The Representation of Disability in Children’s Literature

Tegan Xenos
B Teaching (Secondary)/ B Arts (Newcastle)
Bachelor of Arts (Honours) (Newcastle)
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Statement of Originality

The thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to the final version of my thesis being made available worldwide when deposited in the University’s Digital Repository**, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

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Tegan Xenos
Synopsis

The representation of disability in children’s literature in an area that is severely under researched yet is something that is relevant to us all. Disability is an extremely fluid minority, with people moving between the able-bodied and the disabled throughout their lifetime, some on multiple occasions. It is therefore extremely important that the representation of disability in our literature, particularly in children’s literature, is one that is accurate and diverse.

This thesis will be examining the way that disability is created within society based on our understanding of ‘the norm’ and the way we perceive the body. I will be discussing the binary relationship between the able-bodied and the disabled throughout this thesis and the need to break down socially constructed barriers and reclassify these two groups.

I will be examining the way characters with a disability and ‘the body’ are treated within two classic children’s texts, J.M. Barrie’s Peter Pan and Victor Hugo’s The Hunchback of Notre Dame, before progressing on to a contemporary children’s text Finding Nemo. Additionally, I will be conducting a close analysis of two recent picture books, The Black Book of Colours by Menena Cottin, originally written in Spanish, and the Indigenous Australian text Two Mates by Melanie Prewett.