

Bibliotherapy:
Children and Violence

by

David Frazier

University of Pittsburgh

December 2011

Bunting, E. (1994). *Smoky Night*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace & Company.

Smoky Night is a tale of people coming together on a difficult night in Los Angeles during a riot. Daniel is a young boy who lives with his mother and their cat. Daniel experiences the riot very vividly by observation and later that night, when his apartment building is set on fire, he and his mother have to go to a shelter with their neighbors who have a history of not always getting along. Daniel is able to see the struggles created by allowing our differences to overcome us and then able learn how, by coming together, those differences can be overcome.

Eve Bunting and her husband live in Pasadena California and was inspired to write this book by the riots in Los Angeles. She wanted to help children deal with this traumatic experience, and to possibly find good in even the most negative of situations.

Chaiet, D., Russell, F. (1998). *The safe zone: A kid's Guide To Personal Safety*. New York, NY: Morro Junior Books.

This is more of an instruction manual on how to maintain personal safety through some basic techniques that most self defense instructors teach. The book teaches the importance of awareness of surroundings, self esteem, setting boundaries, and keeping a distance from other people who you consider dangerous "the safe zone". *The Safe Zone* is aimed for the adolescent aged 10 to 18 and is not instruction on how to fight as it is instruction on what you can do so you don't have to fight.

Donna Chaiet is a very outspoken author and has been teaching self defense techniques to various community organizations, as well as fortune 500 companies. Donna lives and works in New York City

Francine Russell is a self defense instructor, who teaches courses to young woman at a private school that was the first school in the nation to offer self defense as a credit course. Francine lives with her husband in Los Angeles.

Dewdney, A. (2007). *Llama llama mad at mamma*. New York, NY: Viking.

This story is for younger children and it details the experience of an all day shopping trip with a baby Llama and his Mamma. The Llama is not happy that he has to stop his play time to accompany his mother to the Shop-o-Rama. After a lengthy session of trying on clothing he loses his temper and makes a mess in the store during a tantrum. Llama is then asked by his mother to control his emotions and helps to clean up the mess he made. This story is probably better for toddlers learning emotional regulation and for parents who are seeking a fresh perspective on how a routine day at the mall can become overwhelming to a young child.

Anna Dewdney lives in Vermont, enjoys the outdoors, and has two dogs. Anna lives close to her family and has two daughters of her own who are currently attending boarding school and college. Anna gets her ideas for her writing from her personal experiences and from raising her two daughters.

Frost, H. (2003). *Keesha's House*. New York, NY: Francis Foster Books.

Keesha's House is a series of poems that is written about a cast of characters who are dealing with a number of issues that have caused them to leave their own homes for a safe haven, Joe's house. The poems tell the story of how seven teenagers came to live at Joe's house where they can hide from their own family's dysfunction and abuse. This

book is written for the older adolescent aged 14 to 18 and deals with issues from teenage pregnancy, to homosexuality, and even the stress involved in having a parent who is incarcerated. *Keesha's House* is a moving compilation of poetry and will give the reader multiple perspectives of the problems adolescent face in our ever changing society.

Helen Frost lives with her son and husband in Fort Wayne, Indiana and teaches writing in group homes and juvenile detention centers. She is a poet and author of books for the younger reader.

Langan, P. (2002). *The Bully*. West Berlin, NJ: Townsend Press

The Bully is a story in the Bluford series written for the young adolescent aged 12-16. The story focuses on Darrell and his trouble adjusting to a new move. Darrell and his mother move from Philadelphia to Los Angeles due to a job loss and the promise of a job opportunity and the ability to be closer to family. Darrell encounters a less than warm welcome from his uncle and then has trouble from a bully and feels very isolated considering his small size, lack of friends and options. Darrell decides to join the wrestling team which helps to build his self esteem, make new friends, and develop the courage to stand up to the bully who is making his life difficult. *The Bully* is particularly relevant due to the economic climate in America today, and the increasing number of reports of bullying.

Paul Langan is from Philadelphia and has held a variety of jobs in the creative writing field since obtaining his degree from La salle university. Paul has been an author, and coauthor on many of the books in the Bluford series, in addition to his writing, he teaches, and is an avid football fan.

Langan, P. (2002). *The Gun*. West Berlin, NJ: Townsend Press.

The Gun is a story in the Bluford series written for the young adolescent aged 12-16 telling the story of Tyray. Tyray is an adolescent who is faced with a choice to live his life positively, or to follow his brother's path to prison. Tyray was the school bully who would intimidate, extort, and physically assault the other students for money and to feel better about him self. Tyray's home life is difficult; his domineering father constantly berates and physically abuses him and his mother, more so since his older brother warren was sentenced to 3 years in prison. Tyray had lost a fight with Darrell and since he is losing his identity as no one is afraid of him any more, so he decides to arm himself in the hope that hurting or killing Darrell and the others who taunt him will get him back to his feared status. Tyray struggles with the choice to be a merciless bully, or to start doing better in school and trying to live a better life.

Paul Langan is from Philadelphia and has held a variety of jobs in the creative writing field since obtaining his degree form La salle university. Paul has been an author, and coauthor on many of the books in the Bluford series, in addition to his writing, he teaches, and is an avid football fan.

Lofits, C. (1997). *The boy who sat by the window*. Far Hills NJ: New Horizon Press.

The Boy Who Sat By the Window is a story that is written for children 8 to twelve years old and may be dealing with violence in their schools and community. This book details the shooting death of a young boy at the hands of four older children involved in a

gang initiation. The book is told from the perspective of Joshua who was in the victim's class. He shares how he deals with the mix of emotions a child experiences when exposed to violence. Joshua has a particularly poignant moment when he has a chance encounter with one of the gang member's mother. She and Joshua have a talk about the need to end violence in the lives of children.

Chris Loftis had been a mental health professional and teacher at a place called Haven House in North Carolina. Chris then moved to Olympia Washington to become the executive director of Big Brother Big Sisters, where he currently lives with his wife and two children.

Mead, A. (1995). *Junebug*. New York, NY: Random House.

Junebug is the main character in this multi-chapter story written for the 8 to 12 year old adolescent. The story is about Junebug, a 9 year old adolescent who is turning ten in two weeks. The story talks a great deal about both life in an impoverished neighborhood, and the relationships that occur in a tight knit "project" community. Junebug has a dream to one day become a sailor and for his birthday wish he devises a plan to set his dreams in motion. Junebug faces a variety of challenges both violence in his community, and in his own family. He manages to remain positive and maintain his sense of values despite the negative influences surrounding him.

Alice Mead had taught art, music and Child development in the inner city schools of New Haven Connecticut, before taking on a new career path. Alice lives with her family in Cumberland Maine.

Mead, A. (2002). *Junebug in trouble*. New York, NY: Random House.

Junebug in Trouble is in a series of books written for the 8 to 12 year old adolescent that depicts how gang violence can affect youth in our society even if they are not in a gang themselves. Junebug during a birthday trip to the mall for his friend Robert becomes caught up in a gang fight between some “Asian teenagers” and Trevor, another of Roberts’s friends. The fight ends where Trevor shoots one of the Asian teenagers and then asks Junebug to cover for him. Junebug is also trying to deal with the stress of trying to build a relationship with his incarcerated father who is not very interested in making the same effort that Junebug is. The story is a glimpse at how easily violence can affect today’s youth while they are just hanging out at the mall.

Alice Mead has written a number for books including the Junebug series. She lives in Maine with her family and spends her free time playing with her dogs, enjoying nature and travel.

Myers, W. d. (2000). *The blues of Flats Brown*. New York, NY: Holiday House

The Blues of Flats Brown is a complex tale written for the younger crowd aged 5 to ten, about Flats and his elderly sidekick Caleb. Two dogs who play the blues and their owner A.J. Grubbs. One day A.J. Grubbs forces Caleb to fight another dog, and in fear that Flats will be next the two dogs take to the road scratching a living out of gritty clubs, and street peddling. A.J. Grubbs always would find them and try to force them to return

to the junkyard. Flats realizes that you can't run from your problems and he offers A.J. Grubbs the one thing no one else has in a long time.

Walter dean Myers and his wife live in New Jersey. He has written several other award winning books, and is a musician himself playing the flute in his spare time.

Polacco, P. (2001). *Mr.Lincoln's way*. New York, NY: Philomel Books.

Mr. Lincolns Way is the tale of "mean Gene" who is violent towards his other classmates, does poorly academically and is considered a "bad" kid. Gene's hatred is directed toward any one who is different from himself. One day the principal Mr Lincoln discovers that Gene has a great inner strength, he then teaches Gene to use that strength to overcome his past hatred and to be a positive force for the future.

Patricia Polacco lives in Union City Michigan, and travels often. This story is based on an actual school where mallards nest and the principal is paramount in their safe passage to the pond.

Raatma, L. (2005). *Safety on the internet*. Chanhassen MN: The Child's World

Safety On The Internet is a very basic instruction manual for younger readers just beginning to use the internet for school and communication aged 8 to 12 years old. The book is intended to give a better understanding of both the dangers on the internet and the ways that children can protect themselves from those dangers. The focus of the book is on avoiding danger though a number of simple techniques. Creating better passwords, not opening strange links, not answering instant messages from strangers are some of the

basic security steps that children can take to help to remain safe when using the internet. This book is one several in a series called *living Well*. The series deals with teaching safety in a variety of settings.

Lucia Raatma lives in New York with her family, and spends her free time with her family, watching movies and practicing yoga.

Sanders, P. (2006). *Choices and decisions: Violent feelings*. Mankato, MN: Aladdin Books Ltd.

This is a series of books that helps young adolescents in the 10 to 15 age range to understand their feelings and the actions that their feelings can bring about. The book give a perspective of how violence begets violence, and how children can avoid getting into violent situations. The books give a story of several classmates and briefly shows how they can be influenced by violence in their homes, peer pressure, and even how alcohol can alter behavior. The book offers alternatives to gang affiliation, self regulation techniques, and even resources for children who need help with dealing with their own feelings of violence.

Pete Sanders has been a counselor for over thirty years and even founded BACP accredited counselor training courses in England. Pete then started PCCS books with his wife Maggie. PCCS Books is a small publishing company specializing in counseling related books.

Stewart, G.B. (2002). *Understanding issues: Guns and Violence*. San Diego, CA:

Kidhaven press

This book gives the reader generous amounts of information on the causes and prevalence of gun violence in America. The book details how easy it is to get firearm and the multitude of reason why children are compelled to carry a weapon. Younger adolescents can benefit from this knowledge in that it helps them to understand the power involved in the use of a firearm and how the inappropriate use of a firearm can lead to disaster. The book details one story of how an accidental shooting caused a young girl to then commit suicide due to the guilt she felt for accidentally shooting her brother. Parents can also use this information to educate their children and themselves on the proper gun safety and storage techniques they can employ in their own homes.

Gail Stewart lives in Minneapolis with her husband and their three sons. Gail had received her education in Minneapolis and had written many other books for younger readers in a series.

Wolinsky, A. (2003). *Safe Surfing on the internet*. Berkley Heights, NJ: Enslow

Publishers

Art Wolinsky is a teacher, who has been teaching math, science, and computer technology at the elementary, middle, and high school age levels for thirty years. Art now works with an online Internet safety website called wired kids, helping children to understand the dangers of Internet predators. Safe surfing on the internet is aimed at the 9 to 15 year old reader. This book is easy to read and talks about the ways that readers are

protected by their schools, and how they can protect themselves from the dangers of the internet. The book discusses the need for rules, and even gives some brief history on how changing technology has created the need for changes in the laws of our society. The book talked extensively about Acceptable Use Policies or AUP and how schools use these to keep children safe from predators on the internet. The book has a glossary of helpful terms and emphasizes the need to be a good citizen or “netizen” as the book calls it. The best thing any child can learn about the use of the internet is how to be safe and this book is a good starting place for the younger reader or a refresher for the adolescent who uses the internet frequently.