

Inclusion Literature:

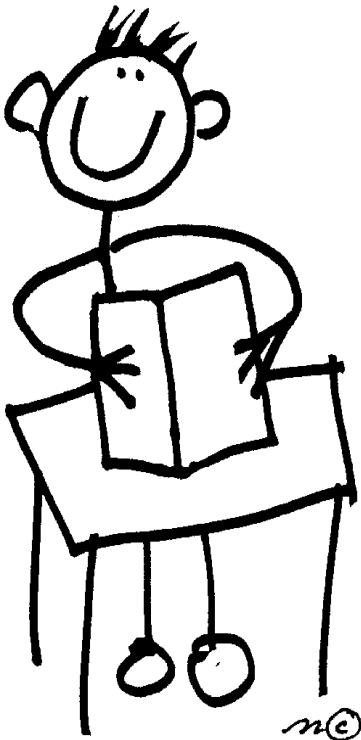
A guide to books for disability awareness



DEEPS

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Introduction



Research suggests that providing children with inclusive reading material is important because it reflects the increasing social diversity of their classrooms, promotes positive attitudes towards peers of all abilities and, in the case of disabled children, supports the development of a positive self-image.

‘Good’ examples also provide non-disabled children with accurate information about the lives of disabled people and help them to develop positive attitudes towards disabled people as members of our community and wider society.

As part of a wider project that explores Disability Equality in English Primary Schools (DEEPS Project) we have reviewed a range of resources available to schools and which might be used as part of strategies to:

- ◆ improve non-disabled children’s understanding of disability
- ◆ help them to develop positive attitudes towards disabled people.

Our review included a range of books (fiction and non-fiction) which include a disability theme/disabled character and which are currently being recommended to schools by a range of disability organisations, school library services, local authorities (LAs) and LA book suppliers.

The primary aim of this booklet is to do the following:

1. To share with teachers the criteria that we used to assess these books. We hope that teachers will find these criteria helpful when assessing the 'inclusiveness' of new or existing books for use in their school.

2. To outline a series of 'issues' of concern that emerged during our review. Again, we hope that teachers will find our outline of these issues helpful when choosing/assessing inclusion literature.

3. Finally, we have included here a list of the 'best books' that we have sourced to date. These are divided into books for 'infants' and 'juniors'. We have purchased all of these books within the last 12 months 'online', but the stock of older books may be thinner on the ground. We suggest that some of these texts may be available from a library.

Before talking about these issues, however, we have also included some background information about disability in UK society, which we thought you might find interesting/thought provoking.

Disability in the UK: Some facts and figures

Employment:

Employer attitudes: 33% of respondent to a DWP survey said that hiring a disabled person was a major risk for an employer and 47% said it would be 'difficult to retain an employee who became disabled'

Income:

Disabled people are more likely to live in poverty. Over 27% of individuals in households with one or more adult of working age have incomes below 60% of median income.

Housing:

Nearly a quarter of disabled people who need adapted accommodation do not have it.

Transport:

The national average for accessibility of buses is only around 30%.

Political Rights:

Over 68% of polling stations at the 2005 general election were inaccessible to disabled people.

Media Representation:

During an eight week monitoring period national newspapers used the following words to describe disabled people: 'freak' 10 times; 'cripple' 20 times.

All facts and figures taken from the 2006 Scope Report "Disablist Britain"

<http://www.scope.org.uk/downloads/publications/Disablistism%20audit.pdf>

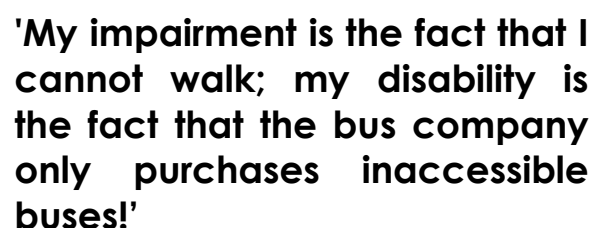
The Social Model of Disability

The DEEPS Project employs and is committed to the Social Model of Disability, as a valuable 'tool' for gaining insights into the position of disabled people in the UK.

This model has been embraced by both local and central government. The model makes an important distinction between the 'biological' and the 'social' i.e. between the barriers facing individuals associated with their impairments (the 'biological') and those that result from the ways in which society is organised economically, environmentally and culturally (the 'social') and which 'disable' people.

- ◆ Based on this definition, people do not have disabilities, they have impairments
- ◆ The 'problem' of disability is located within society not the individual
- ◆ Disability is therefore a social state and not a medical condition.

Example of Social Model-type thinking:



'My impairment is the fact that I cannot walk; my disability is the fact that the bus company only purchases inaccessible buses!'

How inclusive is that book?

When assessing the portrayal of disability within children's books we looked out for any evidence of the following negative stereotypes: the disabled person as...

- ◆ Pitiable or pathetic i.e. the object of 'sympathy' rather than 'empathy'
- ◆ Passive object of bullying i.e. as playing no part in defending themselves
- ◆ The 'baddy'
- ◆ A curio i.e. as having 'freakish' impairments
- ◆ An object of ridicule
- ◆ Having to 'over-achieve' in order to be worthy of respect
- ◆ Their own worst enemy
- ◆ A burden i.e. on a family
- ◆ A perpetual child (asexual)
- ◆ Incapable of fully participating in everyday life i.e. left out/sidelined



We also looked out for any negative or offensive terms. In reaching our decisions regarding terminology we referred to guidelines produced by the disability movement in the UK. Particular terms should be avoided as they are either outdated or offensive. Key examples include:

- ◆ 'handicapped' (preferred term is now 'disabled', and many disabled people find 'handicapped' offensive)
- ◆ 'mentally handicapped' (preferred term is now 'learning difficulty')
- ◆ 'freak' (offensive!)
- ◆ 'cripple' (offensive!)
- ◆ 'dwarf' (preferred term is now 'person of restricted growth')
- ◆ any term used to describe a disabled person if it is employed in a patronising manner e.g. 'plucky'; 'spunky'; 'special'

We also considered how the books presented the ‘problems’ facing disabled people and asked the following:

When describing the disabled person does the book focus only upon the problems associated with their impairment (i.e. what is different about their body/biology)?

Does the book address any of the societal barriers that disabled people face – economic, environmental or cultural?

I.e. are disabled people portrayed as sometimes encountering prejudice or problems of access/discrimination?

Whilst it is not ‘wrong’ to provide accurate information about the nature and difficulties sometimes associated with impairments, it is also important that societal barriers are mentioned, because these are the things that ‘disable’ people.

Finally, we looked out for – and hoped we would find! – portrayals of disability that subvert the stereotypes above and encourage children to view disabled people as valued and active members of a family/school/workplace/community and as multi-dimensional characters who are not defined solely by their disability.

On a more gloomy note, we found that 45% of the books that we reviewed contained one or more problematic theme/issue/term.

On a cheerier note, we are pleased to report that we DID find some very good texts that avoid the common pitfalls and present disability/disabled people in a positive manner. We would like to share some of the best examples with you!

Suggested Books

Infants:

Harter, D. 2000. *The Animal Boogie*. Barefoot Books. (Disability content fairly minimal – a disabled child is pictured as part of the action. But a positive, fun book.) ISBN 1-905236-22-0.

Hudson, C. and L. Gardiner. 2006. *Dan and Deisel*. Red Fox. (An excellent story book about a child who is visually impaired and his guide-dog.) ISBN 0-99-47585-5.

Moon, N. 1994. *Lucy's Picture*. Orchard Books. (An excellent story about a child making a sensory picture for her grandfather who is visually impaired.) ISBN 978-1-85213-955-1.

Naidoo, B. 1994. *Letang and Julie Save the Day*. Pearson. And others in series e.g. *Trouble for Letang and Julie*. (Book about two friends, one of whom is a wheel-chair user. Set within an inclusive classroom/school). ISBN 0-582-12155-8.

Wilkins, V.A. 1995. *Boots for a Bridesmaid*. Tamarind. (Story that is not 'about' disability, but where Mum is pictured as a wheelchair user and portrayed in a very positive manner.) ISBN 1-870516-30-3.

Caseley, J. 1991. *Harry and Willy and Carrothead*. Greenwillow Books. (We suggest that this is an upper infants text and probably best read together with an adult. It is about the inclusion of a child who has a prosthetic arm into a 'mainstream' school.) ISBN 10 0-688-09492-9.

Juniors:

Gleitzman, M. 1992. *Blabber Mouth*. MacMillan. And others in series: *Sticky Beak* and *Gift of the Gab*. (Entertaining and well-written stories about a junior age girl who is unable to speak but who attends 'mainstream' school in Australia. Great fun and likely to be enjoyed by both girls and boys!) ISBN 0-330-33283-X.

Hughes, F. 1994. *Rent a Friend*. Simon and Schuster Young Books. (An interesting and well-written story about friendship between a non-disabled and disabled child.) ISBN 0-7500-1480-6.

Ogaz, N. 2002. *Buster and the Amazing Daisy*. Jessica Kingsley. (An excellently written story about a child who has Asperger's Syndrome and her inclusion within a 'mainstream' classroom. Informative and enjoyable.) ISBN 1-84310-721-X.

Non-fiction texts for juniors:

Condon, J. 2002. *When it's hard to...See*. Franklin Watts. And others in series: *When it's hard to...move; ...hear; ...learn*. ISBN 0-7496-4532-6.

Keith, L. 1998. *Think About...Being in a Wheelchair*. Chrysalis. And others in series: *Think about...being blind;being deaf*. ISBN 1-84138-791-6.

Royston, R. 2006. *What it's like?...Using a Wheelchair*. Heinemann Library. And others in series: *What's it like...blindness; ...deafness; ...down syndrome*. ISBN 0-431-11230-4.

We are sure that this is not an exhaustive list of good inclusion type books, but we hope that it will be helpful to you.

If you would like any additional copies of this pamphlet please see our website where it is downloadable:

<http://www.sociology.leeds.ac.uk/research/projects/deeps/>

We would also be very pleased to hear from you should you have any queries or would like to make any suggestions re. good books!

Please do not hesitate to get in touch should you have any questions or comments.

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