

Introduction to Bibliotherapy



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Reading & Mental Health



✧ Alberto Manguel: *The History of Reading*

„ We all read ourselves and the world to get to know what we are and where we are. We read because we would like to understand something or to depart on the path of understanding. Reading is an essential human activity, just like taking breath.“

Reading & Mental Health



„Every reader finds himself. The writer’s work is merely a kind of optical instrument that makes it possible for the reader to discern what, without this book, he would perhaps never have seen in himself.”

/Marcel Proust/

Reading & Mental Health



„The right story at the right moment is an arrow to the heart. It can find and catch what is hiding inside the reader (or the listener), the secret hurt or anger or need that lies waiting, aching to be brought to the surface.”

/Bruce Colville, children's author, 1990/

Benefits of Reading



- ❧ Increasing self-knowledge & emotional maturity
- ❧ To learn how the world functions
- ❧ To socialize: Development of social skills (empathy, tolerance) & EQ (emotional quotient, emotional intelligence)
- ❧ Empathic understanding of Others (patterns & motivations of behaviour, emotions)
- ❧ Clarification of 'prosocial' values
- ❧ Development of one's ethnic/cultural identity
- ❧ Appreciation of different cultures, viewpoints and lived experiences
- ❧ Improve coping skills: we can find alternative responses to our problems
- ❧ Foster wellbeing, entertain, relax
- ❧ Reduce negative emotions (stress, anxiety, loneliness)

The roots of 'Bibliotherapy'

∞ byblion+therapeia (gr.)

(book) (care,serve,prevent,develop,heal)

∞ „Healing place of the soul.”

(Inscription over the entrance to the ancient library at Thebes)

∞ **Aristotle** proposed the notion of emotional *catharsis*
– strong emotions may purify & heal the soul

∞ **ancient hindu medical practice:** the doctor gives to the patient physical medicine and a story to read at home (healing of the body and mind together!)

Bibliotherapy is...

- ❧ a special readers' guidance to develop readers' personality, social & problem-solving skills, emotional intelligence, to help readers to cope with their social & emotional problems
- ❧ the use of guided reading to help readers learn about and cope with social or emotional struggles and developmental needs through directed reading
- ❧ focuses on special tasks, methods and selection of materials aiming to foster a deeper understanding of ourselves, coping with crisis and existential questions
- ❧ „The process of dynamic interaction between the personality of the reader and literature under the guidance of a trained helper.” (Shrodes, 1950)
- ❧ “Therapeutic (literature-) reading that is used to help solve or prevent problems.” (Stadel, 1964).

Two main types of bibliotherapy

- ❧ **Clinical Bibliotherapy (prescriptive bt.):** is implemented by trained helping professionals dealing with significant emotional or behavioral problems
- ❧ **Developmental Bibliotherapy (creative bt.):** which may be used by teachers, librarians or lay helpers to facilitate normal development and self-actualization with an essentially healthy population (*therapy of healthy people*)
active/receptive

Professionalization of Bibliotherapy

- ❧ Mid-19th Century USA: several hospitals established *patient libraries*
- ❧ **Benjamin Rush** doctor from Philadelphia (1815) – uses the therapeutic value of reading in his medical practice
- ❧ **John Minson Galt** (1833) – reading is part of the treatment of patients
- ❧ 1916: the term of „*bibliotherapy*” appears first (Samuel McChord Crothers); Iowa: hospital libraries
- ❧ 1919: Elizabeth Green, dr. Sidney O. Schwab: *The Therapeutic Use of a Hospital Library*
- ❧ 1925-44: bt. as science – experimental or case studies, researches, special training of bibliotherapist professionals
- ❧ 1931-40: University of Minnesota; annotated & thematic bibliographies & booklists
- ❧ 1939 Hospital Division of American Library Association, first bibliotherapy board

Professionalization of Bibliotherapy

- ❧ 1946: bibliotherapeutic teams in hospitals of world war veterans; individual or group sessions
- ❧ 1950's: group therapy models proliferate – bt. goes out of the hospitals
- ❧ public libraries (children & youth), schools, social care institutions, senior homes, prisons
- ❧ Readers' advisory – special reader guidance, readers in need of special information
- ❧ patient education, booklists, self-help books, minimal contact therapy
- ❧ 1990's: bt. is employed by nearly every helping & educational profession (school counselors, social workers, mental health nurses, psychologists, psychiatrists, and teachers, librarians), with all ages and with multiple target groups

Bibliotherapy has different names...

- ❧ Biblio-/poetry therapy
- ❧ Bibliocounseling
- ❧ Bibliopsychology
- ❧ Bookmatching
- ❧ Literatherapy
- ❧ Library Therapeutics
- ❧ Guided Reading
- ❧ BiblioGuidance

Theoretical bases of Bibliotherapy

Library science: Reader-centred approach

❧ **Readers' development, developmental librarians**

Readers' development is an active intervention to:

- ❧ offer opportunities for people to share their reading experience
- ❧ open up and expand reading choices
- ❧ increase people's confidence and enjoyment of reading

Theoretical bases of Bibliotherapy

Art therapies & psychotherapies



- ∞ verbal & non-verbal art therapies (dance, music, movement, fine art, theatre, film) – combinations, complex art therapy (e.g. bt.+music+design+situation plays)
- ∞ short dynamic psychotherapies, psychoanalytically oriented psychotherapy and art therapy
- ∞ Psychological change takes time! (for a long lasting influence) – min. 6 months intensive work, 1-2 years
- ∞ Counseling (exchanging opinions and ideas, give advice)
- ∞ Nancy Davis: Healing stories, therapeutic stories in the treatment of PTSD

Theoretical bases of Bibliotherapy

Art therapies & psychotherapies



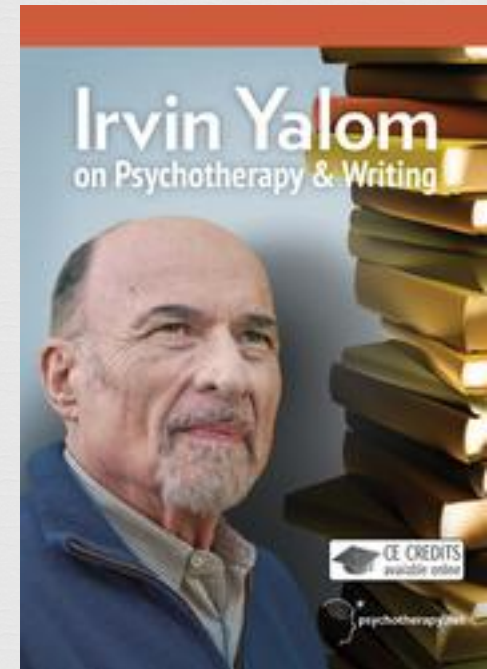
- ❧ Bibliotherapy is based on classic psychotherapy principles of identification, inspiration and insight which leads to motivation for positive change.
- ❧ The therapeutic process goes ahead through stages like recognising, feeling, thinking and universalisation.
- ❧ The aim of the therapy is to elicit change in the attitudes and behavior of the readers to enhance their problem-solving skills, and hence increase their resourcefulness. It aims to show readers that they are not alone because the others have the same concerns or problems (Harvey, 2010).

Theoretical bases of Bibliotherapy

Existential psychotherapy

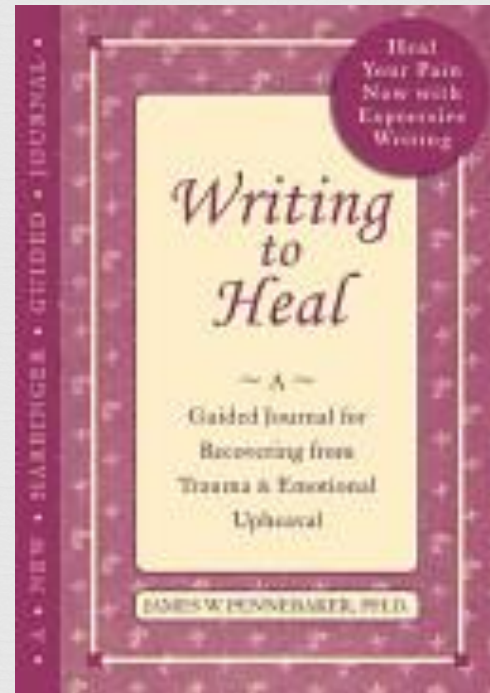
Irvin D. Yalom

- ❧ *The Theory and Practice of Group Psychotherapy*
- ❧ The main goal of the therapeutic process is not the healing as a medical issue, but the positive life-change and the development itself (1995).
- ❧ psychotherapeutic novels
(e.g. *Love's Executioner*;
When Nietzsche Wept;
Momma and the Meaning of Life;
The Schopenhauer Cure; *The Spinoza Problem*)
- ❧ working in the „**here-and-now**“
- ❧ transparency of the therapist
- ❧ psychotherapy & writing



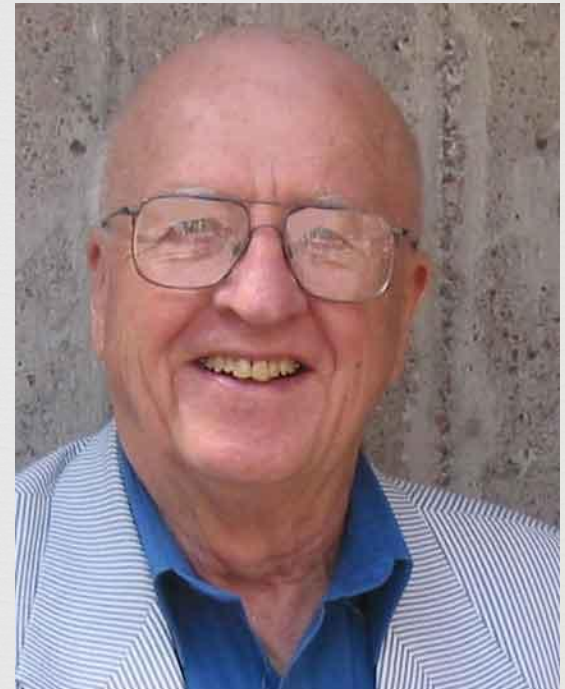
- ❧ Psychologist specialising in language & cognition
- ❧ reading and expressive writing with traumatised children
- ❧ helps readers 'translate' their traumatic, emotionally disturbing experiences into powerful writing that is clinically proven to promote recovery
- ❧ helps people to confront deep, personal issues promotes physical health and subjective wellbeing

James W. Pennebaker: **expressive emotions therapy (EET)**



- ❧ psychoanalytic model of reader response, United States, late 1960s
- ❧ demonstrates the vital role of the reader in creating the "meaning" of a text – transactional theory
- ❧ personal response to the text: reading is shaped by **identity themes** and the **life-experience** of the reader
- ❧ 2006: *Meeting Movies* interpretations of 8 classic movies with the associations and memories that explain why I perceive the movies as I do
- ❧ core meaning: potential meaning patterns imposed by the text – meaning derives from the reader not from the text
- ❧ literary work is a dynamic entity: the reader selects and relates the perspectives of the text from his/her own viewpoint

Norman N. Holland: The Dynamics of Literary Response (1968)



Theoretical bases of Bibliotherapy

Literary Theory: Reader-response criticism

- ❧ began in the 1960s and '70s, particularly in the US and Germany, in work by Norman Holland, Stanley Fish, Wolfgang Iser, Hans-Robert Jauss, Roland Barthes, Louise Rosenblatt etc.
- ❧ a school of literary theory that focuses on the reader and their personal experience of a literary work
- ❧ in contrast to other schools and theories that focus primarily on the author or the content and form of the text
- ❧ pays attention to the reader's role in creating the meaning and experience of a literary text

- ❧ it is important for the teacher to avoid imposing any "preconceived notions about the proper way to react to any work,,
- ❧ "The Reader, The Text, The Poem: The **Transactional Theory** of the Literary Work" (1978)
- ❧ the **act of reading** literature involves a **transaction** between the reader and the text
- ❧ each "transaction" is a **unique experience** in which the reader and text continuously act and are acted upon by each other

Louise Rosenblatt: *Literature as Exploration* (1938)



How the group therapy helps?

- ❧ Disturbed young people have read a strong text aloud together
- ❧ Talked about it with a practised facilitator and trusted community members
- ❧ Discussing characters and subjects that concern they own lives, and then written about it
- ❧ It can transform their ideas of themselves and their future lives
- ❧ They are better to externalise selfhood
- ❧ They can exist in the world while feeling that their internal being has connected to the outside world through books

/James W. Pennebaker: Reading & Expressive Writing with Tarumatised Children, Young Refugees and Asylum Seekers. Unpack my Heart with Words. 2014/

How the group therapy helps?

- ❧ Bibliotherapy is based on classic psychotherapy principles of identification, inspiration and insight which leads to motivation for positive change. This can help readers gain insight into themselves by connecting with characters and values written in poems, short stories, novels or other non-fiction texts.
- ❧ The reading is followed up with some discussion when the reader can share her/his ideas and feelings with the help of free associations, and has the opportunity to express of their own subjective response to the text shaped by their identity and life-experience (Holland, 1968).
- ❧ The therapeutic process goes ahead through stages like recognising, feeling, thinking and universalisation. The aim of the therapy is to elicit change in the attitudes and behavior of the readers to enhance their problem-solving skills, and hence increase their resourcefulness. It aims to show readers that they are not alone because the others have the same concerns or problems (Harvey, 2010).
- ❧ The main goal of the therapeutic process is the positive life-change, the development itself (Yalom, 1995).

Emotional Benefits

- Support of the deeper understanding of Others' different ways of thinking, their motivations and reasons behind their communication, verbal and non-verbal reflections
- Support of the deeper understanding of ourselves (weaknesses and strengths, lacks) and foster the realisation of the needed development of problem-solving, communication & social skills (empathy, tolerance) for future success
- Reduction of feelings of isolation by learning that others shared their experience („sense of universality”, universalization) – participants feel they are not alone suffering from problems
 - To hear and learn how others could solve similar problems
- Have opportunity to share strong feelings, personal readings and arguments, get emotional feedback
- „Holding” – corrective emotional experience; gaining comfort or reassurance
 - Being motivated to act differently & to a positive life-change
 - Temporary escape from pressing problems, support
 - Emotional release (catharsis)

Cognitive Benefits

- ❧ promotion of reading books, to develop a love for literature and reading, motivation to read
- ❧ gaining knowledge, special information, advice or recommendations which help make decisions and talk effectively
- ❧ development of critical thinking, handling of information, communicative skills
- ❧ improvement of communication, thinking and aesthetic skills
- ❧ learning benefits: readers gain a richer insight and meaning of a text - better understanding, reading and writing skills

Special target groups

Bibliotherapy for Youth



The bibliotherapeutic intervention in secondary school environment can be used

- ❧ to promote psychological well-being
- ❧ to strengthen self-knowledge
- ❧ to develop social & emotional intelligence (EQ)
- ❧ research reviews, case & experimental studies (e.g. Bibliotherapy for youth and adolescents - School-based application and research by Debbie McCulliss & David Chamberlain, 2013, Journal of Poetry Therapy)

Subgroup: Disadvantaged Youth

Bt. programs in 3 types of secondary schools (vocational school, technical college, grammar school for gifted children)

Therapeutic aims:

- ❧ to moderate upper socio-emotional risks & distress
- ❧ to develop EQ & positive self-image
- ❧ to facilitate self-responsibility in self-help activities / empowerment
- ❧ to foster a positive life-change (more opportunities & successful life)

Our work

- ☞ professional team: librarians, teachers, psychologists working together
- ☞ beginning of the group works: personality tests (motivation, self-image, level of distress)
- ☞ use of **active** (e.g. creative writing, collage, drama) and **receptive developmental bt. methods** (reading of poetry, short stories, parts of novels)



Dolgok amiket szeretek

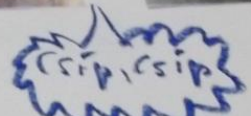


Ahogy érzem magam :)

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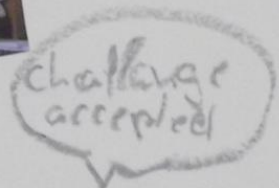


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ILYEN SZERETNEK
LENNI

- GAZDAG
- BEFOLYTÁSOS
- JOBB ZENÉSZ



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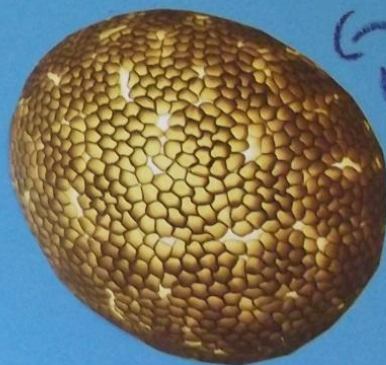


← DOGE



ILYEN VAGYOK

- BECSÜLETES
- LUSTA
- BARATSAGOS



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Topic	Text	Active techniques	Reception, pupils' opinion	Th.Effect
holding and caring in human relationships, patience, values	János Pilinszky: Secrets of our religion (Advent)	write 5 characteristics as you see yourself + 5 as Others see you	3	5
self-confidence, giftedness, emotional resources, courage, empowerment	The wings of Lotilko (Tunguz tale)	Ágnes Ágai's adolescent poems, write a similar poem about yourself	4	5
responsability, sense of duty	La Fontaine: The cricket and the ant	puzzle; Dixit play cards	5	5
dreams, plans for the future, career planning	Frigyes Karinthy: Meeting with a young man	write recommendations for the 8-9 years younger yourself	4	5

pop icons, youth subcultures and trends, positive self-image	Krisztina Tóth: The soul is megabody	write a similar advertisement about yourself as Virág Erdős' Liar Tale	5	5
aims, fighting, insistence, trust	Dino Buzzati: The man who wanted to recover	puzzle, collage	3	5
family relationships, image of the father-mother, personal development	István Örkény: Naples	situation plays	5	5
adolescence, teenagers and adults, primary attachments	Nick Hornby: About a boy	Dixit cards	3	4

adolescence, separation, detachment	Erzsébet Tóth: Sleeping boy	puzzle	3	5
otherness, disabilities, happiness, values	Bohumil Hrabal: Diamond eyes	free associations, mindmap	4	5
personal development, self- knowledge	Géza Gárdonyi: My story	collage	5	5
self-image, respect of others, love	István Örkény: Have you seen her?	write a similar advertisement	3	4

Main outcomes 1

Group leaders' opinion:

- ❧ the aesthetic value of the applicated bt. text doesn't correlate with the therapeutic effectiveness (many times participants didn't like the most effective texts)
- ❧ need for differentiation: the age gap between participants could make hard working together (differences between 15-16-17 years olds)
- ❧ students are not socialized for non-formal learning & it's hard to express themselves
- ❧ Teacher colleagues' positive feedback: there is a strong need for art therapy in schools

Main outcomes 2

Participants' feedback:

- ☞ sense of „universality“ & support of the group is their most important experience
- ☞ deeper understanding of Others
- ☞ deeper understanding of ourselves (weaknesses and strengths, lacks)
- ☞ development of problem-solving, communication & social skills (empathy, tolerance) for future success
- ☞ willing to take part in future bt. groups

Special target groups

Bibliotherapy for Women



BT. groups for Women



- ❧ Mothers in crisis, living in a social care institution
- ❧ Women prisoners
- ❧ Women readers coming randomly to the public library

Common therapeutic aims:

- ❧ Understanding the challenging situations and better problemsolving, better coping skills during female lifecycle periods
- ❧ Give opportunity to care about ourselves, and to gain a deeper insight, to share female experiences

Groups for young parents



∞ Pregnant mothers, young fathers, and future grandparents – readers of a public library

Therapeutic aims:

Foster self confidence, self-esteem (against myths)

Reduce frustration and stress

Share fears and expectations

Prevention of problems in their partnership

Give special information related to child care

Groups for young parents



**As a first time Mum I didn't have
the confidence to stand my ground
and get the help we both needed.**

**Looking back I wish I'd spoken up
more.**



Groups for Seniors



- ❧ Old people living in a closed social care institution, senior homes
- ❧ Active old people participating in a senior academy (adult education course) at the university / monthly
- ❧ Old people who are members of a senior club getting together every week

Common therapeutic aims: refreshment of memory, fighting dementia signs, giving opportunity to communicate with human beings, reduce loneliness

Selection of Materials



It is important to deal with...

- ❧ Participants' actual life-cycle, special life situation, typical problems & crisis they face
- ❧ Participants' emotional & special information needs
- ❧ Participants' mental & emotional level of maturity
- ❧ Participants' possible learning or reading problems
- ❧ Flexibility: change our therapeutic plans if participants have other actual problems & needs

Selection criteria

- ❧ The selection of readings suitable for bibliotherapeutic work are based on how the certain text contains values the therapy is focusing on. The good text fosters common thinking and discussion about the certain topic, guides its reader to a deeper understanding of him- or herself, it is capable to develop directly his or her self-knowledge, social and emotional skills.

e.g. selection criteria from Goddard (2011):

- ❧ 1. motivating and challenging experiences;
- ❧ 2. suitability to age, ability, and maturity;
- ❧ 3. elicits response;
- ❧ 4. range of literacy structures;
- ❧ 5. proper use of language;
- ❧ 6. broadens understanding of diversity;
- ❧ 7. develops sensitivity and understanding.

Important steps

- ❧ Choose your target group
- ❧ Distinguish your higher level and lower level therapeutic aims (it depends on the special developmental needs of your target group)
- ❧ Decide the form and length of the therapy (individual or group work/ problem-centered or general, mixed group/ closed or open group of 10-12 persons / 1-2-3 meetings per month / 45 minutes-2-3-hours-long discussions)
- ❧ Choose the texts you plan to work with participants (we intend to spread therapeutic values and not aesthetic ones!) e.g. literature (poems, short stories, novels), non-literature (parts from the Bible, folk tales, therapeutic stories, diaries, articles), popular fiction books, self-help books, scientific books, lyrics
- ❧ Plan the logical and emotional path of the therapeutic process
- ❧ Plan some active techniques (creative writing, plays etc.) you intend to apply
- ❧ Get feedback from participants – measure the therapeutic effectiveness & improve your work
- ❧ Share and discuss your experiences with colleagues, get therapeutic supervision

Readings & Resources

- ❧ American Library Association. 'Bibliotherapy':
<http://www.ala.org/tools/bibliotherapy>
- ❧ Beatty, William K. A Historical Review of Bibliotherapy. *Library Trends* 11 (2) 1962: 106-117. URL:
https://www.ideals.illinois.edu/bitstream/handle/2142/6050/librarytrendsv11i2c_opt.pdf?sequence=1
- ❧ Bolton, Gillie (2011). *Write Yourself: Creative Writing and Personal Development*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- ❧ Cather, Christine (2006). *To Every Reader Her Book: Creating Bibliotherapy for Women*. Dissertation for MA of Information and Library Studies, University of Strathclyde.
- ❧ URL:http://www.academia.edu/204128/To_Every_Reader_Her_Book_Creating_Bibliotherapy_for_Women
- ❧ Changing Lives Through Literature, bibliotherapy programme for prisoners, University of Massachusetts, blog:
<https://cltlblog.wordpress.com/category/bibliotherapy/>
- ❧ Doll, B. & Doll, C. A. (1997). *Bibliotherapy with Young People: Librarians and Mental Health Professionals Working Together*. Englewood, Colo: Libraries Unlimited.
- ❧ Goddard, A. T. (2011). Children's books for use in bibliotherapy. *Journal of Pediatric Health Care*, 25(1), 57-61.

- ❧ Gold, Joseph (2009). *The O'Henry Syndrome*. *Bibliotherapy and Applied Literature: An E-Journal*, Association of Bibliotherapy & Applied Literature Conference, keynote lecture, URL:
http://www.abal.laurentian.ca/Text/Gold_OHenry.pdf
- ❧ Plock, Simon du (2014). 'Bibliotherapy and Beyond: Research as a Catalyst for Change in Therapeutic Practice', in Goss, S. P. & Stevens, C. (eds). *Making Research Matter. Researching for change in the theory and practice of counselling and psychotherapy*. London: Routledge.
- ❧ Ihanus, Juhani (2012): Finnish Experiences in biblio-/ poetry therapy. *Lapidus Journal*, 6 (2) URL: <http://www.lapidus.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Finnish-experiences-of-training-in-biblio-poetry-therapy-by-Juhani-Ihanus1.pdf>
- ❧ International Federation of Biblio/poetry Therapy web site:
<http://ifbpt.org/>
- ❧ Journal of Poetry Therapy. National Association for Poetry Therapy web site: <http://www.poetrytherapy.org/>
- ❧ Literature Therapy Team web site: <http://www.littherapy.com/>

- ❧ McCulliss, Debbie & Chamberlain, David (2013). Bibliotherapy for youth and adolescents: School-based application and research. *Journal of Poetry Therapy*. 26 (1), 13-40. URL: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/08893675.2013.764052>
- ❧ McLaine, Susan (2012). *Bibliotherapy: Reading for Wellbeing in Old Age*. URL: https://fightdementia.org.au/sites/default/files/Susan_McLaine.pdf
- ❧ McMillen, P.S. & Pehrsson, D.E. (2004). Specialty of the house: Bibliotherapy for hospital patients. *Journal of Hospital Librarianship*, 4 (1), 73-82.
- ❧ Pehrsson, Dale-Elizabeth & McMillen, Paula (2005). A bibliotherapy evaluation tool: Grounding counselors in the therapeutic use of literature. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 32 (1), 47-59.
- ❧ Pehrsson, Dale-Elizabeth & McMillen, Paula (2006). *Competent Bibliotherapy: Preparing Counselors To Use Literature With Culturally Diverse Clients*. URL: <http://counselingoutfitters.com/Pehrsson.htm>
- ❧ *Well into words*. A short film about bibliotherapy services in Kirklees Libraries, England. <http://vimeo.com/wellintowords>