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## A content analysis of realistic fiction for bibliotherapy with gifted children

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## A content analysis of realistic fiction for bibliotherapy with gifted children

### Abstract

Children who are gifted experience the same problems as other children of lesser ability; but they also have unique problems that are a direct result of their giftedness. In a synthesis of her research of gifted children, Galbraith (1983) identified some of these problems, including among others, boredom in school, not being understood and accepted by peers, perfectionism

A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF REALISTIC  
FICTION FOR BIBLIOTHERAPY  
WITH GIFTED CHILDREN

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A Research Paper  
Presented to  
Dr. Mary Nan Aldrich  
Department of Curriculum and Instruction  
University of Northern Iowa

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In Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for 21:299  
Research in Gifted Education

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by  
Myra Kay Hopper LaFrentz  
March, 1987

This Research Paper by: Myra Kay Hopper LaFrentz  
Entitled: A Content Analysis of Realistic Fiction For  
Bibliotherapy with Gifted Children

has been approved as meeting the research requirement for the Degree  
of Master of Arts in Gifted Education.

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## Introduction

### Introductory Paragraphs

Children who are gifted experience the same problems as other children of lesser ability; but they also have unique problems that are a direct result of their giftedness. In a synthesis of her research of gifted children, Galbraith (1983) identified some of these problems, including among others, boredom in school (Hymes & Bullock, 1975; Zaffrann & Colangelo, 1977), not being understood and accepted by peers (Strang, 1951; Zaffrann & Colangelo, 1977), perfectionism (Schmitz & Galbraith, 1985), and super-sensitivity (Webb, Meckstroth, & Tolan, 1985).

While enjoyment is the primary purpose of children's literature, there is a growing trend in the publication of realistic fiction to help youngsters cope with their problems. Bibliotherapy is not a new idea as its historical origins are in ancient Greece. From Plato to present day counselors and educators, books have been recognized as valuable tools to help children solve their educational problems (Corman, 1975; Edwards, 1972), their personal problems (Hartley, 1951; Witty, 1952), and their social problems (Labuda, 1974).

There is little research concerning the use of

bibliotherapy with gifted students. Witty (1964) made the following statement: "... a balanced program provides the gifted pupil with opportunities to satisfy some of his personal and social needs through reading" (p.450).

Weingarten (1956) agreed that this technique was beneficial in helping gifted students to solve problems. Little research has been conducted to help teachers and counselors identify realistic fiction for helping talented and gifted children with their personal, educational, and social problems.

#### Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to conduct a content analysis of selected children's realistic fiction depicting gifted characters to identify their personal, educational, and social problems. The characters were analyzed for evidence of characteristics and behaviors associated with giftedness.

The following research questions were addressed:

1. Do the main characters in books of children's realistic fiction exhibit characteristics and behaviors associated with (1) intellectual ability, (2) creativity, (3) leadership ability, and /or (4) ability in the visual and performing arts?
2. Do the main characters in books of realistic children's



fiction encounter the problem of coursework that is too easy and boring?

3. Do the main characters in books of realistic children's fiction encounter the problem of parents (teachers and friends) expecting them to be perfect, to "do their best", all the time?

4. Do the main characters in books of children's realistic fiction encounter the problem of having few friends who really understand them?

5. Do the main characters in books of children's realistic fiction encounter the problem of having irrelevant coursework?

6. Do the main characters in books of children's realistic fiction encounter the problem of peers teasing them about being smart?

7. Do the main characters in books of children's realistic fiction encounter the problem of being overwhelmed by the number of things they can do in life?

8. Do the main characters in books of children's realistic fiction encounter the problem of feeling too different, alienated?

9. Do the main characters in books of children's realistic fiction encounter the problem of worrying about world problems and feeling helpless to do anything about them?

### Importance of the Problem

Limited research has been conducted to assess the effectiveness of bibliotherapy in helping gifted children solve their problems. For this topic to be studied, it is first necessary to become familiar with children's literature.

This content analysis provides an annotated list of children's realistic fiction, identifying the educational, personal, and social problems encountered by gifted characters. This will aid researchers in selecting appropriate books to be used in bibliotherapy.

### Assumptions

Certain assumptions were made in this investigation. These included: (1) Characters in books exhibit characteristics and behaviors associated with giftedness, (2) children's realistic fiction depicts gifted characters encountering educational, personal, and social problems, and (3) bibliotherapy may be effective in helping gifted children solve their problems.

### Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to 44 books selected by a team of specialists and listed in Bookfinder, Volume I, II, and III, under the subheading Gifted and Talents. The books

were identified as appropriate for children ages six through fifteen.

The main character of each book exhibited characteristics and behaviors of giftedness and encountered the same situations as real life children. The sample excluded autobiographies, biographies, and anthologies, as well as non-realistic fiction such as fantasy, animal stories, and fairy tales.

#### Definitions of Terms

Bibliotherapy. A technique for using books to help children promote good mental health and to discuss and develop alternative approaches for meeting special challenges and problems.

Characterization. The manner in which an author develops a character through the use of dialogue, plot, reaction of other characters, personal emotions, and narrative description.

Children's realistic fiction. Books of fiction written about and for children which depict characters in true life situations.

Content analysis. An objective and systematic analysis of ideas in printed material (Berelsen, 1952). The process involves definition of terms, limitation of criteria, examination of material for the presence or

absence of criteria, and the description of content.

GED. A battery of five different tests to determine high school achievement.

Gifted child. A child of outstanding abilities, capable of high performance, and having potential ability and/or demonstrated achievement in five areas, (singly or in combination) in the following areas: (1) general intellectual ability, (2) specific academic aptitude, (3) creative or productive ability, (4) leadership ability, and (5) visual and performing arts ability (Marland, 1972).

Main character. The protagonist or character about whom the plot revolves in a book of fiction.

### Review of Literature

This study investigated the content of children's realistic fiction, depicting characters to identify the educational, personal, and social problems encountered by the central character. The characters were analyzed for evidence of characteristics and behaviors associated with giftedness. Literature pertinent to this study was presented in the following order: (1) a descriptive overview of attitudes toward giftedness, (2) characteristics of gifted children, (3) definitions of giftedness, (4) problems of gifted children, and (5) bibliotherapy as a tool for strengthening self-concept.

#### Descriptive Overview of Attitudes Toward Giftedness

There has been a fluctuating interest, concern, and commitment to individuals possessing superior abilities and skills in society. This opinion has been expressed by Tannebaum. He compared gifted education to a rocking chair, "always in motion and going nowhere" (Tannebaum, 1975, p.21).

Public interest in giftedness is influenced by a social need for political and scientific leaders to maintain world leadership or domination. "Education rocks forward when there is a national crisis, stays awhile, and then moves backward before a solution can be found, only to

return again another day" (p. 21).

American history has provided examples of oscillating public interest and concern for the gifted. Thomas Jefferson introduced a bill, "The Diffusion of Education." This provided money for the education of gifted youth. The primary objective of this legislation was to provide future leadership for the new nation.

Before the end of the Nineteenth Century public interest lessened. Emphasis during the American Industrial Revolution was placed on the advancement of technology. Industrial heroes were often uneducated, uncultured people who achieved success through cunning and political manipulation. Conforming producers were praised while non-conforming divergent thinkers were shunned. This was in contrast to the founding fathers of the United States. Jefferson, Adams, Franklin, and Madison, who were "men of letters", were concerned with theories and principles, as well as solutions to immediate problems.

Early educational efforts for the gifted began in earnest with compulsory education for all children. Dewey, in the late Nineteenth Century emphasized the importance of the environment, as well as the intellect for the development of the whole child.

First provisions for the gifted, in terms of special

programs, were instituted in St. Louis in 1868. The Flexible Promotion Plan was one of acceleration. A student completed eight years of school in less time. The curriculum was compacted.

Alternative plans were implemented in 1886 in Elizabeth, New Jersey, Chicago, and New York. This plan provided for three performance levels. Five years later in Cambridge, Massachusetts, a double track plan was implemented. This plan had a compacted curriculum taught by specially trained teachers.

With the advent of the Terman studies, emphasis was placed on standardized testing for identifying the gifted. The first school in which entry was based on mental tests results was in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1918. This was a period when educators realized there was a need for differentiated treatment for the gifted and accomplished this through grade skipping and acceleration.

World War I created a need for political and military leaders. Educators approached gifted education scientifically. One example of this was the publication of The Education of the Gifted. This was the first volume on gifted education published by the National Society for the Study of Education in 1924.

Programming for the gifted suffers during periods of

economic hardship. During the Depression, there was a decline in ability grouping and special classes for the gifted. Students were mainstreamed in the years between 1920-1950. Individualization was accomplished through enrichment. There was less emphasis on acceleration.

This trend continued in the 1940's. Little writing and research was conducted. Some interest, however, was generated by the federal government through the intellectual testing of soldiers and emphasis on the GED. Noteworthy was the development of the Hierarchical Model of Human Abilities, Relations, Practical Associations by Burt.

During the 1950's a greater volume of writing and research was conducted. Educators were placing more emphasis on creativity. Guilford presented a paper on creativity which introduced the idea of multiple aptitudes. Taylor held his first Creativity Conference in Utah in 1955.

In 1954 the Supreme Court upheld the Desegregation Act. This, accompanied by Bestor's "attack on educationists," would bring about changes in the educational system.

Following the launching of the Russian Sputnik in 1957, a perceived scientific crisis revived enthusiasm for excellence in education. Massive research on the



characteristics and education of gifted children was conducted. Terman and Oden made mid-life follow-ups of gifted students from their previous research.

The National Defense Education Act was passed in 1958 which made provisions for gifted students. The same year Gardner and Carr lead the NEA at the Invitational Conference on the Academically Gifted.

Once America retained leadership in the Race for Space, gifted education was once again ignored. Three movements affected gifted education. Emphasis shifted to the underprivileged and minorities. The Viet Nam War divided the country. There was a gradual devaluation of science and an emergence of anti-intellectualism.

Some achievements were made in education, however. In 1964 Bloom presented his Taxonomy of Cognitive Development. Torrance's Tests of Creative Thinking Skills were developed two years later. Wechsler also differentiated IQ into verbal, performance, and global skills through the development of his Wechsler Intelligence Scales.

Since the 1970's the interest has again emerged. This may be a reaction to the anti-intellectualism of the 1960's. One indicator of this increased interest is found in the amount and nature of professional publications in the field. Two areas of research are prevalent: (1)

studies which describe gifted people and methods for identification, and (2) studies concerned with meeting the educational needs of gifted students (Whitmore, 1980). Of significant importance was the Marland definition (1972), Torrance's work in creativity, and the John Hopkins' Study on Mathematically Precocious Youth in 1974.

During the 1980's new programs have been implemented in the United States. More workshops and inservices have been conducted for teachers. More universities are offering graduate-degree programs in education of gifted/talented students. In 1984, 101 schools provided degrees in gifted education (Parker & Karnes, 1984). This is in comparison to 39 in 1981 (McHardy, 1981). This brief history of gifted education clearly illustrates the fluctuating interest, concern, and commitment to individuals possessing superior abilities and skills in society. It is the author's belief, that there will be continued interest in gifted education. The world and nation are experiencing problems of overpopulation, diminishing natural resources, chemical and nuclear contamination, hunger, and disease. Unbelievable numbers of deaths are occurring as the result of famine, cancer, AIDS, and others.

The United States once again finds itself in the same

situation following the launching of the Russian Sputnik in 1957. In a recent newspaper article, Turnill (1986) declared that the United States is ten years behind the Soviet Space Program. "In terms of space experience," he said, "they are almost out of sight. The lead is most frightening."

The United States is also losing in the marketplace to more creative nations. Concurrently there is a predicted teacher shortage, particularly in the areas of mathematics and sciences. If interest in gifted education hinges on a social need for political and scientific personnel maintaining world leadership or domination, as stated by Tannebaum, gifted education will be a vital part of the American education system in the year 2000.

#### Characteristics of Gifted Children

Terman's work in the 1920's dispelled the myth that gifted children are "... pathetic creatures, over-serious, undersized, sickly, hollow-chested, stoop-shouldered, clumsy, nervously tense, and bespeckled" (Baskin & Harris, 1980, p.21). They were also stereotyped as lacking friends and social skills and always reading.

Other studies have identified the characteristics of gifted children. Terman and Oden (1951), Khatena (1978), and Lambert (1977) described gifted children as having an

average body, learning quickly, having curiosity and many interests, having a sense of humor, and possessing emotional stability. Gifted students are described by Betts (1985) as students who create excitement and peace. They love themselves and others. They possess a passion for learning. They enjoy today, but see beyond into the tomorrows.

#### Definitions of Giftedness

Definitions of giftedness were written after characteristics of gifted students were identified. The definition is the basis for the philosophical focus and determines the direction for identification, program design, and evaluation. For this reason, the definition is the cornerstone for any gifted program.

There are as many definitions for giftedness as there are educators working with gifted students. No matter how it is defined, the term will remain open for discussion and debate. Gallagher (1985) stated that the definition is dependent upon the type of giftedness that is rewarded and valued by a culture at a certain time in history. If a culture values orators, orators will be produced as in the Golden Age of Greece. Military leaders and scientists will be produced if that is what society needs and values.

Today three popular definitions are frequently used:

the Clark definition (1983), Renzulli definition (1978), and the Marland definition (1972). The three differ in some respects and agree in others. Clark's definition was unique in that she believed that the basis of giftedness is a biological brain function integrating physical sensing, emotions, cognition, and intuition. Renzulli's approach to giftedness was different. He believed that giftedness was the interaction among three basic clusters of human traits: above average abilities, high levels of task commitment, and high levels of creativity. These aren't necessarily present at all times. Motivation and environment act as catalysts.

Perhaps the most widely used definition of giftedness was presented by the U.S. Office of Education in the Marland Report (1972). This was the definition used for the purpose of federally funded programs and by many school districts in planning programs for students. The Marland Report defined gifted and talented children as those who have been identified by professionally qualified persons. It further states that these students require a differentiated educational program from the regular school curriculum in order to reach their potential. They possess outstanding abilities and are capable of high performance in five areas, singly or in combination. These areas

include (1) general intellectual ability, (2) specific academic aptitude, (3) creative or productive thinking, (4) leadership ability, (5) visual and performing arts (p.10).

The first key expression in the definition is "... identified by professionally qualified persons." This was a clear statement to the educational community that teacher training for the gifted is essential.

"... by virtue of outstanding abilities are capable of high performance" was the second important phrase. This phrase provided for, and does not exclude, underachievers and the culturally diverse whose abilities may not be obvious.

According to Gallagher (1985), outstanding ability enables the student to master and use symbol systems which are valued by our society. There are many ways to describe this. One was to identify the major dimensions of intelligence in terms of the figural, symbolic, semantic, and behavioral domains. This was described in Guilford's Structures of Intellect. One can measure these abilities through performance. Symbol systems explain the performance in varied fields of activities.

This section of the Marland definition was similar to Renzulli (1978, 261) and Clark (1979, 5). Renzulli stated that such students are "... capable of developing this

composite set of traits and applying them to any potentially valuable area of human performance." Clark stated "... this definition of intelligence, gifted individuals are those who are performing or show promise of performing at high levels of intelligence."

The third significant phrase was "... require differentiated educational programs and services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program." Renzulli and Clark included this also. Because of their unique characteristics and differentiated needs, gifted students need differentiated programs which include special curriculum, strategies, environment, and resources.

"... To realize their contribution to self and society" was the fourth significant phrase. Marland and Renzulli are in agreement these individuals possessing superior abilities have an obligation to society. Renzulli stated it this way: "... of applying them to any potentially valuable area of human performance." The special programs are designed to provide the background for contributions to society. Clark did not address this issue.

The Marland definition was very broad, including a variety of areas. The school district was left to interpret and provide educational programs based on that

interpretation. For the purpose of this study, this definition of giftedness was used.

#### Frustrations of Gifted Children

Gifted children, are first of all, children. They experience the same needs and problems of those of lesser abilities. They, however, also have unique problems that are directly related to their superior abilities and skills. Schmitz & Galbraith (1985) and Culross (1985) believed that for gifted individuals to develop their potential, all of their needs must be met. This implies personal and social needs, as well as intellectual development.

Galbraith collected data from surveys and interviews from over four hundred students from six states. This sample was composed of nearly equal numbers of boys and girls ranging in age from eight to seventeen. All, but thirty students, were currently participating in special programs for the gifted at the time of the study. The objective of this study was to gain insight into the problems of gifted children. Galbraith (see Appendix A) acknowledged that her findings may have been flawed in some respects as it was "... never intended to be 'pure' research" (personal communication, April 16, 1986).

From this information Galbraith (1983) wrote the



"Eight Great Gripes of Gifted Kids." The Gripes were numbered in the order of frequency. They are:

1. The stuff we do in school is too easy and it's boring. This was the response of approximately 85 percent of the respondents. Students also noted in the interviews that coursework was irrelevant and did not provide a challenge.

2. Parents (teachers, friends) expect us to be perfect, to "do our best" all the time. Eighty percent of the respondents made this statement. They also stated they felt they should receive all A's and answer all questions in class correctly.

3. Friends who really understand us are few and far between. This was the response of about 65 percent of the respondents.

4. Lots of our coursework is irrelevant.

5. Peers often tease us about being smart. About 65 percent of the gifted students in the study said they were teased about their abilities or their participation in a special program. An additional 15-20 percent said they were sometimes teased about being smart.

6. We feel overwhelmed by the number of things we can do in life.

7. We feel too different, alienated. This was the

response of half of the respondents.

8. We worry about world problems and feel helpless to do anything about them. Sixty-five percent of the teenagers indicated this concern (personal communication, April 16, 1986).

"The Eight Great Grips" can be divided into three categories: intellectual, personal, and social problems. For discussion Gripe One (The stuff we do in school is too easy and it's boring) and Gripe Four (Lots of our coursework is irrelevant) will be combined in the category intellectual problems.

Gripe Two (Parents, teachers, and friends expect us to be perfect, to "do our best" all of the time) was regarded as a personal and a social problem. For this reason, it will be discussed separately.

Social problems are exemplified in Gripe Three, Five, and Seven. "Friends who really understand us are few and far between", "peers often tease us about being smart", and "we feel too different, alienated" will be discussed together.

Many of the same problems were identified in current literature and in a study conducted by Delisle (1984). His survey involved six thousand gifted children living in 37 states and territories, as well as Canada, Germany, and

Australia.

The first and fourth Gripe, boredom in school and irrelevant coursework, are, in part, a result of inappropriate educational provisions for gifted children. Gifted children learn easily, read extensively, and comprehend better than their peer group. When new concepts are introduced in the classroom, the student with "average" ability needs six to eight presentations to understand the concept. For gifted students two presentations are needed; hence the boredom.

Lyon (1981) stated that gifted children have quite the opposite problem of children with average abilities. Instead of struggling to stay ahead", gifted boys and girls have the problem of remaining at the level of their peers. A girl, 10, in Maine wrote, " ... most of the time it's just review, review, review." A boy in New York reported, "On a regular day-to-day basis we have the same thing over and over" (Delisle, 1984, p.73).

Another child, age 9, in New York voiced her boredom more poetically:

Oh what a bore to sit and listen,  
To stuff we already know.  
Do everything we've done and done again,  
But we still must sit and listen.

Over and over read one more page

Oh bore, oh bore, oh bore.

Sometimes I feel if we do one more page

My head will explode with boreness rage.

I wish I could get up right there and march right out  
the door (Delisle, 1984, p.72.)

Alvino (1981), Roth (1986), Compton (1982), and Rimm  
(1984) all reported boredom in school. Webb, Meckstroth, &  
Tolan (1982) said that boredom in school can result in  
misbehavior. Underachievement can also occur (Johnson,  
1981 and Gowan, 1955).

In addition, students felt there was little  
relationship between what they were learning and how  
content will serve them later. Teachers seldom explain the  
"whys." Goertzel's (1962) study of 400 prominent people  
indicated they loved learning, but their school experiences  
were disappointing. Because children spend so much time in  
school, inappropriate education can lead to emotional  
problems and frustration.

Bachtold (1978) conducted research with eighteen men  
and eighteen women, twenty-six years of age who had  
participated in gifted programs in the 1960's. Both sexes  
reported similar perceptions when asked about their worst  
experiences in school. Men and women both commented that

school was "a total waste of time." "Boring, mostly. There was no relevance to what I felt was important to know."

In summary, because of their superior skills in language symbols, comprehension, and cognition, gifted children are often many years beyond their classmates. They are forced to review knowledge and to perform inappropriate and unsuitable tasks. They become bored, unchallenged, and finally frustrated with tasks which are of no practical importance to them. This often leads to inappropriate behavior or underachievement (Rice, 1970).

Gifted children display unusual sensitivity to the expectations and feelings of others. Because of early development of an inner focus of control and satisfaction, they become perfectionists (Strang, 1951). As a consequence they tend to exaggerate their abilities and set unrealistic goals (Whitmore, 1980). This is often complicated by pressures and expectations of teachers and parents (Gripe Two). These factors result in frustration and other emotional stress (Barrett, 1957).

In a study by Schilling (1986), it was found that 45 percent of gifted students, compared with 8 percent of students with average ability, expressed concerns of performing poorly on tests and receiving bad grades. They

had a tendency to confuse "loveability" and achievement. Many believed that if performance and achievement were less than perfect, the result would be a loss of love.

Advanced comprehension, high levels of language development, an early ability to use and form conceptual frameworks, and an evaluative approach to themselves and others create an intellectual and social developmental gap between gifted children and their peer group (Alvino, 1981). Feelings of isolation and alienation occur (Rice, 1970). Because of intellectual differences, gifted children have less in common with those of the same chronological age and prefer the company of older children or adults (Lessinger & Martinson, 1961). The discrepancy between intellectual and social development may lead to loneliness. Hansberry (1970) stated, "Eventually it comes to you: the thing that makes you exceptional, if you are at all, is inevitability that which must also make you lonely."

Galbraith's research revealed that the third most frequent concern of gifted children was that they had few friends who really understood them. This does not refer to popularity contests or involvement in clubs and organizations. It means "... being accepted for all that you are and all you can be." Such friendships allow gifted

children to be appreciated for their uniqueness (Webb, Meckstroth, & Tolan, 1982).

The superior abilities of gifted children point out the inadequacies of others. Because of this, they are often disliked (Schetky, 1981). This dislike may lead to fear and jealousy because it makes others feel inferior. This sometimes results in peers teasing gifted children about being smart.

A boy, Tom, 13 years, remarked, "I don't just get teased because I'm into school, I get bullied" (Galbraith, 1983, p.84). In Georgia a girl, aged thirteen, wrote: "I am more active in more intellectual types of groups and clubs, and for that reason I am sneered at, called names, and looked down at. But I try not to let it get me down because I know the other kids are just jealous...." (Delisle, 1984, p.30). Radhika, aged eleven, expressed her feelings in this poem:

I am a snowman

All of the kids are playing with me

A few are jealous and try to make me feel bad

and they succeed. Then I do feel bad.

They press their advantage and finally, it

Becomes so hot with rumors about me

That I melt (Galbraith, p.84).

Roets (1984), author of the Leadership Training Program, identified some characteristics associated with leadership talents. Some of these included strong convictions about issues, decision-making and organizational skills, high energy to complete projects, risk taking to try new experiences, and self-confidence. These, along with integrity and responsibility, are traits expected to be found in leaders (Freehill, 1982). They are also characteristics that many gifted children possess (Galbraith, 1983).

A study by Cassell and Haddox (1959) compared the leadership abilities of gifted and typical high school students. The mean IQ of the gifted students was 125 and 103 for the average students. There was no difference between the scores on the Leader's Quality Test. The scores on the Leadership Ability Test did reveal a difference. Other studies of gifted children have lent support to the notion that there are more leaders among gifted children than average ability children (Freehill, 1982).

Sometimes these advanced leadership skills cause peer problems (Reichart, 1983). Too often these skills are mistaken for bossiness (Webb, Meckstroth, & Tolan, 1985) or manipulation. Manipulation is defined as getting one's own



way in a conflict in a deceptive way.

Gifted children are emotionally sensitive. The same intelligence which compels them to search for answers to their questions also drives them to understand other people and themselves (Freehill, 1982). They feel things more deeply than their peers (Alvino, 1981).

Sensitivity combined with superior reading abilities may lead to problems. Gifted children read more than the comics and sports page. They can, therefore, understand and discuss world issues and problems (Rubenzer, 1986). They worry about these problems and feel helpless to do anything about them. As Hollingworth (1975) noted, difficulties will arise when there is a combination of the intelligence of an adult and the emotions of a child.

Gifted children have unrealistic expectations of themselves and what they should be able to do (Whitmore, 1980). These concerns and their desire to do something must be realistic. It is essential that gifted children comprehend that the world will continue to exist; the world's problems do not rest on their shoulders.

Strang (1960) characterized gifted children as having many interests and multi-passions. One gifted teenager said, "I'm one of those few people who try to do everything from serving as chairman of the parrish bicentennial

committee, to being a cheerleader, and a writer. I may not be very good in everything I do, but I do the best with 24 hours in a day. I would list every little thing I do, but if I saw it, I don't think I would believe it either" (Kruger, 1978).

Having multiple talents is desirable as it motivates gifted children to explore many different areas and to develop a deeper appreciation for life. Many gifted children, however, feel overwhelmed by the number of things they can do in life. This creates problems when deciding what to study (and which vocation to pursue) as there is a wide range of vocations in which they would be successful (Freehill, 1982).

Gifted children are, first of all, those who experience the same problems as their peer group. They, however, are also confronted with unique problems that are a direct result of their superior abilities and skills. A review of literature has lent support to the problems that were identified in Galbraith's research.

### Bibliotherapy

In order for gifted children to fully realize their potential, their emotional and social needs must be met. Bibliotherapy may be an appropriate approach to help them build good mental health and to learn ways to solve their

problems. The idea of using bibliotherapy is not new. An inscription at the the library at Alexandria, 300 B.C., read "The nourishment of the soul." Inscribed at the library of Thebes were written these words: "Healing Place of the Soul." A similar phrase was found at St. Gall, a medieval abbey in Switzerland, "The medicine chest of the soul." More specifically, Plato stated "... for the part can never be well unless the whole is well... If the head and body are to be well, you must begin by curing the soul; that is the first thing. And the cure, my dear youth, has to be effected by the use of certain charms, and these charms are fair words" (Gumaer, 1984, p.141).

The word bibliotherapy was derived from the Greek word, biblion, meaning book, and therapeio meaning healing. It was defined in the Third International Dictionary (unabridged) as "... the use of selected reading materials as therapeutic adjuncts in medicine and psychiatry; guidance in the solution of personal problems through directed reading" (Webster, 1966, p.212). The Dictionary of Education provides this definition: "... the use of books to influence total development, a process of interaction between the reader and literature which is used for personality assessment, adjustment, growth, clinical and mental hygiene purposes; a concept that ideas inherent

in selected reading materials can have a therapeutic effect upon the mental and physical ills of the reader" (Good, 1969, p.58).

For the purpose of this study the definition of Frasier and McCannon (1981) was used. Bibliotherapy is a technique for using books to help gifted children promote good mental health and to discuss and develop alternative approaches for meeting their special challenges and problems (p.81).

What is meant by good mental health? Thomas' (1967) definition was supported by other professionals. He stated that a person having good mental health will: (1) not postpone meeting his/her needs; (2) not interfere with others meeting their needs; and (3) help others to meet their needs. Bledsoe and Garrison (1962) defined a mentally healthy person as one who has a positive self-concept, can admit negative personal characteristics and maintain an acceptable degree of consistency in his/her personality.

Because reading has been perceived as a means of enjoyment and relaxation, its value in therapy is often overlooked. Therapy does not mean serious maladjustment. It is one way of solving a problem. Even the most well adjusted person from time to time encounters problems.

Books are important in everyday life as they: (1) provide vicarious experience; (2) extend experience; (3) form character; (4) further good human relations; and (5) provide a vehicle for personal growth (Labuda, 1974).

The dynamics of bibliotherapy include three mechanisms: identification, catharsis, and insight. Of these, identification is the most important. Readers identify with a character in the book or relate a character to a person in their life . It is through this identification that readers examine their own problems when they read about others. They discover that their problems are not unique.

Because reading is a private experience, embarrassment is minimized. Readers can practice, or role play, solutions to their problems without being interrupted. If their feelings become too intense, they can set the book aside (Berstein, 1983).

Catharsis is the release of emotion or tension when one vicariously experiences the problems (motivation, conflicts, and emotions) of the book character. Readers can assume the role of observers.

Once the tension has been alleviated, readers then can gain new insight. They can become aware and understand their emotions and thoughts. They can also explore the

behavior and motivation of others (Shrodes, 1949). This aids in solving problems. The underlying assumptions of bibliotherapy are that through this process of identification, catharsis, and insight, children incorporate their own needs and problems into the reading experience. They interpret the author's words with respect to their own experiences.

Bibliotherapy has not yet been fully recognized as a means of therapy. Its tenets have been informally accepted. Alston (1962), Lejeune (1969), Shrode (1949), and Spache (1978) have described the value of this process in the following ways: (1) information is provided to help solve problems and develop new skills; (2) satisfaction of personal interests; (3) assistance in identifying repressed problems; (4) examination and communication of personal, threatening problems; (5) assistance in self-awareness and relationships with others; (6) assistance in socialization process, reduction of isolation and loneliness through providing universal experiences; (7) reduction of anxiety and fear; (8) assistance in examining attitudes and values; and (9) enjoyment and entertainment.

History has revealed the power and effect of the written word on groups. Book burnings and murder or banishment of authors bear testimony to the explosive

forces which are hidden in books. Machiavelii's The Prince, Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations, and Thomas Paine's Common Sense had a great impact on nations. Abraham Lincoln once said that Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin was instrumental in starting the Civil War.

These are a few examples of how books have influenced groups of people. It is, however, more difficult to study the effects of books on individuals. Bernstein (1983) stated that Pomeroy tried to put the field of bibliotherapy on an empirical basis with a study entitled "Bibliot- A Study in Results of Hospital Library Service." This study reviewed 1,538 case studies. During the next three decades, studies were conducted to investigate the philosophical and psychological effects on the field. More graduate students were writing dissertations on the topic. Increased interest was shown by researchers in the 1980's who regarded bibliotherapy as a science and an art.

Studies have shown that bibliotherapy was effective with individuals. Webster (1961) was successful in reducing fear of the dark and of dogs in young children. Thirty-five first graders were divided into five groups of seven children each. Each group was read a different story once a week for five consecutive weeks. The stories dealt positively with both the dark and dogs. After each story

the children discussed their reactions to the story and related personal experiences for about twenty minutes.

Three months after the reading of the last story, an unbiased person interviewed the children. Twenty-nine of the thirty-five participants had a reduced fear of both the dark and dogs.

Smith (1948) conducted a study using children in grades four through eight. The students were enrolled in five schools in different geographical settings. She asked students if they remembered any book, story, or poem which changed their thinking or attitude in any way. Of the 502 responses, 60 percent indicated a change in attitude. Thirty percent expressed a change in ideas and concepts. An additional 10 percent remembered a change in behavior.

Little research has been conducted concerning the use of bibliotherapy with gifted children to solve their personal, social, and educational problems. Frasier & McCannon (1981) suggested that perhaps one explanation may be that it is not generally recognized that gifted children have problems. It is assumed that because of their superior abilities, these individuals should be able to solve their problems unaided. This false assumption can be very damaging. Gifted children, as stated by Galbraith, have the same problems as other children in addition to



unique problems that are a direct result of their giftedness.

Frasier and McCannon (1981) believed that bibliotherapy was a good technique for helping gifted children solve their educational, personal, and social problems. Through literature, children can discuss and develop alternative systems for coping with their special challenges and problems. This idea was also expressed by Weingarten (1956), Polette and Hamlin (1980), and Witty (1952).

Bibliotherapy is an appropriate technique because reading is an activity gifted children enjoy. Witty (1971) stated that gifted children achieve best in language and reading. They learn to read at an earlier age than their peers. Terman and Oden (1947) found that 50 percent of the children in the study were reading prior to entering school. Twenty percent were reading before the age of five, 6 percent before four years, and 1/6 of one percent before the age of three. Gifted children also possess word, vocabulary, and comprehension skills several years beyond their peer group.

Bobel's (1981) study of gifted students in grades four through eight revealed a consistently positive attitude about reading. Ninety-six percent said they felt happy

when they were reading what they wanted. Eighty-four percent enjoyed reading at home and 87 percent felt time should be set aside for reading during the summer months. In the same study, 68 percent of gifted students preferred reading books. Goostree (1981) in a similar study found gifted students enjoyed comedy, adventure, myths and legends, and stories about boys and girls their own age.

Some content analyses have been done with the intent of assessing the characteristics of gifted children. Korth's (1977) study found that little stereotyping of giftedness was found. Other such studies were conducted by Horn (1983), Flack and Lamb (1984), Tway (1980), and Vetrone (1986) with the same results.

Familiarity with literature is the first step in bibliotherapy. This process is very time consuming. The result of this study was an annotated list of children's realistic fiction identifying the educational, personal, and social problems encountered by gifted characters. This will aid researchers in selecting appropriate books to be used in bibliotherapy.

### Design of the Study

A content analysis was made using 56 books of children's realistic fiction. This chapter will discuss (1) procedures that were used, (2) sources of data, (3) content analysis, (4) methods of gathering data, (5) description of data-gathering instruments that were used, and (6) analysis of data.

#### Procedures to be Used

Books were selected from the subject index of Bookfinder. The main character of the book was analyzed for characteristics and behaviors associated with giftedness. The books were analyzed in terms of the educational, personal, and social problems encountered. A description of each book was included to be used in research to study the effectiveness of bibliotherapy for helping to solve problems of gifted children.

#### Sources of Data

To investigate the research questions, a list of books was compiled and analyzed. The lists were taken from Volumes I, II, and III of The Bookfinder: A Guide to Children's Literature About the Needs and Problems of Youth, commonly called The Bookfinder. These books described and categorized children's literature according to more than 450 psychological, behavioral, and

developmental topics of concern to young people aged two through fifteen.

Sharon Spredemann Dreyer used the concept of The Bookfinder for her master's thesis. Formal development as a publication began in 1973. The author, consultants, and field-trial participants selected books familiar to them and those found in the Central Youth Library in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The results were field tested at sixteen field test sites.

A criterion was established for selection. Books must be printed in hardbound form and must be accessible from libraries or bookstores. The content must be appropriate and deal with universal themes so that differences in time and place will be irrelevant. Another important consideration is that characters are realistic, plots and themes must be carried through to resolution, and problems encountered must be presented to provoke thoughtful consideration without moralizing. Artistic quality was also considered (Dreyer, 1977, p. XIV).

Volume I included books published before 1975 and represented 680 authors from over a hundred publishing companies. Volume II contained books published between 1975-1978. This volume featured 2500 books written by 475 authors and published by 69 publishing companies. Books

published between 1979-1982 are found in Volume III; 496 authors and 70 publishing companies are represented.

The descriptors used in the Subject Index were Gifted and Talents. The criteria that was applied in this study were: (1) type of book (realistic fiction); (2) recommended age for each book (six through fifteen), (3) and copyright date for each book (prior to 1975- 1982). Children's realistic fiction was defined as books of fiction written about, and for, children which depict characters in true life situations.

In the three volumes of Bookfinder, using the descriptors Gifted and Talented, 96 books were listed. There were several books which did not satisfy the criteria. Two books were excluded because they were biographies and one was an autobiography. Three on the list were non-fiction and one was fiction. One book was excluded because the main character did not meet the identification criteria. Thirty-five titles were repeated.

Books were obtained from four libraries. A large metropolitan library, a small town library, a school library, and a university youth collection library were utilized. Five books from the sample list could not be found.

#### Content Analysis

Content analysis was defined by Berelson (1952) and involved an objective and systematic analysis of ideas in printed material. The process included definitions of terms, limitation of criteria, and examination of material for the presence or absence of criteria and the description of contents. Definitions of terms and limitations of criteria have been described previously.

#### Methods of Gathering Data

A checklist was used to collect data. (See Appendix C and D.)

#### Description of Data-Gathering Instruments

To analyze the books in the sample, it was first necessary to determine if the main character exhibited characteristics and behaviors associated with giftedness. The instrument chosen was one used in a study by Horn (1983). This checklist was compiled applying the criteria used to identify gifted children by the Nebraska Department of Education approved in 1976. It was also supported by the "Characteristics and Identification of the Gifted" compiled by Dr. Anne B. Crabbe, and those established by the Science Research Associates, Inc., 1955 (p. 88). The same definition of giftedness was used as stated in this study. The psycho-motor characteristics, however, were eliminated as that area was excluded from the federal

definition. (See Appendix C)

The second instrument was developed by the researcher. It was based on the study of Galbraith (1983). The checklist was modeled from Galbraith's "Student Questionnaire" (Schmitz & Galbraith, 1985, p.149). (See Appendix D) As each book was read, information was recorded by writing the page number of the book where the character experienced one of the problems listed in "The Eight Great Gripes."

To establish validity of this instrument, it was critiqued by two specialists in gifted education. To establish interrater reliability, the instrument was used by three reader-raters, all using the same book. Prior to reading the books from the sample, the reader-raters read the book The Gifted Kid's Survival Guides for Ages 11-18 (Galbraith, 1983).

## Analysis of the Data

### Introductory Paragraphs

The purpose of this study was to conduct a content analysis of selected children's realistic fiction depicting the personal, educational, and social problems. The characters were analyzed for evidence of characteristics and behaviors associated with giftedness as defined by Marland (1972) and Horn (1983).

The following research questions were addressed:

1. Do the main characters in books of children's realistic fiction exhibit characteristics and behaviors associated with (1) intellectual ability, (2) creativity, (3) leadership ability, and/or (4) ability in the visual and performing arts?
2. Do the main characters in books of realistic children's fiction encounter the problem of coursework that is too easy and boring?
3. Do the main characters in books of realistic children's fiction encounter the problem of parents (teachers and friends) expecting them to be perfect, to "do their best", all the time?
4. Do the main characters in books of children's realistic fiction encounter the problem of having few friends who really understand them?



5. Do the main characters in books of children's realistic fiction encounter the problem of having irrelevant coursework?
6. Do the main characters in books of children's realistic fiction encounter the problem of peers teasing them about being smart?
7. Do the main characters in books of children's realistic fiction encounter the problem of being overwhelmed by the number of things they can do in life?
8. Do the main characters in books of children's realistic fiction encounter the problem of feeling too different, alienated?
9. Do the main characters in books of children's realistic fiction encounter the problem of worrying about world problems and feeling helpless to do anything about them?

It is the purpose of this chapter to state each research question and to present the data that was collected. A summary of each book, identification of the characteristics and behaviors associated with the giftedness of the main character, and the identification of the educational, personal, and social problems encountered are included.

Do the main characters in books of children's realistic fiction exhibit characteristics and behaviors associated

with (1) intellectual ability, (2) creativity, (3) leadership ability, and/or (4) ability in the visual and performing arts?

The main characters according to the selected criteria (Marland, 1972, and Horn, 1983) exhibited characteristics and behaviors of giftedness in the sample. These characteristics were present singly or in combination. Intellectual giftedness was present in 7 books. Creativity was displayed by the main character in one book. Leadership Ability was evidenced in 3 books. Main characters displayed ability in the visual and performing arts in 41 books. (See Table 1).

Table 1

Areas of Giftedness Exhibited by Main Character


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Author	Intellectual Ability	Creativity	Leadership Ability	Visual & Performing Arts
Ames				M
Asher				D
Bates				M
Bethuncourt				M
Bridgers				M
Bulla (1961)			X	A
Bulla (1979)				A
Cohen				A
Colman				A
Corcoran				D
Cretan				A
Cullin				A
Cunningham			X	T
Delton				M
Dobrin				M
First				M

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Author	Intellectual Ability	Creativity	Leadership Ability	Visual & Performing Arts
Flory				A
Greenwald				M
Grimes				W
Hassler				A
Hest				D
Hunter (1981)	X			M W
Hunter (1968)				M
Landis	X			D
Lenski				M
Love				A
Madison	X			W
Magorian				A
Peyton (1973)				M
Peyton (1970)				M
Peyton (1971)				M
Pinkwater				A
Robison				D

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Author	Intellectual Ability	Creativity	Leadership Ability	Visual & Performing Arts
Rock				A
Rodowsky				A
Sachs	X			
Smith				M
Spence				M
Stren		X		A
Sutcliff	X		X	
Thomas				M
Tolan	X			W
Wallace	X			
Wolff				M

---

Note. M = Musical Ability; A = Artistic Ability;

W = Writing Ability; D = Dancing Ability; T = Acting

Ability.

Do the main characters in books of children's realistic fiction encounter the problem of coursework being too easy and boring?

Forty-four books in the sample were read and analyzed. Of these books, 4 books depicted characters who encountered the problem of coursework being too easy and boring (See Table 2).

Do the main characters in books of children's realistic fiction encounter the problem of parents (teachers and friends) expecting them to be perfect, to "do their best" all the time?

Forty-four books in the sample were read and analyzed. Of these books, 7 books portrayed characters who encountered the problem of parents (teachers and friends) expecting them to be perfect, "to do their best" all the time (See Table 2).

Table 2

Educational, Personal, and Social Problems Encountered by  
the Gifted Character

Author	Problems encountered						
	B	P	U	I	T	O	D W
Ames		X	X				X
Asher		X					
Bates							
Bethuncourt							
Bridgers							X
Bulla (1961)			X		X		X
Bulla (1979)							
Cohen							
Colman							
Corcoran							
Cretan							
Cullin		X	X				X
Cunningham			X				
Delton		X					
Dobrin							
First		X			X		





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 Problems encountered
 

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Author	B	P	U	I	T	O	D	W
Sachs			X				X	
Smith								
Spence								
Stren	X						X	
Sutcliff								
Thomas								
Tolan	X							
Wallace					X			
Wolff								

---

Note. B = Problem 1, Boredom; P = Problem 2, Perfection; U = Problem 3, Few Friends Who Understand; I = Problem 4, Irrelevant Coursework; T = Problem 5, Teasing of Peers; O = Problem 6, Overwhelmed by the Number of Things to Do in Life; D = Problem 7, Feeling Too Different, Alienated; W = Problem 8, Worry About World Problems.

Characters in 4 of the 7 books believed that their mothers expected them to be perfect. One of these characters also felt pressure from the father to excel in everything.

Two books portrayed characters who encountered teachers who expected perfection. Only one book focused on friends who expected the main gifted character to be perfect.

Four of the seven books portrayed characters who demanded perfection from themselves. It was interesting to note that one book portrayed a character who demanded perfection from himself, as well as perfection expectations from his parents, teachers, and friends. Another book featured a character who expected perfection from herself and her mother wanted her to be perfect (See Table 3).

Another book featured a character who felt pressure to be perfect from her mother and from herself (See Table 3).

Table 3

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Sources of Expectations of Perfection

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Author	Parents	Teachers	Friends	Self
Ames	M			
Asher	M F			
Cullin				X
Delton				X
First	M	X	X	X
Flory	M			X
Peyton (1971)		X		

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Note. M = Mother; F = Father.

Do the main characters in books of children's realistic fiction encounter the problem of having few friends "who really understand them"?

Forty-four books in the sample were read and analyzed. Of these books, 6 books portrayed characters who encountered the problem of having "few friends who really understood them" (See Table 2).

Do the main characters in books of children's realistic fiction encounter the problem of having irrelevant coursework?

Forty-four books in the sample were read and analyzed. One book portrayed the main character encountering the problem of having irrelevant coursework (See Table 2).

Do the main characters in books of children's realistic fiction encounter the problem of peers teasing them about being smart?

Forty-four books in the sample were read and analyzed. Three of these books portrayed a main character who encountered the problem of peers teasing them about being smart (See Table 2).

Do the main characters in books of children's realistic fiction encounter the problem of being overwhelmed by the number of things they can do in life?

Forty-four books in the sample were read and analyzed.

None of the books in the sample portrayed a character who encountered the problem of being overwhelmed by the number of things they can do in life.

Do the main characters in children's realistic fiction encounter the problem of feeling too different, alienated?

Forty-four books in the sample were read and analyzed. Nine of the books portrayed a character who encountered the problem of feeling too different, alienated (See Table 2).

Do the main characters in children's realistic fiction encounter the problem of worrying about world problems and feeling helpless to do anything about them?

Forty-four books in the sample were read and analyzed. Three of these books portrayed a gifted character who encountered the problem of feeling too different, alienated (Table 2).

### Summary

Children's realistic fiction in the sample of books taken from Bookfinder, Volume I, II, and III do portray main characters as gifted and talented. The characters exhibited characteristics and behaviors associated with (1) intellectual ability, (2) creativity, (3) leadership ability, and/or ability in the visual and performing arts as defined by the criteria.

The sample of books do portray main characters who

encounter educational, personal, and social problems as identified by Galbraith (1983). Fifty percent (22 books) of the books revealed these problems; fifty percent did not.

The most prevalent problem encountered by the gifted character in the sample was the problem of feeling too different, alienated. The second most frequent problem encountered was parents (teachers and friends) expect gifted children to be perfect, to "do their best" all the time. The problem of being overwhelmed by the number of things gifted children can do in life was not encountered by the characters in the sample investigated.

The following is the synopsis of each book, a summary of the characteristics and behaviors of giftedness exhibited by the main character, and a synopsis of the educational, personal, and social problems encountered by the main character:

Ames, M. (1980). Nicky and the joyous noise.

Totowa, NJ: Scribner.

Appropriate for Ages: 9-12 years

Number of pages: 130 pages

Area of Giftedness: Musical Talent

Brief Synopsis of Book:

Nicholas Roy Pratt II. (Nicky) has a natural talent for music. This talent was discovered and was nurtured by one of the men who lived with his mother. He is abandoned by his mother and is sent to live with his grandmother. She provides opportunities for him to develop his talent. A friend Senor Estrada helps him to learn the secret of "finding out what you do best, doing it with joy, and putting into it a 'heap of work.'" "

Characteristics of Giftedness Displayed:

Nicky has a natural talent for music. Like his grandfather, he can play tunes by ear. "Once he'd absorbed a melody in his head, he could play it with ease on the piano" (Ames, 1980, p.14). Soon, however, he becomes frustrated because he lacks the knowledge to progress. He is willing to work to pay for his piano lessons. He also plays the harmonica.

Nicky enjoys all styles of music, particularly

classical. He can "feel" the music, the shifting of the chords. Mr. Grimm, his grandmother, and his friend Velveteen recognize his talent.

This young musician is interested in other's creative talents. He appreciates Estrada's architecture, Velveteen's poetry, and Mr. Grimm's music.

Synopsis of Educational, Personal, and Social Problems Encountered by Main Character:

Nicky experiences three of the problems in this study. He encounters the problem of parents expecting him to be perfect. His mother frequently says, "I hope you're not turning into some kind of odd-ball" (Ames, 1980, p.28).

He also has few friends who truly understand him. He thinks to himself, "I don't know one other kid who is interested in that long-haired stuff. Yes, sir, I'm sure a nut" (Ames, 1980, p.29).

Nicky also worries about world problems and feels helpless to do anything about them. He says, "What is the use of trying when no matter how hard you try, it never makes any difference anyhow" (Ames, 1980, p.124).



Asher, S.T. (1982). Just like Jenny. New York: Delacourte.

Appropriate for Ages: 8-12

Number of pages: 148 pages

Area of Giftedness: Performing Arts

Brief Synopsis of Book:

Stephie Nordham wants to be a ballet dancer. She experiences many different feelings that young dancers encounter: jealousy toward other dancers, nervousness during auditions, frustration, joy, and dedication to dance. The story follows her life as she works through these emotions.

Characteristics of Giftedness Displayed:

Stephie, 13 years old, is a talented, dedicated dancer. She has received 7 years of ballet lessons and two years of modern and jazz. Tuesday and Thursday she has lessons from 6:30 to 8:00. Her lessons on Saturday are from 10:30 to 12:00.

Her talent is recognized by Mrs. Deveraux, her friends, and Mr. Oldham, her dance instructor. He suggests that she audition for the Oldham Dance Workshop, a school known for its excellence.

Synopsis of Educational, Personal, and Social Problems

Encountered by Main Character:

Stephie experiences none of the educational, personal, social problems being researched.

Bates, B. (1979). My mom, the money nut.

New York: Holiday.

Appropriate for Ages: 10-12 years

Number of pages: 158 pages

Area of Giftedness: Musical Talent

Brief Synopsis of Book:

Fritzi Zimmer and her family move to a new home. She makes new friends and adjusts to a new school. Mrs. Torcum and Hope, her friend, recognize her musical talent and encourage her to develop it.

Fritzi and her mother do not have a close relationship. She believes her mother to be interested only in obtaining money. While visiting her grandfather, Fritzi begins to understand her mother's motives for wanting her to have a financially secure future.

Characteristics of Giftedness Displayed:

Fritzi enjoys music. She taught herself to play the piano and easily learned to cord on the guitar. Mrs. Torcum, her music teacher, becomes her mentor and asks her to sing a solo for the Music Festival.

Synopsis of Educational, Personal, and Social Problems

Encountered by Main Character:

Fritzi experiences none of the problems in this study.

Bethuncourt, T.E. (1975). New York city too far from Tampa blues. New York: Holiday.

Appropriate for Ages: 10-14 years

Number of pages: 190 pages

Area of Giftedness: Musical Talent

Brief Synopsis of Book:

Tom, a musically talented, Hispanic teenager, moves from Tampa to New York City. He learns to cope with the problems of moving to a new city and the dangers of street life. Aurelio befriends him. They share a common interest: music. They record a song at a music company.

Characteristics of Giftedness Displayed:

Tom learns easily and is described by other characters as intelligent. He finds many solutions to his problems.

Tom enjoys music. His uncle gives him a guitar. He also has a talent for singing, arranging, and composing music. He and his friend Aurelio perform as a musical group called the Griffin Brothers. A record producer discovers them and offers them a contract.

Tom is accepted at the High School of Music and Art. This is a school for talented musicians and artists.

Synopsis of Educational, Personal, and Social Problems

Encountered by Main Character:

Tom experiences none of the problems in this study.

Bridgers, S.E. (1981). Notes for another life.

Westminister, MD: Knopf.

Appropriate for Ages: 12 years and above

Number of pages: 250 pages

Area of Giftedness: Musical Talent

Brief Synopsis of Book:

Wren Jackson and her brother Kevin live with their grandparents. Their father is suffering from mental illness and is frequently hospitalized. Karen, their mother, lives in another town. Neither Wren nor Kevin can accept the fact that they don't live with her.

Music plays a significant part in the life of the Jackson family. They sing together and enjoy listening to Wren play the piano.

Wren experiences a first love, the attempted suicide of her brother, and her parents' divorce. Her passion for music continues.

Characteristics of Giftedness Displayed:

Wren demonstrates intellectual ability. She has a good memory and memorizes many songs. She recognizes many medicines in her grandfather's pharmacy. She easily pronounces their generic names. She enjoys looking at his reference books.

She has a talent in music. Her grandmother began teaching her to play the piano when she was three years old. Eleven years later, Wren takes lessons at the college. She enjoys music and demonstrates this by practicing two hours every day. She is often asked to play at school functions and to sing at church. She knows that music will always play a significant role in her life.

Synopsis of Educational, Personal, and Social Problems Encountered by Main Character:

Wren experiences the problem of worrying about world problems and feeling helpless to do anything about them. She states, "What could she do about anything? Weren't they helpless against inflation, the spread of Communism, hunger, cancer, and mental illness? Didn't she, saddled with the obligation to avoid conflict with her grandparents, let alone her father, have responsibility enough?" (Bridgers, 1981, p.16).

Bulla, C.R. (1961). Benito. New York:

Thomas Y. Crowell Company, Inc.

Appropriate for Ages: 8-10 years

Number of pages: 85 pages

Area of Giftedness: Artistic Talent and Leadership Ability

Brief Synopsis of Book:

Benito has been abandoned by his father and is forced to live with his Uncle Pedro. Uncle Pedro is insensitive to his nephew's feelings. He is only interested in exploiting Benito. Benito works very long hours at difficult tasks.

Benito meets Manuel Vargas, a famous artist. Vargas encourages the young boy to use his talent. Through this interest, Benito becomes self-reliant and develops his talent.

Characteristics of Giftedness Displayed:

Benito is a talented artist and wood carver. He carves little burros, sheep, and birds which he gives away to his friends. Vargas and his artist friends recognize his talent and choose his carving of a Madonna to be placed in the Treasure Chest, a collection of exceptionally good art work to be shown to school children.

Benito makes time for his art. He often works by the



light of the moon. He finds satisfaction in his products.

Benito is interested in others' art. He tries to determine what colors Vargas uses and what techniques were used.

Benito assumes and carries our responsibility. He works long hours in the garden and cleans out the chicken house. He also takes the produce to market. After much hardship and descrimination, Benito takes responsibility for himself. He informs his uncle that he will continue to work hard, but he will also go to school. His uncle will grant him more freedom.

#### Synopsis of Educational, Personal, and Social Problems

##### Encountered by Main Character:

Benito experiences three of the problems in this study. He has few friends (people) who really understand him. Uncle Pedro is determined to make him a hard worker. He doesn't want him to be a dreamer. Uncle Pedro doesn't understand his artistic talent.

Uncle Pedro's attitude is transferred to his children, Carlos and Rosa. They tease and taunt Benito about his talent. They chant, "Benito is a great artist" (Bulla, 1961, p.58).

People's attitudes and resulting actions, make Benito feel that he is different. Mr. Cruz says that he is

strange. Uncle Pedro's says that "Benito will never amount to much, unless the dreams are knocked of of him" (Bulla, 1961, p.3).

Bulla, C.R. (1979). Daniel's Duck. Scranton, PA:

Har-Row.

Appropriate for Ages: 5-8 years

Number of pages: 64 pages

Area of Giftedness: Artistic Talent

Brief Synopsis of Book:

Daniel carves a wooden duck to take to the spring fair. His brother says that he isn't making it right, but his father encourages him to do it his way.

At the fair, people laugh at his duck. Daniel is heartbroken. With the help of Henry Pettigrew, the best wood carver in Tennessee, Daniel learns there are different ways of laughing. He also learns that art is the personal vision of the artist.

Characteristics of Giftedness Displayed:

Daniel learns easily and appears to have a natural ability to carve wood. He is a risk taker when he takes his duck to the fair. People enjoy his creation.

Daniel is interested in the art of others. He particularly enjoys Mr. Pettigrew's carvings.

Synopsis of Educational, Personal, and Social Problems

Encountered by Main Character:

Daniel experiences none of the problems in this study.

Cohen, M. (1980). No good in art. New York:  
Greenwillow.

Appropriate for Ages: 5-7 years

Number of pages: 64 pages

Area of Giftedness: Artistic Talent

Brief Synopsis of Book:

Jim enjoys art in kindergarten. His teacher, however, interferes with his creativity when she shows him "the right way to draw." He becomes frustrated and doubts his ability. The next year, his first grade teacher appreciates his creativity. He grows in self-esteem.

Characteristics of Giftedness Displayed:

Jim is original in thinking. He breaks away from the obvious when he draws. He draws things from a different viewpoint. He mixes colors for his pictures.

Synopsis of Educational, Personal, and Social Problems

Encountered by Main Character:

Jim experiences none of the problems in this study.

Colman, H. (1976). The amazing Miss Laura. West  
Caldwell, NJ: Morrow.

Appropriate for Ages: 11-14

Number of pages: 192 pages

Area of Giftedness: Artistic Talent

Brief Synopsis of Book:

Josie Smyrski, a 17 year old, lives with her family on her grandfather's farm. She believes that her grandparent is unreasonable and mean when he won't sell off an acre or two to pay her tuition to an art school.

During the summer, Josie works for Laura VanDyk, a widow of a famous artist. In many ways Laura is like Josie's grandfather; she refuses to sell her husband's paintings to pay off her debts.

With the help of Laura and her nephew Mike, Josie learns the joys of caring and understanding people. This occurs while she is developing her artistic ability.

Characteristics of Giftedness Displayed:

Josie has a talent in art. Her ability is recognized by her parents, teachers, Mike, and Miss Laura. Not only does she fill her time with drawing and painting, but she is interested in Paul VanDyk's paintings. She spends her time studying his techniques and use of color.

Synopsis of Educational, Personal, and Social Problems

Encountered by Main Character:

Josie experiences none of the educational, personal, social problems being researched.

Corcoran, B. (1982). Child of the morning. Patterson, NJ: Antheneum.

Appropriate for Ages: Ten years and above

Number of pages: 112 pages

Area of Giftedness: Performing arts

Brief Synopsis of Book:

Susan Bishop has problems finding a summer job because she has spells. A summer theater group hires her unaware of her problems and soon gives her dance lessons. She excels and is given a part in a production. She learns she has epilepsy and controls her spells.

Characteristics of Giftedness Displayed:

Susan has total recall in music. She remembers music and the dance steps she sees and practices them alone. She also makes up her own dances. Others recognize her talent and give her support. She enjoys reading and memorizes poems. Susan is a risk taker and tries new things. She adapts readily to new situations and uses different strategies to solve her problems. She is curious. She likes to daydream. She asks many questions and accepts constructive criticism.

Synopsis of Educational, Personal, and Social Problems

Encountered by Main Character:

Susan experiences none of the educational, personal,



Cretan, G.Y. (1966). All except Sammy.

Waltam, MA: Little, Brown, & Company.

Appropriate for Ages: 6-9 years

Number of pages: 32 pages

Area of Giftedness: Artistic Ability

Brief Synopsis of Book:

Everyone in the Agabasian's family is musically gifted, except for Sammy. He tries to play different instruments and learn to sing; but he has no musical talent. He feels left out. No one seems interested in his ability to play basketball.

For a school assignment, Sammy must visit an art museum and write about the picture that he liked the best. Through this experience, he learns that he has artistic talent.

Characteristics of Giftedness Displayed:

Sammy is interested in the art work of others. He is keenly observant. He demonstrates this by noticing the different colors that were used to shade areas in the pictures. He calls attention to the various techniques used to express an idea.

Sammy enrolls in a special art class. He enjoys the lessons and creating new products.

Synopsis of Educational, Personal, and Social Problems

Encountered by Main Character:

Sammy experiences none of the problems in this study.

Cullin, C. (1979). Cages of glass, flowers of time.

Scarsdale, NY: Bradbury Press.

Appropriate for Ages: 12-adult years

Number of pages: 316 pages

Area of Giftedness: Artistic Ability

Brief Synopsis of Book:

Claire Burden, age 14, is a battered child. As many abused children do, she tries to protect her mother who hurts her. Much of the conflict centers around Claire's desire to draw.

Claire's artistic ability is recognized by her father who taught her to draw, Mr. Beasley and Clyde who encourage her to develop her gift, and Miss Joyce who becomes her mentor.

Characteristics of Giftedness Displayed:

Claire exhibits many characteristics of giftedness. She learns easily, comprehends well, and is keenly observant. Many times she reasons the cause of her mother's abuse is due to "nobody liked my mom" (Cullin, 1979, p.45).

Risk-taking is always apart of Claire's life. Everytime she draws, she risks being abused by her mother who had forbid her to draw.

Claire is always open to constructive criticism. She takes her art work seriously and often finds satisfaction in it. She enjoys her father's art work also.

Claire displays leadership ability. She assumes much responsibility for caring for her alcoholic mother.

#### Synopsis of Educational, Personal, and Social Problems

##### Encountered by Main Character:

Claire experiences three of the problems in the study: two personal problems and a combination of personal and social problem. Although she did not encounter the problem of parents (teachers and friends) expecting her to be perfect, she often feels her drawings are not good enough. She feels people like her because she can draw.

Claire encounters the problem of few friends who really understand her and the problem of feeling too different, alienated. Many times she says, "Kids hate me" (Cullin, 1979, p.15) or "I'm not like the other kids" (Cullin, 1979, p.38).

Cunningham, J. (1981). The silent voice.

New York: Dutton.

Appropriate for Ages: 11-14 years

Number of pages: 145 pages

Area of Giftedness: Performing Arts and Leadership Ability

Brief Synopsis of Book:

The Silent Voice is the story of two gifted and talented children. The main character Auguste is an orphan and a mute. Astair, also an orphan, rescues him and invites him to join her friends. They sing, dance, and mime for money in the streets of Paris.

Astair recognizes the mute's talents. Through some manipulation, she introduces him to the household of Monsieur Bernard, a master of mime and a teacher. He becomes Auguste's mentor and friend.

Characteristics of Giftedness Displayed:

Auguste is a very talented mime. He takes his art work seriously and practices despite physical pain. He uses his art to express his feelings. Often Auguste expresses an interest in the accomplishments of others. He learns quickly and has a sense of humor. His talent is recognized by others.

Astair has a beautiful singing voice. She can also

dance. Her leadership ability is evident. She takes charge of her group, recognizes the abilities of others, includes others in activities, and adapts readily to new situations. She is very perceptive.

Synopsis of Educational, Personal, and Social Problems

Encountered by Main Character:

Auguste experiences the problem of having few friends who really understand him. Other characters tease him because they are jealous of his talent. Some of these problems are a result of his inability to speak and the fact that he is an orphan. Astair has none of the problems being researched.

Delton, J. (1981). I never win. Minneapolis, MN:

Carolrhoda Books.

Appropriate for Ages: 4-7 years

Number of pages: 32 pages

Area of Giftedness: Musical Talent

Brief Synopsis of Book:

I Never Win is the story of Charlie who never wins at games or contests. To alleviate his anxiety, he plays the piano. He finds recognition by playing his piano at his teacher's house for some important people. He concludes, "I guess not every prize is one you can see."

Characteristics of Giftedness Displayed:

Charlie learns easily and has a good memory. His giftedness lies in his musical talent. He takes his music seriously and spends much time practicing the piano. He often uses this art form to express his feelings.

Synopsis of Educational, Personal, and Social Problems

Encountered by Main Character:

Charlie experiences none of the educational, personal, social problems being researched.

Dobrin, A. (1971). Scat. Englewood Cliffs: NJ:

School Book Service.

Appropriate for Ages: 6-9 years

Number of pages: 36 pages

Area of Giftedness: Musical Ability

Brief Synopsis of Book:

Scat is very interested in the jazz that his father plays on the trumpet. His grandmother, with whom the family lives, believes that this music is immoral. She tries to prevent him from listening. Whenever possible, Scat sneaks off to town to listen.

For his birthday, Scat's father gives him a harmonica. The grandmother isn't sure if she approves of this gift, but encourages him "to follow his heart." After the death of his grandmother, Scat discovers the meaning of this advice.

Characteristics of Giftedness Displayed:

Scat is very curious and adventuresome. He acquired his nickname "Scat" because he was always doing things he should not be doing. He always want to do things for which he is too young.

Scat is interested in music. He can identify all the instruments in the band. He taught himself to play the



harmonica.

Synopsis of Educational, Personal, and Social Problems

Encountered by Main Character:

Scat experiences none of the problems in this study.

First, J. (1978). Move over, Beethoven.

New York: Watts.

Appropriate for Ages: 10-13 years

Number of pages: 121 pages

Area of Giftedness: Musical Ability

Brief Synopsis of Book:

Gina Barlow begins junior high school. She must make a decision: to continue practicing her piano four hours each day or to participate in extra-curricular activities.

Characteristics of Giftedness Displayed:

Gina exhibits many characteristics of giftedness. In second grade, she began to play the piano with remarkable skill. She would also compose songs for her own amusement. This talent was recognized by her piano teacher, her mother, and friends.

This young pianist takes her talent seriously. She spends many hours each day practicing. She often loses herself in her music. She uses her music to express her feelings.

Gina is described by other characters as being intelligent. Her friends come to her for advice. She is observant and reasons things out.

Synopsis of Educational, Personal, and Social Problems

Encountered by Main Character:

Gina believes that her teachers, her mother, and her friends expect her to be perfect all of the time. This makes her feel guilty when she doesn't practice four hours every day. She expects perfection from herself which compounds the problem. She sometimes calls herself an intellectual slob and character weakling.

Other characters in the book are jealous of Gina's ability. One character says with a snarl in her voice, "My mother keeps calling you a paragon of the community, the way you do well in school, excel at the piano, and are such a nice girl" (First, 1978, p.39).

Flory, J. (1963). One hundred and eight bells

New York: Houghton Mifflin Co.

Appropriate for Ages: 9-11 years

Number of pages: 219 pages

Area of Giftedness: Artistic Talent

Brief Synopsis of Book:

Setsuko Sagawa wants to become an artist like her father. She becomes so involved in her drawing that she often forgets to do many of her chores. This concerns her mother who was reared in the traditional Japanese way. She believes that girls should learn to care for a family and not to have a career. Setsuko's aunt often defends her from criticism.

Characteristics of Giftedness Displayed:

There is little doubt that Setsuko is a talented artist. Several characters comment on her ability. Aunt Toshiko states, "I envy this gifted child" (Flory, 1963, p.91).

When drawing, Setsuko becomes oblivious to the events around her. She takes her art work seriously and finds great satisfaction in it.

Setsuko enjoys the art work of others. She critiques their style and choice of colors.

Synopsis of Educational, Personal, and Social Problems

Encountered by Main Character:

Setsuko experiences the problem of people expecting her to be perfect. Her mother reminds her, "Better do fine in arithmetic and in history. Last year you were a disgrace to the family in history" (Flory, 1963, p.32).

The main character sometimes believes she is different. She said, "Being an artist is lonely. It is hard sometimes to be an artist with thoughts and feelings that were bursting to be expressed, but no one to tell them to" (Flory, 1963, p.33).

Greenwald, S. (1981). Give us a big hand, Rosy Cole.

Waltham, MA: Little, Brown, & Company.

Appropriate for Ages: 8-10 years

Number of pages: 76 pages

Area of Giftedness: Musical Ability

Brief Synopsis of Book:

Give Us A Great Big Smile, Rosy Cole centers around a family's attempt to push a child to excel before her time. The main character Rosy Cole, aged 10, is to become the subject of her uncle's next book, just as her older sisters had been. Her uncle is determined to make Rosy and her violin a successful book.

The problem is that Rosy has no talent or desire to play the violin. She honestly judges her own ability and knows she has no musical talent.

Characteristics of Giftedness Displayed:

There is little evidence of Rosy giftedness. Her mother said "Rosy liked to draw", but this was not developed in the story (Greenwald, 1981, p.13). The character did have a playful sense of humor. She comes up with funny solutions to avoid playing the violin.

Synopsis of Educational, Personal, and Social Problems

Encountered by Main Character:

Rosy experiences none of the problems being researched.

Grimes, N. (1977). Growin'. New York:Dial.

Appropriate for Ages: 9-11 years

Number of pages: 107 pages

Area of Giftedness: Visual Arts Ability

Brief Synopsis of Book:

Yolanda "Pump" Jackson's life changes after the death of her father. She and her mother move to a new neighborhood and she meets new friends. Yolanda struggles with her desire to write as she overcomes the loss of her father. She establishes a better relationship with her mother. She shares her writing with Jim, an artist who goes to her school.

Characteristics of Giftedness Displayed:

Yolanda's parents and her friend Jim recognize her talent for writing. She often expresses her feelings in stories and poems. "It keeps me from hurting people too. Most times when I got mad at somebody, I'd write an angry poem instead of yelling at the person who got me mad." Sometimes these poems have an unexpected twist.

Yolanda is good in English. Her teacher recognizes her ability.

The main character is sensitive to the wants and needs of Jim. Together they combine their talents to make



booklets, but do not share them with others.

Synopsis of Educational, Personal, and Social Problems  
Encountered by Main Character:

Yolanda experiences coursework being too easy and boring. This occurs in English. She says, "This is the third time this week that Miss Morris has talked about contractions. The other kids just couldn't get it. I got them the first time in fourth grade" (Grimes, 1977, p.46). She copes with her boredom by writing poems. Her teacher, unfortunately, discovers this and makes her stay after school.

Hassler, J.F. (1980). Jemmy. Patterson, NJ: Atheneum.

Appropriate for Ages: 11 years and above

Number of pages: 175 pages

Area of Giftedness: Artistic Talent

Brief Synopsis of Book:

Jemmy Stott has only a few months to go before she will graduate from high school. These plans are thwarted when her father, a weak, self-pitying alcoholic, orders her to quit, to stay home and care for her younger siblings.

Returning home, Jemmy is caught in a blizzard. She is rescued by Otis and Ann Chapman. Otis, a well-known artist, recognizes Jemmy's talent and becomes her mentor. The couple helps the Stott family in their struggle against poverty, ignorance, alcoholism, and prejudice.

Characteristics of Giftedness Displayed:

Jemmy is an artist. She takes her work seriously and often loses herself in her art. After leaving school, she spends her free time modeling for Otis, drawing, or painting. She isn't afraid to try new mediums.

Jemmy has a sense of humor. She can't understand why her friend doesn't understand her play on words.

The character also has leadership ability. She assumes and carries out the responsibility of caring for

her family.

She is sensitive to the family's wants and needs.

This is demonstrated when Jemmy saves her money to purchase new jeans for her sister, but resists giving them to her until she has some for her brother.

Synopsis of Educational, Personal, and Social Problems

Encountered by Main Character:

Jemmy experiences the problems of having few friends who really understand her. It is uncertain if this problem is the result of her talent or her heredity. She is a half-breed Indian.

Hest, A. (1982). Maybe next year. New York:

Houghton Mifflin Co.

Appropriate for Ages: 9-12 years and above

Number of pages: 175 pages

Area of Giftedness: Performing Arts Ability

Brief Synopsis of Book:

Twelve-year old Kate Newman lives with her grandmother and sister, Pinky. Mr. Schumacher, her grandmother's friend, moves in. Together, the family begins a chocolate chip cookie business.

Kate's friend is Peter. They attend ballet lessons. She must decide whether to audition for the National Ballet Summer School or wait another year.

Characteristics of Giftedness Displayed:

Kate began taking ballet lessons in fifth grade. Sometimes her teacher chooses her to dance in the front line which is reserved for accomplished dancers. Her friend Peter tells her often that she is a good dancer. There is little evidence to indicate that she is gifted in the performing arts.

Synopsis of Educational, Personal, and Social Problems

Encountered by Main Character:

Kate does not experience any of the problems in this

study.

Hunter, K.E. (1981). Lou in the limelight.

Totowa, NJ: Charles Scribner's & Sons.

Appropriate for Ages: 14 years and above

Number of pages: 296 pages

Area of Giftedness: Intellectual, Musical, and Writing Ability

Brief Synopsis of Book:

Lou, a fourteen year old talented singer-composer, leaves home with her three friends to find success in the world of popular music. The quartet encounters a trap which awaits many inexperienced performers: unscrupulous managers, drugs, and prostitution.

Lou's godmother, Jerutha Jackson, rescues the young people from exploitation. Lou finds a way to satisfy her intellectual and artistic needs without sacrificing her moral standards.

Characteristics of Giftedness Displayed:

Lou is intellectually and artistically talented. She possesses a good memory and is capable of learning one poem a day. Her teacher comments that she has a good mind. Lou's favorite subject is English. She particularly enjoys writing poetry.

The young artist has a good singing voice, stronger

than most adults, with a range of three octaves. She also plays the piano with skill and is a good dancer.

Synopsis of Educational, Personal, and Social Problems

Encountered by Main Character:

Lou does not experience any of the problems in this study.

Hunter, K.E. (1968). Soul brothers an sister Lou.

Totowa, NJ: Charles Scribner's & Sons.

Appropriate for Ages: 12 years and above

Number of pages: 248 pages

Area of Giftedness: Musical Ability

Brief Synopsis of Book:

Louretta Hawkins is a lonely teenager. She and the members of the fighting Hawks gang discover they enjoy music. Together at the clubhouse, they share common problems: police harassment, sorrow, and family disagreements.

With the help of her friends, which includes Miss. Hodges, her English teacher, Lou learns to be proud of her Black heritage.

Blind Eddie Bell introduces her to Black music. With his help and Mr. Al Lucitanno's (music teacher), the Soul Brothers and Sister Lou are discovered by Jewel Records.

Characteristics of Giftedness Displayed:

Louretta is a good student. She receives A's in all of her subjects, except math. She skipped the seventh grade. Her favorite subject is English and she enjoys memorizing poems. In her spare time, Lou and her friends publish a newspaper.



Like other teenagers, Lou knows all the words to the popular songs and enjoys singing them. She took piano lessons and plays classical pieces, plays popular pieces by ear, and plays at the Methodist Tabernacle. With her friends, she sets poetry to music. These are recorded and are a success.

Synopsis of Educational, Personal, and Social Problems

Encountered by Main Character:

Lou does not experience any of the problems in this study.

Landis, J.D. (1979). The sisters impossible.

Westminister, MD: Knopf.

Appropriate for Ages: 9-11 years

Number of pages: 171 pages

Area of Giftedness: Intellectual Ability and Ability in  
the Performing Arts

Brief Synopsis of Book:

Lilly Leonard's father wants her to be a ballet dancer, like her sister, Sandra. Lilly resists, but gives in. Much to her surprise, she enjoys ballet, but knows she will not be a dancer like her sister.

Sandra is older and acts haughty. She often ignores her little sister. Then everything changes and Lilly takes on a new role when she becomes a dancer too.

Lilly helps Sandra withstand the stress of competition against Meredith. The result is a renewed and stronger sibling relationship.

Characteristics of Giftedness Displayed:

Lilly loves dancing. She learns easily. After her first ballet lesson, she knew all five positions. She realizes, however, that she doesn't possess enough talent to be a good dancer.

Lilly recognizes her real strength is intellectual

ability. Other characters describe her as being intelligent. Her father says that "she is the only person who can argue a point better than he can" (Landis, 1979, p.24). She decides she will be a lawyer or a judge. Her statement "I will try a lot of things, as many as possible" (Landis, 1979, p.168) reveals that she is a risk-taker.

Lilly is creative. She employs a variety of strategies to solve problems. She is original in her thinking. She breaks away from the obvious. She also has a playful sense of humor.

#### Synopsis of Educational, Personal, and Social Problems

##### Encountered by Main Character:

Lilly experiences none of the educational, personal, social problems being researched.

Lenski, L. (1946). Blue ridge Billy.

Philadelphia, PA: J.B. Lippincott Company.

Appropriate for Ages: 9-12 years

Number of pages: 201 pages

Area of Giftedness: Musical Ability

Brief Synopsis of Book:

Ten year old Billy Honeycutt enjoys music. He wants desperately to buy a banjo and learn to play. His father sees little value in music. Billy is persistent. He learns to make baskets and sells them in order to buy the instrument. This story is about the young boy's struggle to fulfill a dream.

Characteristics of Giftedness Displayed:

Billy is musically gifted. He has a good voice and enjoys singing a large repertoire of songs. With the help of Uncle Pozy, he learns to play the dulcimer. His uncle also teaches him to play the violin.

Uncle Pozy and his uncle believe that Billy is a born musician. He accompanies a square dance band. The people enjoy his playing.

Billy also enjoys working with his hands. He learns to make baskets and a wooden dulcimer.

Synopsis of Educational, Personal, and Social Problems

Encountered by Main Character:

Billy experiences none of the educational, personal, social problems being researched.

Love, S.W. (1981). Crossing over. New York:

Lothrop, Lee, & Shepard Co.

Appropriate for Ages: 10-12 years

Number of pages: 155 pages

Area of Giftedness: Artistic Ability

Brief Synopsis of Book:

When her mother decides to go to graduate school, Megan and her brother go to live with their father. They enroll at the Kentucky Military Academy which is quite different from their old school.

Megan has a difficult time adjusting to her new life and becoming reacquainted with her father. Elsie Aberdeen, an art teacher, befriends her and becomes her mentor.

Characteristics of Giftedness Displayed:

Megan enjoys sketching. Had she remained at her former school, she would have been art editor of the eighth grade newspaper. She takes her art work seriously and finds great satisfaction in art. She states, "How can I get through this year without art" (Love, 1981, p.33).

Megan is interested in Elsie's art work. Her mentor says, "Megan's an artist. She is my best critic (Love, 1981, p.125).

Synopsis of Educational, Personal, and Social Problems

Encountered by Main Character:

Megan experiences none of the educational, personal, social problems being researched.

Madison, W. (1976). Getting out. Chicago:  
Follett.

Appropriate for Ages: 9-12 years

Number of pages: 288 pages

Area of Giftedness: Intellectual and Writing Ability

Brief Synopsis of Book:

Maggie DuBois is restless and impatient to find herself. She believes that to do this, she must "get out" of Steadfast, Iowa, her hometown. She wants to escape the dull days, the agony of seeing her mother beaten by her step-father, and the caste system which separates different levels of society.

Maggie has many experiences common to all teenagers. She loses a good friendship and falls in love with an older man. She must make some difficult decisions. One such decision is to accept or decline Miss Frazier's offer to finance her education. In return, Maggie will write a history of Steadfast. She declines the opportunity and learns that she doesn't need to leave to find herself.

Characteristics of Giftedness Displayed:

Although her grades were not exceptional, Maggie displays characteristics of intellectual ability. Her mentor helped her to learn to read at an early age and



helped her to develop an appreciation and love for reading. Miss Frazier says that "there was nothing simpler than teaching her to read; she learned almost by herself" (Madison, 1976, p.209).

Several characters describe Maggie as being special. They say she was independent and imaginative.

Maggie possesses a writing talent. She takes her writing seriously. Characters believe her to be a "born story teller" (Madison, 1976, p.233).

Synopsis of Educational, Personal, and Social Problems Encountered by Main Character:

Maggie experiences the frustration of feeling too different. She states, "I had to write no matter how much my feet hurt or how tired I was" (Madison, 1976, p.248).

Magorian, M. (1982). Good night, Mr. Tom.

Scranton, PA: Har-Row.

Appropriate for Ages: 11 years and above

Number of pages: 318 pages

Area of Giftedness: Artistic Ability

Brief Synopsis of Book:

William "Will" Beech, an eight year old boy, is evacuated from London to the country prior to World War II. He finds peace and security with Mr. Tom and his friends Zak, Carrie, and George. This comes to an end when his mother sends a telegram demanding that he return.

Weeks pass without a word from Will; Mr. Tom goes to find him. He finds Will nearly beaten and starved to death. They return home and Mr. Tom adopts Will.

Characteristics of Giftedness Displayed:

Although Will has had little schooling, he learns quickly. He is described by several characters as being bright. He enjoys plays and poetry.

Will has a natural artistic ability. Many characters comment on "his gift", among these are Mr. Tom, his teacher, and an artist.

Will finds satisfaction in art. When painting, he becomes so involved that he is oblivious to the events

around him.

Synopsis of Educational, Personal, and Social Problems

Encountered by Main Character:

Will experiences the frustration of feeling too different. He says, "I feel lonely, being so different" (Magorian, 1982, p.153). His friend Zak says also, "Will is different, a bit of a loner, an independent sort of a soul" (Magorian, 1982, p.73).

Peyton, K.M. (1973). Pennington's heir.

New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, Inc.

Appropriate for Ages: 12 years and above

Number of pages: 229 pages

Area of Giftedness: Musical Talent

Brief Synopsis of Book:

The saga of Patrick Pennington continues when he is released from prison for assaulting a policeman. He resumes his relationship with Ruth Hollis who becomes pregnant. Her condition threatens his happiness and his future as a concert pianist. He decides to leave the tutorship of the professor to move into the role of husband, father, and breadwinner. The couple's first year of marriage is a difficult.

Characteristics of Giftedness Displayed:

Patrick is a gifted pianist. He is the winner of the Beethoven Medal. Some of the characters refer to him as a genius. He "learned very quickly and has a prodigious memory" (Peyton, 1973, p.101).

Despite the positive response of the audience and good reviews in the paper, Patrick does not consider himself to be exceptional.

Patrick enjoys playing the piano and his harmonica.

He plays even with an injured hand. Sometimes he uses his music to express his feelings.

Synopsis of Educational, Personal, and Social Problems

Encountered by Main Character:

Patrick experiences none of the educational, personal, social problems being researched.

Peyton, K.M. (1971). The Beethoven medal.

New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, Inc.

Appropriate for Ages: 12 years and above

Number of pages: 186 pages

Area of Giftedness: Musical Talent

Brief Synopsis of Book:

Patrick Pennington is studying with Professor Hampton. During the week, he delivers bread. On his route he meets Ruth Hollis. They fall in love. Pennington continues to be defiant and rebellious toward the authority of his parents and the police.

Characteristics of Giftedness Displayed:

Patrick is a talented musician. He receives a scholarship to further his music education. He takes his music seriously and devotes many long hours each day to practice. Many teachers and people interested in music recognize his talent.

Synopsis of Educational, Personal, and Social Problems

Encountered by Main Character:

Patrick experiences the problem of teachers expecting him to be perfect all of the time. Professor Hampton expects him to be perfect. He expects Patrick to devote all of his time to his music.

Pinkwater, M. (1976). Wingman. New York: Dell.

Appropriate for Ages: 9-12 years and above

Number of pages: 63 pages

Area of Giftedness: Artistic Talent

Brief Synopsis of Book:

Donald Chen is the only Chinese boy in school. He dislikes school but enjoys reading comics. Without his father's knowledge, he plays hookey from school to climb a bridge and enjoy his comic books. Here he daydreams and imagines Wingman, a character similar to one in his comics, comes to life. A truant officer catches him and Donald returns to school. A substitute teacher, Mrs. Miller, befriends him and encourages him to draw.

Characteristics of Giftedness Displayed:

Donald learns easily. He did not learn English until he went to school. Later, Mrs. Miller says he is the best reader in the class. He has a vivid imagination and spends much time daydreaming. Donald is also a good artist. He wins the City-Wide School Art Contest.

Synopsis of Educational, Personal, and Social Problems

Encountered by Main Character:

Donald experiences none of the educational, personal, or social problems under investigation.

Robison, N. (1981). Ballet magic. Chicago, IL:

Whitman, Albert, & Co.

Appropriate for Ages: 9-11 years

Number of pages: 95 pages

Area of Giftedness: Performing arts

Brief Synopsis of Book:

Ballet Magic focuses on Stacey's problem of "being too tall." With the help of Ida May and Maria, Stacey learns that being tall (different) is not a deficit. With this new understanding, she grows in self-esteem.

Characteristics of Giftedness Displayed:

Stacey is a gifted ballet dancer and basketball player. She learns easily and adapts quickly to new situations. This is demonstrated by her ability to act out various parts in the Nutcracker. Her ability is recognized by those around her: her teacher, Maria, and friends.

Stacey loves ballet and takes her dancing seriously. She accepts constructive criticism well and tries to improve.

Synopsis of Educational, Personal, and Social Problems

Encountered by Character:

Stacey experiences only one of the problems under study. She encounters the problem of feeling too



different. She said, "I am an outcast" (Robison, 1981, p.53). This feeling, however, is a result of her height, not her dancing ability.

Rock, G. (1975). A dream for Addie. Westminster, MD:  
Knopf.

Appropriate for Ages: 9-12 years

Number of pages: 89 pages

Area of Giftedness: Artistic

Brief Synopsis of Book:

Addie is twelve years old. Despite her father's protest, she befriends Constance Payne, a lady presumed to be an actress. Despite their difference in age, she and Constance share something special: daydreams, creativity, and an unwillingness to settle for an ordinary life. Addie receives acting lessons from Constance.

Characteristics of Giftedness Displayed:

Addie reads extensively and values books and libraries. She is never at a loss for ideas. She is a risk taker and is open minded about incidents that occur around her.

She enjoys painting and drawing. She writes and rewrites scripts. She designs clothes.

Addie is sensitive to others around her. She helps her friends to see the wants and needs of others.

Synopsis of Educational, Personal, and Social Problems

Encountered by the Main Character:

Addie experiences none of the educational, personal, and social problems being researched.

Rodowsky, C.F. (1976). What about me?. New York: Watts.

Appropriate for Ages: 11-13

Number of pages: 134 pages

Area of Giftedness: Artistic Ability

Brief Synopsis of Book:

Dorrie Schaffer is a rebellious teenager. It is her belief that she is being neglected by her family. She feels that her parents give all their attention to Fred, her mongoloid brother. This book revolves around these feelings and her interest in art.

Characteristics of Giftedness Displayed:

Dorrie finds satisfaction in art. Characters recognize her talent, particularly her mentor Guntzie. At the Spring Art Festival, she won many blue ribbons, including one in sculpturing and one in drawing.

At school Dorrie is involved in music. She sings in the Glee Club. This talent, however, does not play a significant part in her life.

Synopsis of Educational, Personal, and Social Problems

Encountered by Main Character:

Dorrie experiences none of the educational, personal, social problems being researched.

Sachs, M. (1979). A summer's lease. New York  
Dutton.

Appropriate for Ages: 11-14 years

Number of pages: 124 pages

Area of Giftedness: Intellectual Ability

Brief Synopsis of Book:

Gloria Rein, aged 15, is a truly gifted individual. Her opening dialogue, "I am a genius", sets the stage for the rest of the book. Her one desire is to be editor-in-chief of Wings, the high school literary magazine. Miss Horn, an English teacher, recognizes her writing talent, but also recognizes that Gloria has many problems to overcome. These problems include coming to terms with her talent, ambition, and human relationships.

Characteristics of Giftedness Displayed:

Gloria exhibits many characteristics of giftedness. She excels in school, reads extensively, and performs difficult mental tasks. She is self-motivated to do school work and engages in school related work outside the classroom. She enjoys writing stories and poems and takes her writing seriously. She has good command of the language and embroiders simple ideas into works of art.

Synopsis of Educational, Personal, and Social Problems

Encountered by Main Character:

Gloria experiences two of the problems in this study. She encounters the problem of having few friends who really understand her and the problem of feeling too different, alienated. The problems are the result of her own inappropriate behavior and desire to "always be better than anyone else."

Smith, A.W. (1982). Blue denim blues.

Patterson, NJ: Atheneum.

Appropriate for Ages: 12 years and above

Number of pages: 126 pages

Area of Giftedness: Musical Ability

Brief Synopsis of Book:

Janet Donovan is good with children. She applies and receives a job helping at a pre-school during the summer. She enjoys her work, although she has some problems with two of the children, one of whom is being physically abused by his mother. In her spare time, she plays with her father in an amateur Blue Grass Band.

Characteristics of Giftedness Displayed:

Janet's main strength is in interpersonal relationships. She is good with children and they like her. The author makes reference to her singing, her strumming on her father's mandolin and guitar, and playing a washtub. There is little, if any, evidence that she is talented.

Synopsis of Educational, Personal, and Social Problems

Encountered by Main Character:

Janet experiences none of the educational, personal, and educational problems under investigation.

Spence, E. (1977). The devil hole. New York:  
Lothrop, Lee, & Shepard, Co.

Appropriate for Ages: 10-14 years and above

Number of pages: 215 pages

Area of Giftedness: Musical Ability

Brief Synopsis of Book:

Douglas is delighted when his mother brings home the newest addition to the Mariner family. Before long, the family realizes that Carl is different from the other children. The doctors diagnose him as autistic.

Doug and his family learn to understand and cope with Carl's autism. They move to Sidney, Australia so that Carl can attend a special school. Doug is accepted at the Music College. Mr. Mead, his mentor helps him to develop his talent.

Characteristics of Giftedness Displayed:

Doug enjoys English Composition. He enjoys reading also. When his mother was in the hospital, Doug stated, "I am free to read to my heart's content, even while I eat my lunch" (Spence, 1986, p.26).

Doug's musical talent is recognized by his teachers, Daniel Mead, and his family. For a school program, he sings three solos. He is accepted into the Musical School,



which requires that he pass an entrance exam, play at least two instruments, and possess a good singing voice. He diligently practices, as he wants to be a music teacher, like Mr. Mead.

Synopsis of Educational, Personal, and Social Problems

Encountered by Main Character:

Doug experiences none of the educational, personal, and educational problems under investigation.

Stren, P. (1970). There's a rainbow in my closet.

Scranton, PA: Har-Row.

Appropriate for Ages: 6-10 years and above

Number of pages: 136 pages

Area of Giftedness: Creativity and Artistic Talent

Brief Synopsis of Book:

Emma Goldberg loves to draw and paint, particularly with purple. Life is happy for her until her mother announces that she is going to Europe for two months and that her grandmother, whom she doesn't know, is coming to stay with her and her father. Emma decides that she doesn't want to like her grandmother. Much to her surprise, Gramma enjoys art and understands her feelings when no one else does.

With Gramma's help, Emma grows in self-esteem. She learns to accept and appreciate her gift.

Characteristics of Giftedness Displayed:

Emma is a very creative, talented artist. She experiments with a variety of techniques: paint spattering, knuckles for clouds, and finger painting with her toes. She spends many hours mixing paint to get just the right color. Often Emma breaks away from the obvious, she paints from her imagination: Flying Rabbit Constellation, faces in

bottles, smiling monsters in finger paint.

Emma's humor is reflected in her drawings and cartoons. She uses her talent to express her feelings. She identifies with Van Gogh who said, "I do it in all seriousness and sometimes with passion and fire" (Stren, 1979, p.66). Emma feels terrific when she paints. She forgets everyone around her.

Synopsis of Educational, Personal, and Social Problems  
Encountered by Main Character:

Emma experiences two of the problems under investigation. She encounters coursework that is boring. To alleviate the boredom, she draws pictures.

Emma also encounters the problem of feeling too different. Her grandmother gives her this advice, "So never, never feel bad about the way you see things, Emma. The fact that you are different is what is so wonderful about you" (Stren, 1979, p.116). Emma accepts this advice.

Sutcliff, R. (1970). The witch's brat. New York: Henry Z. Walck.

Appropriate for Ages: 9-13 years

Number of pages: 143 pages

Area of Giftedness: Intellectual Ability and Leadership Ability

Brief Synopsis of Book:

Lovel is the deformed grandson of a healer, living in twelfth-century England. After her death, he is banished from his village and is labeled the "Witch's Brat". He finds sanctuary at the Minister.

The monks believe that he is useless because of his deformity. Lovel accepts his fate until Rahere, jongleur to King Henry I, visits the Minister. Rahere asks Lovel to come with him.

A few days later, Brother Anselm discovers Lovel's knowledge of healing skills and herb lore. Years later he uses this gift to heal and care for poor people in a hospital built by Rahere.

Characteristics of Giftedness Displayed:

Lovel's grandmother teaches him to collect herbs from her garden. Years later he remembers much of what she taught him. Brother Anselm discovers his talent and

teaches him to read and more about healing.

Lovel demonstrates some leadership ability. He assumes responsibility for healing his friend's dog, his first patient. Lovel's real gift is his sensitivity to the wants and needs of others.

Synopsis of Educational, Personal, and Social Problems

Encountered by Main Character:

Lovel experiences none of the problems being researched.

Thomas, I. (1981). Willie blows a mean horn.

Scranton, PA: Har-Row.

Appropriate for Ages: 5-8 years

Number of pages: 22 pages

Area of Giftedness: Musical Ability

Brief Synopsis of Book:

The name of the narrator is unknown. He is the son of Coleman "Willie" Hawkins, a talented musician. In the evening, he is permitted to go to the club where his father plays. On occasion, Willie permits his son to play his trumpet. The child wants to grow up like his father.

Characteristics of Giftedness Displayed:

The main character's father comments that "someday he will play a lullaby to the wind" (Thomas, 1981, p.11). Willie's friends say, "Tell that little man of yours he can play for us anytime" (Thomas, 1981, p.13).

Synopsis of Educational, Personal, and Social Problems

Encountered by Main Character:

The narrator experiences none of the problems under investigation.

Tolan, S.S. (1980). The last of Eden.

New York: Warne, Frederick, & Co., Inc.

Appropriate for Ages: 12 years and above

Number of pages: 154 pages

Area of Giftedness: Intellectual and Writing Ability

Brief Synopsis of Book:

Michelle Caine attends Turnbull Hall. To most of the girls who attend this boarding school, it resembles a kind of Eden. The girls share friendship, loyalty, and warmth.

Beginning in their sophomore year, the girls must contend with the trials of life. This includes suspicion of disloyalty, affairs, and homosexuality.

Characteristics of Giftedness Displayed:

Michelle Caine is intellectually gifted. She is at the top of her class in a school which is known for its high academic standards. Most of her subjects are easy, except for Latin. Because of this, she decides to abandon her desire to become an archeologist, a goal she has had since fourth grade.

Michelle enjoys writing poetry. She states, "Poetry is more important to me than anything else" (Tolan, 1980, p.21).

Her talent is recognized by the faculty. Michelle is

invited to join Penwomen, an honor which is generally not given to sophomores. The group meets to share and discuss literary works. At one of the first meeting, she is chosen to be the editor of the Penwomen's Literary Magazine.

Synopsis of Educational, Personal, and Social Problems

Encountered by Main Character:

Michelle experiences the problem of coursework being boring. She states, "History was dull enough without sitting in class day after day listening to somebody read" (Tolan, 1980, p.35).



Wallace, A. (1971). Toby. Garden City,  
New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc.

Appropriate for Ages: 9-11 years and above

Number of pages: 116 pages

Area of Giftedness: Intellectual and Mechanical Ability

Brief Synopsis of Book:

Toby moves to a new town. He tries to make friends with Harry, Joe, and Mike by showing off. He fails. He seeks revenge for their rejection by plotting to scare them in a house reported to be haunted. The plan backfires, but concludes in Toby making friends with these boys.

Characteristics of Giftedness Displayed:

Toby is intellectually gifted. He was identified by a doctor in New York who gave him a battery of tests. He is an avid reader, enjoying books on astronomy, geology, history, and philosophy. He can calculate three digit multiplication problems in his head.

Toby is interested in mechanical gadgets and machines. He makes a geiger counter. Using his mechanical skills, he takes apart bicycles to help the boys escape the "haunted house."

Synopsis of Educational, Personal, and Social Problems

Encountered by Main Character:

Toby experiences the problem of peers teasing him about being smart. They call him a genius. He realizes he is using inappropriate behavior when he says, "Nobody likes a smart-alecky, show-offy nine year old, even if he does happen to be almost a genius" (Wallace, 1971, p.10).

Toby brings most of the problems on himself. He tells his peer group, "You're just sore because I'm smarter than you are" (Wallace, 1971, p.53).

Wolff, R. (1965). Crack in the sidewalk.

New York: John Day Company, Inc.

Appropriate for Ages: 12 and above

Number of pages: 282 pages

Area of Giftedness: Musical Ability

Brief Synopsis of Book:

Linsey Templeton is apart of a loving, caring, old-fashioned family. The story focuses on her childhood experiences which include jealousy of an older sister and protection of a mentally handicapped brother. While developing her interest in music, she falls in love.

Characteristics of Giftedness Displayed:

Linsey is a bright girl who is forced to leave school to support her family after her father's death. Many characters describe her as having a beautiful singing voice. Her talent is recognized by her music teacher and Mrs. Duncan, a talent scout for a summer musical troupe. During the summer, she sings with a group and also solo. She plays the guitar.

Synopsis of Educational, Personal, and Social Problems

Encountered by Main Character:

Linsey experiences none of the educational, personal, social problems being researched.

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations for Future  
Research

Analysis of the data resulting from this investigation will be summarized, pertinent findings discussed, conclusions formulated, and recommendations for future research made.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to conduct a content analysis of selected children's realistic fiction depicting educational, personal, and social problems. The main characters were analyzed for evidence of characteristics and behaviors associated with giftedness as defined by Marland (1972) and Horn (1983).

The following research questions were addressed:

1. Do the main characters in books of children's realistic fiction exhibit characteristics and behaviors associated with (1) intellectual ability, (2) creativity, (3) leadership ability, and/or (4) ability in the visual and performing arts?
2. Do the main characters in books of children's realistic fiction encounter the problem of coursework that is too easy and boring?
3. Do the main characters in books of children's realistic fiction encounter the problem of parents (teachers and

friends) expecting them to be perfect, to "do their best", all the time?

4. Do the main characters in books of children's realistic fiction encounter the problem of having few friends who really understand them?

5. Do the main characters in books of children's realistic fiction encounter the problem of having irrelevant coursework?

6. Do the main characters in books of children's realistic fiction encounter the problem of peers teasing them about being smart?

7. Do the main characters in books of children's realistic fiction encounter the problem of being overwhelmed by the number of things they can do in life?

8. Do the main characters in books of children's realistic fiction encounter the problem of feeling too different, alienated?

9. Do the main characters in books of children's realistic fiction encounter the problem of worrying about world problems and feeling helpless to do anything about them?

This study was limited to 44 books selected by a team of specialists and listed in Bookfinder Volume I, II, and III under the subheadings Giftedness and Talents. The books were identified as appropriate for children ages six

through fifteen.

Thirteen books were in the sample from Volume I. Nine books were from Volume II. Volume III yielded 22 books for the sample.

The main characters of each book exhibited characteristics and behaviors of giftedness and encountered situations similar to those of real life children. The sample excluded autobiographies, biographies, anthologies, and non-realistic fiction such as fantasy, animal stories, and fairy tales.

To analyze the books in the sample, it was first necessary to determine if the main character exhibited characteristics and behaviors associated with giftedness. Secondly, the books were examined to determine if the gifted characters experienced the educational, personal, and social problems listed in "The Great Gripes" (Galbraith, 1983). The results of this research were reported in a summary of this analysis and a synopsis of each book.

Authors of children's realistic fiction in the sample of 44 books did portray characters as being gifted and talented, according to the established criteria. These characteristics or behaviors were present singly or in combination. Intellectual giftedness was present in 7

books. Creativity was displayed by the main character in one book. Leadership Ability was evidenced in 3 books. Main characters displayed ability in the Visual and Performing Arts in 41 books.

Visual and Performing Arts was divided into Artistic Ability, Writing Ability, Dance Ability, and Acting Ability. Of the 41 books in the visual and performing arts category, 14 books displayed Artistic Ability, 4 books displayed Writing Ability, and 18 books displayed Musical Ability. The main character revealed characteristics of Dancing Ability in 5 books and characteristics of Acting Ability in one book.

The sample of books did portray main characters who encountered educational, personal, and social problems in 50% of the sample. The most frequent problem encountered by gifted characters was the problem of feeling too different, alienated. Nine books portrayed this problem. The second most prevalent problem was parents (teachers and friends) expect gifted children to be perfect, to "do their best" all the time. Eight of the 44 books portrayed this problem.

Having few friends "who really understand gifted children" was the third frequent problem encountered. Six of the 44 books revealed this.

The fourth frequent problem was coursework being too easy and boring. Four of the books in the sample revealed characters experiencing this problem.

The problem of peers teasing gifted children about being smart and the problem of worrying about world problems and feeling helpless to do anything about them tied for the next most frequent problem. Three books each revealed this problem in the sample.

One book in the sample depicted a character who encountered the problem of having irrelevant coursework. The problem of being overwhelmed by the number of things gifted children can do in life was not encountered.

Some other interesting observations were made in this research that were not apart of the research questions. There was no significant difference in the number of male and female gifted characters. Twenty of the 44 books in the sample portrayed the gifted character as male. Twenty-four books had a female gifted character.

The age of the main character was significant. The age of the main character was unknown in 9 books. The characters were between the ages of 5 and 12 for 13 books. Characters between the ages of 13 and 20 were found in 22 books. More teenagers were depicted as being gifted.

The sex of the authors of children's realistic fiction



with gifted characters in the sample was predominately female. Thirty-five of the books were written by females and nine were written by males.

Of the 44 books in the sample, three authors had more than one book published with a gifted main character. Two authors had two books represented. Another had three.

Twenty-seven publishing companies were represented in the sample. Six companies published 2 different books, 2 companies published 3 different books, 1 published five different books, and 1 published five different books.

The criteria for selection of books in the Bookfinder was that the books must be printed in hardbound form and must be accessible from libraries and bookstores. Four libraries were chosen to obtain books in the sample: a large metropolitan library, a small town library, a school library, and an university youth collection library. Sixty-one percent (27 books) could be obtained from a large metropolitan library. Twenty-five percent (11 books) from a small town library, 20% (9 books) from a school library, and 48% (21 books) from an university youth collection library. Five books (11%) from the original list could not be obtained.

Forty-eight percent (21 books) could be obtained from two of the sources listed. Seven percent (3 books) of the

books could be obtained from three sources. No book could be obtained from all four sources.

The 44 books in the sample were identified appropriate for children ages six through fifteen. These books as identified in the Bookfinder Volume I, II, and III were divided into three age categories: 5-8 years, 8-10, and eleven years and older. Sixteen percent (7 books) in the sample were written for children ages 5-8. Fifty-two percent (23 books) were written for children 8-10 years old. Seventy-five percent (33 books) were written for children 11 and above.

### Conclusions

Several conclusions can be drawn from the content analysis of children's realistic fiction that is appropriate for children ages 6-15. There were more books published between 1979-1982 depicting gifted main characters than in the earlier years. This may be due to the increased national attention to the identification and nurturance of gifted children.

There are more main characters exhibiting characteristics and behaviors of giftedness in the area of the Visual and Performing Arts. Within this area, characters with musical and artistic ability were most prevalent.

This observation was most surprising as Intellectual Ability has been the most common identifier of those who are gifted. The prevalence of characters with characteristics and abilities in the Visual and Performing Arts may be the result of increased attention to creativity and the gradual devaluation of science in past years which has influenced the authors in their writing. This finding could be the result of increased attention to a broader definition of giftedness as stated in the Marland Report and multi-faceted criteria for identification of the gifted.

Half (22 books), of the sample of books read and analyzed, portrayed gifted characters as encountering the educational, personal, and social problems as identified in the "Eight Great Gripses." The other 22 books did not. These results may suggest that the authors are not aware of the unique problems that gifted children have that are directly related to their superior abilities and skills.

The result of this study may indicate that authors in the sample do not have a good understanding of the educational and personal problems of gifted children. The greatest concern of gifted students in Galbraith study was that school is too easy and it's boring. This was fourth in frequency in this content analysis. This could suggest

that authors are not familiar or aware of the boredom that results when inappropriate educational provisions are made for the gifted or their effects.

The problem of feeling too different, alienated was the most frequently occurring problem in the content analysis. This was ranked seventh in Galbraith's study. This suggests that authors view children of superior abilities and skills as being different, alienated from their peers. The Terman study dispelled the myth that gifted children are pathetic creatures who are over-serious, clumsy, and nervously tense. The results of this study, however, suggests that the stereotyping of gifted children as lacking friends and social skills still remains.

The frequency of the problems found in the sample and the ranking of these problems in Galbraith's study coincided three times. Both were the same for the second problem (parents (teachers and friends) expecting perfection), the third problem (having few friends who "really understand"), and the fifth problem (peers teasing about being smart). This would suggest that authors are more aware of the social problems encountered by gifted and talented children.

Much research has been conducted identifying the

characteristics of gifted children. Witty revealed that gifted children achieved best in language and reading. They possess word vocabulary and comprehension skills several years beyond their peer group. It is an activity that they enjoy.

It has been documented that reading has influenced people in their attitudes and beliefs. This research suggests that gifted children can gain insight into educational, personal, and social problems. It is also suggested that other people can, likewise, learn and understand people who possess special aptitudes and skills through reading books that have gifted characters.

In summary, the conclusions of this research are:

1. Gifted children are present in books of children's realistic fiction identified appropriate for children ages 6-15.
2. Books portraying gifted characters have increased in number since before 1975.
3. There are more main characters who exhibit characteristics and behaviors of giftedness in the area of Visual and Performing Arts than in Intellectual Ability, Creativity, and Leadership Ability. Within the Visual and Performing Arts category, characters with musical and artistic ability were most prevalent.

4. Authors may not be aware of the unique problems gifted children have that are directly related to their superior ability and skills.
5. Authors are more aware of the social problems encountered by gifted children.
6. Authors are less aware of the educational and personal problems encountered by gifted children.
7. Research has lent support that books can influence children's attitudes and beliefs. Bibliotherapy may be beneficial in helping children to better understand and cope with their educational, personal, and social problems.

#### Recommendations

The following are recommendations for future research:

1. It is recommended that this study be replicated using Bookfinder Volume IV when it is published to ascertain whether the trend discerned in this study has continued. It is also recommended that a larger sample taken from different sources be used in order to make broader inferences to books available to young people.
2. It is recommended that books in this study be used in a study to determine the effectiveness of bibliotherapy in helping gifted children to understand and to cope with their educational, personal, and social problems.
3. It is recommended that a study be conducted to

investigate the reasons why authors depict gifted characters as they do. Are the authors gifted? Do they write about problems they have encountered?

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Appendix A

Personal Communication with Judy Galbraith

April 16, 1986

April 16, 1986

Myra La Frentz  
304 Ardis  
Hudson, IA 50643

Dear Myra:

Here's some statistical data about my research with gifted and talented youth. I must add that my research was never intended to be "pure" research. Rather, I hoped to gain some insight and understanding about the social and emotional needs of the gifted, from the kids' point of view. I feel my sampling was large enough to have accomplished that goal.

I interviewed approximately 400 gifted & talented students from six states. There were nearly equal numbers of boys and girls. They ranged in age from 8 - 17 and all but 30 students were currently participating in special programs for the gifted.

Not all of the items listed in the teacher's guide student questionnaire were on my original questionnaire. Although while doing personal interviews, I had the opportunity to ask children additional questions which ended up in the teacher's guide version.

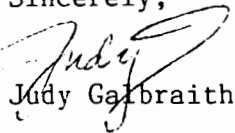
The following information comes from the results of my first interviews. (Aprox. 400)

1. The majority of my respondents, easily 85%, said "school is too easy, boring." Upon probing further, many followed up saying classes didn't move fast enough, studies were often irrelevant and coursework wasn't challenging.
2. The majority, (I don't have exact percents as this was an open-ended question) had a vague understanding of the term gifted. They more often than not knew little about how they were accepted into a program or what the goals of the program were. At best, a few were able to say, "We're here to be challenged more."
3. The majority, approximately 80%, felt "Everyone expects me to be perfect." More specifically, they felt they were not acceptable if they got less than A's, didn't know answers to questions in class, or were unable to do everything well.
4. About 65% felt they were often teased, in some form, for being smart or for being in the gifted program. *(An additional 15% said they were sometimes teased about being smart.)*

- 5. About 65% said they felt that "Friends who really understand me are few and far between."
- 6. About half felt too different, alienated, alone.
- 7. 65% of the teenagers said they often felt more strongly about world problems than their peers and felt helpless to do anything about those problems.

I'm not sure what other information you would like. Please feel free to call me if you have any questions. As mentioned over the phone, in order for me to dig out all my past research it would take hours. Should I ever do doctoral work, I know I'll have to be much more methodical about this. And, I'll, no doubt, have to publish my research results. Until then, I see no need.

Best wishes to you with your work.

Sincerely,  
  
Judy Galbraith

*[Faint handwritten notes or scribbles]*

Appendix B

Bibliography of Selected Books for Sample



## Bibliography of Books to Be Read for Study

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- Rock, G. (1975). A dream for Addie. Westminister, MD: Knopf.
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- Sachs, M. (1979). A summer's lease. New York: Dutton.
- Smith, A.W. (1982). Blue denim blues. Patterson, NJ: Atheneum.
- Spence, E. (1977). The devil hole. New York: Lothrop, Lee, & Shepard, Co.
- Stren, P. (1970). There's a rainbow in my closet. Scranton, PA: Har-Row.

- Sutcliff, R. (1970). The witch's brat. New York: Walck.
- Thomas, I. (1981). Willie blows a mean horn. Scranton, PA: Har-Row.
- Tolan, S.S. (1980). The last Eden. New York: Warne, Frederick, & Co., Inc.
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**Appendix C**

**Data Gathering Instrument for  
Characteristics of Main Characters**

## Demographic Sheet

Name of Book \_\_\_\_\_

Author \_\_\_\_\_ Sex of Author: M \_\_\_ F \_\_\_

Publisher \_\_\_\_\_ Copyright Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Main Character \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_ Sex: M \_\_\_ F \_\_\_

Setting of Book \_\_\_\_\_

Amount of evidence in support of main character's giftedness:

<u>Characteristic</u>	<u>Total F Count</u>	<u>Rater Assessment of Giftedness:</u>	
		Yes	No
Intellectual Ability	_____	_____	_____
Creativity	_____	_____	_____
Leadership Ability	_____	_____	_____
Ability in Visual and Performing Arts	_____	_____	_____
Psychomotor Ability	_____	_____	_____
Total	_____	_____	_____

The main character of this book is assessed: Gifted \_\_\_ Not Gifted \_\_\_  
 Not enough evidence--Cannot assess \_\_\_\_\_

Rating Scale--Evidence of Giftedness of Character in Book  
 Low    1        2        3        4        5        6        7        High

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
None	Very Little	Little	Some	Much	Very Much	Great Deal	

This book is most appropriate for: ages 8-11 \_\_\_\_\_  
 ages 12-15 \_\_\_\_\_  
 All ages \_\_\_\_\_

Book Identification Code No. \_\_\_\_\_

## Identifying Characteristics of Giftedness Found in Main Characters

	<u>Evidence of</u>	<u>Total Frequency</u>
<b>I. Intellectual Ability</b>		
1. Learns easily	_____	_____
2. Reads extensively	_____	_____
3. Values books and libraries	_____	_____
4. Has a large vocabulary	_____	_____
5. Uses vocabulary accurately	_____	_____
6. Expresses self clearly	_____	_____
7. Comprehends well	_____	_____
8. Has a good memory	_____	_____
9. Performs difficult mental tasks	_____	_____
10. Is curious	_____	_____
11. Asks many questions	_____	_____
12. Wants to know reasons	_____	_____
13. Investigates	_____	_____
14. Is keenly observant	_____	_____
15. Reasons things out	_____	_____
16. Applies knowledge to solve problems	_____	_____
17. Knows many things about which peers are unaware	_____	_____
18. Is described by other characters as being intelligent	_____	_____
19. Is aware of own intelligence	_____	_____
20. Pursues learning unrelated to school assignments	_____	_____
Total Frequency--Intellectual Ability		_____
<b>II. Academic Achievement</b>		
1. Does well in school	_____	_____
2. Performs in superior manner compared to classmates	_____	_____
3. Reads extensively in school	_____	_____
4. Has large vocabulary compared to classmates	_____	_____
5. Is self-motivated to do school work	_____	_____
6. Is involved in extra-curricular activities	_____	_____
7. Engages in school-related work outside school	_____	_____
Total Frequency--Academic Achievement		_____

Evidence of                      Total Frequency

III. Creativity

- 1. Fluent in production of ideas \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Flexible in thinking: \_\_\_\_\_
- a. Produces many different solutions to problems \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Changes mind if needed \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Employs a variety of strategies to solve problems \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Abandons unproductive approaches to solving problems \_\_\_\_\_
- e. Experiments to get answers. \_\_\_\_\_
- f. Takes risks \_\_\_\_\_
- g. Is open-minded \_\_\_\_\_
- h. Is resourceful \_\_\_\_\_
- i. Accepts constructive criticism \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Original in thinking: \_\_\_\_\_
- a. Breaks away from the obvious \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Sees new relationships \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Puts one or more ideas together to get a new idea \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Creates new products \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. Elaborates on ideas: \_\_\_\_\_
- a. Spells out details of task \_\_\_\_\_
- b. "Embroiders" simple ideas \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Produces thorough plans \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Extends ideas of others \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. General: \_\_\_\_\_
- a. Has playful sense of humor \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Resists closure \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Is oblivious to the criticism of others \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Expresses feelings and emotions \_\_\_\_\_
- e. Daydreams \_\_\_\_\_

Total Frequency--Creativity \_\_\_\_\_

IV. Leadership Ability

- 1. Assumes responsibility \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Carries out responsibility \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Perseveres \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. Is liked by peers \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. Is respected by peers \_\_\_\_\_
- 6. Is sensitive to wants and needs of others \_\_\_\_\_
- 7. Is confident of self \_\_\_\_\_
- 8. Is able to influence others toward goals \_\_\_\_\_



	<u>Evidence of</u>	<u>Total Frequency</u>
9. Can take charge of a group	_____	_____
10. Can judge abilities of others	_____	_____
11. Can find a place for others in the group's activities	_____	_____
12. Is able to show others how to do a thing	_____	_____
13. Is often asked for ideas or suggestions by others	_____	_____
14. Enters into group activities with enthusiasm	_____	_____
15. Is looked to by others when a decision must be made	_____	_____
16. Adapts readily to situations	_____	_____
17. Enjoys socializing with others	_____	_____
18. Is emotionally stable	_____	_____
19. Has self-respect	_____	_____
20. Has sense of humor	_____	_____
21. Can honestly judge own ability	_____	_____
22. Can honestly judge own performance	_____	_____
23. Is perceptive	_____	_____
Total Frequency--Leadership Ability		_____

V. Ability in Visual or Performing Arts

1. Artistic Talent		_____
a. Takes art work seriously	_____	
b. Finds satisfaction in art	_____	
c. Fills extra time with art activities (drawing, painting, sculpturing, etc.)	_____	
d. Uses art to express feelings	_____	
e. Is interested in other people's art work	_____	
f. Critiques others' art	_____	
2. Writing Talent		_____
a. Enjoys writing stories, poems or plays	_____	
b. Takes writing seriously	_____	
c. Uses writing to express self	_____	
d. Writes with great detail	_____	
e. Gives a refreshing twist to his or her writing	_____	
f. Uses words in unusual combinations	_____	

	<u>Evidence of</u>	<u>Total Frequency</u>
3. Dramatic Talent		_____
a. Takes role of a character	_____	
b. Shows interest in drama	_____	
c. Enjoys evoking emotional response from others	_____	
d. Shows unusual ability to dramatize feelings and experiences	_____	
e. Gets satisfaction from dramatizing	_____	
4. Musical Talent		_____
a. Enjoys music	_____	
b. Uses music to express self	_____	
c. Plays a musical instrument or sings	_____	
d. Composes music	_____	
e. Participates in musical group	_____	
Total Frequency--Ability in Visual and Performing Arts		_____

#### VI. Psychomotor Ability

1. Mechanical Skill--Fine Motor Skills		_____
a. Is interested in mechanical gadgets and machines	_____	
b. Works on craft projects	_____	
c. Has a hobby involving mechanical devices (radios, models, etc.)	_____	
d. Can repair mechanical gadgets	_____	
e. Can put together mechanical things	_____	
f. Comprehends mechanical problems	_____	
g. Draws sketches of mechanical objects	_____	
h. Has good eye-hand motor coordination	_____	
i. Can do fine precise manipulations	_____	
2. Physical Skills--Gross Motor Skills		_____
a. Enjoys good health	_____	
b. Has a strong physical body	_____	
c. Is well coordinated, physically	_____	
d. Is energetic	_____	
e. Enjoys participating in competitive physical games	_____	
f. Is consistently outstanding in physical games	_____	

**Appendix D**

**Data Gathering Instrument for Personal, Social, and/or  
Educational Problems Encountered by Main Characters**

Data Gathering Instrument for Personal, Social, and/or  
Educational Problems Encountered by Main Characters

Name of Book \_\_\_\_\_

Author \_\_\_\_\_

Publisher \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Main Character \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_ Sex: M. \_\_\_\_\_ F. \_\_\_\_\_

For each question, record the page number where the problem was encountered. Record the frequency of each problem.

1. Do the main characters in books of realistic children's fiction encounter the problem of coursework being too easy and boring?

Number of times problem was encountered \_\_\_\_\_

2. Do the main characters in books of realistic children's fiction encounter the problem of parents (teachers and friends) expecting them to be perfect, to "do their best" all the time?

Number of times problem was encountered \_\_\_\_\_

3. Do the main characters in books of realistic children's fiction encounter the problem of having few friends "who really understand them"?

Number of times problem was encountered \_\_\_\_\_

4. Do the main characters in books of realistic children's fiction encounter the problem of having irrelevant coursework?

Number of times problem was encountered \_\_\_\_\_

5. Do the main characters in books of realistic children's fiction encounter the problem of peers teasing them about being smart?

Number of times problem was encountered \_\_\_\_\_

6. Do the main characters in books of realistic children's fiction encounter the problem of being overwhelmed by the number of things they can do in life?

Number of times problem was encountered\_\_\_\_\_.

7. Do the main characters in books of realistic children's fiction encounter the problem of feeling too different, alienated?

Number of times problem was encountered\_\_\_\_\_.

8. Do the main characters in books of realistic children's fiction encounter the problem of worrying about world problems and feeling helpless to do anything about them?

Number of times problem was encountered\_\_\_\_\_.

## Appendix E

Instrument for Recording the Summary of the Book, Synopsis  
of Characteristics of Giftedness, and Synopsis of  
Educational, Personal, and Social Problems Encountered



**Bibliography Information:**

**Appropriate for Ages:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Number of pages:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Area of Giftedness:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Brief Synopsis of Book:**

**Characteristics of Giftedness Displayed:**

**Synopsis of Educational, Personal, and Social Problems**

**Encountered by Main Character:**