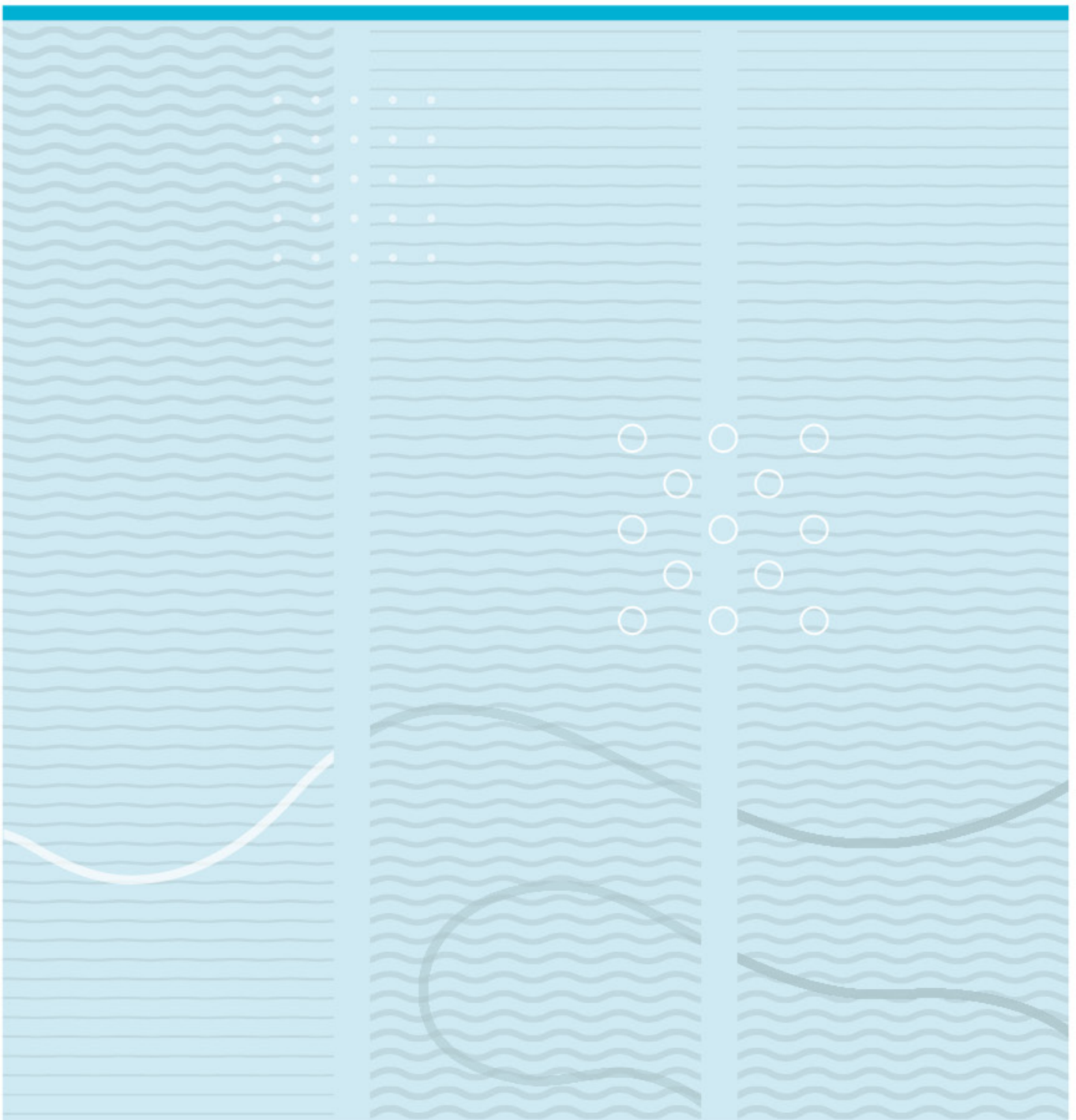


Lisa Dalsgaard Christensen and Ingrida Weberg

# Identity Development in English Classrooms

A study implementing interdisciplinary topics with the help of YA fiction



University of South-Eastern Norway  
Faculty of Humanities, Sports, and Educational Science  
Institute of Educational Science  
PO Box 235  
NO-3603 Kongsberg, Norway

<http://www.usn.no>

© 2023 Christensen & Weberg

This thesis is worth 30 study points

## Abstract

Young adults meet different challenges in school and society, where bullying and poor life quality affect the understanding of identity development. Therefore, our thesis will focus on how English teaching at secondary school can contribute to healthy identity development amongst pupils based on the interdisciplinary topics ‘health and life skills’ and ‘democracy and citizenship’ from LK20. Our research focuses on two texts containing LGBTQ+ topics. *The Black Flamingo* by Dean Atta and *Heartstopper Volumes 1 and 2* by Alice Oseman are texts where the reader follows the identity development of two protagonists. The texts describe challenges pupils can experience in society, proving the relevance of the usage of these kinds of books in English teaching. Our aim is to research how identity theory can contribute to a healthier understanding of identity development by using texts where pupils can discuss and learn about diversity, and accept differences between individuals, in addition, they learn to respect and tolerate these differences in society. Furthermore, we will use the theories of windows and mirrors, place identity, gender intelligibility, Maslow’s Pyramid of Psychological Needs, and previous research which we used to inspire our research.

Our research will perform textual analysis, focusing on discourse in the texts. We will conduct a close reading of the texts and use graphic analysis (*Heartstopper Volumes 1 and 2*) and poetry analysis (*The Black Flamingo*). Excerpts from the texts are discussed considering theories and learning aims from the interdisciplinary topics to prove that these texts can contribute to higher competence in interdisciplinary topics, that the texts can be suitable in English classrooms, and affects healthier identity development.

## Abstrakt

Ungdommer møter på forskjellige utfordringer både på skolen og ute i samfunnet, der de strever med mobbing og lav livskvalitet, som påvirker forståelse av hvordan identiteten utvikler seg. Derfor skal denne oppgaven fokusere på hvordan engelsk undervisning på ungdomsskolen kan bidra til sunn identitetsutvikling hos elever basert på tverrfaglige temaer «helse og livsmestring» og «demokrati og medborgerskap» fra LK20. I vår forskningen tar vi utgangspunkt i tre tekster som tar for seg LHBTQ+ temaer. *The Black Flamingo* av Dean Atta og *Heartstopper Volume 1* og *Heartstopper Volume 2* av Alice Oseman, hvor leseren følger identitetsutvikling til to hovedkarakterer. Bøkene viser til utfordringer elevene kan støtte på i dagens samfunn, som beviser relevansen av bruk av slike bøker i engelsk undervisning. Vi vil undersøke hvordan blant annet identitetsteori kan bidra til en sunn forståelse av identitetsutvikling ved hjelp av tekster, der elevene kan diskutere og lære om mangfold, akseptere forskjeller mellom individer, samt respektere og tolerere disse forskjellene i samfunnet. For å undersøke dette skal vi bruke teoriene windows og mirrors, place identity, gender intelligibility og Maslow behovspyramide, i tillegg drøfte tidligere forskning som vi har interessert oss i for å utforme vår forskning.

Forskningen vil gjennomføres ved hjelp av litterær analyse, der vi har hovedfokus på å undersøke diskurs i tekstene. Dette vil gjennomføres ved nærlesing av skjønnlitterære tekster, der vi i hovedsak bruker grafisk roman analyse (*Heartstopper Volume 1* og *Volume 2*) og diktroman analyse (*The Black Flamingo*). Utdragene fra tekstene skal drøftes i lys av teoriene og kompetansemålene fra LK20 tverrfaglige temaer, for å bevise hvordan bøkene kan bidra til økt kompetanse i tverrfaglige temaer, at bøkene kan tilpasses i engelsk undervisning og sunn identitetsutvikling.

# Table of contents

<b>Abstract .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Abstrakt .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Table of contents.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Foreword .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1 Introduction.....</b>	<b>8</b>
1.1 Background .....	9
1.1.1 Previous Research.....	14
1.1.2 Interdisciplinary Topics .....	14
1.2 Aim of the Thesis.....	16
1.3 The Process of Research Analysis.....	16
1.3.1 Graphic Novel Analysis.....	17
1.3.2 Poetry Analysis .....	17
1.4 Terms and Definitions .....	18
1.5 Selection of Material.....	19
<b>2 Theory .....</b>	<b>21</b>
2.1 Identity and the Self.....	21
2.1.1 Identity and Power .....	25
2.1.2 Gender Trouble and Identity .....	26
2.1.3 The Identity Process.....	27
2.1.4 Change in Identity.....	30
2.1.5 Maslow’s Pyramid of Psychological Needs.....	31
2.1.6 Windows and Mirrors .....	33
2.2 Previous Research.....	33
<b>3 Method.....</b>	<b>38</b>
3.1 The Process Step by Step.....	38
3.1.1 Close Reading .....	38
3.1.2 Analyzing the Texts .....	39
3.2 Discourse.....	45
3.3 Limitations and Potential Problems .....	48
3.4 Research Ethics .....	49
<b>4 Analysis and Discussion.....</b>	<b>50</b>

4.1	Identity in the Texts .....	50
4.1.1	<i>The Black Flamingo</i> .....	50
4.1.2	<i>Heartstopper</i> .....	60
4.2	Life Quality in the Texts .....	66
4.2.1	<i>The Black Flamingo</i> .....	66
4.2.2	<i>Heartstopper</i> .....	69
4.3	The Texts and Interdisciplinary Topics.....	73
4.3.1	<i>The Black Flamingo</i> .....	73
4.3.2	<i>Heartstopper</i> .....	77
<b>5</b>	<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>81</b>
	<b>References</b> .....	<b>86</b>

# Foreword

Our thesis has been an exciting process where we have developed our own thoughts and knowledge regarding implementing the topic of LGBTQ+. We hope our research is being received as an example of how LGBTQ+ literature can be used in English classrooms, both to read for enjoyment and learning. We hope you as a reader value our discussion of identity in the texts and that we make arguments you would like to address with your pupils.

We want to thank Houman Sadri for being such an amazing supervisor! Without him, we would not have had the pleasure of reading *Heartstopper*, and our thesis would not have been the same. Also, we want to thank our families for being so optimistic during our writing process, without their constant support it would be much more difficult to finish this thesis.

Drammen, 31<sup>st</sup> of May 2023

Lisa Dalsgaard Christensen & Ingrida Weberg

# 1 Introduction

The topic for this thesis is inspired by the interdisciplinary topics in the new curriculum. We found it interesting that the new curriculum has a strong focus on interdisciplinary topics, especially life and health skills. The new curriculum was published in 2020, which means it is starting to be established at schools. We as English teachers find it interesting that one aspect of health and life skills has a great focus on identity, self-worth, and mastering one's own life. Therefore, the focus of our thesis is how YA fiction can be implemented in the subject of English in 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> grade to educate pupils about identity processes.

These school years are a period of the pupils' lives where there are a lot of changes within themselves, e.g., puberty where young people are in the phase of becoming adults between the ages of 10 to 19 which is a unique stage of development (World Health Organization, n.d.). In the English subject, there is a focus on learning a new language and being capable of communicating in English, additionally we address how one can use this subject to learn new things about one's own identity. With that in mind, we want to use two texts, one of which is divided into two volumes, to argue for literary use in English lessons that can contribute to the development of identity within the pupils. Our focus in this thesis is not to make teachers pressure pupils to find their identity, but rather the identity process each of the pupils is going through. We want to argue that YA fiction regarding identity topics, such as LGBTQ+, can contribute to discussions surrounding one's own identity, curiosity, and reflection.

We argue that there is a lack of research in this field because it is a relatively new curriculum, and the topic of LGBTQ+ is discussed more frequently today. Therefore, introducing YA fiction with LGBTQ+ themes will guide pupils to take part in the debate or start the inner process of evaluating their own identities. We agree that the discussion about LGBTQ+ in the news and from influencers today is important for the changes in the world. By taking the topic into the English classroom the pupils can experience a new arena where there is a debate and safe space for discussion about this topic.

Therefore, we argue democracy and citizenship is important for our thesis because it is meant to educate pupils to take part in society and brace them to take a stand regarding their opinions. Furthermore, LGBTQ+ is a topic that includes sexuality and the identity of an individual. Today there are debates regarding pronouns, gender,



and how one wants to identify oneself. Introducing YA fiction which explains the protagonists' identity processes of being gay, trans, etc., can support the debate and guide pupils to explore their identities.

Pupils in 8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> grade are going through puberty where they “experience rapid physical, cognitive and psychosocial growth” (World Health Organization, n.d.). Therefore, the experience in this period can affect how the pupils “feel, think, make decisions, and interact with the world around them” (World Health Organization, n.d.). In this case, the teacher can, with the help of interdisciplinary topics, educate the pupils to learn about the different characterizations of identities, which can contribute to finding their own identities.

We argue there is a need for more research on how to address identity development and how to introduce this topic in school. By implementing identity development in teaching one can create a healthy discussion, a safe space where there is a possibility to ask questions and be curious about the topic. We argue that lack of knowledge is a big part of the negative response that circulates out in the world, in groups of people, and on the news. By using interdisciplinary topics as a tool one can argue that pupils will be more respectful and tolerant of other people's identities and the processes people are going through to find their identity. We argue that pupils who have respect and tolerance for others' opinions about their identities will develop acceptance of diversity.

As mentioned, we use *The Black Flamingo* and *Heartstopper Volume 1 & 2*, as examples of texts that can be used to implement health and life skills and democracy and citizenship.

## **1.1 Background**

### **Field of Research**

For our thesis, we are researching YA fiction in education, LGBTQ+ in education, and the new curriculum of 2020. Sunde (2020) states in their thesis that there is a need for YA fiction in education (p.8), and Islam (2022) states that the topic of LGBTQ+ can promote values regarding the pupils' all-around development of identity and their role as democratic citizens (p.8). We agree with Sunde's (2020) statement regarding the benefits of using YA fiction as a tool to understand oneself, other people, and the world we live in (p.7).

As stated, young adults are an age group where they are developing their identity (World Health Organization, n.d.), meaning they try to find out who they are, whom they want to be, and what they are going to do in the future. When someone explores their identity there might be questions, uncertainty, and a lack of belonging. Whenever you are exploring there are new places and new knowledge to be found about yourself, which can be exciting or scary. Therefore, when someone is exploring and developing an identity one might need a safe space or a trusting person to talk to, and this is what we argue pupils are meant to learn from interdisciplinary topics.

### **Importance and Professional Relevance of the Thesis**

Dæhlen (2021) states that 26% of LGBTQ+ people experience loneliness, which is why we argue the importance of bringing knowledge regarding identity development into the classrooms. LGBTQ+ people might have a smaller social circle in which they can be themselves. Therefore, it is important that teachers are able to introduce the topic of LGBTQ+ in education to make it less foreign, and instead provide knowledge that can contribute to a greater life quality for all people, not just those who identify as LGBTQ+. Islam (2022) states there is a need for more research on LGBTQ+ literature as learning materials in education and there is a need for specific instructions in the curriculum on how to present LGBTQ+ topics in education (p.87). Therefore, we argue the need for YA fiction that describes LGBTQ+ and the processes people are going through to prepare the pupils if they were to experience this themselves.

Eisenbach et al. (2018) argue that pupils should consider to what extent their identity is affected by, for instance, groups, race, culture, gender, and orientation (p.122). When reading in class it is important that pupils have the opportunity and access to explore their identity since it is shifting (Eisenbach et al., 2018, p.123). Eisenbach et al. (2018) discuss the use of an LGBTQ book that conveys a difference in how adults in the story support the character's identity based on religious beliefs, and that this is an aspect of the story that can contribute to a discussion of how LGBTQ+ youth can feel safe and supported in their community (p.125).

SSB conducted a survey in 2021 which collected data regarding the life quality of Norwegian people and the results state that 53% of non-straight people have experienced bullying in the last year (Oppøyen, 2022). In addition, the SSB survey addresses the whole society of sexual orientation, to establish that this may affect everybody. The survey introduces people who have faced a low quality of life because

of their experience of discrimination regarding sexual orientation (amongst other examples), which affects heterosexual and LGBTQ+ people alike (Oppøyen, 2022). Garbo (2018) argues that it is easier to come out as LGBTQ+ today than it was twenty years ago, however it is difficult for the ones it concerns. This indicates that society around is more open-minded today than twenty years ago, although the ones it concerns are afraid of the response from their loved ones because it is in fact an important change. Garbo (2018) also mentions the life quality survey and states that every third trans person has tried to commit suicide, and that some LGBTQ+ people hesitate to take part in activities in their spare time because of the chances of being discriminated against. Garbo (2018) argues for the importance of competence regarding LGBTQ+, and they express a wish to implement this competence in syllabuses and teaching to help make diversity of sexuality a part of our culture. In addition, Bufdir (2022) states: “82% of the participants agreed that everyone can enjoy a society where lesbians, gays, bi-, and trans-people can be open” (our own translation) (Bufdir, 2022). These surveys show the importance of our thesis and knowledge regarding gender diversity, life quality, and events relatable to society today. These topics are discussed in *The Black Flamingo* and *Heartstopper Volumes 1 & 2*, which is why we address life quality and connect these texts to experiences pupils have met or might meet themselves.

Waters (2016) states that the first LGBTQ+ YA book was published in 1969, (without mentioning the title of the book). Furthermore, Waters (2016) explains that identifying as queer was categorized as a mental disorder in the US, and if you were a lesbian, to name just one example, you were seen as a threat. However, we have come a long way since then, and in literature, there are more “[p]ositive portrayals of same-gender love [which] have become more and more mainstream” (Waters, 2016). The positive change of representation in LGBTQ+-themed YA books is the result of the changes happening in society today, this also includes the positive change in how queer people are treated (Waters, 2016). In addition, Waters (2016) states that authors writing about LGBTQ+ issues today are able to take a bigger risk to explore different ways of portraying identity that “remains inherently political in our society”.

Clark et al. (2009) argue that “using LGBT-themed literature in schools is possible and necessary” (p.25). Furthermore, they argue that queer pupils feel disconnected from school and disconnected from literacy when there is no focus on LGBTQ+ themes in books taught in school (Clark et al., 2009, p.26). We agree with this statement from Clark et al. (2009) because we argue it is important to teach pupils how

to become citizens that contribute to society and learn about different aspects of literature, lifestyles, identities, and cultures.

Clark et al. (2009) address the notion of being able to choose homophobia when reading literature, which means that the pupils can decide not to read a book with LGBTQ+ themes because they are uncomfortable (p.27). However, Clark et al. (2009) argue “[t]he texts are selected to serve as windows [...] through which straight students might see into the world of a homosexual character” (p.27), which can contribute to a better understanding regarding problems or conflicts that might occur between people. Waters (2016) states “[h]omophobes and queer activists alike could read [queer literature] as confirming their own, very contradictory views”, and Clark et al. (2009) argue for the possibility that there will be a homophobic or political idea (Clark et al., 2009, p.28). Furthermore, Clark et al. (2009) argue that teachers often raise questions surrounding these texts without challenging pupils’ beliefs (p.28), which can lead to “[t]eachers [...] tacitly [...] affirming and even promoting heterosexism and homophobia in schools” (Clark et al., 2009, p.28). Hence, if teachers do not challenge pupils’ beliefs, they may intensify the negative attitude toward LGBTQ+ that already exists and create an even more homophobic environment. Therefore, teaching pupils about LGBTQ+ by using YA fiction can help create a discussion where pupils learn to tolerate and respect differences (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020a). One can argue that by using LGBTQ+ themes throughout a schoolyear one can address different aspects of LGBTQ+ and what different fictional characters go through, and then pupils can reflect on whether they are LGBTQ+, allies to the LGBTQ+ community, or homophobic (Clark et al., 2009, p.29).

### **LGBTQ+ and Identity Process in YA Fiction**

The surveys above introduce people who experience challenges regarding their expression of identity. Hauge (2007) states: “identity is [...] a complex term, especially in interdisciplinary fields” (p. 45), which indicates that there are different elements that shape identity. In addition, everyone defines themselves differently because of their own traditions, where place affects identity construction in different aspects (Hauge, 2007, p. 45). Understanding how someone identifies is affected by the different places a person belongs to or what environmental past one has. The society a person is a part of, traditions, and family and close friends is what contributes to shaping one’s identity.

Place Identity Theory addresses how different environments influence one's identity and how one learns to differentiate oneself from others in a psychical environment. One may develop certain feelings about a place, which may affect how one may identify oneself (Hauge, 2007, p. 46). Hence, social identity theory influences identity development depending on which social group someone belongs to. This means that identity development is affected by which group or place one is a part of. In addition, we identify ourselves regarding the similarities or differences we find in various social groups and people often seek the positive outcome, whereas the negative outcome would be denied or encourage people to leave a social group (Hauge, 2007, p. 47). Identity can be constructed or be a developing process, depending on aspects of places and social groups. Pupils are surrounded by different places e.g., classrooms, hallways, and the schoolyard, thus there are various social groups, which may affect pupils and their identity processes. We investigate how teachers can support this development using LGBTQ+ and interdisciplinary topics to improve pupils' respect and tolerance. In addition, educating pupils concerning these topics can decrease the challenges people in society meet regarding their identity and sexuality.

### **Contribution to the Field**

The purpose of our thesis is to research interdisciplinary topics and identity development, and how they can be beneficial in English classrooms. Islam (2022) researched how literature can be used as 'mirrors' and 'windows' with pupils, where windows are a metaphor for experiences pupils gather about others and mirrors the reflection of oneself (p. 11). Moreover, using literature that addresses situations pupils have heard about, but not experienced themselves, opens the possibility to learn more about the subject. Using teaching methods based on windows and mirrors of texts can engage pupils in reflections around their own experiences. Further, our thesis can expand teaching methods and usage of texts when addressing interdisciplinary and LGBTQ+ topics. Sunde (2020) states there are benefits to using fantasy literature, where fantasy opens the room for discussions around differences, diversity, and acceptance of these differences (p. 22). In addition, Maslow (1954) specifies that safety is one of the most important psychological needs of the hierarchy, where stability, protection, and freedom from fear are addressed (p.39). Thus, the need for self-esteem has a big role, achieving these needs leads people to feel confident, worthy, and strong (Maslow, 1954, p. 45). Hence, our purpose addresses YA fiction and we will prove that

*The Black Flamingo* and *Heartstopper Volumes 1 & 2* have an impact on LGBTQ+ topics, identity development in pupils, and acceptance around pupils' identification. Mainly, we argue this will contribute to pupils' knowledge to educate them about queer society, normalize diversity, and help them to accept people despite their differences.

### 1.1.1 Previous Research

Islam (2022) and Sunde (2020) studied LGBTQ+ and how to implement it in teaching with literature. Therefore, we are using Islam (2022) and Sunde (2020) as previous research and as contributions to our research, because our focus is on how LGBTQ+ texts can be used as tools to teach and learn about identity development. In addition, Bach (2016) researched how teacher-students should include LGBTQ+ books in the classroom. Thus, our thesis aims to prove that YA fiction describing protagonists identifying as LGBTQ+ is a useful resource in English classrooms. Furthermore, Zaidi et al. (2016) have researched gender bias and argue that identity texts can be an intervention that can help build diversity where pupils are open to exploring identity (p.6). Hence, we address democracy and citizenship as the pupils acquire knowledge and learn to accept and respect others' opinions of identity. Bates et al. (2020) state that experimenting with one's identity is important for psychological health (p. 53). Hence, Bates et al.'s (2020) research will provide support as we analyze the errors that occur when the protagonists in *The Black Flamingo* and *Heartstopper Volumes 1 & 2* are in their identity process. In addition, Kiperman et al. (2022) address what life quality challenges people might experience, such as discrimination, bullying, and homophobia. We use Kiperman et al. (2022) to argue for the impact of these situations on the protagonists' experience.

### 1.1.2 Interdisciplinary Topics

The interdisciplinary topics are a part of the curriculum of 2020 where Utdanningsdirektoratet (2020c) states pupils shall acquire knowledge regarding their own lives. There are two areas within interdisciplinary topics we focus on in our thesis: health and life skills and democracy and citizenship. We argue health and life skills and democracy and citizenship can be taught with the use of YA fiction that addresses topics such as LGBTQ+.

Thus, health and life skills is an important part because it focuses on identity and the self. "Health and life skills refers to developing the ability of the pupils to express

themselves in writing and orally in English” (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020c). We interpret this excerpt as the ability for pupils to express feelings, thoughts, experiences, and opinions they have. The focus of health and life skills is to educate the pupils with “competence which promotes sound physical and mental health, and which provides opportunities for making responsible life choices” (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020b). Furthermore, relevant topics within health and life skills are physical and mental health, lifestyle, sexuality, and gender (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020b). Hence, the curriculum intends for the pupils to learn that a “positive self-image and confident identity is particularly important” (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020b). Life skills include “the ability to understand and influence factors that are important for mastering one’s own life” (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020b). On the other hand, health and life skills aims to represent issues such as the relationship one has with others, and that pupils shall learn “the ability to draw boundaries and respect others’ boundaries, and the ability to deal with thoughts, feelings and relationships” (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020b). Today, there is more acceptance of exploring identity, although there are people who might have difficulty approving of subjects they have little knowledge about.

Democracy and citizenship refer to pupils’ competence “of the fact that the way they view the world is culture dependent” (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020c). Cultural dependence is not mentioned as a purpose to investigate cultural differences but to prove that people can live in a diverse society, with ethical and moral standards and tolerance. “The teaching and training shall give the pupils an understanding of the relationship between democracy and key human rights” (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020a). By teaching pupils about this relationship, the teacher has an opportunity to address what people in a democracy state is the correct norm and standard, whilst the human rights indicate the correct norm is what drives a person and makes that person feel confident and worthy in the self. The pupils “shall train their ability to think critically, learn to deal with conflicts of opinion and respect disagreement” (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020a) therefore, addressing this learning aim can teach pupils to listen to others’ opinions without feeling criticized. Pupils might argue they know who they are and that others need to respect them without realizing they lack respect for the other individual. The pupils are expected to respect and tolerate the individuals who experience identity changes.

## 1.2 Aim of the Thesis

The aim of this thesis is to examine how YA fiction can contribute to developing the interdisciplinary topics of pupils in 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> grade. Furthermore, it aims to explore how YA fiction can contribute to enhancing pupils' tolerance and respect for other people's identities and their identity processes. Consequently, tolerance and respect are skills we argue pupils will acquire when health and life skills and democracy and citizenship are implemented in English classrooms. This leads us to our research question: How can YA fiction be used to explore pupils' identities, develop the understanding necessary to foster diversity, and contribute to a better quality of life for LGBTQ+ youth?

Our focus in our thesis is to investigate how YA fiction with LGBTQ+ themes can help pupils to explore their identities and develop an understanding of interdisciplinary topics. We research if the use of LGBTQ+ YA texts can affect pupils' identity development by using *The Black Flamingo* and *Heartstopper Volumes 1 & 2* as example texts. We address and discuss how these books can help students identify themselves by addressing the texts as windows and mirrors. We implement interdisciplinary topics because we argue the new curriculum has a profound focus on health and life skills and democracy and citizenship, with a density on identity and the self.

## 1.3 The Process of Research Analysis

We conduct our research question by performing textual analysis, which is a qualitative method. Therefore, we have collected data from YA fiction, previous research, and other theoretical frameworks. This means that our approach relies heavily on the theoretical, which we use to prove our research question. *The Black Flamingo* and *Heartstopper Volumes 1 & 2* are texts that show two different approaches to representing text, language, and illustrations. Since both texts include text and illustrations, they provide a deeper understanding of the story and give the reader room for interpretation.

To study how YA fiction can contribute to the identity process aim of the curriculum we analyze the two texts. To do so, we use graphic novel analysis and poetry analysis as methods introduce in the following sections.



### 1.3.1 Graphic Novel Analysis

We analyze panels that show facial expressions, positions of the characters, speech, and gestures to better understand the discourse. The discourse we analyze is the identity processes the protagonist experiences throughout the text. During the analysis, we will interpret the discourse, how it is presented in the pictures and the text, and how the reader can experience the protagonists' identity processes and challenges.

McCloud (1994) and Kukkonen (2013) state that comics are a special form of text which contains clues and details that convey a deeper meaning to each panel. To analyze each panel, with all its details, we address the characteristic details the comic creators are implementing to create discourse. Within comics and graphic novels, there are spaces called gutters (McCloud, 1994, p. 66), the gutters help create space representing time in the story. The gutters are in other words blank spaces where the reader must use their cognitive skills to understand what is happening between the panels. The creators of comics are selective in the placing and choosing of what to present in each panel to create a dance between the seen and unseen (McCloud, 1994, p.92). The details in the panels have the intention to create emotions to convey the story (McCloud, 1994, p.118), this can be done with facial expressions, the perspective in the panels, the positions of the characters, and the background. We elaborate on graphic analysis in Chapter 3 Method.

### 1.3.2 Poetry Analysis

We argue *The Black Flamingo* has an essential context that addresses identity, which is why we approach reading the lines, reading between the lines, and reading beyond the lines as a method for analyzing the text. Oliver (1994) and Barry (2013) state that poetry is written in a figurative language or imaginary, however, both terms are either subjective or objective, which gives the reader the opportunity to feel or imagine how something seems to be. We gather textual evidence to prove our understanding of the context, how figurative language is being expressed in the poem, its use for educational purposes, and the effect on the reader's feelings and identity.

Further, Oliver (1994) and Barry (2013) agree on the importance of metaphor used in poems and how it connects the fictional world with the actual setting. Therefore, we gather textual evidence regarding feelings, metaphors, and experiences that the reader is introduced to, which provides a subjective image. We provide a definition regarding rhythm, rhyme, and meter since they are important elements of poetry.

Although we do not intend to use these terms as we perform poetry analysis, we recon them for being important in poetry structure. Oliver (1994) argues that poems are often written based on authors' actual experiences, which can provide poetry with more significant depth and possibility for interpretation. Furthermore, Barry (2013) argues about the time difference between the time the poem was written and what time the reader experiences the poem. Therefore, to argue for the usage of identity, life quality, and interdisciplinary topics we use textual evidence which will be set against the theoretical framework to prove valid arguments for the thesis. "Poetry has a place in the curriculum because it can be taught as part of reading, writing, and language, which fits easily into different topics to foster curiosity and creative thinking" (Cronin & Hawthorne, 2019, p.74).

## **1.4 Terms and Definitions**

We are to define some of the terms we will use in our thesis to make it clear to the reader what we mean by the terms since they can have a broad definition.

### **LGBTQ+**

Lesbian, gay, bi, trans, queer, questioning, and ace (Stonewall, n.d.).

### **Identity**

'Identity' as a term can be described as the personality or the characteristics of a person (Hauge, 2007, p.46). In addition, 'self' as a term can be defined as 'you' as a person because you can think, and you can think about yourself (Oyserman et al., 2011, p.73). 'Identity' is the traits that make an individual who they are, and identity is not set in stone; it does not have to be the same as it was in the past or is in the present, nor what you aspire it to be in the future (Oyserman et al., 2011, p.69). 'Identity' as a term is therefore a definition of what or whom an individual thinks of when they imagen themselves. Hence, 'identity' will in this thesis be used to describe the individual's own personal self-definition, a term that covers the person's own experiences and feelings and controls the process of the self to conclude with self-identity.

## 1.5 Selection of Material

The materials chosen for this research are *The Black Flamingo* by Dean Atta and *Heartstopper Volumes 1 & 2* by Alice Oseman, which address the theme of LGBTQ+. Heathcote (2019) suggests that *The Black Flamingo* may be inappropriate for children, since the text contains descriptions of sexuality in a detailed manner. However, we believe it is suitable for children and young adults because it is mostly metaphors, thoughts, and experiences regarding identity development which some young adults go through and have knowledge about. This supports our argument for using this material as windows and mirrors. *The Black Flamingo* should be read because it provides “support and education to many” (Heathcote, 2019, p. 243). *Heartstopper* introduces struggles pupils can relate to, their search for identity, bullying, and sexuality. In addition, the protagonists in the books are close to the targeted age group we address in this thesis. For these reasons, we argue that *The Black Flamingo* and *Heartstopper Volumes 1 & 2* are suitable materials for our thesis.

We want to stress that while these two texts are examples of YA fiction that can be used, there are other texts that address LGBTQ+ themes that are just as suitable when implementing interdisciplinary topics in English classrooms through the use of texts. We argue that our selected texts can be efficient resources when addressing identity with pupils. Also, selecting two texts that are written in two different ways can provide more interest and motivation among the pupils, encouraging them to discuss the subtext, rather than only reading the word on the page.

### ***The Black Flamingo***

The book introduces the protagonist Michael who is followed from a young age until young adulthood when he first arrives at university. The book follows Michael’s identity and sexuality development. While exploring the world he experiences the challenges of being mixed race. In addition, he struggles to find a place where he feels a sense of belonging. When Michael attends university, he joins a drag society. Michael experiences a feeling of belonging, freedom, and acceptance. Additionally, Michael writes his own poetry throughout the story where he expresses his thoughts in different situations. Additionally, Michael develops new friendships and improves his relationships with his family and old friends, while learning to stand up for himself and be the real Michael.

### *Heartstopper Volume 1 & Volume 2*

These texts are graphic novels where we follow a boy named Charlie, who goes to Truham Grammar School for boys. In *Heartstopper Volume 1*, the reader follows Charlie who identifies as homosexual, and introduces the reader to some challenges he experienced after coming out. Further, Charlie and Nick are placed next to each other in class, and later Nick invites Charlie to join the rugby team. Although Charlie believes that Nick is a boy out of his league who identify as heterosexual, while the relationship between them develops. Nick helps Charlie to avoid harassment from Ben, a boy who uses Charlie to cover his needs and feelings for boys. After spending time together, Charlie experiences mixed signals from Nick, and Nick gets confused after his mother states he seems more like himself when hanging out with Charlie.

*Heartstopper Volume 2* introduces the progression of the relationship between Nick and Charlie. Nick is still exploring his identity, while Charlie is trying to show support. On the other hand, Charlie's friends express doubts about the relationship with Nick but respect his wishes. Unfortunately, Nick's rugby friends create conflicts. Volume 2 follows how the two boys manage these issues, and how their relationship develops into something more.

## 2 Theory

As our thesis question is based on teaching pupils interdisciplinary topics using YA fiction that contains LGBTQ+ themes, we believe it is essential that our main focus is on identity theory. As previously mentioned, we address Maslow's Pyramid of Psychological Needs, windows and mirrors, and previous research within the same field.

### 2.1 Identity and the Self

Ph.D. Shahram Heshmat (2014) presents the basis of identity as the question 'who are you?'. We argue that this question is simple, yet can be difficult to answer. With a question such as 'who are you?' one can learn about the individual's values, culture, sexuality, friend group, or family. "Identity relates to our basic values that dictate the choices we make" (Heshmat, 2014). Therefore, we argue for using pupils' experiences to discuss their personal values. Heshmat (2014) states that few people choose their identities but rather adopt the identity of their parents or their dominant culture. Therefore, when discussing the identity process, we argue for the choice of challenging one's identity to find the individual's truth when asked 'who are you?'.

There are different identities among people, and some of them share similar values, which makes individuals belong to the same social categorization. "The sum total of the social identification used by a person to define him- or herself will be described as his or her *social identity*" (Turner, 2010, p.18). According to Turner (2010), social identity refers to one's definition of themselves and the process of locating oneself or another person in social categorization (p. 17-18). Social categorization addresses one's membership in a group based on sex, nationality, and race, to mention a few. While personal characteristics can be for example competence, taste, and relations to others (Turner, 2010, p. 22).

In addition, Turner (2010) describes the term social identity as a subsystem of self-concept, a cognitive structure influenced by the social environment and social behaviors (p.21). Within self-concept Turner (2010) argues for three terms: self-image, self-description, and self-esteem, which is being influenced by group membership (p.18-19). Hence, Turner (2010) argues that the different group memberships tend to 'switch on' different self-conceptions to better suit the dynamic and norms within the group (p.20).

Social group formation does not only appear regarding similarities between individuals, but group formations also depend on similar beliefs or values, giving the opportunity for a sense of belonging (Turner, 2010, p. 23). Belonging to a social group supports people in being themselves whilst being a part of a group (Turner, 2010, p. 27). The purpose of belonging to a social group is to build positive self-esteem, where members provide high subjective status and affect social identity positively. Thus, negative social identity groups will encourage members to seek other groups (Turner, 2010, p. 34). Burke & Stets (2009) state “the *personal* identity involves seeing oneself as a unique and distinct individual, different from others” (p.124). However, Reicher (2010) states an individual seeks a system of social categorization to define themselves, and that an individual will not primarily behave regarding their personal identity, but rather according to group values (p. 67).

Belonging to a social group affects self-esteem, which Maslow (1954) describes, as a feeling of status, reputation, feeling of mastery, and strength (p.45). Thus, Maslow (1954) mentions that people who lack self-esteem can experience weakness or helplessness (p. 45). Since there are many social categorizations, it is important to teach pupils to behave according to their personal identity in a group, because group values can vary. Thus, if there appear to be differences within a group, it is necessary for pupils to learn to respect, tolerate, and accept others’ differences. Pupils will meet a society of differences, which does not mean people cannot socialize with each other, people can belong to a group beyond these differences.

### **Identity and Place**

Proshansky et al. (1983) define place identity as “a sub-structure of the self-identity of the person consisting of, broadly conceived, cognitions about the physical world in which the individual lives” (p.59). That defines people’s existence regarding the cognitions which represent memories, values, and meanings, thus representing people’s behavior, experience, and complexity of physical settings. (Proshansky et al., 1983, p. 59). Place identity includes the ‘environmental past’, which defines people’s past as consisting of places or spaces that affected people’s social, biological, or cultural needs (Proshansky et al., 1983, p.59). The place identity is not built by physical settings only, but also by what other people may think, tell, or do, about these physical settings that seem to be right or wrong (Proshansky et al., 1983, p. 60). Proshansky et al. (1983) state

that place identity has specific functions, such as thoughts, experience, and behavior, which affect people's self-identity (p.66).

Place identity as a cognitive system has functions that are required for people's adjustments in identity, protection, and adjustments of the self-identity, whereas the physical and social world, can either change slowly or quickly regarding the events in life (Proshansky et al., 1983, p. 66). Several functions contribute to our thesis' purpose: the recognition function, meaning function, expressive-requirement function, mediating change function, and anxiety and defense function.

The recognition function addresses the 'environmental past' as mentioned earlier, it defines people's experience in the physical world and stability in changing properties. Proshansky et al. (1983) add that the recognition function gives people stability and belief in continuity over time, which also supports self-identity (p. 66-67). Therefore, people who relocate their day-to-day properties extremely often lead to a sense of rootlessness, and it expands the lack of growth, consistency, and continuity in different properties, which leads to the suffering of integration of self-identity (Proshansky et al., 1983, p. 67).

Further, Proshansky et al. (1983) introduce the 'meaning function' where they address place identity as a setting, where people's environment and activities have an indication of what will happen, how people or others should behave in each setting, or how it is supposed to be (p. 67). These setting cognitions enable people's capability to recognize places and spaces around them and mainly give these settings a purpose (Proshansky et al., 1983, p. 67). The meaning of the places is 'culturally transmitted' and integrated into place identity according to one's own experience in the physical world. Some of these meanings are shared rules in society, while other rules are relevant for sub-groups within a culture or other (Proshansky et al., 1983, p.68). Overall, people seek to make places familiar based on their own experience, which gives relevant and meaningful place identity experiences. Thus, it will improve people's future adjustment in society outside of familiar places (Proshansky et al., 1983, p. 68). For instance, a classroom can be interpreted as a group of cultures, where the classroom has common rules that pupils must follow. Pupils are taught to be respectful, kind, and open-minded where everyone is welcomed and accepted for who they are, which could affect how pupils would adjust themselves in future society.

Expressive-requirement function addresses the personality of self-identity and standards that people must have which address two types of place identity cognitions

(Proshansky et al., 1983, p. 69). One of the cognitions addresses the taste and preferences of the people, and the second cognition relies on what people require in places and spaces. These requirements are necessary for people to exist, such as, e.g., oxygen and light. Thus, when it comes to people's personality or characteristics it represents the source of place identity development, which embodies the impact of social, religious, ethnic, or other aspects (Proshansky et al., 1983, p. 69). Proshansky et al. (1983) determine that "a complex of personal, social, and cultural factors are involved in the transitions from cognitive processes to active manipulation of the environment" (p.70).

Furthermore, mediating change function address differences between people's place identity and the characteristics of a physical setting, which lead people to either change or remove these differences. The differences can be eliminated or reduced, which depends on people knowing what is right or wrong with physical settings, that affect the differences between place identity cognitions of the people (Proshansky et al., 1983, p. 70). This depends on people's environmental skills and resources for making changes between differences, which address cognitions and not only actual behavior (Proshansky et al., 1983, p. 70). Proshansky et al. (1983) mention that people must acquire environmental competence and know how to behave in common physical settings based on their understanding (p.72).

The last function in place identity theory is anxiety and defense, which is the representation or danger that may signal in physical settings, or they may signify response tendencies to defend or protect oneself against the danger (Proshansky et al., 1983, p. 73). The anxiety and defense functions lead to people knowing about the danger and threat that can affect people's well-being in a common physical setting (Proshansky et al., 1983, p. 73). Furthermore, there are physical setting properties that will affect place identity because of one's environmental past. Thus, if something negative is experienced in a common physical setting, it can affect people's well-being and create anxiety and defense functions which will urge people to avoid these settings (Proshansky et al., 1983, p. 73). Lastly, anxiety and defense functions can appear in social groups, where one may judge an individual's roles and behavior. Belonging to a group people experience self-worth and self-esteem. Although, it can lead to consequences as the inability to perform a role in a group can affect people's self-image and self-respect, which may induce anxiety or discomfort in common spaces or places (Proshansky et al., 1983, p. 73).



Twigger-Ross & Uzell (1996) were investigating how attachment to a place, can support and develop identity aspects (p. 206). Twigger-Ross & Uzzell (1996) agree with Proshansky et al. (1983) regarding the theory of place identity. Although, they suggested that “rather than there being a separate part of identity concerned with place, all aspects of identity will, to a greater or lesser extent, have place-related implications” (Twigger-Ross & Uzell, 1996, p. 206).

### 2.1.1 Identity and Power

Foucault (2012) states that there has been a sense of power in our society as long as it has been a hierarchy, meaning “the exercise of power has always been formulated in terms of law” (p.72-73). Further, Foucault (1986) states that power which is represented in women introduces negative value, one is represented as linguistic in nature and the other relates to sexual ethics. Foucault (1986) addresses linguistics in nature, relatable to prostitution, where women are described as ‘a place for everyone’, thus sexual ethics touch upon the fact that it is unnecessary to have a sexual act with women who would not benefit from providing an outcome (p. 19). This statement developed by Foucault, can be addressed as an example of the impact power relations have on society and people’s representation of sexuality. In addition, this connects the statements of Butler (2002), where the term gender intelligibility addresses the narrow understanding of male and female (p. 22), which we will address later on. Furthermore, Foucault (1986) argues that we should not categorize sexuality “of the lawful, the unlawful, or the unnatural” (Foucault, 1986, p. 17). Thus, it indicates that these categories have an impact on intelligibility (Foucault, 1986, p. 17). Therefore, what Foucault states about power in a society and how power leads to lawful, unlawful, and unnatural categories, makes it more difficult to create a diverse society. Foucault (2012) questions, if society is capable of having power where visible rituals, creating reliable instruments, and being open-minded to changes, are a part of the norm, why society still has a problem accepting diversity (p. 70-71)? We do agree with this question of power in a society where we today fight for equality and still create lawful, unlawful, and unnatural categorizations when people express their identity outside the norms. Additionally, Spargo (1999) states “[s]exuality seems, like gender, to be simply *there*, but also to be somehow special, personal, a matter of our ‘innermost desires’ – who we want, what we want, how we want. It’s something inside us, a property, *our* property” (p. 13). Hence, we argue that even though “power has been formulated in terms of law” (Foucault,

2012, p.72-73), our society needs to acknowledge the fact that people have the right to their own property (Spargo, 1999, p.13). The power initiated by our democracy should be used to create a more diverse society, rather than creating categories for the ones we argue are lawful, one for the unlawful, and lastly one for the unnatural, who are people we somehow choose not to understand.

Foucault (1986; 2012) addresses power as a mechanism which is also a phenomenon called ‘panopticism’ (1977). Foucault (1977) explains panopticism as a disciplinary mechanism, where individuals are observed and given a fixed place, where the power can observe all movement, all events, where “power is exercised without division”, according to the hierarchical figure (p. 197). Foucault (1977) presents plague as an example of panopticism where people were put in quarantine because the people in power gave people a fixed place to be able to contain the disease (p. 195). Thus, Foucault (1977) continues to explain that plague gave rise to the division of normal and the abnormal, where individuals were located in the society by the power and created fear in a society of ‘difference’ (p. 199). Therefore, this can indicate that people can develop prejudices regarding LGBTQ+ society, that their unique representation of sexuality can be interpreted as a ‘disease’ because of gender intelligibility (Butler, 2002, p. 22), although the power today is open-minded, diverse, and fight for equality, and people no longer refer to LGBTQ+ as a ‘disease’ or mental disorder (Waters, 2016).

### 2.1.2 Gender Trouble and Identity

Butler (2002) discusses ‘gender trouble’ as a form of feminist theory. Gender trouble is the role of men and women and the assumptions that women shall be feminine, and men shall be masculine. However, being a woman is defined as a term that “fails to be exhaustive [...] because gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts, and because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities” (Butler, 2002, p.6). Therefore, being a woman by society’s norms can create trouble for the person’s race, ethnicity, or sexuality as they can identify outside the norms. Butler (2002) argues for the definition of ‘identity’ as more than gender and the person following the given norms and standards given by society (p.22). Butler (2002) uses the term “gender intelligibility” (p.22) when addressing a lack of knowledge and not seeking an understanding of identity. Gender intelligibility is still a part of some people’s mentality as it is a recognized standard as to how one should act as a person with a given gender

(Butler, 2002, p.22). Therefore, this can be discussed as a lack of knowledge regarding LGBTQ+ and is linked to interdisciplinary topics as the pupils are to respect others' opinions and whom they identify as (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020b). In addition, Butler (2002) argues that sex and gender do not mean the same. The sex of a person is the biological term, meaning an individual is born with male or female reproductive genitalia, and gender is what is culturally constructed (p.9). Some of the thoughts regarding gender and how people identify can be linked to this statement from Butler (2002): "certain kinds of 'gender identities' fail to conform to those norms of cultural intelligibility; they appear only as developmental failures or logical impossibilities from within that domain" (p.24). These development failures contribute to creating less diversity and probably making people hide who they truly are.

Furthermore, Butler (2002) states "'identity' is assured through the stabilizing concepts of sex, gender, and sexuality, the very notion of 'the person' is called into question by the cultural emergence of those 'incoherent' or 'discontinuous' gendered beings who appear to be persons but who fail to conform to the gendered norms of cultural intelligibility by which persons are defined" (p.23). What Butler states as 'identity' we interpret as a concept of identity is part of an individual, but also that an individual's identity consists of their sex, gender, and sexuality. Cultural norms change depending on the society and today there are new norms developing that others do not understand or choose not to understand. The change in norms is creating conflicts within society because of the lack of knowledge regarding the new norms. Therefore, cultural intelligibility will be used to look into how other characters in our material act in line with the identity process of the protagonists.

### 2.1.3 The Identity Process

When we research how to implement identity processes we cannot assume that the pupils are aware of a change or that they can control change regarding their identity (Burke & Stets, 2009, p.61). The identity process is what makes an individual change their self-concept, which is why we use this when analyzing our data. Burke & Stets (2009) argues for four basic components in the identity process: input, identity standard, comparator, and output (p.62). These four components make a process that is influenced by the environment and the self (Burk & Stets, 2009, p.62).

The input process is what the individual is taking in, processes the perceptions one gets from the input, and compares it with the identity standard one has (Burke &

Stets, 2009, p.62). “A little thought can convince us that we know [...] things because we see them, we hear them, and we feel them. In short, we perceive them” (Burke & Stets, 2009, p.64). The input one gets is perceived from what we see, feel, and hear regarding the specific input from the environment one is in at a specific point in time. If the same input happens two times with different surroundings one can question if one will get the same output. Our perceptions from the inputs are meant to fit into our standards, and our ‘goal’ is met when the perception fits with our standards (Burke & Stets, 2009, p.65). “The importance [...] is not that we *change* the environment, but that the consequences of what we do are only known to us in our perceptions” (Burke & Stets, 2009, p.65).

The identity standard is a set of meanings that defines the individual’s identity (Burke & Stets, 2009, p.63). It is the meanings that one person has which make them who they are. We argue that it can be interesting for people to challenge their meanings to better understand what identity meanings one has. Burke & Stets (2009) state that an individual does not have one meaning, they can have multiple if not hundreds of different meanings that are contained in the identity standard (p.64). Hence, all the different meanings one has cannot be the same throughout one lifetime, we argue that people change their meanings almost like they change clothes, which is why identity is fascinating and important to address with pupils.

The comparator is a component within the identity process where the input perceptions of meanings are compared to the identity standard of meanings (Burke & Stets, 2009, p.66). When we compare an input of perceptions to an identity standard there might be an ‘error’ in the output of the perception, which means that the standards do not fit the perception of the input. The errors created by the comparator are what drive the rest of the identity process.

The output is the response to the error message from the comparator component, which creates the behavior of the person (Burke & Stets, 2009, p.66). A person can try to balance the perceptions of the input to fit into their identity standard, or one can change their meanings within their identity standards. One can argue that when you change identity standards, to exaggerate with an example, that is when an individual might want to change their pronouns or gender.

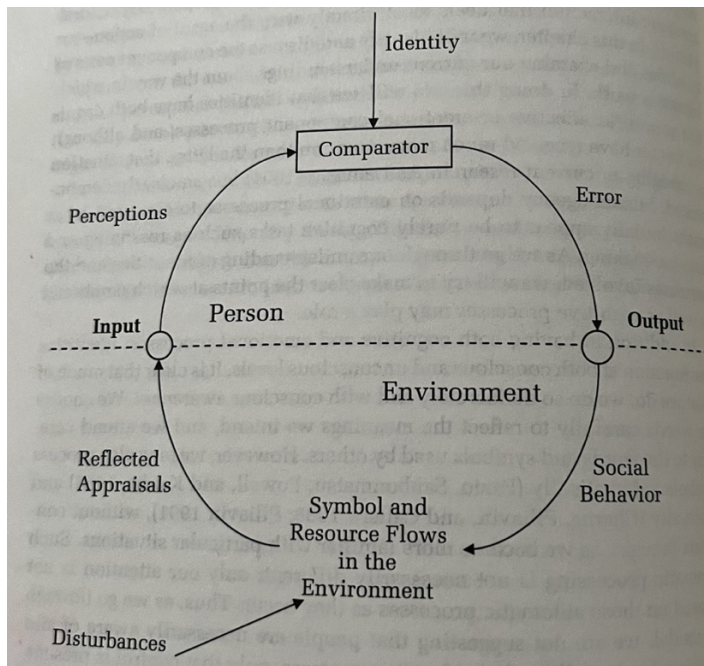


Figure 1 (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 62)

The inputs are being perceived to fit the identity standard that is evaluated in the comparator, creating an error, which creates a behavior that is resulting in output to the situation. Hence, the identity process is a continuous loop (Burke & Stets, 2009, p.67). “Identity processes are organized to maintain the inputs as close to the identity standard as possible, counteracting any disturbances that occur in the environment” (Burke & Stets, 2009, p.68). When trying to maintain the inputs as close as possible to the identity standard it will most likely create a disagreement which provokes the comparator. This is what creates a change in identity. It is also important to remember that “the self is composed of multiple identities that reflect the various social positions” (Cast & Burke, 2002, p.1042). Different identities will therefore make different behaviors in given situations. We argue that the behaviors from the errors in the loop can result in specific emotions, e.g., anger, sadness, or happiness, which the protagonists in *The Black Flamingo* and *Heartstopper Volumes 1 & 2* are expressing. “The normal operation of [an identity process] [...] results in behavior that produces a match between self-relevant meanings in the situation and the meanings and expectations held in the identity standard” (Cast & Burke, 2002, p.1044).

Furthermore, when we address identity and its process within a person, we find it important to address emotions surrounding the person. Emotions are “the feelings individuals experience in situations” (Burke & Stets, 2009, p.155). Hence, emotions can interfere with the behavior when the perceptions meet identity standards resulting in errors. Cast & Burke (2002) argue that individuals who experience errors with their

identity standards can influence their self-esteem (p.1043). “Individuals emotionally react negatively when they perceive that they are not being or acting in accord with their identity standard” (Burke & Stets, 2009, p.174). If an individual experiences negative errors from the perceptions of the identity standard, it will most likely provoke their self-esteem and create a behavior that is influenced by the emotions from the errors.

#### 2.1.4 Change in Identity

Change in identity happens over a long period of time, there is no one that can say that their identity is different from the day before (Burke & Stets, 2009, p.175-176). When we address the change in identity in *The Black Flamingo* and *Heartstopper Volumes 1 & 2* we can observe as change happens with the protagonists while they go through situations. Showing pupils that change in identity starts with an error can raise awareness regarding the challenges they might experience and opens the possibility for discussion about their thoughts. As mentioned previously, the components of the identity process act in favor of keeping our identity stable and changing as we grow up and acquire new knowledge. There are different sources of change in identity which we address below.

Firstly, changes in the situation can create a disagreement between identity standard and self-meanings (Burke & Stets, 2009, p.180). As we have argued, when there is a disagreement between meanings and perceptions it can affect the person’s behavior. As one cannot change a situation as one pleases, one will attempt to find different meanings within one’s identity standard to fit into the perceptions of the situation, and by doing so the person will change identity from the situation that occurred (Burke & Stets, 2009, p.180).

Secondly, one may experience identity conflict within oneself (Burke & Stets, 2009, p.183). This may occur when there are two (or more) identities that act in the same situation with different identity standards (Burke & Stets, 2009, p.183). Different identities can be what we argue are ‘hats’, e.g., you wear one ‘hat’ at work as a teacher, one ‘hat’ as a girlfriend, and one ‘hat’ as a female. If there were to be a disagreement between your identity as a girlfriend and as a female, there can become disagreement when both ‘hats’ are on at the same time. For example, as a girlfriend, you might have identity standards that are letting the boyfriend feel needed, but as a female, your standards are to be independent. If there is a situation where these two meanings happen at the same time, there will be disagreement in the identity standard between the two

different identities. In this example, the two identities will try and find a compromise and it will lead to a change in identity standards (Example inspired by Burk & Stets, 2009).

Thirdly, a change in identity can occur from conflict between meanings in behavior and identity standards (Burke & Stets, 2009, p.184). “We normally choose behaviors whose meanings are consistent with our identity or whose meanings restore situational meanings to be consistent with our identity” (Burke & Stets, 2009, p.184). We cannot always act in accord with our identity standard, there is often a small change in behavior when we are in a situation. Hence, all the small changes in behavior will result in a change in identity standards and ultimately change our identity.

Fourth and lastly, Burke & Stets (2009) argue that change in identity can occur when we put ourselves in other’s ‘shoes’ (p.185-186). This means that one is role-playing and, in some ways, observing oneself from another’s perspective.

These four sources of changing identity are all represented in our selected material, we will therefore address how they can be perceived in the texts.

### 2.1.5 Maslow’s Pyramid of Psychological Needs

Maslow’s Pyramid of Psychological Needs introduces a hierarchy regarding people’s personalities and needs which affect one’s identity development. Maslow’s hierarchy gives a description of what people experience in the identity processes, and we argue personality traits are affected by identity. Hence, Maslow’s hierarchy of needs gives an insight into how and what people should be surrounded by to experience healthy development.

Physiological needs in Maslow’s (1954) hierarchy address what the human body needs to sustain normal body functions, such as food, water, and vitamins. In addition, it includes sleep, exercises, and all the physical a body needs to maintain normal function (p.35).

Further, safety needs addresses stability, protection, and freedom from fear, to mention a few (Maslow, 1954, p. 39). Some people have strong values regarding their safety, leading other hierarchies of the pyramid to look less important, even psychological needs (Maslow, 1954, p. 39). According to Maslow (1954), children feel safe and functional under a schedule or routine, where the world is organized, which they do not experience as unreliable, unsafe, or unpredictable (p. 40). Values regarding

safety needs in children depend on adults because the adults have already been educated about dangers in society (Maslow, 1954, p. 39).

Thus, the love needs consist of feelings such as tenderness, affection, happiness, and satisfaction. These feelings encourage people to love and be loved, which also affects psychological health (Maslow, 1954, p. 182). Thus, the need of belonging describes people who belong to one's territory, clan, or own 'kind' of people, which helps to avoid feelings of, e.g., loneliness or strangeness (Maslow, 1954, p.43-44). Maslow (1954) argues that healthy love in self-actualizing people accepts and respects others' individuality, others' unique personalities, and wishes for the growth of others (p. 195). Self-actualizing love "shows many of the characteristics of self-actualization in general" (Maslow, 1954, p.188), which leads to "healthy acceptance of the self and others" (Maslow, 1954, p.188). Maslow (1954) argues that respect in self-actualizing people has no purpose of using or controlling another or disregarding one's wishes when addressing love between people. People will allow the respected human a fundamental, irreducible dignity, and will not use power to humiliate the other (p. 196).

Maslow (1954) argues that the hierarchy of esteem needs describes people who have a need for self-respect, self-esteem, and high evaluation of themselves. Hence, Maslow (1954) classifies it into two sets: 1) the desire for strength, achievement, and mastery, and 2) the set includes reputation, status, and attention (p. 45). Maslow (1954) states that respect that is deserved by others, is the healthiest self-esteem, not something that is gained by being famous (p. 46). The purpose of esteem needs leads people to feel confident, worthy, strong, and capable. Although, if people lack esteem needs, it will awaken feelings of weakness or helplessness (Maslow, 1954, p. 45).

Lastly, Maslow (1954) addresses self-actualization as a hierarchy where one accepts other levels of the hierarchy. Further, Maslow (1954) argues for the purpose being to accept nature, the differences between individuals, and stop arguing about the way nature is constructed (p. 156). Normal arguments between individual who are in a conflict is a lack of unnecessary or compulsive guilt or shame (Maslow, 1954, p. 156). To accept other levels of the hierarchy, Maslow (1954) argues further that these aspects are unrealistic since the human body, especially women, experience menstruation, which is a part of nature, a reality that should be accepted (p.156-157). Hence, there is not healthy to feel guilt or other about something that is a part of nature and human processes (Maslow, 1954, p. 157).



### 2.1.6 Windows and Mirrors

We use the theory of ‘windows’ and ‘mirrors’ to argue for the way our selected material can contribute to identity processes within the pupils. As literature can be based on real-life one can argue that the situations in the texts might be similar to what pupils experience on their own. Thus, making it possible to discuss a text as windows or mirrors.

Bishop (1990) states “readers often seek their mirrors in books” (p.1). Bishop (1990) describes windows and mirrors as a coherent phenomenon. There are windows the reader looks through to experience the story, and sometimes the storyline and actions taking place in a story can be just right, as the sun shining on a window, to create a mirror (Bishop, 1990, p.1). A mirror in literature is when a story reflects the reader’s own life and experiences (Bishop, 1990, p.1). “Our classrooms need to be places where all the children from all the cultures [...] can find their mirrors” (Bishop, 1990, p.1). Furthermore, Bishop (1990) argues for the importance of books that reflect and can act as windows of lifestyles and ways of living that not all young adults are familiar with (p.1). We know literature cannot change the world and how people are acting towards one another, but as Bishop (1990) argues literature can “help us to understand each other better by helping to change our attitudes towards difference” (p.2).

One can develop a more meaningful discussion with the pupils by reflecting on literature as windows and mirrors. It is possible that pupils are open to discussing topics or situations based on text rather than their own experiences. Furthermore, “[pupils] can learn to value diverse perspectives through literature” (Phillips, 2022). By creating a diverse perspective one can argue for accepting other’s opinions with respect or tolerance for these differences, as discussed in 1.1.2 Interdisciplinary Topics.

## 2.2 Previous Research

Previous research done with a focus on LGBTQ+ YA fiction includes the study by Sara Islam (2022) *Reflecting Rainbows: LGBTQ+ Young Adult Literature for the Secondary School*. Islam (2022) researched YA novels regarding the using windows and mirrors when reading literature with pupils to “further [...] secondary school students’ development, both as individuals and members of society” (Islam, 2022, p.12). “[The] novels perpetuate the notion of coming out as something that is a daunting and pivotal occurrence that is unavoidable in queer people’s lives, and in both cases, the big

coming-out story is characterised by a lack of acceptance and support from others” (Islam, 2022, p.84). Furthermore, Islam (2022) concludes that novels with LGBTQ+ as a topic can in fact be mirrors because the books portray experiences, situations, and dilemmas that can resonate with different pupils and their life (p.85). Additionally, LGBTQ+ books can be windows as they portray the lives and obstacles of LGBTQ+ people that heterosexual people cannot relate to themselves (Islam, 2022, p.86). Islam (2022) argues for the lack of presentation of LGBTQ+ topics in education (p.13), and we agree with this claim. Hence, we use Islam’s research as an entrance to this field of research.

Sunde’s (2020) research focused on how YA fantasy literature would support the new LK20 curriculum’s interdisciplinary topics (p. 8). Sunde (2020) aimed to develop new knowledge that could guide teachers to implement the curriculum into lessons with materials such as YA fantasy literature (p.9). Sunde (2020) researched the didactic benefits of YA fantasy in education, focusing on developing health and life skills. “The teaching is supposed to create a foundation where the pupils can understand not only themselves but also others and the world they live in” (Sunde, 2020, p.24), this statement is why we take an interest in Sunde’s (2020) research. Sunde (2020) states: “Working with literature that portray people in the LGBTQ community can contribute in this area” (p.36), with ‘this area’ Sunde (2020) means “reducing stigma and discrimination towards LGBTQ people” (p.36).

Bach (2016) investigated how courses focusing on literature can affect the growth of using YA literature regarding LGBTQ+, gender themes, and characters (p.917). Bach (2016) argues that teacher-students express a hesitation with using LGBTQ+ topic YA literature because the perception of a teacher shall be objective and neutral (p.918). Hence, YA fiction portraying LGBTQ+ characters is not just for analyzing what the fictional characters are experiencing, but to create a discussion where pupils can learn and reflect on their own life and choices. Bach (2016) argues that the use of YA literature regarding LGBTQ+ topics is increasing, thus there are still teachers who are reluctant to use books about gender, or the teachers are unsure how to adapt this type of literature in the classroom properly (p. 917). Bach (2016) based the research on a previous pilot study, where the focus was on the books that were used in courses and other activities (p. 922). The focus was to investigate how many books were mainly about LGBTQ+ (Bach, 2016, p. 922), what those books presented, and how teachers were taught to use them in the classroom (Bach, 2016, p. 924). Mostly it

was focused on using texts to analyze symbolism, but Bach (2016) argues that it should be used to talk about general life-relevant themes (gender, characterization) (p. 930). “A simple conversation about contemporary books may lead to conversations about many themes, including sexual orientation and gender identity, without teachers having to be direct or didactic” (Bach, 2016, p.919). Although the research was conducted in the US and addresses courses designed for teachers, we consider it relevant for our research.

Bates et al. (2020) argue that sexuality is an important part of identity development and that experimenting with one’s identity is important for psychological health (p.53). Furthermore, expressing LGBTQ+ identities have been met with negative stereotypes because of people’s lack of knowledge (Bates et al., 2020, p.53-54). With the use of smartphones among young adults today it is possible for them to explore their ‘self’ by learning from others online (Bates et al., 2020, p.55). When developing an identity with help from social media one might bring new meaning to experiences from the past (Bates et al., 2020, p.56). Bates et al. (2020) use narrative sense-making as a way of describing three steps that occur when developing identity: narrative engagement, identity configuration, and narratives to make a link between past, present, and future, hence, these three steps help individuals to create a guideline which makes sense of experiences in relation to identity (p.57). In Bates et al. (2020) interviews, one participant states “I would have seen there were more people out there” (p.63) from the use of social media to see and experience a different way of living. Social media and the narrative expressed on different platforms (e.g., Instagram, Facebook) is therefore a way of mirroring or looking at, as a window, to reflect on one’s own identity. From the participants in Bates et al. (2020) research, young adults feel it is hard to communicate “serious things face-to-face” (p.65) and that social media helps them to communicate their ‘coming out’ experience.

The research of Kiperman et al. (2022) investigate how discrimination, bullying, and homophobia can impact identity development in young adults. Regarding the research findings, Kiperman et al. (2022) seek to understand identity development in LGBTQ+ ‘culture’ (p. 2). Kiperman et al. (2022) address peer victimization which can appear to be physical, verbal, or psychological, by a peer who means to harm others (p.2). Kiperman et al (2022) used a mixed-method design in their research to collect data (p. 5). The quantitative data gathered information about how victimization relates to people’s LGBTQ+ identity development and how the support system improves one’s negative insights “of their LGBTQ+ identity development when experiencing

victimization” (Kiperman et al., 2022, p. 5). Thus, the qualitative data produced information regarding the victimization LGBTQ+ youth experienced, how they address their identity while talking about these experiences, and how support systems should work to address these issues (Kiperman et al., 2022, p. 5). Kiperman et al. (2022) goal was to produce an explanation regarding LGBTQ+ experiences of victimization and how it affected one’s identity development. Hence, develop an understanding of LGBTQ+ culture and investigate situations where there is possible to interfere and avoid negative situations, whilst contributing to positive social change (Kiperman et al., 2022, p. 5). The participants in the research were between 14-17 years old and identified themselves as LGBTQ+ (Kiperman et al., 2022, p. 5). Kiperman et al. (2022) concluded that peer victimization affects LGBTQ+ youth’s sensitivity, increases difficulties regarding their identity development, and creates a negative interpretation of the self (Kiperman et al., 2022, p. 17). Standing up for oneself, alone or with the support of friends, in these situations was described as a buffer against these victimizations, which contributes to better mental health (Kiperman et al., 2022, p. 17). Since this research addresses LGBTQ+ topics and identity development we consider this as a relevant study when conducting our research. Kiperman et al. (2022) research gives insight into LGBTQ+ youth’s experiences and provides data on how youth cope with these challenges. This is why we are using Kiperman et al.’s research because we research how we can impact youth’s identity development positively while addressing interdisciplinary topics and improving pupils’ behavior among each other despite their sexuality. Therefore, we can interpret what LGBTQ+ youths feel as we use texts to discuss different situations and hopefully interfere and avoid negative experiences and contribute to social change.

“Creation of ‘Identity-Safe Classrooms’ where teachers encourage discussions about learners’ identities has been shown to improve student performance on standardized testing” (Zaidi et al., 2016, n.p.). Zaidi et al. (2016) research was based on how identity texts (texts written by pupils using their own knowledge and culture to produce text) can contribute to interdisciplinary topics with a focus on global health (n.p.). We argue that one can use YA fiction instead of pupil-written identity texts to create an Identity-Safe Classroom. Zaidi et al. (2016) are using discourse analysis to research not only what a person is saying, but also what they are doing and how they are being (n.p.). The result of the research was that the participants reflected on deep cross-cultural issues, e.g., gender bias (Zaidi et al., 2016, n.p.). Furthermore, identity texts

challenge negative utterances, and by doing so there is a safe space in the classroom where one can share and learn about important issues, without the limitations from cultural backgrounds that were a key point in the participants' own identity texts (Zaidi et al., 2016, n.p.). "Learners who are adept in multicultural conversations report improved preparedness to take care of diverse population" (Zaidi et al., 2016, n.p.). In conclusion, Zaidi et al. (2016) argue that identity text can be an intervention that can help build a community where pupils are open to identity affirmation and discussions (n.p.). It is needed research on whether an intervention such as identity text increases dialogue on sociocultural issues (Zaidi et al., 2016, n.p.).

## 3 Method

To answer our research question we, as stated, perform textual analysis as our method for data collection. Our data will be excerpts and images from *The Black Flamingo* and *Heartstopper Volumes 1 & 2* and how these books can be used to implement interdisciplinary topics in English education.

### 3.1 The Process Step by Step

In this part, we address how we are to use close reading and analyze the texts. Next, we discuss the limitations and potential problems we came across whilst performing textual analysis. Lastly, we address research ethical standpoints we came across during our research.

#### 3.1.1 Close Reading

Close reading is a method of reading where the reader can analyze elementary features such as irony, paraphrasing, and multiple meanings (Klarer, 2013, p.110), in other words, the hidden meaning within the text. Close reading is a method used frequently when analyzing poetry because of the metaphors, hidden meanings, and multiple meanings (Klarer, 2013, p.110). Close reading a comic or graphic novel gives a reader more input than other texts does, because when using close reading as a strategy the panels and stanzas will first provide the overall situation and second they provide details of the story taking place. Further on, when close reading graphic novels one can analyze the positions of the characters, gestures, and facial expressions (Kukkonen, 2013, p.8-9). “Paying attention to the details on the page fleshes out the basic impression that you get from the first glance” (Kukkonen, 2013, p. 10).

Lukić & Espinosa (2011) mentions that reading strategies and the questions asked when conducting a close reading of a text will play a role in what result one gets (p.106), which indicates that different researchers will possibly collect different results. Lukić & Espinosa (2011) argues that close reading “remains one of the much needed tools in feminist literary studies, cultural studies and beyond” (p.107). As we used close reading with our research question, we were able to gather data regarding identity theory, life quality, and diversity.

Gallop (2007) argues for close reading to be a necessary strategy when reading literature because when doing a close reading one can apply knowledge one has into a

text and ultimately discover things in the text that one had not discovered without the use of close reading (p.183). In addition, Gallop (2007) argues that pupils trained in close reading will develop a deeper understanding of different types of texts (p.183), and in the end, a close reading will be the best way to stay “timeless and universal” (p.185). Furthermore, by using close reading in our thesis we are able to prove that the pupils, when reading books themselves, will ultimately work on the interdisciplinary topics from the curriculum. We argue that close reading will help us to get a deeper understanding of the discourse within the texts, especially the discourse we get from analyzing text and imagery.

As we read one text at a time through the use of close reading, we managed to gather data concerning our research question. By doing so, we are able to start analyzing how and in what way the narrative presents identity development within the text. Firstly, we focus on the protagonist’s identity development and process. Secondly, we address the situations the protagonist experiences situations regarding life quality. Thirdly, we argue how the texts achieve the learning aims of the interdisciplinary topics. After we have close read our selected material and found the protagonists’ identity development, experiences, and feelings regarding the outcome, we compare the results against the theory and the learning aims.

### 3.1.2 Analyzing the Texts

#### 3.1.2.1 *Graphic Novel Analysis*

When we analyze *Heartstopper Volumes 1 & 2* we are aware that there is a need for a different type of mindset when close reading and analyzing images and text. In this chapter, we define what is important for us to know about the structure and how to best analyze *Heartstopper* to answer our research question.

One can argue that graphic novels are easier to read since text and pictures elaborate the story and its meaning. That can be true, but there are loads of clues in each panel that are processed while one reads a comic or a graphic novel. McCloud (1994) states that a comic, or graphic novel, has space between panels called gutters, and in these gutters, there is “magic and mystery” that is the heart of comics (p.66). It is in these gutters that the reader takes in the perceptions and processes the information, leading to the panels creating a whole scene that makes sense in the continuous story.

When reading a comic or a graphic novel there is a different reading experience than other literary works. In a graphic novel, there are panels that make up the story,

and these panels can be structured differently on each page. However, you are still meant to start reading the panel at the top left corner and move to the panel to the right until you are at the panel in the bottom right (Kukkonen, 2013, p.16). In a graphic novel, there can be three panels on one page and five on the next, the reader is still to read from top to bottom and from left to right. The structure of each panel is different on the pages throughout *Heartstopper*. We take the structure of the panels into consideration when analyzing what is going on in the specific panels. McCloud (1994) states that space in a comic does the same as time does for films (p.7), which means the gutters, placing of panels, and the number of panels create the illusion of time within the story which the comic is telling. Consequently, analyzing the space one panel is given can provide a deeper meaning to a situation.

Kukkonen (2013) states that images are better for showing a story, whilst words are better at telling a story (p.32), which is the reason for us to perform textual analysis with a focus on discourse when close reading. Kukkonen (2013) defines the term discourse as “the text as it presents itself to the reader: the images, words, panel sequences, and page layouts of the comic itself” (p. 35). We argue that images and words create a bigger picture, therefore it can show and tell the reader more about the feelings the protagonist experiences in situations, also how these situations create identity processes. Kukkonen (2013) states “[e]ach of the elements of the discourse of the comic’s text has been put there for a reason – they all work as clues in the meaning-making process” (p.36).

Kukkonen (2013) states facial expressions, gestures, postures, speech, and layout of the image are clues to how and what is happening in the comic (p.7). This means that when close reading *Heartstopper* we analyze facial expressions, positions of the characters, speech, and gestures to understand the discourse of each panel. Additionally, McCloud (1994) explains that facial expressions in comics include only the special details (p.30) that are needed for the reader to understand the emotions of the character. Furthermore, “comics use stereotypical features to allow readers to make snap judgments about characters” (Kukkonen, 2013, p.15). This indicates that the reader should have knowledge about different cultural stereotypes or be open-minded towards learning or understanding how different cultures act or are presented. Kukkonen (2013) addresses six basic facial expressions that most likely can be understood across cultures: anger, disgust, fear, happiness, sadness, and surprise (p.16). Furthermore, McCloud (1994) states “the idea that a picture can evoke an emotional or sensual response in the



viewer is vital to the art of comics” (p.121). From analyzing facial expressions, body language, and emotions in a panel, one can interpret the all-over feelings regarding a situation that the protagonist is in. Facial expressions helped analyze the situation and the feelings the protagonists come across.

Within a panel, there is a visual and verbal presentation of the narrative that conveys the plot of the story. The clues are not placed at random, but rather to engage the reader with the story. “A narrative can be defined as a sequence of events, in which a number of characters engage and which is recounted by a narrator” (Kukkonen, 2013, p.31). Within *Heartstopper*, the reader meets different characters who take part in events that form the plot of the story because the protagonist experience problems and conflicts when talking to or meeting characters in their life. Meeting other people are creating situations where the protagonist encounters situations that produce errors in their identity process, which then start a process of change. Since comic creators need to find “the balance between too much and too little” (McCloud, 1994, p.85) and the reader “only convey[s] information visually” (McCloud, 1994, p.89) the whole panel must be seen and read with all the details to make it understandable. Combining the gutters, the details, the facial expressions, and the emotions within the panels are together providing the reader with a unique amount of information. The creators are also asking the audience for a lot of interpretation, which is what McCloud (1994) states is a “silent dance of the seen and the unseen” (p.92). Therefore, we analyze conversations that occur which have an impact on the identity processes.

The narrative in a graphic novel is presented with words, images, and the structure of the panels to tell a story (Kukkonen, 2013, p.49). “When you consider the narrative of a comic, you look into the connections between the clues and the uses to which they are put” (Kukkonen, 2013, p.49). Furthermore, the narrative is a combination of all the elements that make out a graphic novel, which introduces the reader to a deeper discourse understanding than they would have gotten from a regular novel. Kukkonen (2013) introduces a checklist of graphic narratives; are the panels ‘showing’ or ‘telling’; how are story and discourse related; what is the main conflict; does the narrative build suspense, curiosity, or surprise, what type of narrative is it; are there any observers (p.49). When analyzing the discourse from the story we address Kukkonen’s (2013) checklist to make sure we analyze the narrative. The checklist will guide us in noticing new clues and conflicts which may be significant in the story.

McCloud (1994) raises the question: can emotions be made visible (p.118)?

There are different intentions to each line drawn in a comic, such as smoke lines from a pipe and smell lines from rotten garbage, these lines are similar, but they show the reader visually both smoke that can be seen and a scent that can be smelled (McCloud, 1994, p.128). The visual representation of rotten garbage can provoke the reader to feel the scent themselves, which is answering the question McCloud asked: panels in a comic can in fact make emotions visible. Hence, we discuss the discourse created in the panels based on the text and what emotion the creator intends to present.

We use graphic analysis to gather information the panels provide about facial expressions, body posture, and conversation between the characters and protagonists. When analyzing *Heartstopper* we focus on the discourse created from the text combined with the images which formulates and invites the reader to join the development and process of identity.

### 3.1.2.2 Poetry Analysis

#### **Reading the Lines**

In poetry the text presents an image with the aim to make the reader imagine how something seems and how it feels (Barry, 2013, p.22). Oliver (1994) continues that figurative language is an image or a figure, which is a concrete, nonliteral representation of something, represented as a metaphor, allusion, or personification (p.93). Oliver (1994) adds that “poem must have a necessary quality of detail – enough to sustain the reader’s passage into the imagined world of the poem” (p.93). Further, while investigating by close reading the lines, Barry (2013) introduces objective and subjective images, which address the reader’s visualization of the objects or place described in the poem. Thus, the subjective image has the function of leading the reader to the emotional experience of the poem, how things seem to be, or how it feels (p. 22). Hence, Barry (2013) suggests that metaphors are set to be an element of idea and object; these two elements invite the reader to see the similarity between the metaphor while addressing the actual setting (p.25). Oliver (1994) states that the “idea springs from the object” (p. 74) and elaborates that a poem is not a discussion or a lecture, it is an instance of attention or recognizing something in the world. Thus, Oliver (1994) argues that texture is fundamental in poetry, which makes the reader experience the poem as something more than a statement (p. 94). Causing the reader to create cognitive imagery from different objects provided by the author, to construct a meaningful scene (p.74).

We looked at these elements by close reading because these aspects affect how readers can get an impression of the feelings the protagonists' experience.

### **Reading Between the Lines**

Barry (2013) argues for a constant change in close and distant reading of poems when analyzing them (p.75), then the reader can get an overview of the plot and go into details while reading. When reading between the line, one can experience metaphors in different ways. "In many poems, the transformative use of metaphor marks the transition point, the moment when the act or object being described gathers new associations or connotations and starts to mean something else" (Barry, 2013, p.12). When the metaphor is decoded, it is possible to get a different understanding of the situation and the feelings the protagonist might feel.

Feelings in poetry are argued to develop from meaning, imagery, diction, metre, and form from the lines to create the overall feeling between the lines. Thus, we must trust the reader on what feelings the poem is expressing, which indicates that we cannot be sure if those feelings are based on sentiment (Barry, 2013, p.86). The author does not express feelings directly within poetry, rather leaving clues between the lines for the reader to interpret (Barry, 2013, p. 96).

Barry (2013) describes text and context in poetry by having a different sense of time and place than other literary works. Barry (2013) argues that there is a "widespread feeling" between time and place, which is less direct and apparent (p.97). Further, Barry (2013) states that analyzing poetry typically guides the reader to address the context happening beyond the text (p.98). Therefore, discussing context as something specific even though it is beyond the text, is relevant for the context as part of the actual text (Barry, 2013, p. 98). The purpose of text and context is to understand the underlying context of the poem, thus to make these aspects of the context reliable, one needs to justify with textual details to prove the certain analysis of the poem (Barry, 2013, p. 98).

While introducing text and context connections in the poem Barry (2013) mentions that pictures used in a poem reflect upon the poem's context. Barry (2013) states that "poems say what pictures cannot show, and pictures show what poems cannot say" (p.110), which indicates that pictures give a better illustration of the relationship between the text and context, and since *Black Flamingo* includes some pictures, it is possible to analyze how or if it affects the poem (p. 101). However, we did not see the need to analyze pictures in *The Black Flamingo* to answer our research

question, but we argue that it would be suitable practice for pupils. Thus, pictures that are implemented as essential to the poem can be a resource to get a better understanding, appreciation, and enjoyment of the context, and how these two elements connect the reader to the real world (Barry, 2013, p.114, p. 119).

Oliver (1994) argues that “good poems are the best teachers” (p.10). Good poetry can teach understandings of different eras and cultures, which can awaken motivation and interest (p.11). Further, Oliver (1994) explains that poems that are written with rhyme are strict metrical patterns, which can be unfamiliar to the new generation, but familiar to the older generation. Since they grew up with strictly metrical patterns, some poets continued with the standards and imitated poems in meter and rhyme as usual (p. 14). Whilst poets who would write free verse, without a typical meter and rhyme, would then study to accomplish what was described as a great poem, which was new to many (Oliver, 1994, p. 15). Free verses are not as strict as metrical ones, even though both types include similar stylistic devices (Oliver, 1994, p. 15). *The Black Flamingo* is a poem established in free verse since there is no rhyme or meter, there are different presentations of text and images, which has no strict and metronomic rhythm repeating itself. Hence, Oliver (1994) states that “language is a living material, full of shadow and sudden moments of up-leap and endless nuance” (p. 43).

*The Black Flamingo* is written as a free verse poem, which is why we analyze the meaning of the lines, between the lines, and beyond the lines, but we did not study the rhythm or meter. We consequently analyzed in the light of the discourse presented in the text and focused on its meaning. Although we argue *The Black Flamingo* is a free verse poetry novel, it is “free from metrical design”, but it is not free from any other design (Oliver, 1994, p. 67). Free verse poems include a setup, sounds, and lines, giving a premise, which often appears in a concluding pattern, but these elements are not as strict as they would appear in a metrical poem (Oliver, 1994, p. 68).

### **Reading Beyond the Lines**

“Poems often focus on a moment in the past at which a particular thought is represented as taking place, and they seek to recreate the moment within the moment of writing the poem” (Barry, 2013, p.135). Poems can be written at different times or places, but the reader will always be affected as if the author is talking to them in the present time, making them a witness or participant in the situation (Barry, 2013, p. 136). The elements of time and place, being written in the past and read now, is a “natural

‘ground’ for a discussion” (Barry, 2013, p. 144). Oliver (1994) states that authors use actual events which helps them create a poem that maintains experiences and uses figurative language as a description to the reader (p. 106). These events cannot be felt or understood by a reader without being based on familiar experiences or the natural world (Oliver, 1994, p. 107).

We chose *The Black Flamingo* as our material to prove how it presents identity development, which we argue needs significant theory to be able to interpret. Barry (2013) argues that “the use of theory can help us to appreciate and enjoy poetry and see unfamiliar aspects of it” (p. 146). The theory must be set alongside the poem and used to show how the poem affects theory and vice versa, thus putting these two elements in a dialogue, where theory clarifies the issues that are being raised by the poem (Barry, 2013, p. 150). Poems bring up issues that may appear fictional, but it raises awareness regarding the issues that might exist in society, which can be analyzed using theory to see the purpose that poems are intended to introduce (Barry, 2013, p. 153).

Barry’s poetry analysis introduces what one should pay attention to when analyzing poetry, by reading the lines, reading between the lines, and reading beyond the lines. When analyzing data collected from close reading we gathered textual evidence and compared it to the chosen theory to prove our research question regarding identity and interdisciplinary topics. When we started the process of reading the lines, we focused on a subjective image, idea, and object that the author is trying to convey to the reader. Furthermore, when we read between the lines, we analyzed what feelings the poetry can awaken in the reader and how the text brings out the context of the poetry novel. Thus, address the time in the poem and what issues the poem brings out to the reader while focusing on theory to confirm our research while reading beyond the lines.

## 3.2 Discourse

To argue for our method and to answer our research question we feel the need to explain the term *discourse* considering other theorists’ descriptions. “*Discourse* is commonly used in various senses; including (a) meaning-making as an element of the social process; (b) the language associated with a particular social field or practice [...]; (c) a way of construing aspects of the world associated with a particular social perspective” (Fairclough, 2012, p.11).

“Critical discourse analysis (CDA) brings the critical tradition of social analysis into language studies and contributes to critical social analysis with a particular focus on

discourse and on relations between discourse and other social elements (power relations, ideologies, institutions, social identities, and so forth)” (Fairclough, 2012, p. 9). Based on the YA fiction we have chosen for our thesis, we argue there are elements of critical discourse analysis we can use to our understanding, for example, to address the discourse within social identities, relations, and institutions. Fairclough (2012) argues that CDA is a suitable research method when the framework of a study and the theory used is developing a dialogue (p.12). Therefore, we argue that our thesis, with the aim to explore pupils’ identity processes through dialog, can be strengthened by elements of CDA. In addition, Fairclough (2012) uses the term *styles* in discourse to define identities or ‘ways of being’ (p.11), which indicates that people have different *styles* in different situations which again can result in discourse suitable in a specific social field. Hence, the aim of our thesis to research how the protagonists’ identity processes and their different styles can be used as windows and mirrors to educate pupils on their own identity processes.

Coates (2012) argues for language as a ‘concrete living totality’ which is the freedom to think about and analyze conversations and texts in relation to discourse and social life (p.90). When discussing ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ one can argue for the terms are synonyms or that these words mean different things, but when analysts started using ‘gender’ in the late 1980s they adopted a new understanding of ‘gender’, the understanding being “that gender was not given, but culturally constructed” (Coates, 2012, p. 90). “Research that takes a different perspective, by contrast, sees the difference between women’s linguistic usage and men’s linguistic usage as arising from different subcultures in which, it claims, women and men are socialized” (Coates, 2012, p. 91). These contrasts between gender linguistics are tools we will use to understand the discourses in our research material.

Coates (2012) mentions there has been research on interruptions, and the conclusion of this research is that men often interrupt more to show dominance (p.91-92). In addition, women tend to initiate conversation and bring up different topics, but men tend to dominate by being silent, non-responsive, responding late, and interrupting, which controls what topics are being discussed (Coates, 2012, p. 92). The reason for discussing gender discourse in this thesis is to give a deeper understanding of why discourse is important as a method when addressing texts that are guiding the pupils to start their identity process. “The notion of gender as fluid and multiple is intrinsic to queer linguistics since binary categories like *man/woman* are unhelpful when studying

[gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender]” (Coates, 2012, p.98). “Queer linguistics posits that gender is the normative reference in this discussion, recognizing that a society’s statements about ‘who men and women are’ are ideological formations” (Leap, 2012, p.558). Furthermore, Leap (2012) argues that one needs to “look beyond those discourses of certainty” (p.558), where ‘those discourses’ mean the discourse of being a man or woman. When addressing queer linguistics there cannot be a focus on just sexuality, but rather a focus on sexual desires, practices, and identities as components that inflect an individual’s private discourse or public discourse (Leap, 2012, p.558).

Harris (1952) states “even though we use formal procedures akin to those of descriptive linguistics, we can obtain new information about the particular text we are studying, information that goes beyond descriptive linguistics” (p.1). Harris (1952) argues that investigating texts with the same patterns can express different structures, styles, or themes, between the discourses of different people (p. 1). Discourse analysis regarding Harris (1952) can be approached in two ways, one is to analyze descriptive linguistics, and another relates to the culture and language of the text (p. 1). Although Harris (1952) uses a different approach from our investigation regarding discourse analysis, his input on ways of analyzing is helpful. Harris (1952) uses discourse analysis to investigate descriptive linguistics of language, with particular elements (p.6), whilst we use discourse to analyze poetry and graphic novel.

When analyzing poetry, one needs to consider the narrative in the text (Tan, 2012, p.631). In addition, it is expected from the author to provide details and guidance as to how the reader should interpret the text (Tan, 2012, p.633). Thus, descriptive linguistics in his research only describes how elements work in the structure of the sentence, which “builds up sophistication about the ways in which linguistic systems can be constructed to meet various specifications” (Harris, 1952, p. 30).

Overall, discourse analysis proves that discourse can be constructed to meet the same various specifications as descriptive linguistics, thus, it provides information beyond the sentence structure and addresses the text as a whole (Harris, 1952, p. 30). While we use textual analysis, we also intend to look beyond the sentence structure and focus on conversations and identity development considering discourse.

### 3.3 Limitations and Potential Problems

By performing textual analysis with a focus on discourse as our method we argue for limitations and potential problems we did experience. Aydın-Düzgit & Rumelili (2019) states that there are many definitions regarding discourse analysis and that people use this method either systematically or illustratively, where theory is used to conclude various statements (p. 285). Since the LK20 curriculum and interdisciplinary topics are still quite new topics in the school system, there is limited how much previous research we investigated before starting ours, and topics regarding LGBTQ+ are in constant change, meaning we experienced new information on our social media almost every day.

Aydın-Düzgit & Rumelili (2019) argue that to create an ideal investigation by using discourse analysis, one would need to gather a variety of genres to answer a given issue (p. 300-301). Therefore, we did experience limitations in making our research valid and reliable in a broader sense, because we were not able to read every text regarding LGBTQ+ and identity, which could be relevant to our research. In addition, we argue that we could have gathered more data regarding identity processes if we had had time to analyze more material, for instance read the whole *Heartstopper* series and watched the *Heartstopper* series on Netflix. Thus, our research method is qualitative and limited because we did not consult our results with other teachers, pupils, or conduct an interview to support our results with a quantitative approach. Which would have given our results, which consist of theory and thoughts, more depth. Although, we argue using our research in a classroom can be a great investigation to continue working on to take the topics further.

Aydın-Düzgit & Rumelili (2019) argue that by conducting discourse analysis research there is a risk that scholars could appear not to be objective and engage in their own beliefs or political argumentation (p. 301). We did analyze two texts that differ and we argue our interpretation can differ from others, which is what the emotions in texts are supposed to do, therefore there can be people who might disagree with our discussion and results.

Since we are looking at discourse in two different texts, we did experience some challenges because of the different ways of reading and analyzing. However, we argue that both texts provided us with a deeper understanding of how literature can present LGBTQ+, identity, and relations.



Overall, being aware of the limitations and potential problems we came across, influenced how we proceeded with textual analysis and what we needed to look out for when analyzing the results, and how our data can contribute to further research.

### **3.4 Research Ethics**

We are aware that some people might disagree with our data and/or argumentation because of their own opinions and identity standards. Therefore, we present our data, and argue for our results with research and theory regarding the topic. We reflect upon the LGBTQ+ identity process respectfully since this is a subject we do not know personally. Since we do not identify as LGBTQ+ we use sources on the subject to make sure we do not conduct false statements, or that we put ourselves in a position where we misinterpret the LGBTQ+ society in this process.

We want to stress that our research do not want to force any belief onto pupils, that pupils have to go through an identity process in public, or in the classroom, or that pupils must tell others about their identity. Our intention is to research our selected material, which describes characters' identity processes, as something other people might go through. We argue, with the interdisciplinary topics as a reference, for the necessity that teachers educate their pupils on how others might feel, or how one can be supportive as a friend if the situation occurs. This is where democracy and citizenship is a necessary part of our thesis. We argue that interdisciplinary topics shall be a guide as to how pupils learn to be helpful and responsible individuals in society. We argue it can be helpful to introduce pupils to fictional characters that go through an identity process, to have something specific to discuss and analyze with pupils. Our intention by analyzing these texts is to provide a different point of view for teaching pupils about the self.

## 4 Analysis and Discussion

### 4.1 Identity in the Texts

#### 4.1.1 *The Black Flamingo*

Turner (2010) argues for three terms of self-concept; self-image, self-description, and self-esteem (p.18-19). The concept of the self is a part of the way one identifies oneself. If an individual experiences a lack of self-image, self-description, or self-esteem it will have an impact on the identity standard of the individual, in the way that the standard is unclear. In the same way, if an individual experiences high self-esteem, self-image, and self-description one will experience a stronger individual who knows their standards and meanings. It is possible that self-concept changes over time, with different people, or in situations.

In the prologue of *The Black Flamingo*, the reader is introduced to the protagonist who identifies as the black flamingo, and as a transexual:

“I am the black flamingo.  
The black flamingo is me  
trying to find myself.  
This book is a fairy tale  
in which I am the prince  
and the princess. I am  
the king and the queen”  
(Atta, 2019, p.8).

From this excerpt, the reader gets the idea that the protagonist, Michael, is clear in his self-description as he states: “I am the black flamingo” (Atta, 2019, p.8). Also, the self-esteem Michael has can be interpreted as high as he states, “I am the king and the queen” (Atta, 2019, p.8). The use of king and queen express to the reader that Michael has high self-esteem, as the terms king and queen are royal titles that people look up to and respect. In addition, Michael’s self-image is clear in the same way as his self-esteem as he sees himself as the top of royalty. As this is the prologue, the reader gets to know that Michael describes himself as male and female, and he is proud of it. The “fairy tale” (Atta, 2019, p.8) as Michael puts it, has created a stronger character. A fairy tale is known to have a happy ending where the characters live happily ever after, and the readers will take part in how the happy ending transpired for the protagonist.

The reader quickly gets to know the self-concept output as discussed, but throughout the story, there are places where Michael experiences errors in his identity standards and his self-concept. For example, when Michael is on holiday in Greece with his mother, sister, and Daisy there is a native girl who says ‘leventis’ to him, and he thinks about the meaning a lot:

“*Leventis*, ’ I repeat,  
once again. Handsome man, beautiful boy  
or brave. *But am I any of those things?*”

(Atta, 2019, p.136)

In this excerpt, the reader gets to experience an error within the protagonist as Michael questions a statement about himself, “am I any of those things?” (Atta, 2019, p.136).

It can be discussed what one feels or thinks Michael’s identity is like when analyzing these two excerpts. We argue that from the beginning of the book and through the first half there are clues given to the reader as Michael grows up and learns more about himself, his family, and the society around him. However, when the reader in the prologue gets to know Michael as the Black Flamingo and king and queen, one can interpret what the ending is, but one might get intrigued and interested in knowing how he got to that powerful statement regarding his own identity.

If one discusses these two excerpts with pupils, one can address the line “am I any of those things?” (Atta, 2019, p.136) against the “I am the king and the queen” (Atta, 2019, p.8). One way to address these lines can be to analyze the way Michael reflects on his own feelings and thoughts. Being able to express feelings and thoughts about oneself is part of the interdisciplinary topic of health and life skills (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020c). Therefore, the change in Michael’s self-concept can be discussed as to how he used to think about himself, and how he now thinks of himself. In addition, asking the pupils if they have experienced something similar themselves, or observed others, will contribute to making the text a mirror and window, as the pupils use the text to reflect on similar situations. Another way to address these excerpts is to reflect on the situations Michael is in at that time. By reflecting on others’ experiences the pupils will learn to respect others’ boundaries, feelings, and thoughts (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020b). Hence, the text will be a window for the pupils to see through and observe how others can act and think in specific situations, and mirrors to reflect on their own actions.

Burke & Stets (2009) argue that identity changes occur over a longer period of time (p.61). For a change in identity to occur there are errors developing. As mentioned previously in Chapter 2.1 there are four components that make out the loop of identity change: input, identity standards, comparator, and output (Burke & Stets, 2009, p.62). As depicted in Figure 1 there is a continuous loop in progress when an individual is in a situation. Michael experiences situations that we argue create errors, a change in behavior, and in the long run, changes his identity standards. We will discuss the excerpts in coherence with the identity loop in Figure 1.

One situation where Michael introduces the reader to his identity standards is when he says:

“I told Mummy two months ago,  
‘If you only get me one present  
this year, *please* can it be

**a Barbie?’”**

(Atta, 2019, p.15).

With the italic writing in ‘please’ the reader can interpret the pressure put into the word and get a sense of how much Michael wants a Barbie for his birthday, also that the phrase ‘a Barbie’ is written in bold, and on its own line, makes a statement of what he really wishes to get as his present. The reader learns that Michael’s identity standard says it is OK to ask his mother for a girl’s toy. However, when it comes to Michael’s birthday present, he gets a Ninja Turtle figure instead since his mother does not believe that Michael really wants a Barbie. As his mother says: “But I got you something that I know you’ll love” (Atta, 2019, p.16), Michael gets a feeling of disappointment and “watch a tear land on the wooden floor” (Atta, 2019, p.16). The situation created a perception to the reader that Michael made it clear to his mother that the only thing he wanted was a Barbie. When Michael gets a Ninja Turtle instead it creates an error with his identity standards because to him the Ninja Turtle represents a different identity standard. The error that occurs creates a behavior that in this situation is sadness expressed with tears.

With pupils, one can discuss the wish for a Barbie and the disappointment Michael experiences after receiving the Ninja Turtle. The discussion can be regarding a boy wanting a girl's toy, which is a definition constructed by society. Butler (2002) discusses the phenomenon of gender and sex (p.6), where gender is constructed, and sex

is biological. Therefore, discussing the fact that society has set the norm for what toy Michael should play with can be interesting as to what the pupils think about the difference between sex and gender. If the pupils were to agree with the norm, that Michael should play with the Ninja Turtle and not wish for a Barbie, the teacher could address gender intelligibility (Butler, 2002, p.22), and challenge this point of view. Creating an open-minded discussion where the pupils ask questions and reflect. Where pupils acquire an understanding of how democracy and key human rights, such as love and freedom of choice, play a part in their lives, and how they can challenge norms themselves.

Turner (2010) argues how different situations can ‘switch on’ different conceptions of the identity standard an individual has, resulting in a shift in behavior (p.20). In addition, this relates to the environmental past that appears in place identity, which indicates that the past is consisting of places that affected people’s social, biological, or cultural needs (Proshansky et al., 1983, p. 59). Thus, it can be affected by what people perceive in physical settings, what seems to be right or wrong (Proshansky et al., 1983, p.60), since place identity has specific functions (experience, behavior, and thoughts), which affect people’s self-identity (Proshansky et al., 1983, p.66). This concept of identity standards in specific groups is also connected to the self-concept (Turner, 2010, p.19). Hence, when an individual is with specific people, e.g., friends or family, the identity standards will create a different behavior when it comes to the individual, this is because with a friend there is acceptable to discuss one subject and a different subject with family. For instance, when Michael explains how he introduces himself in different groups, the reader gets the idea of Michael’s different identity standards:

“I introduce myself as Mike.

Mike feels right for this new chapter.

Michael is what Mum calls me.

Mikey is for Granny and Uncle B.

Mike is the man I am at university”

(Atta, 2019, p. 186).

Hence, in one social group, one will act one way in line with the individual’s identity standard and in another way in a different setting. However, if there is an error occurring frequently with the identity standard, within different groups, it will cause a change in the identity standard eventually.

One might be familiar with nicknames in friend groups or by a partner. There might be pupils that would like to share their nicknames or there are pupils that might keep it to themselves. However, addressing the usage of nicknames in different groups can indicate different identity standards and make them suitable for specific groups. In this discussion, the teacher can address and reflect with the pupils if there is possible to be in a group where there can be errors interrupting their identity standards, or if they have experienced abnormal behavior when being in a specific group. If one discusses these topics based on the excerpt above, then the text can be a mirror or window, and therefore, the pupils will develop a broader understanding of factors that can influence their lives (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020b).

In *The Black Flamingo*, we are interested in addressing how Michael experiences errors in different groups, and how he behaves and changes meanings when experiencing these errors. For instance, Michael sees Daisy in a beautiful, red, sparkly dress as they are on their way to a school dance.

*“I wonder how that dress would look on me?”*

(Atta, 2019, p.88).

This is the first thought the reader comes across as Michael develops into a cross-dresser. The reader has known that Michael enjoys playing with Barbies and that he enjoys having girls as his friends, but now we are introduced to a new identity standard. Later in the book we are introduced to the Drag Soc, where people aspire to show how they see and feel about themselves, and Michael considers joining the group.

*“when I saw that poster I simply knew  
that Drag Soc was something I had to do”*

(Atta, 2019, p. 205).

Now the reader gets more knowledge regarding Michael’s change in identity standards. From the first statement where Michael thought about how the dress would look on him, to him knowing that this is a concept suitable for him. Following this argument, we learn that Michael is confident in his new identity standard as he has a conversation with Mzz B, the leader of the Drag Soc:

*“Neither’, I say. ‘I’m just a man and I want  
to wear a dress and make-up on stage.  
I want to know how it feels to publicly  
express a side of me I’ve only felt privately  
when playing with my Barbie as a boy.*

It was only at home that I'd play with that toy;

[...]

I never wanted to take my difference too far”

(Atta, 2019, p. 206).

The reader learns from this excerpt that Michael wants to express himself as he sees himself in his self-description, meaning he searches for a way to safely be able to express his self-concept in more than one situation. Burke & Stets (2009) argue that being affected by different meanings in one's identity standard and changing one's mind multiple times (p.64) is what makes a person who they truly are. Cast & Burke (2002) argue for the self-being composed of multiple identities that one uses on different occasions based on social positions (p.1042). The reader observes as Michael is neglecting the fact that there are people observing and judging him, as Foucault (1977) argues for the panopticon where it was fear of being different (p.197). When Michael discussed and reflected with Mzz B, he managed to adapt his meanings that match the group he is a part of because he now knows who he is, what he is, and how he wants to be (Spargo, 1999, p.13).

“I reply,

‘He is me, who I have been,

who I am, who I hope to become.

Someone fabulous, wild and strong.

With or without a costume on.”

(Atta, 2019, p. 285)

Hence, Michael experienced an error with the dress Daisy wore, where he thought about how the dress would look on him, which is an error that stuck with him. Then Michael finds the Drag Soc where people are openly showing off their identity and the self. Michael also wants to be able to do this with the same attitude that they have. As a result, by joining the Drag Soc Michael can change his identity standard to being and expressing who he is, his identity, and his self “with or without a costume on” (Atta, 2019, p.285). Hence, Foucault (1977) argues that people are performing because there are people observing at all times (p.197). Butler (2002) argues for the trouble with sex and gender, and Michael is an example of how these norms created by society can go against a person's sexuality (p.6), either way, Michael is clear about his sex, being a male, and wanting to dress as he likes, without it being seen as a costume.

By reading and discussing these excerpts, about Michael becoming The Black Flamingo, one can develop “competence which promotes sound physical and mental health, [...] which provides opportunities for making responsible life choices” (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020b). Therefore, introducing a discussion based on how liberated Michael feels at the moment he discovers that he can be who he is, can initiate questions on how much one should expose to others or how one can respect or tolerate when people act against the gender norms. In addition, one can discuss how the identity process created a change in Michael’s identity, with a focus on the behavior created by the error (Burke & Stets, 2009, p.184). Since the errors contribute to a change in a person’s behavior and emotions there should be knowledge about the reactions one might experience, e.g., if a friend suddenly acts differently. Then it can be easier to act with more compassion, ask ‘the right’ questions, be there for their friend, and have knowledge of what can cause the behavior, making it easier to talk about later on.

Burke & Stets (2009) argue for experiencing a form of disagreement between identity and identity standards (p.180). As stated previously in 2.1 these disagreements happen when a person is using more than one ‘hat’. The problem with having two or more meanings can cause disagreements in a given situation. These situations might happen often when there is a change in identity standards, and one is trying to figure out exactly how one prefers to identify.

We argue that Michael is conflicted on when to use the different ‘hats’ as he feels like halves. In a conversation with Michael’s mother, this is a topic where the reader can develop an understanding of what it can mean to be a ‘half’:

“Don’t let anyone tell you  
that you are **half** anything.

You and Anna are  
simply brother and sister.

Don’t let anyone tell you  
that she’s your **half**-sister.

Don’t let anyone tell you  
that you are **half-black**  
and **half-white. Half-Cypriot**  
and **half-Jamaican.**



You are a full human  
being. It's never as simple  
as being half and half.

What it means to you  
to be British, Cypriot  
and Jamaican, too; but  
it's only for you to decide.”

(Atta, 2019, p.35)

From the conversation, it seems like Michael's mother wants to teach Michael that he does not need to have a 'hat' for each half that he has. We argue the goal of this conversation is to teach Michael that each part categorized as halves make him whole. In a classroom, it is important to be aware of pupils having their own halves which cannot be seen. Therefore, a person can have errors that define their character because the individual is unsure where to use the most energy or what 'hat' to wear the most.

In a classroom, there are about thirty pupils and all of them are special in their own way. Addressing the excerpt above with pupils, about being halves, can contribute to acknowledging and accepting halves in a positive manner. The parts of a person that are different parts of halves can contribute to “understand[ing] [...] factors that are important for mastering one's own life” (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020b). Hence, discussing parts of pupils or parts of yourself as the teacher can help create dialogue regarding what people might experience as problems. We are not arguing that one should discuss pupils' private life without their consent, but rather discuss the way Michael's mother describes her son. The halves that make Michael who he is can be similar to some pupils and therefore making it easier to discuss as there is a fictional character.

In Maslow's Pyramid of Psychological Needs, in chapter 2.1.1, we are introduced to love and the need for belonging. Thus, Maslow (1954) argues that these needs consist of happiness, satisfaction (p. 182), and belonging to one's territory, clan, or own 'kind' of people, which helps people avoid the feeling of loneliness and strangeness (p. 43-44). Michael addresses these feelings:

“Outside Mum's family  
I have never felt Cypriot enough.

I remember back to Cyprus and how I even  
felt like an outsider within my own family”

(Atta, 2019, p. 192).

Thus, Michael approaches the similar emotions of an outsider later on but uses it as a metaphor, which can be compared to an element of idea and object where the poem gives a subjective image indicating that the reader might experience this metaphor emotionally (Barry, 2013, p. 22).

“The Black Flamingo looks in the mirror  
of the salt lake’s surface and doesn’t  
understand why a shadow stares back  
at him. He doesn’t look like the other  
flamingos around him, he feels foreign  
to his own flock, within his own family”

(Atta, 2019, p. 340).

Michael does not indicate that he felt unloved by his family, but he experienced some errors, such as he was not fully understood by his family members, e.g., the time he wanted a Barbie, but he got a Ninja Turtle because his mother was convinced that he would love the boy toy more than the girl toy. The attitude Michael experiences from his mother is what Butler (2002) discusses as gender intelligibility (p.22), hence, Michael’s mother has difficulty accepting the change in gender norms that her son is experiencing, which results in Michael feeling foreign in his own flock and family (Atta, 2019, p.340). These happenings can lead to errors such as feeling like an outsider, not being understood, or wishing for different things. which leads to Maslow’s Pyramid of Psychological Needs. In addition, these errors may appear in pupils, the feeling of being misunderstood by adults, which is why the author uses a metaphor to address the reader emotionally.

Discussing these excerpts with pupils can be emotional if there is a pupil in the class who feels like there is no space for them. Therefore, it is important to discuss that people often feel a lack of belonging in a group. However, as Michael discovers the Drag Soc later in the story, proves there is never too late to find that special place.

“I feel safe in this room  
with my new drag family;  
I carry this room with me  
for the rest of the week.

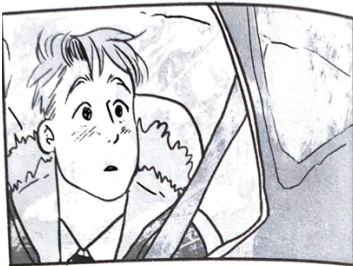
[...]

it's a place without fear”

(Atta, 2019, p. 208).

The experiences Michael goes through in different places relate to the family and Drag Soc and can be connected to the meaning function in the place identity. The meaning function in place identity addresses how people's environment and activities have an indication of what will happen, how one should behave in different environments, and how it is supposed to be (Proshansky et al., 1983, p. 67). Proshansky et al. (1983) state that these meanings are experienced earlier in the physical world, some of these meanings are shared in society with its own rules or relevant for sub-groups within the culture (p. 68). As discussed, in the last three excerpts, Michael is giving meaning to his existence in these different sub-groups, one he refers to as a metaphor. Each of these sub-groups has a meaning for him, but they represent different cultures, which can be interpreted that he has experienced different places. This helps him to adjust and behave according to what is right or wrong, but he acts differently according to a given place. In addition, Michael expresses that he is comfortable in all the places, but he feels slightly different when addressing his family, thus Drag Soc Union “it's a place without fear” (Atta, 2019, p. 208). Eisenbach et al. (2018) argue for the importance to address change in identity (p.122) and use YA fiction to address how the characters experience it, and how the parents and adults in the books act in these situations. Therefore, addressing the lack of love and space where one belongs (Maslow, 1954) can contribute to the time it takes to find the perfect place, as Michael shows an example where he tried different places and groups of people to find that special place for him. By discussing this, pupils who have difficulty finding their place can get faith in time and be encouraged to try to find their place in a group. On the other hand, pupils who do have their belonging in a group or place will possibly think that this is an easy task. Therefore, it is necessary to teach them that some people have difficulty meeting new challenges and that they need to open up to people who want to join their place or group.

## 4.1.2 *Heartstopper*



Picture 1 (Oseman, 2019a, p. 94)

In picture 1, the reader is not getting any actual text but rather an expression, thoughts of Charlie, and two birds flying together. We argue Nick's facial expression shows him blushing and relaxed but surprised over the fact that he is thinking about Charlie's smile. From the panel with the two birds, we argue that Nick is thinking about Charlie and himself as the two birds flying away.

Picture 1 is the first situation we argue creates errors with Nick's identity standards. As for Nick's identity standard, his meanings are him being a boy, liking rugby (Oseman, 2019a, p.41), liking girls (Oseman, 2019a, p.23, p.25, p.126), and taking care of others (Oseman, 2019a, p.82, p.108), this is Nick's self-concept. In the self-concept, Turner (2010) argues for self-esteem, self-image, and self-description (p19), and from the description the reader gets from Oseman (2019a) throughout situations in *Heartstopper*, we argue that Nick was having a strong and consistent self-concept as he knew who he was. Now Nick is experiencing some kind of surprise as he is thinking of Charlie's smile in the car, while looking at birds.

We will analyze the situation with the help of the identity loop (Figure 1). As Burke & Stets (2009) argues, the identity standard is a set of meanings that defines the identity of the individual (p.63). As Figure 1 shows, the input in the situation Nick is experiencing (Oseman, 2019a, p. 94) is the thought of Charlie's smile. The input in this situation is therefore the thought of Charlie as Nick sees the birds and the perception is a feeling that Nick is experiencing as he thinks of Charlie. This input is then compared

to Nick's identity standard which again implies that Nick is not normally thinking about other guys' smiles as he is looking at birds flying. The fact that Nick is experiencing this abnormality is creating an error with his identity standard. Therefore, the result is Nick being surprised and blushing as the reader can notice in the first panel (Oseman, 2019a, p.94).

Nick is slowly working out his meanings after the error experienced from the car ride (Oseman, 2019a, p.94), and is hangouts with Charlie; after school to say hi to Nick's dog Nellie (Oseman, 2019a, p.127); playing Mario Kart (Oseman, 2019, p. 143); doing homework (Oseman, 2019a, p.169). After these hangouts, the reader learns that Nick's mother has experienced a change in Nick's behavior as she says: "You seem much more like yourself around him" (Oseman, 2019a, p.157).



Picture 2 (Oseman, 2019a, p. 157)

As Nick is experiencing errors from hanging out with Charlie, he is questioning his identity and what is going on (Oseman, 2019a, p.187). In picture 3, there is a dark background creating a dark focus on Nick, and the angle makes the reader look slightly down on him. Nick has his hands covering his face as he is uttering "What is happening to me?" (Oseman, 2019a, p.187). The position of Nick and the dark colors contribute to making the panel sad and heavy. In this panel, the reader can witness the moment Nick experiences a strong error. Burke & Stets (2009) argue errors result in negative emotions when an individual's perception is not in accord with their identity standard (p.174). In this moment it seems that there is no behavior that can be expressed in a way that is suitable to Nick's identity standard and the meanings he is used to. Burke & Stets (2009) argue that one can change identity standards when repeatedly experiencing

errors between identity standards and self-meanings (p.180).



Picture 3 (Oseman, 2019a, p. 187)

In the situation in picture 3, Nick experiences an input and a perception that does not comply with his identity standard, there is an error presented which makes Nick express what can be argued as distress, sadness, and confusion. The negative feelings Nick is expressing in Picture 3 can be discussed as a lack of the love needs, as this can affect psychological health (Maslow, 1954, p.182). Moreover, we argue Nick is not sure of his identity standard, and that he needs to be open to changing the meanings within. If Nick were to adjust his identity standard it would create a smaller error each time, resulting in a more agreeable identity loop.

From the error experienced in picture 3, the reader is witnessing that Nick is, in picture 4, researching and trying to find out if his experiences indicates that he is 'gay'. The action Nick is taking can be argued is a change in identity where his identity standard does not match his meanings (Burke & Stets, 2009, p.180), and he is trying to find answers and a way to make his identity standard and meanings match again.



Picture 4 (Oseman, 2019a, p. 191)

Picture 4 shows the reader that Nick is trying to take control and find out if his errors, behavior, and statement from his mother in picture 2 can be connected. The idea of Nick being homosexual is something pupils can use as windows, or some pupils might see this as mirrors. We argue Nick is reflecting on the meaning of him identifying

as homosexual, thus he tries to find a new meaning in his identity standard, where there are fewer errors created, as he is experiencing situations.

In picture 5, Nick is providing hints to Charlie that he might be interested in guys too. One can see Charlie's reaction as he is shocked by this new information because his eyes are wide, his mouth is slightly open, and there are two lines representing a rapid head movement. Whilst Nick has a little smile and a loving look when asking this teasing question. In Picture 5, the reader can observe the change within Nick as he uses skills to make changes with his errors, creating a change in his cognition and behavior (Proshansky et al., 1983, p.70).



Picture 5 (Oseman, 2019a, p. 242)

We argue that this is a change in identity where Nick puts himself in Charlie's shoes (Burke & Stets, 2009, p.185-186) to experience and try out if liking guys is a more suitable identity standard for him. On the other hand, one can argue that Nick is experiencing repeated errors of not knowing if he is in love with Charlie, which makes him act with this behavior to see if it is an identity standard that is more suitable for him (Burke & Stets, 2009, p.184).

*Heartstopper Volume 1* addresses the change in a straight boy's identity and ends with the reader wondering if Nick is pursuing Charlie or not, if Nick is homosexual or just experiencing what it would be like, or if Nick finds out that his identity standard is something besides being homosexual or heterosexual. This is a discussion a teacher can address with pupils. By asking pupils about what they think of how Nick is handling the errors he is experiencing, or if the pupils were characters in the text how would they react, as friends of Nick or if they were Nick? By reflecting on how Nick handles the errors the pupils will develop a better understanding of factors that are important for one's own life (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 202b) and acquire these factors as positive changes. The pupils can discuss how it must feel like experiencing these errors by themselves, as Nick is experiencing it in picture 3. By discussing the evolving of Nick's identity change the pupils can develop knowledge about tolerating

and respecting others and their opinions and learn to think critically to be able to resolve conflicts (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020a).



Picture 6 (Oseman, 2019b, p. 300)

According to Burke & Stets (2009) identity changes over a longer period of time because one grows up and gains new knowledge (p.175-176). Thus, these changes can appear when there is a disagreement or an error, that appears between identity standard and self-meanings. One may not have the opportunity to change the situation as they please, but rather find a different meaning to fit into the perceptions of the situation, where one will change their identity regarding these situations and errors that occur (Burke & Stets, 2009, p.180). As it appears in picture 6 Nick is experiencing a situation with an unfamiliar error regarding his identity. Nick's reaction to the situation is to consult with Charlie where Charlie makes Nick aware that his feelings are something he needs time to process. Furthermore, in picture 7 Charlie is comforting Nick considering the situation that appeared and tries to reassure him that there are lots of sexualities and these experiences take time to figure out.





Picture 7 (Oseman, 2019b, p. 320)

Furthermore, in picture 8 Nick is researching what it means to be bisexual. As mentioned previously, Butler (2002) address ‘gender intelligibility’ where one may be insisted on how one should behave regarding the standards of their identity, since they lack knowledge regarding LGBTQ+ (p.22). However, gender intelligibility is not the case when Charlie suggests the idea of Nick being bisexual, rather that Nick shows that he has a lack of knowledge regarding the different ways one can identify. Therefore, this indicates why it is necessary to include identity as a topic in the English classroom. Picture 7 shows that Nick went to someone who may know more about these experiences than he does. In picture 8 Nick is researching these meanings regarding his changing identity standard. These experiences should be discussed in English classrooms, so pupils are aware of the identity processes that appear during identity development, and how to approach if something is unfamiliar. Health and life skills shall educate pupils to understand and master their own lives, thus dealing in the best possible way with personal and practical challenges (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020b). Hence, Zaidi et al. (2016) researched on “creation of Identity-Safe Classrooms” (p.2), where pupils can share and learn about important issues, without limitations regarding cultural backgrounds (p. 5). Regarding picture 8, Bates (2020) conducted research on “developing a sense of identity within the digital age” (p.53), where participants expressed feeling more comfortable while investigating these experiences on social media. Since it can be hard to discuss these happenings ‘face-to-face’, which supports pupils’ experiences while ‘coming out’ (Bates, 2020, p.65), where pictures 7 and 8 can be discussed. Utdanningsdirektoratet (2020c) states that by learning English pupils will

be exposed to different societies and cultures, which will support the understanding of the world, promote curiosity, and prevent prejudices (2020c).



Picture 8 (Oseman, 2019b, p. 347)

## 4.2 Life Quality in the Texts

### 4.2.1 *The Black Flamingo*

Oppøyen (2022) states there are 53% of non-straight people experience bullying. Furthermore, trans people seem to have a higher attempt at suicide as Garbo (2018) argues that every third has tried to commit suicide. In 2022 there was an act of terror where a person targeted the LGBTQ+ community in Oslo (Politiet, 2022), which resulted in canceling the Pride parade that year. As mentioned in our introduction, there are 26% of people who identify as LGBTQ+ that experiences loneliness (Dæhlen, 2021). The high percentage of LGBTQ+ people feeling lonely can be a result of few places where LGBTQ+ can feel and act as themselves, or that their family and friends do not show acceptance regarding their identity.

In *The Black Flamingo* there is a news story regarding a black flamingo amongst the other flamingoes, and Michael's grandfather comments on it:

“‘Why does it matter if he’s black?’  
Adding, ‘The other flamingos don’t care.’

And I am certain what he’s saying is:

**‘I love you.’”**

(Atta, 2019, p.146).

Since Michael is present and interested in the story of the black flamingo on the news, he notices the comment from his grandfather. Michael experiences the comment as equivalent to his grandfather saying “I love you” (Atta, 2019, p.146). From this excerpt, the reader can interpret that Michael might be a part of this 26% that feels alone. When Michael notices the subtext from his grandfather it is as if a weight has been lifted off his shoulders.

In *The Black Flamingo*, Michael is experiencing bullying as he receives quotes from the Bible (Atta, 2019, p.112) explaining that being gay is a sin. Furthermore, Grace and Faith are both telling Michael that being gay is a sin:

“‘Are you gay?’ asks Grace.

There goes my breath again.

‘You know that it’s a sin’ says Faith.

*Yes, I know. But I say nothing”*

(Atta, 2019, p.72).

This excerpt indicates struggles one might experience in society as an LGBTQ+ person, and it can be used to discuss what pupils might experience in situations like these and why one should behave politely and respectfully against others. Utdanningsdirektoratet (2020b) states that health and life skills shall be used to educate pupils on how to deal with conflicts pupils might experience. Further, educating pupils to value relations to others, define their boundaries, and respect others’ boundaries (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020b). The first excerpt, regarding Michael’s grandad expressing love towards Michael, can be used to discuss how pupils experience and accept love from others, as a window. Thus, the second excerpt can be discussed in light of why one should not judge others for being who one desires to be. In addition, how bullying can affect one’s life quality, mental health, and identity development.

Maslow (1954) addresses that people should develop needs of esteem, in regards to self-esteem and self-respect, which leads people into feeling confident, strong, and worthy. Without developing these needs people may experience weakness and helplessness (p. 45-46). Thus, Proshansky et al. (1983) introduce a function of place identity called anxiety and defense, which may signify the fear or danger one must protect oneself against (p. 73). Moreover, Butler (2002) argues that identity contains sex and gender, that sex is biological whilst gender is a norm created by society (p. 9).

Michael is breaking these norms as he defends himself against Jack after he asks “What’s all this?” (Atta, 2019, p.352):

“I scream:  
‘You’re embarrassed *for me*?  
I don’t need to be a *man*  
for you or anyone else.  
I don’t perform for you  
or anyone else.  
What I wear is for me.  
What I perform is for me.  
What I write is for me.  
I’m my own man  
and you’re a frightened  
little boy. Who are you  
to come here and shout at me?  
We slept together once,  
Jack. You don’t know me.  
You don’t know my story  
and I don’t know yours,  
but right now I don’t want to.  
If this is who you are, Jack,  
I don’t want to know you any more”  
(Atta, 2019, p. 353-354).

This excerpt gives an example of discrimination by others and how one should have the courage to stand up for oneself. The excerpt does not address an error in identity development, but the life quality of Michael after he was attacked by Jack.

Interdisciplinary topics state that pupils will meet different cultures and societies in the world and pupils should be able to communicate beyond these differences (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020c). Further, educate pupils to express their feelings and thoughts, and support their development of positive self-image and secure identity (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020c). In the excerpt, Michael expresses his positive self-image and secure identity by standing up for himself. Thus, Jack shows a lack of knowledge, respect, and acceptance in his confrontation, which forces Michael to express himself in this manner. When discussing the differences between cultures and

societies, this excerpt can be used to argue how one should behave in such a situation. This excerpt can be related to the research of Kiperman et al. (2022), on victimization affecting LGBTQ+ people's sensitivity and creating a negative interpretation of the self (p.17). Therefore, indicating the importance of implementing this excerpt into discussions when it comes to interdisciplinary topics, by contributing to better mental health (Kiperman et al., 2022, p.17), and supporting the improvement of life quality.

#### 4.2.2 *Heartstopper*



Picture 9 (Oseman, 2019a, p. 14)

In picture 9, we argue Charlie is surrounded by chaos, as the background is dark and filled with questions behind him. As McCloud (1994) argues the emotions created in panels evoke emotions in the reader (p.121), where this panel can create a sense of chaos with the reader. The questions are directed toward Charlie's thoughts about Nick and the kindness he shows as of late. "Why does he always say hello to me every single morning? Is it a joke? Is it like the guys who used to bully me last year all over again?" (Oseman, 2019a, p.14). Charlie expects negative responses from these questions, and that Nick being nice and friendly is just a cover. Proshansky et al. (1983) state that anxiety is a function where one protects oneself from fear (p.73), which we argue can be the reason for Charlie being on alert as Nick is being nice towards him. This situation shows a piece of Charlie's self-esteem as he is not expecting guys to be friendly with him after the bullying he received after coming out as homosexual. The panel portrays a surprised expression in Charlie's eyes as he snaps out of the thoughts he is having.

Furthermore, in picture 10 the reader is presented with a messy and chaotic page that looks like seven panels combined. The lack of gutter in the panels represents a

smaller time period since there is no space for the reader to interpret what happens in the gutter (McCloud, 1994, p.66). When picture 9 is analyzed with what happens in picture 10, the reader is able to understand the nerves and questions Charlie is experiencing when another guy is being nice to him, which we argue is a form of anxiety and defense function (Proshansky et al., 1983, p.73).



Picture 10 (Oseman, 2019a, p. 80)

In picture 10 the reader gets a visual presentation of what seems to be panic, lack of control, and abuse, where Ben is forcing himself onto Charlie to get a kiss. Since Ben has not yet come out and told anyone about him being homosexual, he needs Charlie to be able to express his true self. Furthermore, Ben hides his identity and can only be himself with Charlie in secret places, we argue that he is feeling lonely, which is a frequent problem regarding LGBTQ+ (Dæhlen, 2021). The seven panels are combined into one, creating a messy scene with a lot of emotions. In the bottom right corner of picture 10, Charlie's facial expression is showing fear as he is crying and asking Ben to "stop it" (Oseman, 2019a, p.80).

Maslow (1954) argues that self-actualizing people have no purpose of using or controlling another or disregarding one's wishes when addressing dignity and will not use their power to humiliate the other (p. 196). Thus, picture 10 indicates that Ben has no self-actualizing, and uses his power to control and disregard Charlie's wishes. As this situation occurs after Charlie has said that this arrangement is over, it can be interpreted as harassment, which can be argued is a form of bullying. Therefore, the situation in picture 10 can be discussed as a part of Oppøyen's (2022) research regarding life quality, because there are 53% that experience some kind of bullying.



Picture 11 (Oseman, 2019a, p. 259)

In picture 11, Nick and Charlie have just kissed in a private room at a party, and now Nick's friends are calling for him. From Nick's facial expression, it can be interpreted that he is feeling conflicted and that he is in fact hiding. However, we argue Nick is hiding who he really is. Garbo (2018) states that a lot of LGBTQ+ hide who they are to reserve themselves from discrimination and bullying. One can also view how Nick is presented in the middle panel in picture 11, he is looking down on Charlie, and the angle of this perspective is exaggerated, as the reader can see how tiny Charlie is presented in the bottom panel. This exaggeration presents to the reader that, in this situation, the control is in Nick's hands, and what he does next is only up to him.

One's identity can shift based on situations and groups a person takes part in (Proshansky et al., 1983, p.66). In Picture 11, Nick is conflicted as he experiences two different 'hats' (Burke & Stets, 2009, p.183), one being the heterosexual guy that his friends know, or the other hat being a guy trying to figure out if he is homosexual. Being conflicted and changing identity in different situations causes a lack of growth in the identity (Proshansky et al., 1983, p.67).

Discussing the life quality of LGBTQ+ people with pupils is something we find necessary as we read *Heartstopper* and the life quality survey (Dæhlen, 2021; Oppøyen, 2022; Garbo, 2018). Therefore, by analyzing pictures 9, 10, and 11 with pupils there is a chance that they will develop knowledge and see the possibility of fear, anxiety, and loneliness LGBTQ+ people can experience. Furthermore, in picture 9 the discussion can be regarding the anxiety a person can feel as they have experienced trauma previously and are scared that it will happen again. In picture 10, pupils can discuss how forcing oneself onto another is harmful and not something one should do. Furthermore, in



picture 11, the pupils can analyze and discuss if this is a situation Charlie has been scared of experiencing again, as it seems Nick is about to leave Charlie alone, just as Ben did. Hence, Charlie is reexperiencing the anxiety from picture 9, and possibly feeling the fear as he did in picture 10. Therefore, by discussing these pictures as linked situations, the pupils will develop knowledge about boundaries one has with others, that one should respect other's boundaries, and that one needs to deal with thoughts, feelings, and relationships (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020b).



Picture 12 (Oseman, 2019b, p. 481)

In picture 12, Nick's friend teases Charlie for being homosexual. Kiperman et al. (2022) researched that there are a lot of pupils who experience bullying by their peers (p. 2). Kiperman et al. (2022) state that peer victimization affects LGBTQ+ youth's sensitivity and increases difficulties regarding their identity development (p. 17). Thus, in picture 15 Charlie explains to Nick that the bullying does not bother him anymore, since he has experienced it a long time, and is capable to ignore it. Charlie has his own friend group who supported him during the time he experienced peer victimization. However, in picture 15 the reader sees that Nick feels differently about the situation, as he argues that this is not normal, and nobody should have to experience bullying by their peers. Thus, pictures 12 and 14 can be interpreted with place identity as anxiety and defense function, which can signify response tendencies to defend or protect oneself from danger (Proshansky et al., 1983, p. 73), where Nick gets in a conflict with his friend group because they are behaving awfully against Charlie. Hence, in picture 15 Charlie is representing the other side of place identity, where his anxiety and defense function is connected to the environmental past, where he recalls the bullying, which



leads him to avoid the common experience since this affected him negatively (Proshansky et al., 1983, p. 73).

The presentation of the pictures shows what life quality issues LGBTQ+ people can be affected by, which is necessary to teach pupils about respect, tolerance, and diversity. Foucault (1986) argues that society is categorized under the pressure of lawful, unlawful, and unnatural sexuality (p. 17), and these categories affect the diverse society. Foucault (2012) adds that the power society has established rituals, instruments, and become more open-minded towards diversity, but still has challenges in accepting diversity (p. 70-71). Picture 12 is a suitable example when addressing Foucault (1986) since Nick's friends struggle to accept Charlie's identity, making it difficult to create diversity because of the friends' prejudices. When Nick defends Charlie in pictures 12 and 14, shows a good example of how to approach and defend oneself and others while experiencing similar situations. Hence, these pictures could be used to discuss how one should behave since they can be used as mirrors to present pupils' own life quality, identity development, and how to avoid being affected negatively. Health and life skills states that pupils shall work on values, life, and relations with others, and how to draw one's boundaries and respect others' boundaries (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020b). Thus, educate them to respect, tolerate and accept the diversity of pupils.

### **4.3 The Texts and Interdisciplinary Topics**

#### *4.3.1 The Black Flamingo*

It is stated in the curriculum that pupils are to learn how to express their feelings, experiences, and opinions in English (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020c). We argue that using YA fiction can be a tool to make windows and mirrors for pupils, this topic of expression and discussion regarding opinions and their own lives will help in this matter. Therefore, we are now presenting results we will argue can be used as windows and mirrors.

In *The Black Flamingo*, there are utterances in the form of questions that can be adapted into English classrooms to initiate discussions. We are introducing some of the questions as a tool to argue for the pupils' own experiences and opinions. For example, in the following excerpt, Michael is asking Daisy about how she introduced herself regarding her skin tone.

“I ask Daisy, ‘Why do you say you’re white?’

Are you ashamed of being mixed?’

(Atta, 2019, p.92)

Michael is also providing a follow-up question regarding if she is ashamed. We argue this is an interesting excerpt because pupils can be curious as to how others are introducing themselves, which is why this excerpt can be used as a mirror since this can be a relatable situation. In health and life skills it is stated that pupils are to learn about and respect others’ boundaries (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020b). One can argue that asking this question to whoever can be seen as offensive, but one can also argue that it is appropriate to ask this question to a close friend. Daisy responds to Michael’s question as she is offended, because she “snaps back” (Atta, 2019, p.92):

“I just look like a white girl with a tan  
and that suits me just fine, I don’t want  
to explain myself to people. I’ve seen  
how you have to do it. How people ask  
you questions like they have the right  
to see your family tree. I don’t want that.

I just want to be me”

(Atta, 2019, p.92).

Daisy describes how she sees Michael having to answer people and that “they have the right to see [his] family tree” (Atta, 2019, p.92). We argue that Daisy is mirroring Michael’s actions on herself and takes a stand to not put herself in the same situation, stating: “I don’t want that. I just want to be me” (Atta, 2019, p.92).

In *The Black Flamingo* where Michael and Daisy are going to a ‘gay club’ for the first time. We argue that this situation shows how safe Michael has become with his self-concept since he is now taking a step further and openly looking for a guy. We argue this scenario can show “the ability to understand and influence factors that are important for mastering one’s own life” (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020b) because Daisy has a different reaction than Michael hoped for when attending this ‘gay club’.

“she says,

‘You have to protect me,  
if any girls try to chat me up.  
Tell them that we’re together.’

‘Daisy, the point of us being here

is for me to meet a guy.  
How will that happen if we  
pretend to be a couple?'

'I just don't want anyone thinking  
I'm a lesbian,' she replies"  
(Atta, 2019, p.176).

Daisy is clearly stating that she does not want to come across as a 'lesbian', this shows the reader that Daisy is conflicted with her identity standards. Daisy wants to support and come with Michael, which is her meaning as a supportive friend, but the fact that there is a possibility for her to be mistaken for a 'lesbian' creates an error and results in the behavior where she asks Michael for protection. Daisy's error ultimately creates a behavior where she continues to express her discomfort as a response to the error of her identity standard.

"It makes me feel sick,  
the idea of two women sleeping together.  
Two men doesn't bother me  
but two women, I don't get it"  
(Atta, 2019, p.177).

This behavior is created as her identity standard is challenged. Daisy's statement results in negative feedback toward Michael's identity standards. Whilst Michael had gotten a "positive self-image and confident identity" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020b). From this excerpt, it is possible to address the reaction Daisy has, and one can possibly use it as a mirror since this is a situation where a lack of knowledge and open-mindedness is a fact. Pupils might have an experience as to how to be supportive as someone close to them is coming out as LGBTQ+, and this excerpt can be used to start a discussion regarding how to be supportive, and where to draw a line for oneself as to what one is comfortable with.

Butler (2002) addresses that identity is often defined by the norms and standards that are given by society (p. 22). 'Gender intelligibility' describes how people seek to define how one should act or behave according to the standards that society gives based on their gender (Butler, 2002, p. 22). Thus, the lack of knowledge regarding LGBTQ+ limits the possibilities for a diverse society with acceptance, and creates fear in individuals for being and behaving as their true selves. As the excerpt below shows,

Michael needs to buy high heels for his Drag Soc performance, but he is having some doubts to ask for help since he is afraid of being judged for his requests.

“I’m terrified of what the lady  
in the shop will think when  
I ask to try them on. Will they  
even have them in my size?  
‘Size seven, yes, of course,’  
she casually replies. ‘Just these?’

(Atta, 2019, p. 242).

Fortunately, the lady is responding with acceptance and comprehensibility, which can be interpreted as a comforting experience for Michael. Maslow (1954) states that safety needs are strong feelings that can shadow other important psychological needs (p.39). Mostly, children depend on their parents to schedule a routine (Maslow, 1954, p. 39), thus Michael represents something that is new to him, buying high heels, this experience is something he does for the first time, which leads him to be afraid of being judged for his wishes and affects his safety needs. This excerpt can be discussed with pupils as an example of the seller showing the normality of being asked to find girls’ shoes for Michael, and Michael’s thoughts before asking for help.

Utdanningsdirektoratet (2020b) states that it is necessary that pupils learn to master their own life, for example, Michael manages to ask for help although he has doubts regarding the reaction of the seller. Thus, educate pupils on the prevention of the prejudices that appear in society (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020c), which we believe can suit this excerpt regarding the reaction of the seller.

Although after Michael’s performance, one of his peers, Jack, attacked and criticized his performance at the Drag Soc Union.

“‘What’s all this?’ Jack points at me.

‘My brother said you were  
performing tonight but I thought  
it would be poetry, like when  
we first met. I didn’t know  
it was going to be a gay night  
and you’d be dressed like a girl.  
I just don’t get this, Mike,  
you’re a talented writer,

you don't need to do all this,  
it's just so embarrassingly extra.  
Why can't you just be a man?"

(Atta, 2019, p. 352).

The last statement, where Jack claims "Why can't you just be a man?" (Atta, 2019, p. 352) addresses exactly what Butler (2002) argues about gender intelligibility. Jack is unaware of what it means to Michael to perform this way, to behave and act exactly how he feels while being safe. So, Jack addresses the stereotypes that he has observed from society, that this is wrong, which can affect Michael's esteem needs regarding Maslow's Pyramid of Psychological Needs. As mentioned in 4.2.1, Michael stands up for himself against Jack's attack, which represents the anxiety and defense function in place identity, where Michael's response is to defend himself against discrimination. Anyhow, this should not be necessary to defend oneself against bullying and danger, one should feel freedom from fear, be who one desires to be, and behave as one wishes to be. Thus, addressing Butler's (2002) opinions regarding gender intelligibility, indicates why we argue it is necessary to raise awareness by educating pupils regarding interdisciplinary topics, to build respect, acceptance, and create diversity. Hence, educate pupils to "deal with conflicts of opinion and respect disagreement" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020a).

#### 4.3.2 *Heartstopper*

In picture 13, the reader perceives a conversation between Nick and one of his friends where the topic of the conversation is that Charlie is good at sports even though he is homosexual (Oseman, 2019a, p.62).

The conversation is kind of a test, or trying to make a situation not awkward, as Nick is the one stating that being homosexual is not what makes someone bad at sports (Oseman, 2019a, p.62). The friend clearly did not mean that being homosexual equals being bad at sports, he probably meant that he now understands why Charlie is popular. This can be because the friend got to know Charlie for himself, and not only by what everyone else has said about him.



Picture 13 (Oseman, 2019a, p. 62)

Therefore, the conversation in picture 13 can contribute to a discussion about “the ability to deal with thoughts, feelings and relationships” (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020b). One can argue that the conversation could be more respectable if Nick had not added the statement regarding ‘gays’ and sports, or one can argue that the friend has not had the courage to get to know Charlie. Also, one can discuss the fact that being homosexual is probably seen down upon because people lack knowledge and frequently assume they are more feminine. Therefore, one can initiate a discussion regarding democracy and key human rights (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020a), and discuss if homosexuals have a reason to be worse at sports than heterosexuals.



Picture 14 (Oseman, 2019b, p. 491)

Regarding the previous analysis of pictures 14 and 15, one can interpret that they relate to social identity and social categorization. Turner (2010) establishes that social identity is one's definition of themselves and the process of locating oneself or another person in social categorization (p.17-18). Social categorization addresses one's belonging to a group based on sex or race (Turner, 2010, p. 22). Thus, groups do not always format after similarities, but people can share the same values or beliefs (Turner, 2010, p.23). The purpose of these social groups is to build positive self-esteem, where members provide high status and positively affect social identity, but if it affects the social identity negatively one will seek other groups (Turner, 2010, p. 34).

Picture 14 represents the social group of friends that belongs to Nick, although he has developed different values since they tease Charlie, which Nick is not a fan of. Thus, Nick argues with his group showing that he and the group members have different values. In addition, it affects his identity standard negatively and contributes to Nick trying to teach them his values.



Picture 15 (Oseman, 2019b, p. 487)

As seen in picture 15, Nick is comforting Charlie and establishing what he argues is the right thing. Despite the differences Nick and his friends appear to have, they can still be friends and belong to the same social group, as proved by them being on the same rugby team. Pictures 14 and 15 are suitable to discuss regarding interdisciplinary topics since they address the differences within social categorization. Where interdisciplinary topics claim that pupils will handle situations better when they gain linguistic and cultural competence, thus when learning English pupils will experience different societies and cultures, which will develop communication patterns (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020c). Pupils will meet a society full of differences, and it is important to establish that such

behavior, as in picture 14 is not acceptable. Although one does not have to be a part of a common social group, one should still be capable to socialize beyond these differences with respect and tolerance.



## 5 Conclusion

Although there are a great many texts regarding LGBTQ+ topics and identity development, we argue that we have provided valid statements based on the two texts we have chosen to investigate. We argue that our research provides groundwork that can be used in further research. The purpose of choosing these texts was to find something that pupils can relate to, something that seems common in society, and that the texts include diversity. The topics that appear in the chosen texts are relevant to the interdisciplinary topics which pupils are required to acquire. Health and life skills indicate how pupils should acquire moral values, accept feelings, comprehend challenges, and be confident in their identity to be able to participate in society and respect and tolerate differences accordingly. Thus, democracy and citizenship address mostly democratic competence, however, it includes being respectful of others, their boundaries and opinions, and preventing prejudices (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020c). Furthermore, the protagonists are close in age to the pupils in 8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> grade, which is an important factor since we conducted the research based on this age group. In addition, we have chosen these texts because they probably are well-known by many pupils since *Heartstopper* is a popular series on Netflix.

As we have researched two YA texts addressing identity and LGBTQ+ we argue there is a need to see if our analysis and discussion regarding these topics are sustainable with pupils. We recommend further research on the usage of queer literature, as Bach (2016) researched how course literature created hesitation among teacher-students. Therefore, if there is more research on the usage of queer literature with pupils, the hesitation of using queer texts can be limited and possibly normalize the topic of identity development and LGBTQ+. Ultimately more research on this topic can provide more knowledge about identity development in English classrooms.

To conclude our research on how YA fiction can be used to explore pupils' identities, develop the understanding necessary to foster diversity, and contribute to a better quality of life for LGBTQ+ youth, we address the experiences in the identity development of the protagonists. We argue that the excerpts and the theory prove the change in identity within the protagonists and that these texts are possible to discuss with pupils regarding personal experiences, and to learn about interdisciplinary topics.

Changes in an individual's identity happen over a longer period of time (Burke & Stets, 2009, p.175-176), which makes it a difficult phenomenon to discuss with

pupils without specific situations or experiences. Therefore, by using YA fiction that presents stories about how protagonists experience changes, e.g., when Michael wonders about how a dress would look on him (Atta, 2019, p.88) changes later in the book to Michael being a man who wears a dress and make-up on stage (Atta, 2019, p.206), and Nick being told by his mother that Charlie brings out more of his true self (Oseman, 2019a, p.157), changes to Nick searching online after ‘How gay are you?’ quizzes (Oseman, 2019a, p.191). By discussing these changes with pupils, it would be easier to see the changes themselves and reflect on them.

Another way these texts can contribute to exploring identity among the pupils is to address different statements, such as “am I any of those things?” (Atta, 2019, p.136) and “I am the king and the queen” (Atta, 2019, p. 8), or Nick being perceived as a person who had a strong self-concept at the beginning of the text, which declines as the story goes on. Therefore, by using these texts where one protagonist, Michael, is telling a story as he had a low self-concept to becoming strong in his self-concept, and the other one, Nick, had a strong self-concept and the reader follows him as the self-concept declines, can be helpful as to discussing and acquiring a better understanding of how pupils can better understand changes evolving in their own lives. As Nick has a crisis where frustration takes over and he realizes that his identity standards are in conflict (Oseman, 2019a, p.187), can be used to show pupils that there are going to be situations where they cannot control what they feel. If pupils understand and are able to reflect upon changes being difficult, they can be better suited to mastering their own lives (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020b).

A different identity problem we argue the texts can contribute to is gender intelligibility, as Michael has a strong wish for a Barbie for his birthday, which is seen as a girl’s toy by society. Butler (2002) argues for the difference between sex as biological and gender as socially constructed (p.9). Hence, discussing the situation in *The Black Flamingo* where Michael’s mother gives him a Ninja Turtle instead can challenge the norms in society. Foucault (1977) discussed the power where everyone is being watched and therefore everyone is performing (p.197). Discussing the fact that Michael is a boy who wants to play with a girl’s toy is something that makes him feel better about himself and that it does not affect anyone around him. Hence, challenging the gender norms in society by letting people do what makes them feel confident with their identity and have a positive self-image (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020b), can make pupils acquire knowledge and motivation to challenge the gender norms themselves.

As we laid out our thoughts regarding the texts' portrayal of interdisciplinary topics, we argue that the texts can contribute to raising awareness, knowledge, and acceptance of LGBTQ+. As Islam (2022) argued, LGBTQ+-themed texts can be used as windows and mirrors since they portray situations, experiences, and dilemmas pupils might have knowledge about from their own lives. The situation in picture 13, arises aspects of stigmatization where Charlie's ability to play rugby is discussed by teammates because Charlie is homosexual, and the fact that he could be good at sports was not something they imagined. Therefore, this situation can be used as a mirror or window as pupils can have similar experiences where they are left out because of stigmatization. By teaching pupils to accept diversity with YA fiction it is possible to address certain situations from a different angle because it is based on reality. Furthermore, literature can portray LGBTQ+ people in a reduced stigmatized and discriminated way (Sunde, 2020, p.36).

*The Black Flamingo* and *Heartstopper* are texts we argue can be used to show pupils how life quality can be affected in a negative way. Arguing for discussion regarding negative life quality, such as bullying, can help to contribute to a better understanding of one's actions towards another. For instance, Michael experiences bullying when he receives notes from the Bible stating that being gay is a sin (Atta, 2019, p.112), resulting in Michael's self-esteem being weakened, which can be used as a window or mirror to address this type of bullying. Maslow (1954) argues self-esteem needs to be built up by feeling confident, worthy, and strong (p. 45), but as Michael is experiencing these notes his self-worth and confidence are torn down and makes him weaker and less capable to stand against the message in the notes. Discussing this situation can develop knowledge about mental health and that positive self-image is important (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020b). As well as, mastering one's own life, respecting other's boundaries, and dealing with thoughts, feelings, and relations (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020b).

In *Heartstopper* the reader learns about the trauma that Charlie has gone through and how it keeps reappearing (pictures 9, 10, and 11) and develops into a form of anxiety. Proshansky et al. (1983) state that conflict in situations, where one is developing changes in identity, can cause a lack of growth (p.67). Therefore, addressing the notion of Ben feeling lonely, such as 26% of LGBTQ+ people experience (Dæhlen, 2021), can be discussed as to what reactions people can have when they experience errors in their identity standard. Furthermore, Ben forcing himself on Charlie is not an

acceptable attitude. Hence, Maslow (1954) argues that self-actualizing people have no purpose in using or controlling another and will not use their power to humiliate the other (p.196). These aspects can be implemented in English classrooms because life quality influences the ability to draw boundaries (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020b), think critically, and be able to deal with conflicts (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020a).

We argue that the interdisciplinary topics will be met when discussing our selected material because the texts address situations pupils can experience as familiar. *The Black Flamingo* is a text where there are utterances from side characters that can be discussed to develop knowledge regarding what types of questions one ask, such as “Why do you say you are white?” (Atta, 2019, p.92), “people ask you questions like they have the right to see your family tree” (Atta, 2019, p.92), and “It makes me feel sick, the idea of two women sleeping together” (Atta, 2019, p.177). Teaching pupils that these questions can be hurtful to the ones receiving them, is important when teaching pupils to accept differences and boundaries (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020b).

Kiperman et al. (2022) argued for the negative impact bullying and peer victimization of others had on LGBTQ+ people. In *Heartstopper* one of Nick’s friends says “Yeah, you can’t just bring some gay kid and expect us to automatically like him” (Oseman, 2019b, p. 491), which is not meant to be a homophobic comment, but as the situations, facial expressions, and Nick’s reaction provides an undertone of it being a homophobic comment regardless. Therefore, by addressing these utterances pupils can learn to ask questions that are not victimizing or seen as bullying by the receiver. Hence, pupils will develop an understanding of other people’s opinions and respect (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020b) the emotions surrounding these topics. Besides, when educating pupils regarding identity development, life quality, and diversity pupils will be exposed to interdisciplinary topics.

To conclude, teachers can support pupils’ identity development by using texts such as *The Black Flamingo* and *Heartstopper Volume 1 & 2* since it provides various possibilities on how to adapt texts in English classrooms regarding interdisciplinary topics. We argue the panels in *Heartstopper* and the excerpts from *The Black Flamingo* can be adapted to all three discussion sections, however, we have intended to analyze our data after the selected categories to provide coherence in our structure. In addition, the use of these texts shows how it affects one’s identity development, based on the theories we gathered from windows and mirrors, place identity, gender intelligibility, and the identity process. While working on these topics, we believe that it will

encourage pupils to be open-minded, respectful, and tolerant of others, which will affect the acceptance of diversity. Hence, pupils will acquire interdisciplinary topics by reading and discussing our selected material, with a focus on respect, tolerance, and diversity, and learn to accept the diversity of people who identify outside the norms. Butler (2002) argues for the difference of sex and gender (p. 9), where pupils will have competence in communicating with others despite the differences affecting their self-identity or life quality in a negative way. To answer our research question, we argue *The Black Flamingo* and *Heartstopper* are examples of YA fiction that can be used to explore pupils' identities, develop the understanding necessary to foster diversity, and contribute to a better quality of life for LGBTQ+ youth.

## References

Atta, D. (2019). *The Black Flamingo*. Hodder Children's Books.

Aydın-Düzgit, S. & Rumelili, B. (2019). Discourse Analysis: Strengths and Shortcomings. *All Azimuth*, 8(2), 285–392. Retrieved from <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/discourse-analysis-strengths-shortcomings/docview/2256483720/se-2>

Bach, J. (2016). Exploring queer pedagogies in the college-level YA literature course. *Discourse: studies in the cultural politics of education*, 37(6), 917-932. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2015.1071758>

Barry, P. (2013). *Reading poetry*. Manchester University Press. <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy2.usn.no/lib/ucsn-ebooks/reader.action?docID=4704709>

Bates, A., Hobman, T., & Bell, B. T. (2020). “Let Me Do What I Please With It . . . Don't Decide My Identity For Me”: LGBTQ+ Youth Experiences of Social Media in Narrative Identity Development. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 35(1), 51–83. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0743558419884700>

Bishop, R. S. (1990). Multicultural Literacy: Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors. *Reading Is Fundamental*. 1-2. Retrieved from <https://scenicregional.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Mirrors-Windows-and-Sliding-Glass-Doors.pdf>

Bufdir. (2022, 22. November). *Holdninger til lhbtqi-personer*. Barne-, ungdoms- og familiedirektoratet. [https://www2.bufdir.no/Statistikk\\_og\\_analyse/lhbtqi/Holdninger/](https://www2.bufdir.no/Statistikk_og_analyse/lhbtqi/Holdninger/)

Burke, P. J. & Stets, J. E. (2009). *Identity Theory*. Oxford University Press.

Butler, J. (2002). *Gender trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203824979>

Cast, A. D. & Burke, P. J. (2002). A Theory of Self-Esteem. *Social Forces*, 80(3), 1041–1068. <https://doi.org/10.1353/sof.2002.0003>

Clark, C. T., Blackburn, M. V. & Gardner, T. (2009). Reading LGBT-Themed Literature with Young People: What's Possible? *English Journal*, 98(4), 25–32. Retrieved from <https://www.proquest.com/docview/237298054?parentSessionId=o1bWf%2FZRGEkR LtBXbqxn1F1FR%2F%2B%2BjFCgoeHLeF7YZIs%3D&pq-origsite=primo&accountid=43239>

Coates, J. (2012). Gender and discourse analysis. In J. P. Gee & M. Handford (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (p.90-103). Taylor & Francis Group. <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy1.usn.no/lib/ucsn-ebooks/reader.action?docID=957494>

Cronin, C. & Hawthorne, C. (2019). ‘Poetry in motion’ a place in the classroom: Using poetry to develop writing confidence and reflective skills. *Nurse Education Today*, 76, 73–77. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2019.01.026>

Dæhlen, M. (2021, January 27). *Nå vet vi mer om hvordan skeive har det i Norge*. <https://forkning.no/homoseksualitet/na-vet-vi-mer-om-hvordan-skeive-har-det-i-norge/1804156>

Eisenbach, B., Greathouse, P. & Taylor, L. (2018). What Defines Me? Exploring Identity through One True Way in the Middle-Level ELA Classroom. In P. Greathouse, B. Eisenbach & J. F. Kaywell (Eds.), *Queer Adolescent Literature as a Complement to the English Language Arts Curriculum* (p. 119-130). Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy1.usn.no/lib/ucsn-ebooks/detail.action?docID=5492091>

Fairclough, N. (2012). Critical discourse analysis. In M. Handford, J. P. Gee (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (p.9-20). Routledge. <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy1.usn.no/lib/ucsn-ebooks/reader.action?docID=957494>

Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Vintage Books.

Retrieved from

<http://architecturalnetworks.research.mcgill.ca/assets/disciplineandpunish-min.pdf>

Foucault, M. (1986). *The Care of the Self: Volume 3 of The History of the Sexuality*.

Random House, Inc. <https://voidnetwork.gr/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/The-History-of-Sexuality.-Volume-3-by-Michel-Foucault..pdf>

Foucault, M. (2012). *The History of Sexuality*. Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group.

<https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy1.usn.no/lib/ucsn-ebooks/detail.action?pq-origsite=primo&docID=6084793#>

Gallop, J. (2007). *The Historicization of Literary Studies and the Fate of Close*

*Reading*. *Profession*, 2007(1), 181–186. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25595865>

Garbo, G. L. (2018, 21. June). *Fortsatt ikke lett å komme ut av skapet*. Universitetet i

Oslo. <https://www.sv.uio.no/psi/forskning/aktuelt/aktuelle-saker/2018/fortsatt-ikke-lett-a-komme-ut-av-skapet-.html>

Harris, Z. S. (1952). Discourse Analysis. *Language*, 28(1), 1-30.

<https://doi.org/10.2307/409987>

Hauge, Å. L. (2007). Identity and Place: A Critical Comparison of Three Identity

Theories. *Architectural Science Review*, 50(1), 44–51.

<https://doi.org/10.3763/asre.2007.5007>

Heathcote, B. (Winter, 2019). *12-16 Fiction: Atta, Dean The Black Flamingo* [Review

of the book *The Black Flamingo*, by D. Atta]. Wanborough: The School

Librarian, 67(4), 243. [https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/black-](https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/black-flamingo/docview/2401308649/se-2)

[flamingo/docview/2401308649/se-2](https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/black-flamingo/docview/2401308649/se-2)

Heshmat, S. (2014, 8. December). *Basics of Identity*. *Psychology Today*.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/science-choice/201412/basics-identity>



- Islam, S. (2022). *Reflecting Rainbows: LGBTQ+ Young Adult Literature for the Secondary School*. [Master Thesis]. Høgskulen på Vestlandet. <https://hvlopen.brage.unit.no/hvlopen-xmlui/handle/11250/3019145>
- Kiperman, S., Schacter, H. L., Judge, M. & DeLong, G. (2022). LGBTQ+ Youth's Identity Development in the Context of Peer Victimization: A Mixed Methods Investigation. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(7), 3921. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19073921>
- Klarer, M. (2013). *An Introduction to Literary Studies* (3rd ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203068915>
- Kukkonen, K. (2013). *Studying comics and graphic novels*. Wiley. <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy2.usn.no/lib/ucsn-ebooks/detail.action?docID=7103735>
- Leap, W. L. (2012). Queer linguistics, sexuality, and discourse analysis. In J. P. Gee & M. Handford (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (p.558-571). Taylor & Francis Group. <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy1.usn.no/lib/ucsn-ebooks/reader.action?docID=957494>
- Lukić, J., & Espinosa, A. S. (2011). Feminist Perspectives on Close Reading. In R. Buikema, G. Griffin & N. Lykke (Eds.), *Theories and Methodologies in Postgraduate Feminist Research: Researching Differently* (Vol. 5, p.105-118). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203817339>
- Maslow, A. H. (1954). *Motivation and Personality*. Harper & Row. <https://www.eyco.org/nuovo/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Motivation-and-Personality-A.H.Maslow.pdf>
- McCloud, S. (1994). *Understanding comics*. HarperPerennial.
- Oliver, M. (1994). *A Poetry Handbook* (1. ed). Harcourt Brace & Company. <https://www.docdroid.net/7iE8fIJ/a-poetry-handbook-pdfdrivecom-pdf#page=4>

Oppøyen, M. S. (2022, November 7). *En av fem opplever diskriminering*. Statistisk sentralbyrå. <https://www.ssb.no/sosiale-forhold-og-kriminalitet/levekar/artikler/en-av-fem-opplever-diskriminering>

Oseman, A. (2019a). *Heartstopper: Volume 1*. Hooder Children's Books.

Oseman, A. (2019b). *Heartstopper: Volume 2*. Hooder Children's Books.

Oyserman, D., Elmore, K. & Smith, G. (2011). Self, Self-Concept, and Identity. In M. R. Leary & J. P. Tangney (Eds.), *Handbook of Self and Identity, Second Edition* (2nd ed., p.69-104). Guilford Publications. <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy1.usn.no/lib/ucsn-ebooks/reader.action?docID=836860>

Phillips, J. (2022, August 16). *Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors: A Metaphor for Reading and Life*. Great Schools Partnership. <https://www.greatschoolspartnership.org/mirrors-windows-and-sliding-glass-doors-a-metaphor-for-reading-and-life/>

Politiet. (2022, 25.June). *Skyting i Oslo 25. juni – oppdatering*. Politiet. <https://www.politiet.no/aktuelt-tall-og-fakta/aktuelt/nyheter/2022/06/25/hendelsen-i-oslo-sentrum/>

Proshansky, H. M., Fabian, A. K. & Kaminoff, R. (1983). Place-identity: Physical World Socialization of the Self. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*. 3, 57-83. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0272-4944\(83\)80021-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0272-4944(83)80021-8)

Reicher, S. (2010). The determination of collective behaviour. In H, Tajfel (Ed.), *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations* (p.41- 83). Cambridge University Press.

Spargo, T. (1999). *Foucault and Queer Theory*. Icon Books Ltd.

Stonewall. (n.d). *List of LGBTQ+ terms*. Retrieved January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2023 from <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/list-lgbtq-terms>

Sunde, Å. H. (2020). *The possibilities of YA fantasy literature in upper secondary subject English when teaching the interdisciplinary topic "health and life skills"* [Master Thesis]. Inland Norwegian University. <https://brage.inn.no/inn-xmlui/handle/11250/2764696>

Tan, P. K. W. (2012). Literary discourse. In J. P. Gee & M. Handford (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (p.628-641). Taylor & Francis Group. <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy1.usn.no/lib/ucsn-ebooks/reader.action?docID=957494>

Turner, J. C. (2010). Towards a cognitive redefinition of the social group. In H. Tajfel (Ed.), *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations* (p.15- 40). Cambridge University Press.

Twigger-Ross, C. & Uzzell, D. (1996) Place and Identity Processes. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 16(3), 205-220. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jevp.1996.0017>

Utdanningsdirektoratet. (2020a). *Core curriculum - Democracy and citizenship*. Established as regulations. The National curriculum for the Knowledge Promotion 2020. <https://www.udir.no/lk20/overordnet-del/prinsipper-for-laring-utvikling-og-danning/tverrfaglige-temaer/demokrati-og-medborgerskap?kode=eng01-04&lang=eng>

Utdanningsdirektoratet. (2020b). *Core curriculum - Health and life skills*. Established as regulations. The National curriculum for the Knowledge Promotion 2020. <https://www.udir.no/lk20/overordnet-del/prinsipper-for-laring-utvikling-og-danning/tverrfaglige-temaer/folkehelse-og-livsmestring?kode=eng01-04&lang=eng>

Utdanningsdirektoratet. (2020c). *Interdisciplinary topics* (ENG01-04). Established as regulations. The National curriculum for the Knowledge Promotion 2020. <https://www.udir.no/lk20/eng01-04/om-faget/tverrfaglige-temaer?lang=eng>

Waters, M. (2016, 3. August). *A Brief History Of Queer Young Adult Literature*. The Establishment. <https://medium.com/the-establishment/the-critical-evolution-of-lgbtq-young-adult-literature-ce40cd4905c6>

World Health Organization. (n.d.). *Adolescent Health*. Retrieved 23rd of May, 2023 from [https://www.who.int/health-topics/adolescent-health?fbclid=IwAR17Zt7DfubyZoFUcJcjr5WruZ33EvZ5GRmbo-GZrSsx8efOcveGGOM6I5A#tab=tab\\_1](https://www.who.int/health-topics/adolescent-health?fbclid=IwAR17Zt7DfubyZoFUcJcjr5WruZ33EvZ5GRmbo-GZrSsx8efOcveGGOM6I5A#tab=tab_1)

Zaidi, Z., Verstegen, D., Naqvi, R., Dornan, T. & Morahan, P. (2016). *Identity text: an educational intervention to foster cultural interaction*. Medical Education Online, 21(1), n.p. <https://doi.org/10.3402/meo.v21.33135>