

Adverse Childhood Experiences

A Bibliography to Foster Discussions and Reassure Children

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Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are most often associated with traumatic events involving violence, abuse, or severe neglect. But federal government statistics on ACEs also consider the strain related to a child's unstable home life. Highly stressful situations such as an incarcerated parent, living with a substance abuser, refugee status, prolonged separation from a parent, or a difficult parental divorce are all considered causes of ACEs.

Several federal government agencies identify ACEs as a far-reaching problem in our society. The Department of Health and Human Services reports one-third of American children suffer ACEs.¹ Research conducted by the Center for Disease Control determined such events can negatively affect a child's development and health, causing chronic problems that continue into adulthood.²

Considering the prevalence and impact of ACEs in our society, adults who work with children need resources to help mitigate the long-term harmful effects. Children's literature can be a supportive resource to help children cope.

Psychologists widely accept the use of children's literature for bibliotherapy as an intervention strategy to help children with an assortment of complex social-emotional issues.³ Bibliotherapy is the reading of specific texts as part of the healing process and can be used in a school or community-based program with minimal cost. The National Association of School Psychologists specifically suggests the use of children's literature as a tool to help children understand and cope with their feelings about ACEs.⁴ Implementing bibliotherapy to support children who suffer ACEs requires

facilitating a personal connection between a child and the stories they read.

Rudine Sims Bishop, a pioneer in modern children's literature, champions the need for children to personally connect to books. She uses the metaphor of books as mirrors to describe a child's need to see a reflection of themselves in the stories they read. Bishop argues, when a child closely identifies with a fictional character, a child's own life connects with the larger human experience.⁵ The premise of books functioning as mirrors applies to children's literature about ACEs. When a child identifies with a fictional character who copes with ACEs, the child realizes they are not alone because they see others also need to go through a healing process. Correspondingly, as a fictional character copes with ACEs, a child learns specific coping skills.

Purpose of the Bibliography

I received a \$5,000 Carnegie-Whitney Grant from the American Library Association to prepare and promote a



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children's literature booklist for ACEs. Booklists of children's literature helps educators, counselors, and caregivers match books to a child as a means to facilitate a personal connection between the child and a fictional character. Reading stories provides other affective benefits such as contemplating active civic engagement, a healthier lifestyle, or empathy. The University of Arizona's World of Words Children's Library explains the purpose of booklists as assisting educators who are looking for "quality texts for young people."⁶

On a personal note, the theme of trauma is especially important to me because throughout my career as an educator, I taught in locations where trauma was a daily reality. I believe society has an obligation to understand and help individuals experiencing trauma. One way to reach children and help them is with the use of a good story. Stories provide entryways for individuals to speak to one another.

Process

Creating a text set often has two distinct avenues for criteria: quantitative and qualitative. Quantitatively, I consider the following criteria when creating a booklist: age of prospective readers, date of publication, author's background, and representation of multiple cultures.

Quantitatively, a booklist may have a specific age demographic it aims to target. If a proposed age group is school-age, then reading levels need to be considered. Providing books that are too difficult is not advantageous to promote reading. Offering too many easy to read books tends to lessen a child's motivation to read. Therefore selecting books children can read independently, but still interests them, is crucial.

The date of publication is another quantitative area. While some tried-and-true classics may be more than twenty years old, I try to keep to books published within the last fifteen years. Newer books often are more relatable, relevant, and better at avoiding stereotypes. Booklists are also commonly used to inform readers about relatively newer titles within a specific category of books. Authors are especially important to consider when it comes to cultural insight. I want an author to provide an authentic view of a culture or community.

Keeping the audience who will view and use your booklist in mind is essential. Qualitatively, I consider representation in two ways. First, authentic representation of characters and communities must take place within each book. Second, the booklist should provide multiple perspectives on a theme. I want students to think broadly and openly about themes rather than in a finite manner. I want students to question, investigate, and consider avenues of thought they have not previously considered. Searching for books and considering

both quantitative and qualitative criteria makes creating a quality booklist a recursive process.

A booklist creator must continually evaluate a book choice by each of the specific criteria set. Books are often moved on and off a booklist. Usually, this depends on what other books are identified and how all the books work together holistically to provide the best well-rounded selection of books for the purpose. The most significant limitation in creating this bibliography was finding authentic stories in several of the categories.

Other beneficial resources for creating a booklist are websites and databases that help locate, review, and loan e-books as well as several websites that provide read-alouds of books. I find each one of these areas crucial when creating a booklist. I am especially fond of e-books and read-alouds for their easy access while traveling.

Bibliography

Violence

War

Pinkney, Andrea Davis. *The Red Pencil*. Illus. by Shane W. Evans. Little Brown, 2014. 368p.

This book details ten months in the life of a twelve-year-old Sudanese girl named Amira. Even though her village is being destroyed by war, Amira wants more than anything to attend school.

Davies, Nicola. *The Day the War Came*. Illus. by Rebecca Cobb. Candlewick, 2018.

A narrative poem that portrays one young girl's experience with war. The story is written in response to a decision the United Kingdom made regarding unaccompanied refugee children. The story shows how a firsthand view of war can affect a child for a long time past the actual experience—even after the child arrives in a safe place.

Kastle, Seth. *Why is Dad So Mad?* Illus. by Karissa Gonzalez-Othon. Tall Tale Press, 2015. 34p.

A story that details the way a father struggles with combat-related Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The story provides an inside look at the numerous symptoms combat veterans may struggle while integrating back into society.

Sanna, Francesca. *The Journey*. Illus. by the author. Flying Eye, 2016. 48p.

Shows the unimaginable decisions made by a family as they leave their home and all they know to flee the chaos and misfortune brought by war. This book is a composite of many refugee's experiences.

Abuse

Domestic

McCleary, Carol, S. *The Day My Daddy Lost His Temper: Empowering Kids That Have Witnessed Domestic Violence*. Illus. by Naomi Santana. CreateSpace, 2014. 25p.

A collection of stories told from several children's points-of-view; it can be used to open discussions pertaining to domestic violence.

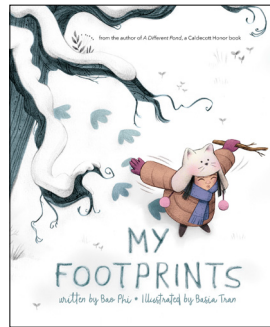
Ippen, Chandra, G. *Once I Was Very Scared*. Illus by Erich Ippen. Pipro Productions, 2017. 64p.

This is a story of several small animals who once experienced a very, very, scary situation. Each of the animals experience a different scary experience and each reacts differently to their situation. When scared, turtle gets a stomachache and hides, monkey clings, and elephant does not want to talk about it. Reference are made to domestic violence and the book can help open discussions.

Bullying

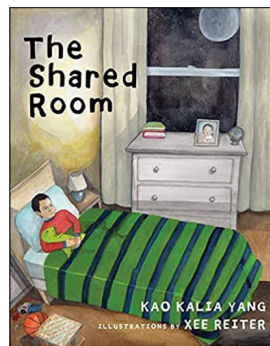
Phi, Bao. *My Footprints*. Illus. by Basia Tran. Capstone, 2019. 32p.

Thuy is different because she is both Vietnamese American and has two moms. Angry and lonely after a bully's taunts, Thuy walks home in the snow one afternoon. A small bird catches Thuy's attention on her walk home and Thuy imagines all the ways she could run or fly away and creates the footprints of several creatures in the snow. Thuy makes her way home to her moms who together imagine the powerful creatures who always have the courage Thuy displays.



Yang, Kao, K. *The Shared Room*. Illus. by Xee Reiter. University of Minnesota Press, 2020. 32p.

American Hmong family must move forward in life after the unexpected drowning death of the family's youngest daughter. Months later the youngest daughter's bedroom remains empty until the mother asks the oldest brother if he would like the bedroom. Cautiously he agrees and the family works together to clean out the room while sharing memories of their sister and daughter when packing away her belongings.



Kerascoët. *I Walk with Vanessa: A Story About a Simple Act of Kindness*. Illus. by the authors. Schwartz and Wade, 2018. 40p. This is a wordless book that demonstrates how a single act of kindness can change a community. When Vanessa, the new girl in school, encounters a bully, a classmate stands beside her for support.

Baldacchino, Christine. *Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress*. Illus. by Isabelle Malenfant. Groundwood, 2014. 32p.

Morris is creative and has a great imagination. The dress-up center at school is one of his favorite centers to play. Morris especially likes to dress up in the tangerine dress which reminds him of a tiger, the sun, or his mother's hair. However, his classmates building a spaceship let him know he is not welcome with them because he is wearing the tangerine dress.

Sexual

Riggs, Shannon. *Not in Room 204: Breaking the Silence of Abuse*. Illus. by Jamie Zollars. Albert Whitman, 2007. 32p.

Regina's mom attends a school conference, where the teacher describes Regina as doing a great job, but she is very quiet. This book provides an opportunity to discuss sexual abuse. Discussing reasons why Regina is so quiet may foster openness with a child.

Weeks, Sarah. *Jumping the Scratch*. HarperCollins, 2006. 192p.

Jamie Reardon has three bad things happen to him in quick succession: his cat dies, his father leaves, and his aunt Saphy has an accident that affects her memory. Jamie just wants his simple life back, but he is unable to forget one bad memory that haunts him.

Illness, Disability, Anxiety, and Depression

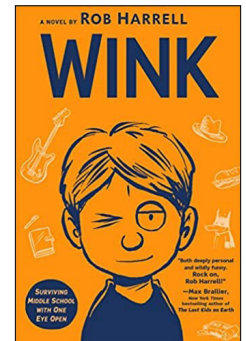
Illness

De Bode, Ann. *Can You Make Me Better?* Illus. by Rien Broere. Amicus, 2010. 32p.

Rosie, a young heart patient is admitted to the hospital for surgery. During her stay, she learns about anesthesia, blood draws, bedpans, and healing scars and patience.

Harrell, Rob. *Wink*. Dial, 2020, 320p.

This story is more difficult to categorize within trauma because there are several types addressed, including death, illness, and bullying. Above all, the story demonstrates how humor can help people cope with dark times. Ross wants nothing more than to just



be a normal kid who blends in with the other middle schoolers. However, he suffers from a rare form of eye cancer and tries to navigate his illness. When Ross's appearance changes due to his treatment, bullies pick on him. All this happens while Ross still misses his mother who died when he was younger. This story is a heartwarming story of survival, made possible through the wonder of music and laughter.

Disability

Palacio, R. J. *We're All Wonders*. Illus. by the author. Knopf, 2017. 32p.

Auggie is facially disfigured and has only one eye. The story is an adaptation of Palacio's novel, *Wonder*. Auggie explains what it is like to be mistreated based on the way he looks.

Rabinowitz, Alan. *A Boy and a Jaguar*. Illus. by Catia Chien. HMH, 2014. 32p.

Alan loves the cats in the Bronx Zoo, especially the jaguars, so he must find the strength to overcome his stuttering to help his beloved cats.

Anxiety

Tregonning, Mel. *Small Things*. Illus. by the author. Pajama, 2018. 40p.

This is a wordless picture book about a young boy who feels isolated and does not fit in at school, and his grades suffer. He even begins to treat his loved ones poorly until one day he realizes he is not alone, and many people emotionally struggle. The revelation alone helps him begin to make improvements in his life.

Depression

Jones, Lloyd. *The Princess and the Fog: A Story for Children with Depression*. Illus. by the author. Jessica Kingsley, 2015. 48p.

The story of a young princess who experiences a fog that makes her feel alone, slow, sad, and tired. Through the efforts of her parents, classmates, knights, a druid, and a wise woman, the princess regains her happiness.

Browne, Anthony. *Willy and the Cloud*. Illus. by the author. Candlewick, 2016. 32p.

Willy, a chimp, is on his way to the park when he realizes a cloud is following him. Eventually, he challenges the cloud, and after a rain, the sun comes out, and Willy heads back to the park.

Grief and Anger from Loss

General

Robinson, Hilary. *The Copper Tree*. Illus. by Mandy Stanley. Strauss House, 2012. 32p.

After elementary school teacher Miss Evans dies in the middle of a school year, her students create a copper-leaf tree in her memory. This story demonstrates how people can work together to heal and remember.

Empson, Jo. *Rabbityness*. Illus. by the author. Child's Play, 2012, 32p.

Rabbit enjoys life to the fullest by sharing his uniqueness with everyone around him. Rabbit shows how appreciation can come from simply intermingling with others.

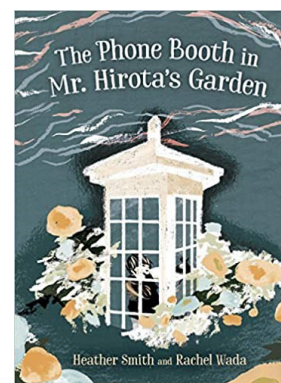
Death

Rowland, Joanna. *The Memory Box: A Book About Grief*. Illus. by Thea Baker. Sparkhouse Family, 2017. 32p.

A young girl's process of dealing with the death of a loved one is by making a memory box. A simple story that offers an opening to discuss coping with loss.

Slosse, Nathalie. *Big Tree is Sick: A Story to Help Children Cope*. Illus. by Rocio Del Moral, R., Trans by Emmi Smid. Jessica Kingsley, 2017. 40p.

Big Tree is infected with woodworm and tells his friend Snibbles that he will eventually feel better. Encouraged, Snibbles is present for Big Tree every day through all the phases of the treatment and recovery.



Smith, Heather. *The Phone Booth in Mr. Hirota's Garden*. Illus. by Rachel Wada. Orca, 2019. 32p.

Based on a true story about one Japanese village that lost many residents when a tsunami hit. The story focuses on Maiko, a young boy who lost his father, and Mr. Hirota, Maiko's neighbor who lost his daughter. Mr. Hirota builds a phone booth in the middle of his garden and uses it to speak to his daughter. Soon after Mr. Hirota begins his healing process, other villagers also use the phone booth to speak to their loved ones lost in the tsunami. Maiko eventually is able to find his voice and express his grief by using the phone booth to speak to his father.

Divorce

McKenna, Susan. *More Feelings Only I Know: [Divorce and Fighting are Hurting My Heart]*. Illus. by Shelley Johannes. Wayfarer, 2008. 22p.

This book considers divorce and the feelings it causes from a child's point of view.

Shreeve, Elizabeth. *Oliver at the Window*. Illus. by Candice Hartsough McDonald. Front Street, 2009. 32p.

Since Oliver's parents' divorce, he lives in two separate houses and spends a lot of time at the window. To compound the situation, Oliver also has to adjust to a new preschool.

Gray, Kes. *Mum and Dad Glue*. Illus. by Lee Wildish. Hodder Children's Books, 2009. 32p.

Written in prose, the story revolves around a little boy who wants to find a pot of parent glue to stick his mum and dad back together. All the while the little boy in the story wonders if he is the cause of his parents' breakup.

Stanton, Karen. *Monday, Wednesday, and Every Other Weekend*. Illus. by the author. Feiwel and Friends, 2014. 30p.

Henry Cooper's parents are divorced, and he spends time at both of their homes. His dog, however, gets a little confused with the moving back and forth.

Daly, Cathleen. *Emily's Blue Period*. Illus. by Lisa Brown. Roaring Brook, 2014. 56p.

Emily is a young artist whose parents are divorcing. She uses her art as therapy to work through her anger and grief. Both Emily and her brother discover that some good can come out of a difficult situation.

Poverty, Homelessness, and Hunger

Poverty

Boelts, Maribeth. *Those Shoes*. Illus. by Noah Z. Jones. Candlewick, 2007. 40p.

Jeremy wants "the shoes" everyone has. His current shoes fall apart in gym class, and his grandmother wants to buy him the shoes, but she does not have enough money. Jeremy's experience considers the struggle of setting priorities and to distinguish the difference between needs and wants.

Homelessness and Hunger

Genhart, Michael. *I See You*. Illus. by Joanne Lew-Vriethoff. Magination Press, 2017. 40p.

This wordless book shows the way one homeless woman is treated every day. Each day, she is met with avoidance and dismissal. One young boy observes the homeless woman over a year and eventually offers her some help. His act of kindness lets her know she is not invisible.

Brandt, Lois. *Maddi's Fridge*. Illus. by Vin Vogel. Flashlight Press, 2014. 32p.

Maddi and Sofia are playing in a park near Maddi's apartment. When Sofia is hungry, she runs to Maddi's apartment to get a snack, only to find one carton of milk. Maddi confides they do not have enough money and swears Sofia to secrecy. Eventually, Sofia realizes she cannot keep the secret and tells her mother.

Williams, Laura E. *The Can Man*. Illus. by Craig Orback. Lee Low, 2010. 40p.

Tim wants a skateboard for his birthday even though his father tells him money is scarce. Mr. Peter is homeless and collects cans to earn money. Tim bumps into Mr. Peters and gets the idea to collect cans to raise money for a skateboard. But when Mr. Peters says he needs the money for a warm coat, Tim offers him the money he raises.

de la Peña, Matt. *Last Stop on Market Street*. Illus. by Christian Robinson. Putnam, 2015. 32p.

Due to CJ's nanna's appreciation for her community, he does not realize he is as poor as those around him. Nanna and CJ's trip from the church to the soup kitchen provides nanna an opportunity to help CJ see all the beauty and goodness around him.

Leronimo, Christine. *A Thirst for Home: Story of Water Across the World*. Illus. by Eric Velasquez. Bloomsbury, 2014. 32p.

This story about the female water collectors in Ethiopia helps students understand that many people lack readily available food and water. The book can lead to powerful discussions on empathy.

Bromley, Anne. C. *The Lunch Thief: A Story of Hunger, Homelessness and Friendship*. Illus. by Robert Casilla. Tilbury House, 2010. 32p.

Rafael's lunch is one of three lunches stolen by a lunch thief. When Rafael sees the new student steal his lunch, he realizes Kevin's financial circumstances.

Refugees and Immigration

Refugees

Wheatley, Nadia. *Flight*. Illus. by Armin Greder. Windy Hollow, 2015. 32p.

A family must flee in the middle of the night after they are tipped off that authorities want them. After traveling for several hours, the family encounters large explosions. Tired and thirsty, the family continues until they find a refugee camp where they will spend years.

Smith, Icy. *Half Spoon of Rice: A Survival Story of the Cambodian Genocide*. Illus. by Sopaul Nhem. East West Discovery Press, 2010. 44p.

Nine-year-old Nat is forced from his home by the Khmer Rouge and forced to work in rice fields eighteen hours a day

with little food to eat. Over the next four years, Nat endures starvation, fear, and brutality, but eventually he escapes and reunites with his family.

Immigration

Danticat, Edwidge. *Mama's Nightingale: A Story of Immigration and Separation*. Illus. by Leslie Staub. Dial, 2015. 32p.

This story is about Saya, a child who visits her Haitian mother weekly in an immigration detention center. Saya misses her mother, but she is comforted by the bedtime stories her mother records and sends to her.

Jaramillo, Ann. *La Linea The Line*. Square Fish, 2008. 144p.

On the morning of Miguel's fifteenth birthday, he leaves Mexico to join his parents in California. The trip is dangerous enough, but with his little sister in tow, it becomes even more problematic. The siblings encounter thieves, border guards, and a hard journey across the desert.

References

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2. "Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences," Center for Disease Control and Prevention, April 3, 2020, https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/fastfact.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fviolenceprevention%2Fchildabuseandneglect%2Faces%2Ffastfact.html.
3. Melissa Allen Heath, "Addressing Children's Social Emotional Needs with Children's Literature," *School Psychology International* 38, no. 5 (2017): 453–57.
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5. Rudine Sims Bishop, "Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors," *Perspectives: Choosing and Using Books for the Classroom* 6, no. 3 (1990): ix–xi, <https://scenicregional.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Mirrors-Windows-and-Sliding-Glass-Doors.pdf>.
6. "Booklists," World of Words, <https://wowlit.org/links/booklists/>.

Natural Disasters

Uhlberg, Myron. *A Storm Called Katrina*. Illus. by Colin Bootman. Peachtree, 2011. 40p.

A story that demonstrates the effect Hurricane Katrina had on the people of New Orleans. Louis Daniel and his family take refugees in the Superdome and quickly find daily life becomes a struggle.

Villa, Alvaro F. *Flood*. Illus. by the author. Capstone, 2013. 32p.

This is a wordless book with beautiful pictures that depict the effects of a devastating flood on a family's home.

Morton, Stephanie, *Three Lost Seeds: Stories of Becoming*. Illus. by Nicole E. Wong. Tilbury House, 2019. 36p.

This story is a metaphor for the hardships faced by displaced children. This story is about three seeds: a cherry seed from the Middle East, an acacia seed from Australia, and a lotus seed from Asia. Each survives a challenging journey through flood, fire, or drought. All three of the seeds eventually flourish when given the opportunity. &