



# Introducing the Toolkit

This toolkit provides a set of strategies, activities and ideas that can be used in a wide range of spaces. It can be used by anyone working in an educational, community or health setting who wants to use children's literature to address the educational and emotional needs of children, young people and their families.

## The toolkit is based on several key principles:

1. Literature acts as a safe space that invites readers (and viewers, if we use picturebooks) to think/reflect/talk about issues and ideas shown in the text when they feel ready to do so. The topics in a book could be sensitive, but readers/viewers do not have to respond unless they feel comfortable in doing so.
2. Literature acts as a **mirror, window and door**. When a text acts as a mirror, the reader/viewer is able to see representations of themselves in the text, through the characters, their context, and their actions. When children are able to see elements in a book that relate to their own lives, they can develop a sense of belonging, imagining themselves in the book. Surrounding children with such texts can lead to them developing an empowered sense of self and a greater understanding of their community and culture.

When literature acts as a window, it poses alternative options for the reader/viewer and when they begin to contrast what they see out the window with what they see in the mirror, they often undertake further reflection on serious issues that concern them. The process can reframe readers' view of the world.

When readers/viewers cross the threshold and open up to new possibilities of being and understanding the world around them, opening that door allows them to embrace new ways of seeing and thinking.

3. Picturebooks make their meanings through words and pictures and this means readers and viewers are provided with multiple ways of tapping into the safe space of the text and respond to it as a mirror, window and door.
4. There are many creative ways to respond to a book that include talking, writing, acting, and drawing. This toolkit looks at some examples which we call 'creative response strategies'. Practitioners can use these strategies as described in the toolkit or they can adapt them to their own needs and contexts. In conjunction with the Toolkit, we will maintain a blog where you can share examples of creative responses that you have designed.

As we continue to add new strategies to the toolkit, we invite you to visit our dedicated page regularly, to read about our latest activities, including those shared with us by mediators in other contexts across the world.