

'Telling Tales'. An investigation into the representation of disability in classic children's fairy tales.

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Abstract

The research examined the cultural construction of disability found within children's traditional fairy tales that are employed to support the English National Curriculum. The study employed proto text analysis, a meta-analysis process which combines textual analysis, critical discourse analysis and semiotics, to uncover the hidden representations and stereotypes relating to disability that were contained within well-known children's fairy tales. The study, which examined five story books in detail, found consistent themes which included normalcy, the emphasis on the 'perfect' physical appearance, exclusion, avoidance and portrayal of the disabled character as an 'object of evil' as well as the employment of the 'happily ever after' story ending. The research concludes these children's fiction books, commonly employed to support the English National Curriculum, are problematic in terms of how they represent disability. The authors argue that this form of children's literature is introducing young children to ableist assumptions and oppressive attitudes towards disability which we suggest could be a factor in why these attitudes are replicated within society.

Keywords

Disability, Fairy Tales, Representations, Proto-Text Analysis

Introduction

The conceptual starting point in our analysis is that children's literature provides a powerful medium through which children make sense of both the world they live in and their cultural heritage (Ullah, *et.al.* 2014). In such literature, the representation of disability within children's books is observed, by many (see Barnes, 1992; Hodkinson, 2016a; Beckett *et. al.* 2010), to be a major concern in the education of young children. This concern rests on the potential this form of literature has to create wider social justice issues for people with impairments (Siebers, 2010). For example, the analysis of Macabe *et. al.* (2011) suggests that this corpus of texts delivers messages about what is 'normal', what is 'beautiful and hideous', what is 'right and wrong' and importantly 'what is attainable' to young children.

Given the paucity of academic consideration offered to the explanation of the cultural constructions of disability in pedagogical materials, this article seeks to add to the research which has examined representations of disability in children's literature. In mobilising this vista of literature, the research explores what, if any, notions of normality might have influenced the selection of text and images found within a sample of children's fairy tale books employed by teachers to support their English lessons. The five children's books chosen were: *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *Beauty and The Beast*, *Rumpelstiltskin*, *Peter Pan and the Ugly Duckling*. The research, by the application of proto text analysis, seeks to reveal how disability in children's fairy tales is represented and whether such representations are formulated within a construct of medical deficit and negative stereotype. Before this analysis commences though, it seems pertinent to provide a brief contextual detail as to extant and current representation of disability in children's books.

The representation of disability: a difficult past and a problematic present?

Research by Flood (2016) reveals that famous fairy tales such as *Beauty and the Beast*, *Rumpelstiltskin* and *Jack and the Beanstalk* have a history dating back some 4,000 to 5,000 years. Historically, research has argued that authors of children's literature have employed disabled characters, in such texts, for literacy symbolism or indeed to aid the moral development of other more significant characters in the storyline. (Dyches and Prater, 2000). As Greta (1986) explains, books from the 19th

century represent disability as a form of suffering or as pitiable and a burden to non-disabled people and society. More recently Carlise (1988), in a study of more general children's texts from the 1940s to the 1980s, although distinguishing an increased portrayal of disabled characters, suggests that children's texts still offered mainly negative messages about the lives of people with disabilities (See Sanders, 2000). Harril *et. al.* (1993) examined 45 randomly selected texts to compare the portrayal of disability. They found that after 1978 the incidents of negative stereotypes and employment of non-discriminatory language decreased. Additionally, the realistic depiction of disabled people as 'appropriate role models' within the stories also increased after this time (Prater, 2003).

However, and more pessimistically, Ayala (1999) studied 59 fiction and non-fiction children's books that were published between 1974 and 1996 that specifically portrayed disabled characters. This study's finding detailed that only 20 per cent of the disabled people portrayed what the author determined were 'realistic characters'. This study revealed that in the main disabled characters mirrored the prevailing 'demographic trends' and negative stereotypes that were replete in society. It is also interesting here to note the study of Hughes (2006) and Beckett *et. al.* (2010). Hughes' study examined the representation of visual impairment in six picture books designed for children aged 12 or under. Hughes's analysis demonstrated that some of these texts continued to demonstrate stereotypical messages about disability, not least that with love and kindness a visual impairment might be cured. Hughes' research concluded that teachers need to be much more selective as to which non-fiction books they incorporate into their classroom resources. Beckett *et. al.*'s (2010) research demonstrates that in the 21st Century representations of disability and impairment seemingly had changed little to those dominating the preceding century. Beckett's findings, confirming those of Reiser and Mason (1992), denote that discriminatory language and negative stereotypes continue to be folded into representations of disability appearing in children's literature.

Other studies (see Schmiesing, 2014 and Zascavage, 2014), detail that such pessimistic narratives exist in the classic fairy tales of the Grimm Brothers. These analyses revealed that such stories are dominated by 'universal truths' (Zascavage, 2011, 158) such as 'blindness is a horrible fate' and that visual impairment, amongst

other things, would lead to 'poverty, disenfranchisement and disrespect' and that disability is a 'consequence or sacrifice for wrongdoing' (Zascavage, 2011: 158 and 159). Schmiesing adds that such classic tales are grounded upon the concept of able-bodiedness and that disability is a tragedy that must be overcome.

Most recently research into curricular resources also revealed that they lack a positive representation of disability (Hodkinson, 2016a; *In Press*; Hodkinson and Beigi, 2014; 2016). Quayson (2007) adds to this body of research, stating that when children's literature does contain disabled characters, they are continuously perceived in a negative way and use frightening scenarios and imagery which makes children dislike these characters. According to Wall and Crevecoeur, (2016) such stereotypical representations creates, for children, problematic attitudes towards people with impairments. Biklen and Bogdana (1977) analysis suggests such attitudes are conceptualised within ten commonly occurring stereotypes; that disabled people are 'pitiable and pathetic', 'an object of violence', 'sinister and evil', 'curio or exotica', 'an object of ridicule', 'super cripple', 'their own worst enemy', 'a burden', 'asexual' and 'incapable of fully participating in everyday life'. Solis (2004) details these stereotypes are deeply engrained in our cultural heritage. Moreover, Agbaw (2011) accounts that traditional fairy tales, still employed within the 21st century, focus on these past principles. In practice, this means that children are reading fiction that promotes a distinct line between non-disabled and disabled people. This form of segregation in such classic books (re) presents in the present stereotypical attitudes that were once very common towards disabled people. We turn now to consider and explore some of the classic representations of disabilities that are employed in children's stories books.

The disabled character as the evil villain

It is important to realise here that throughout the history of Western culture visual renderings and textual explanations (Solis, 2004) have been utilised as a metaphor for evil and depravity (Connor and Bejorian, 2007). Research undertaken by Dahl (1993) provides critical understandings of the role of disabled characters within classic texts. He argues that a dominant theme that his research revealed was how the disabled character is commonly perceived as the wicked villain. By deconstructing this stereotype, researchers have established that this label allows

children to connect physical disfigurement with a character who is frequently represented as an embodiment of evil, a 'baddie' or an isolated being (Harnett, 2000). A critical point in this research is the finding that traditional children's tales frequently employ a tragedy model of disability which shapes disabled characters as pitiable and pathetic people. Furthermore, traditional fairy tales represent a connection between physical deformity, illness, visible defects and monstrous behaviour (Sontag, 1978). For example, Sontag (1978) argues characters that have a different physical appearance to the 'norm' are often employed to symbolise evil beings. An example of this is the use of 'Captain Hook' within the traditional tale of *Peter Pan*. Hook, an amputee with a prosthesis, is an evil character with very questionable morals. Worryingly, Dahl, (1993) suggests that the employment of disability here makes children believe that all individuals with a missing limb are likely to have a similar personality to that of the Hook character. Dahl's work is supported by the research of Hodkinson (2007) and Quayson (2007). For example, Hodkinson observed that young children saw disability as evil even when they had never met a person who had a disability. Furthermore, Quayson (2007) asserts that culture, portrayed in this form, can also influence an individual's behaviour towards disability. He named this phenomenon as 'aesthetic nervousness' which he believes produces an automatic response of tension and anxiety when a child experiences a social encounter with a disabled person.

The disabled character as a source of humour

A conspectus of the literature also denotes that the disabled character is often utilised as a source of humour (McGrail and Rieger, 2014). For example, whilst the villain within most fairy tales is an object of fright, they are also often characters subjected to ridicule, humiliation and are frequently shamed by non-disabled characters (See Hodkinson, 2016a). Shakespeare adds to this argument, stating that not only are disabled characters promoted as the villain and humiliated, but also are often represented as the scapegoat in classic stories (Shakespeare, 1994). In contrast, in traditional fairy tales 'goodness' is articulated by angel like figures with long flowing (often blonde) locks and smiling faces. Such representations have, it is argued, created a corporeal reality that presents disabled people in two ways (Solis, 2004). These being, that they are 'defeated, angry people requiring help' or 'never-

say-die' people whose impairments are a challenge to make them go out and conquer the world (Crow, 1990, pg.1). Conner and Bejorian (2007) believe that such presentations tell us a great deal about society and its values.

The disabled character as the super cripple

Another common stereotype in relation to disability is that of the super cripple. Goodley (2010) accounts that disabled people occupy such a position when despite their 'broken bodies' they still achieve. Harnett (2000) believes that if a disabled character is not displayed as negative within the story then the 'supercrip' stereotype is frequently employed. This stereotype when employed promotes a world where disabled people must change themselves in order to be accepted and to achieve happiness (Harnett, 2000). Furthermore, Harnett (2000) found that use of magic potions, replete in story lines, provide children with an unrealistic belief that disabled people can be magically healed and so become normal (Harnett, 2000). The danger with such a stereotype is that it could make children believe that disability is not real or serious, thus allowing the reader to misinterpret the consequences and social prejudice that disabled people face. Beckett *et. al.* (2010) extends Harnett's argument by suggesting that 'happy ever after' endings within children's literature are also problematic. This form of ending allows children to believe that an impaired body can be magically fixed. This complicated but easy way to end a story allows children to view disability as less important and ignores the barriers that disabled people face.

From examining the research, it became evident that 'normalcy' was a key factor in children's literature. This is caused by the representation of disabled characters with the super cripple stereotype in comparison to non-disabled characters who are represented to be popular and an image of perfection (Davis, Dickey and Stratford, 1992). Santiago's research on the fairy-tale '*Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*' recognises that the distinction between the dwarfs and Snow White characters is a good example of such misrepresentations. The representation of difference here promotes the need to be normal to the reader, which in turn promotes that in order to be 'normal', and thus accepted by society, a person must have similar characteristics to Snow White (Santiago, 2007).

'Telling tales'- the employment of fairy tales to support the National Curriculum

The Department of Education (2014) states that key stage one children are taught through a curriculum which encourages the use of traditional tales such as *Hansel and Gretel*, *Rumpelstiltskin* and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. These tales we suggest provide the basis of the complex layering of stories and influences that encourage children to adopt cultural norms that are held by society (Leslee and Sturn, 2007). Cameron and Rutland (2006) argue that when children read literature their attitudes towards the disabled characters can become permanent even overruling those created by having direct contact with a disabled person. Saunders (2000) and Hodkinson (2007) concur stating that children's literature and textbooks provide subliminal negative messages regarding disability. For Rieser (2014) the result of such cultural scripts is clear; they begin the process of shaping a child's attitudes that can lead to bullying and hate crime towards disabled people.

Summarising the representation of disability in children's literature

After reviewing the literature, it is apparent that many negative stereotypes of disabled people and influences of how children should perceive them are hidden within the classic fiction books that children are encouraged to read. It would seem it is the case as Tichkosky (2009) suggests that every image of disability is an image which actually represents the cultural information and beliefs of a society naturally woven into story books by the author (Yokota, 1993). For Prater and Dyches (2008), therefore, it is only inclusive literature which can be unquestionably beneficial for all children. This is because they believe that reading develops a child's awareness, knowledge and understanding of impairment and allows the child to be familiar with disability issues within society (Prater and Dyches, 2008). Baglieri and Shapiro's (2012) belief is that in order to achieve inclusion, all children's books should not ignore or avoid disability but instead should seek to celebrate difference. Problematically, though, Shakespeare (2005) believes that 'aesthetic nervousness' often negates the benefits of inclusive literature so continuing the reinforcement of prejudice towards disabled people. He further argues that unless literature is adapted and negative cultural attitudes are removed, this prejudice will continue to shape children's outlook towards disability (Shakespeare, 2005). Whatever maybe said of the effects of children's literature we believe that the continued uncritical

employment of this form of media to support the National Curriculum creates a threat to a cohesive society because these texts regurgitate old ideologies and historical principles that relate to disability to a new generation of children.

Methodology

In this research, the representation of disability in five fairy-tale books which are currently incorporated in the National Curriculum was analysed. The research employed proto-text analysis to critically examine the text and illustrations within these fiction books (Bourdillion, 1992). This meta method of research incorporates textual analysis, critical discourse analysis, and social semiotics combined with image analysis to allow the research to uncover obvious and hidden messages of representation contained within the books. By employing textual analysis, we hoped to 'reveal the more subtle messages embedded in the text' (Hoffman et al, 2011: 28).

Textual analysis, then, is a flexible method of research which is performed by a close reading of literature. It is designed to study the content and structure of the hidden messages that are contained within texts (Frey, Botan and Kreps, 1999). Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) allows the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the hidden agents in text, these being the main source that influences social events and attitudes (Fairclough, 2003). This element is significant in disability research, as it allows the researcher to uncover how disability oppression is promoted in seemingly innocent children's books (Houston, 2015). CDA allows text to be analysed to highlight any fundamental causes of issues in relation to disability and the relationships between text, society and culture (Mogashoa, 2014). The process of CDA will enable the researcher to produce codes that reflect particular themes and common traits that are current in the literature (Houston, 2015). This is extremely useful for this research as a thematic approach will determine whether disabled characters are represented in a positive or negative way (Fereday, 2006). Additionally, by using CDA as a method, power relations and ideologies of disability can also be discovered (Mogashoa, 2014). Using CDA will allow this research to understand language as a means of social construction. We intend to support our employment of CDA by the application of social semiotics. Social semiotics is a branch of CDA which predominantly focuses on the way that language is used to

create attitudes in society (Mitchell and Snyder, 2000). Although CDA will allow the researcher to create themes in the text, semiotics can generate a wider meaning of the language that is used and how it has the power to communicate and persuade the reader to believe wider attitudes of disability (Mapley, 2015). By using semiotics within this research, the author's choice of terminology and language can be focused upon, to draw attention to single words that may have negative interpretations of disability issues. This method of research will enable the researcher to analyse the literature more critically, providing clearer views of the dominant stereotypes towards disabled people in the text (Mitchell and Snyder, 2000).

In attempting to uncover the books' subcutaneous layer (Johnsen, 1993) the aim of the research, then, was to examine whether consciously or unconsciously they promoted prejudices or stereotypical ideas about disability or disabled people (Fritzsche, 1992). The initial macro analysis was based upon the framework developed by one of the authors and was informed by the work of Dyches *et. al.* (2001). This meant that each book was examined page by page with any pictures, illustrations or texts which related to disability or disabled people being demarcated by the researcher (Commeyras and Alvermann, 1996; Ninnes, 2002). The second phase, the microanalysis, examined the demarcated sections using linguistic analysis (Crawford, 2004). Here, linguistic forms within the text such as the lexicon, agency and action, voice, verbs and adjectives (Ninnes, 2002) were analysed to reveal any 'hidden assumptions' about disability and disabled people (Crawford, 2004: 21). Finally, an examination of the images within the scheme books was undertaken (Johnsen, 1993).

In summary, this research explored and explained and in phenomenological terms gained a first-hand description of the image of disability uncovered in five fairy tale books. From the outset, this explorative research did not aim to impose, find truths or indeed to attempt to prove something right or wrong. An attempt was made merely to interpret this reality and to help to understand this human experience.

Analysis and discussion

The analysis of the data produced a range of findings which have been grouped into individual themes. First, we turn to consider the fairy tales reliance on characters with a 'perfect physical appearance'.

Normalcy and the 'perfect physical appearance'

Within the literature reviewed for this research, there was a significant focus on how children's literature placed a substantial emphasis on the need to be normal and physically beautiful. In our analysis, this fixation on normalcy was also present in most of the children's books we examined. Out of the five books chosen, four books placed a substantial focus on the non-disabled character's beauty and recognised the disabled characters as 'ugly'. For example, the *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* storyline is primarily based on the need for beauty, as the story centres on a stepmother's jealousy towards her beautiful step daughter. The books main character Snow White is described as having 'skin as white as snow, cheeks that were bright red and hair that was as black as ebony' (Southgate and Scott, 2012: 4). The representation of the princesses within the books images also illustrates that the non-disabled characters appearance is always one which represents beauty and perfection. Neikirk (2009) supports this argument, believing that this distorted view of beauty plants a seed into the minds of children which later leads to insecurities in respect of the 'perfect physical body'. This finding confirms those of other researchers that children's story books promote a belief that in order to be 'normal' and accepted within society, you must have similar characteristics as the non-disabled characters presented within the text (Santiago, 2007).

In addition, the focus of normalcy and the representation of the disabled character as abnormal is also repeated within the story of *Beauty and the Beast*. Here, the character's names reflect the way in which they are represented in the story. The story suggests that beauty symbolizes goodness and disability or characters who are made to look 'ugly' represent evil. This focus on physical appearance supports Davis, Dickey and Stratford (1992) argument that non-disabled characters are always represented to be beautiful, popular and an image of perfection. This notion of physical perfection or the non-disabled character being beautiful was prevalent in

our review of the five texts. Interestingly, another finding evident within all of the five books was how the disabled character was represented as evil especially in relation to how they damaged the 'normal' attractive character as a form of revenge (Shapiro, 2000).

Exclusion and the avoidance of the disabled character

Another important finding of this research is that within many of the children's books examined, the disabled character was excluded and emplaced as the other within the story's narrative. For example, this theme of exclusion is detailed within *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. Here the dwarfs are described as living in a 'little cottage deep in the great forest' where they 'spent all day in the mountains, digging for gold' (Southgate and Scott, 2012: 14). Although the dwarfs are represented as positive characters within the story, the reader is made to perceive the dwarfs as 'childish' characters that cannot look after themselves. This is demonstrated by Snow White acting as a mother figure towards them (Croxtton, 2015). This exclusionary behaviour was also found in the story of *Beauty and the Beast*. Here the beast character lived far away in a dark, creepy and abandoned forest, suggesting that the character's physical appearance stopped him from being accepted within society. Furthermore, exclusion as a theme is also represented in the story of *The Ugly Duckling*. This story does not represent disability directly but can be understood to represent disability issues. This is because, *The Ugly Duckling* focuses on difference in appearance and how this can determine if a person is acceptable to society. The difference in appearance within this story has been analysed, by visualising physical differences with disability issues. By applying this notion, the stigma of someone with a dissimilar body from the 'norm' can be connected to the storyline. The story focuses on an 'ugly' duckling that does not have the same features in comparison to others. This leads to this character being excluded and tormented. The duck then faces four episodes of exclusion after trying to fit in with other animal characters. This book demonstrates clearly common issues surrounding 'body perfection' that disabled people have to encounter in society on a daily basis.

At the end of the story the ugly duckling becomes a swan and it is only then that this character is included. This ending is problematic, as it presents a super cripple

stereotype of disability that we mentioned earlier. This is because in order for difference to be accepted a person must become 'normal' in some way. When applied to disability, this allows the reader to interpret that a disabled person cannot be accepted by 'normal' people within society, but only by those who have a similar bodily difference. Rieser (2014) suggests that children's literature which focuses on these disability issues contribute to shaping children's minds in creating negative attitudes towards difference. Rieser believes that these influential messages are one of the prime reasoning as to why bullying and hate crime towards disabled people still exist (Rieser, 2014).

The disabled character as an object of evil

Another finding of this research was that the disabled character was often portrayed as an evil villain. As mentioned earlier, *Peter Pan* was the main book to associate this role with the disabled character. The character, Hook, in our version of this story, is described as 'the most evil rogue of them all' (Collins and Wilkinson, 2012: 26) and was illustrated as a fierce and mean captain, standing with a sword in one hand and a giant hook on the other. In each part of Hook's involvement within the story, he is continuously seeking revenge on the non-disabled characters. This supports Dahl's (1993) contention that where disabled characters are portrayed they often seek revenge on the non-disabled. This allows the reader to believe that a disabled person's condition of life makes them place blame and guilt on others.

Another negative representation of disability may also be observed in the book of *Rumpelstiltskin*. Within this story the main character, described as a 'deformed' dwarf, was represented to be a sly and mean character. Rumpelstiltskin was described as being a 'goblin', 'strange', 'little', 'awful' and 'ugly' throughout the book (Ross, 2010: 31). As an object of evil, he was introduced within the story when he stole the queen's new-born baby. Quayson (2007) argues that when children read stories such as this, they are made to dislike the character which he believes leads to them developing a stigma towards disability. Solis (2014) also suggests that these extant views of disability can become realistic when children are led to believe that a certain disability can determine their character traits (Solis, 2014). It is these false beliefs that are a principle causation of aesthetic nervousness towards disabled people (Quayson, 2007).

The happy ever after ending

The final theme that was considered important in our analysis was the different ways that the story ended in these fairy tales. This is a very important aspect of the research, as each of the book's endings relate to themes already discussed above. The book, *Beauty and the Beast*, for example, presented an ending that contributes to the disability issue of normalcy. This is because the ending presents the beast magically changing into a handsome prince that he secretly was all along. It is interesting to note here how similar this ending is to that of the *Ugly Duckling*. This unrealistic ending supports Harnett (2000) view that this form of children's literature employs the super cripple stereotype when using disabled characters. By representing disabled characters as a super cripple, the literature influences people to think that in order to be accepted by others, disabled people need to change and meet the set standards of what is seen to be 'normal'. This transformation of the disabled character, it is argued, shapes children to believe that disability is unrealistic and also that disabled people can be magically healed or cured. This is a misrepresentation of disability and ignores the consequences and social prejudice that it could create (Harnett, 2000). Additionally, Beckett *et. al.* (2010) argues that the problematic use of 'happy ever after' endings leads children to believe that the disabled character is less important and it also ignores the barriers and stigma that disabled people face throughout their lives. The 'happy ever after' was employed within four of the five books analysed. It was evident from the research that the disabled character was either killed, missing or transformed into a 'normal' person within the majority of the books employing this form of ending. As an example, the book *Rumpelstiltskin* ended by the character vanishing out of the window which was then followed with a happy image with the phrase 'they lived happily together for ever' (Ross, 2010: 36). By representing disability so negatively, children are exposed to the power of normalcy and the hierarchy between the non-disabled and the disabled characters within the story.

Another problematic story ending was observed within the book, *Peter Pan*. The ending contained the phrase: 'Hook reached the water, the crocodile opened his jaws – and finally had the rest of Hook for his supper' (Collins and Wilkinson, 2012, p66). Here, then, the disabled character is represented as humorous, a

representation which commonly occurs in children's literature (McGrail and Rieger 2014). McGrail and Rieger (2014) believe that such representations influence children to believe that disabled people are to be laughed at. This perception of disability further enables children to place disabled people lower than themselves in terms of importance and hierarchy in society (McGrail and Rieger, 2014).

Conclusions

Throughout this study the representation of disability within classic children's literature has been examined. The main finding of our research was the substantial focus and representation of the so called 'norms' that are endorsed by society. Santiago (2007) supports these findings, as he found that the representation of normalcy within children's literature creates the belief that to be accepted within society, people must have certain physical characteristics. Another major finding in many of the texts was that the disabled character was excluded, positioned as the other character and was symbolised as an entity of evil. In addition to this, not only was the disabled character consistently represented to be evil but they were also encouraged to be laughed at by the reader. Another finding, supporting earlier literature, was the employment of the story ending 'happy ever after'. In this distorted view, the employment of a happily ever after ending frequently represented the disabled character as unimportant and that it was essential that they should disappear or be transformed if everybody was to live a happy life (Beckett et al, 2010). Whilst this finding was central within our research other problematic representations of disability were also found which lead us to question the continued uncritical use of these books with young children.

The findings detailed above lead to a conclusion that the employment of children's classic fairy tales to support the National Curriculum for English is problematic. This is because this research suggests that disability is formulated in the negative in these texts. The finding of such exclusionary storylines is consistent with Greta's (1986) research, which identified how disability is represented to be pitiable and a burden to non-disabled people and society. We likewise suggest that such ableist ideologies of disability and such a lack of inclusion of disabled characters promotes the segregation of disabled people in society. Furthermore, we suggest that issues

surrounding disability, operationalised within this form of literature, could create barriers and negative preconceptions of disabled people by young children. Our findings, then, support the research of Prater and Dyches (2008) which suggests that it is only 'inclusive literature' which can be unquestionably beneficial for all children. It is our belief, therefore, that a review of the employment of current curriculum texts must be conducted to ensure that they are not employed uncritically by teachers in their teaching and learning activities which are employed to support the National Curriculum for English.

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