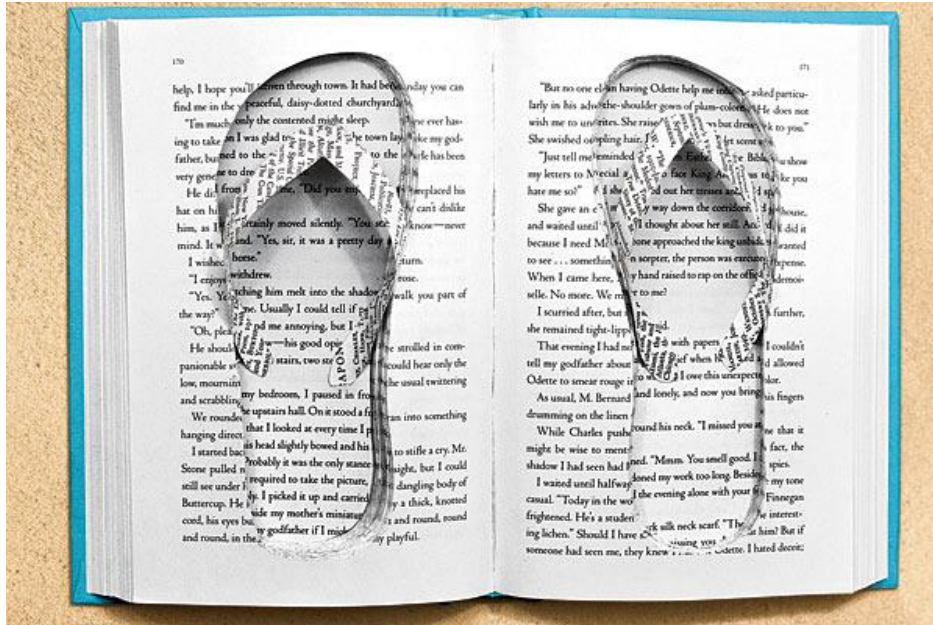


A Novel Summer: Workshop Proposal



Workshop Title: A Novel Summer: Book Therapy for a Mentally-Healthy Summer

Workshop Facilitators: Susan Nadathur, MA and Sita Nadathur, MA

Statement of Need: Today's teens are facing intense academic, psychological, and emotional challenges that can leave them exhausted at the end of the school year. In Susan's work as an author of young adult literature, and Sita's work as a clinical therapist, we have interacted with hundreds of young people. And one thing we have learned: by the end of the school year, young people are in need of healthy therapeutic activities that can help them decompress, focus, and self-reflect over their much-deserved summer holidays.

Workshop Premise: Picking up a good novel is a cherished summer activity for school children around the world. A novel offers distraction, entertainment, and an opportunity to unwind or re-focus. But it can also be something more powerful; it can be a way to help young people to understand the spiritual, emotional and psychological challenges they encounter through the experiences of well-crafted fictional characters. Through books and story, young people can perceive how others have coped with and resolved problems that cause sadness, stress, fear and uncertainty. Through literature, they can understand that they are not alone in encountering heartache, rejection, loneliness and fear. Books can do so much more than support reading comprehension and model good writing. They can help students relate to their world and consider the complexities of the human experience. Once a teen sees himself represented in a book, his experience is validated. Feeling part of something bigger, something universal, can be a powerful tool in combating spiritual confusion, depression, feelings of worthlessness, and negative emotional impulses.

Workshop Objective: By the end of this presentation, students will feel more comfortable talking about themselves and their problems by identifying an area of personal need and/or conflict. After identifying his area of need, the student will be offered a therapeutic (and school pre-approved) novel that will inspire character building, emotional and spiritual healing, creativity, peace, and harmony. Students will be better able to look inside themselves to find their personal resources, challenge their intellect, inspire their imagination, and empower their emotions.

Workshop Description: Using the platform of young adult and Christian literature to navigate the challenges of being young, this workshop is designed to introduce young men (and women) to life-changing, eye-opening, thought-provoking works of literature that have the power to enrich, inspire and heal. “A Novel Summer” offers a way to understand and process the often confusing adolescent strongholds of relationship stress, low self-esteem, depression, bullying, and sadly but all too common, suicidal ideation. We as educators have a general sense that books can teach us things, make us value our everyday lives, and even shape the way we think. But books as therapy is rarely considered. This workshop is a literary apothecary that will help students to identify issues that are causing stress and conflict in their lives. Once identified, these issues will be treated with the appropriate books. To create this literary pharmacy, we have spoken to dozens of teachers, mental health care providers, and spiritual advisors for recommendations of novels that effectively promote happiness, health, and spirituality. Be it healing strained relationships, soothing depression, or raising self-esteem, there is a book for every student participating in this workshop. Books as therapy reaffirms literature’s ability to distract and transport, to resonate and reassure, to change the way we see the world and visualize our place in it.

Learning Outcomes: After participating in this presentation, students can expect to 1) learn to look inside themselves for the tools they need to grow; 2) identify coping strategies that work for them; and 3) rely on the power of books to heal, to be heard, and to be understood.

Sample Books and Their Projected Cures: *All the Bright Places* by Jennifer Niven (depression, bereavement); *Every Last Word* by Tamara Ireland Stone (obsessive compulsive disorder); *The Downside of Being Charlie* by Jenny Torres Sanchez (boys and eating disorders); *Finding Audrey* by Sophie Kinsella (social anxiety, bullying)

Timeframe: Workshops are scheduled in two-hour timeframes, ranging from a two-hour intensive to extended trainings twice a week over a period of four weeks.

Target Students: Grades 7-12 (ages 13-18)

Supplies Required: Photocopies of selected readings, worksheets, and interactive activities

AV Equipment Required: PowerPoint Projector, screen, sound system

Post-Workshop Follow-through: After the workshop, students will be left with a list of suggested books based on individual need. Continued contact with the facilitators and others students is made possible through “A Novel Life” Facebook group.

Facilitators Fee: The sharing of the talents and skills that God bestowed upon us is our gift to the world. For this reason, we have no specific monetary charge. Any donation is at your own discretion and may include either a modest honorarium, or simply the cost of providing accommodation, local transportation, and meals for the duration of the time we spend with you.

Instructor Bio: Susan Nadathur is a young adult author whose work focuses on the vulnerable corners of young adulthood. She is actively involved in book therapy and teen suicide prevention programs which incorporate books, stories, and the creative arts. Susan lives and works in Lajas, Puerto Rico, but divides her time between the island and her second home in Connecticut. For more information about Susan and her work, you may link to www.SusanNadathur.com.

Instructor Bio: Sita Nadathur is a doctoral candidate at the University of Hartford in Hartford, Connecticut. Originally from Puerto Rico, Sita now resides in the United States, where she provides therapy and neuropsychological testing to culturally diverse clients. Her research and speaking interests focus on the exploration of cultural and spiritual values, and the incorporation of those values as therapeutic interventions enhancing both engagement and treatment adherence.

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