



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
1997 Volume II: American Children's Literature

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## **American Children's Literature: A Bibliotherapeutic Approach**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 97.02.12  
by Jeanne Z. Lawrence

We live in stressful times. With the social problems and concerns of today, many of our young students deal with difficult issues daily. 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 lives. Thus books can be therapeutic in several ways, and my unit offers a program of reading as therapy.

A steady diet of such moralistic offerings could become a turn off. My suggestion would be to use only one or two of the books with each class that visits the Library Media Center, or for a classroom teacher to limit the bibliotherapeutic approach as well.

I work as a School Library Media Specialist with Kindergartners through Fifth Graders. My unit covers those reading and listening levels. The five areas of stress that are covered include: feeling like you do not belong at home, feeling like you do not belong at school, feeling like you do not belong because of a racial situation, making and keeping friends, and encountering the death of a family member, friend or pet.

My hope is that as students read or listen to the offered stories, they will 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.

(Recommended for Reading and Language Arts, grades K-5)

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