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ADOPTION CHILDREN'S BOOK

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HONORS PROJECT

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fulfillment of the requirements for graduation with

UNIVERSITY HONORS

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Children's books are used by parents and educators for many reasons. Books help teach young children how to read and how to understand topics talked about in schools. They also can be used by adults to aid in conversations about more challenging or abstract topics. Some topics might include death, war, love, trust, friendship and more; but this project focuses on the idea of adoption. This is a difficult subject to talk about and is a sensitive one for many. When parents tell their child about adoption it should be something that is taught as being a positive step in their life. Using a children's book can help aid the conversation between adults and children. The project is about designing a book that helps explain why several children are adopted and also includes a note that will facilitate the conversation.

This book can help many people have a conversation with children about adoption and it is important to inform each one on how to use it. Parents are the usually the first people that are thought of when the adoption talk is brought up. Parents, especially, may use the book to introduce the subject to their either their adoptive child or biological child. Biological parents might use the book to talk with their children when they meet someone who is adopted or hear about the topic outside the home. Educators and counselors can use the book to help promote positive relationships and foster good behavior towards adopted children. Whether the book is being read to adopted children or others, educating children on such an emotional subject can help with bullying and support positive self esteem.

There are two separate notes at the beginning of the book, the first being for adoptive parents on how to help them to talk to their children. The idea is that parents will read the note before reading the book and will have an easier time talking with their children about adoption. The note begins by stating that children around the ages of five to seven are building their self

esteem and often asking “why” to many of life’s situations. For example, children may struggle with wanting to know why they were given up for adoption and therefore could conclude that they were not loved (“Tapestry Books”). This could lead to a lower self-esteem because the child will be unsure of their self-worth. The note informs the reader of this developmental need for love and acceptance in order to allow the parents to foster high self esteem in their child. Piaget’s egocentrism explains that children at this age are only able to view the world through their own eyes, which means that children view situations from their point of view and have trouble taking other points of view into account. When dealing with adoptions, egocentrism can hinder the child’s ability to see situation for what it really is. The child might view it as they were given up for adoption because they weren’t wanted or loved. Making the child’s worth known will help them feel valued when they don’t understand their biological parent’s reasoning. The note explains that parents need to let the child ask the questions and that parents should not give them more information than what they want to know. In this way, it is important that the child’s curiosities lead the conversation. Having honest and open communication between the adoptive parents and their child is important when focusing on fostering an emotional and trust-based relationship.

The second note on this page is intended for other adults including teachers, parents, or any figure in a child’s life. This note explains many of the same things as the first note by reiterating letting the child lead the conversation and only answering the questions the child has. Adding on to this, if the child asks about different kinds of adoption then the adult should explain the different types, that there is no one better type, and that each is suited to different situations. Informing children about adoption will make for better informed children and more

understanding peers. Educating children about adoption will hopefully make for less bullying in schools due to adoption.

The story line of this book goes with the story line of an open adoption. A young boy, named Billy, lives in the country with his family and his large dog. One day Billy's parents tell him that they will be moving into the city. His parents go to the city to look for places to live but can't find any that allow dogs as big as Jackson, Billy's dog. When Billy was told that they would have to put the dog up for adoption he was very upset. They interviewed many families and Billy wanted to find a family that he felt would love his dog and do all the same things for Jackson that he did. Finally, Billy meets a family that will take good care of his dog and Billy allows that family to adopt his dog. Billy is sad and will always love Jackson but Billy knows that adoption was best for him.

Although this story is about the adoption of a dog it relates to adoption of children in many ways. In many cases, the child is adopted because he biological parents know that the child will be better taken care of with other parents. In the story, Billy must make a selfless decision and do what is best for his dog; which is what has to happen in many cases of adoption. Also, this story resembles that of an open adoption with children. In open adoptions, the biological parents look through and interview many different families in order to find one that they best feel fits their goals for their children. The aim of this story is to make sure children are able to see the reasoning behind a biological parents' decision to put their child up for adoption. They will realize why Billy isn't able to take care of his dog and how hard Jackson is to give up. The goal of this is to prove that the parents went with adoption out of love to give their child a better life. The plot line allows for the egocentric child to put themselves in the biological parents' situation and this will help the child realize the parents' reasoning.

Along with the plot being age appropriate for egocentrism, the book itself is also age appropriate. The length of the book is short enough to be read within fifteen minutes so that the child does not lose interest. By only having a few sentences on each page children and adults are able to have enough time to view the pictures while reading. Each page is a full page illustration that uses vibrant colors. The colors on each illustration grab the attention of the child because they are bright and calming colors. The illustrations are also done using many soft and curved lines. This causes the child to feel more relaxed when viewing each page because curved lines are less intense and more calming than straight jagged lines. The illustrations depict the emotion of the current page so that the child can read about the emotion but also see it displayed on the page. Making the book age appropriate is important so that the child can fully grasp and benefit from the text and art work together.

This project is based on psychology theories, literature techniques, and educational philosophy to make it useful to many different types of adoption situations. During the research and planning process, psychology was used in that I had to understand different theories on how children thought and acted in different situations. Piaget's egocentrism and understanding of developmental levels of children ages five through seven are all apart of psychology. The parents note includes psychology in all of its reasoning. Next, making the book goes into the literature field. For example, learning the page length needed to keep a young child's attention is part of the literary process of this project. Another focus of the book was implementing the different styles of illustrations and text inclusion. I read multiple children's books on the subject and analyzed the plot of each story and the illustrations. Finally, this project can also include an educational aspect. The book can be used in classrooms when teachers see there is a problem with bullying or inclusion of a student. There is more to education than just teaching the core

curriculum. Teaching students to become well-rounded and grow in their support and encouragement towards other students is also a goal of many teachers and part of my personal philosophy. Therefore, educators, whether they be administrators, counselors, or teachers, they can use this book to help inform students about adoption and some of the reasons behind adoption. The note in the front of the book for other adults explains how to go about talking to children about adoption when you're not the adoptive parent. This note is helpful for these educators. This project encompasses multiple subject areas in order to make it applicable to people to use.

Incorporating different areas of study allowed this project to reach its potential. The psychology allowed the note to be useful for parents and other adults when talking to children about adoption. The literature studies brought into perspective the importance of the book itself. The text, page length, and illustrations were all part of literature. The importance of informing students about adoption and fostering positive peer relationships is an important part of hidden curriculum in education, especially for schools where adopted children attend. The use of children's books is an effective way to introduce topics to children and can easily be followed with a discussion about the topic.

Works Cited

"Choosing Books For Adopted Children." Tapestry Books. Tapestry Books, 2008. Web. 24 Jan 2012. <<http://www.tapestrybooks.com/Books.for.Adopted.Children.asp>>.