and is consistently voted favorite book in school votes over the years since it was first published in 1952. Adults as well as children enjoy this witty tale. Charlotte the spider is a good friend to Wilbur the pig and helps him immensely with her friendship. No ordinary spider, she spins a web above Wilbur with the words "Some Pig" glistening with dew on the web. Other webs follow that say "Terrific," "Radiant" and "Humble". These miraculous webs cause Wilbur's owners to spare his life and win a special award for Wilbur at the state fair. Spiders do not live long and this story falls into the category of stories about death also. Charlotte has a sweet acceptance about death: it all falls into the cycle of life; her acceptance is calming to Wilbur and to the reader.

Also important to the story is Templeton the rat. He is not a caring character and like a miser saves things like rotten eggs and does not take care of them. He has to be bribed by Wilbur to help save Charlotte's egg sack.

There is a cassette of a children's song sung by The Brady Bunch entitled "Charlotte's Web." It can be played effectively for a class. The words are poetic, "Lovely and lyrical, silvery miracle, Charlotte's Web."

Many activities lend themselves to this book. The illustrations are very descriptive and suitable to enlarge on a copier machine. Students can sit and listen and color the picture that goes with the chapter being read. At the end of each short chapter, it is a good idea to ask several reading comprehension questions. Dividing the class into competing teams by tables adds to the fun and helps some students pay attention.

A fun craft to accompany this story is to make spider necklaces with a large bead as the body, threaded onto colorful yarn. Pass out four pipe cleaners and have the students fold each in half to get eight spider legs. Thread the legs through the bead. A fun touch is to glue on moveable eyes.

Harriet the Spy by Louise Fitzhugh can be used successfully with third and fourth graders. This book was made very popular by the recent movie. I would read the book to students first and then possibly show the movie after the book is completed. Harriet, the main character needs to become more sensitive to how others feel about her actions. She keeps a journal for her spying but does not consider how others may feel if they see what she has written about them. Journal writing is an activity that this novel will inspire, with some guidelines about what is OK to write. We will brainstorm about what kind of comments are hurtful and thus not allowed as part of this class project.

Another story about friendship, for our older classes, also deals with death. *Bridge to Terabithia* by Katherine Paterson tells the story of Jess Aarons. This Newbery award winning book is suitable for fifth graders. I would not use it with anyone younger, because it deals with the death of a "same age" friend. Jess is your typical loner. He used to spend all his time alone, drawing pictures. Then in fifth grade, he wins a race and discovers the thrill of racing to win. He wants the title of fastest runner in the whole school. Now he has a new identity. When the new girl, Leslie Burke, moves in and crosses into the boys' side of the playground, he can see that she is different from the other children who mainly have been ignoring him. After she beats him in an important race and after his anger subsides, they become friends.

They, very imaginatively, make up a secret land. This world of theirs, far in the woods is named the castle of Terabithia. Their secret world is very important to them. They forget about the unhappiness at home and at school where the other kids either ignore them or taunt them and call them weird. Tragedy then strikes, and Leslie accidentally is killed. The story is very moving.

A follow up activity would be to have students write sympathy letters to either Leslie's family or to Jess. Another activity is to talk to the class about giving each other "put-ups" which are the opposite of "put-downs." I would give some examples of put-ups, and then ask members of the class to compliment each other publicly.

I would then have everyone's name written down on separate slips and placed in a decorative container. Each child would draw out a name and write three compliments to that person, using their best handwriting, colored markers and fancy paper. If there is access to a computer, fancy fonts and colored inks can be utilized for this activity. The students can choose to sign their work or leave it unsigned. We would make a bulletin board display to share our project.

An alternate project is to write name poems. Each student can write their own name down a paper, with one letter on each line. Then they are to write a descriptive word or words, beginning with each letter of their name, with the aid of a dictionary or thesaurus. Here is an example:

M asterful

A thletic

T echno wizard

T alented

Stress Number 5: Encountering the Death of a Family Member, Friend or Pet

The charming *I'll Always Love You* by Hans Wilhelm is a book suitable for all ages, beginning with kindergarteners and first graders. It tell the story in picture form of a young boy, who remains nameless throughout. It is also the story of a dog named Elfie who comes to the boy as a young pup. They have wonderful times romping together. The illustrations complement the story and continue the written actions exceptionally. We smile as we see the closeness and joy experienced by the boy, and sometimes his brother and sister, with Elfie. But she is definitely his dog and every night he tells her, "I'll always love you." He knows she understands. We know what is in store, and sure enough the inevitable happens. One day, the vet tells the boy and his family, "Elfie is just growing old." When Elfie dies in the night, the whole family grieves together. What helps the boy is that he can remember that he always told her of his love for her. He is not ready for a new pet, but when he is, he will be just as loving and tell his pet how he feels.

With puppets, our students will discuss pets they have known or had. They can act out their stories.

This book lends itself very nicely to writing a diamond shaped poem called a diamante. We will write about pets we have owned or known or about storybook animals. The formula for this type of poem is to write the animal's name on one line, then two words that describe the animal on the next line. Follow that with three adjectives, then on the next line with two adjectives. The last line repeats the animal's name. An example follows:

Elfie

Best Dog
Loving, Loyal, Playful
Elderly, Tired

Elfie. It is also entertaining for children to write a diamante about themselves, other family members, or about each other.

For second and third graders, I would have them listen to *Blackberries in the Dark* by Mavis Jukes. It tells of the summer after Grandfather's death when Austin goes to stay with Grandma. Always before, he and Grandfather would have a wonderful time together, fishing and picking blackberries and doing innumerable other enjoyable activities. Now Austin faces time without his beloved Grandfather. His Grandmother helps him remember Grandfather in a loving way and tries to be a companion to her grandson. By talking together, they grieve together as they remember happier days when grandfather was with them.

For our older students, we will present Rosemary Well's *The Language of Doves*. It also involves a grandfather and his grandchild. Julietta is given a dove or homing pigeon as a birthday present from her grandfather. He tells her the story of how the homing pigeons were used during World War I to send secret communications between the troops. He had a job also: although only 9 years old, he helped the Italian army by caring for the doves. His favorite was called Isabella. Julietta names her pigeon Isabella. She must learn to fly back to Julietta, her new owner. It is not until Grandfather passes away and all the pigeons are sold that Isabella finally does learn the language of the doves and returns to her young owner.

We will research homing pigeons and their part in World War I. The homing pigeons were used by the Italian army as well as other armies.

Discussion can ensue about the groups' experience with their grandparents or surrogate grandparents. Often, relatives are seen at family gatherings or parties. We will have a party for our treasured grandparents. The students will all write an invitation to a grandparent or treasured older friend to come to tea in the media center. The invitations will be on white paper doves.

Refreshments will be organized and students will help with bringing in and setting up the food. The entertainment will be for the students to tell a story about their grandparent and themselves. They will have a choice of acting out their story at the puppet theater or reading their story aloud. The stories will be typed up ahead of time and practiced. A copy of their own story will be presented to each of the guests.

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Materials for Classroom or Library Media Center Use

A puppet stage or an area that can be utilized for puppet use.

Multicultural children puppets/dolls from Treehuggers. Set of 12 are available.

Rainbow Fish puppet.

Color-A-Mummy Standup with easel back

Magic Markers

Mummy bookmarks

Felicity Firefly puppet

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