University of South-Eastern Norway

Faculty of Humanities, Sports, and Educational Sciences

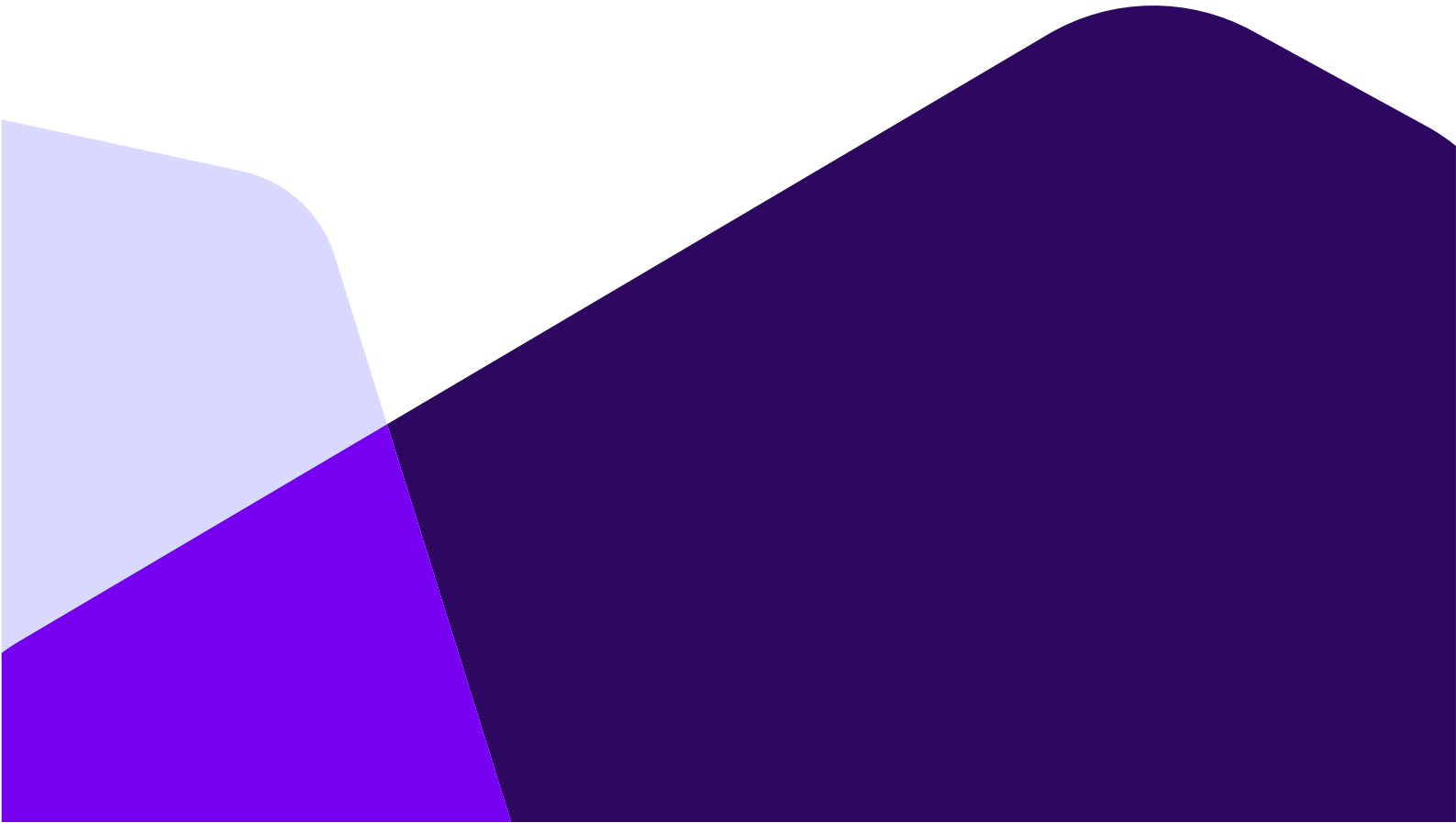
Master's thesis

English/MG1EN8

2024 Spring

Hanne Kjemperud Nilsen

# Diversity in English-language books in Norwegian school libraries



**University of South-Eastern Norway**
Faculty of Humanities, Sports, and Educational Sciences
Institute of Languages and Literature
PO Box 4
3199 Borre

http://www.usn.no



This thesis is worth 30 study points

# Abstract

This thesis examines the diversity in English-language books in ten Norwegian school libraries through mixed methods. In this study, diversity encompasses gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality, religion, and disability. 1 105 books were the total count in the ten libraries, and 227 books were analyzed for this study. Furthermore, this research encompasses literature studies of the three books that were most frequently found.

Diversity in literature is important for all readers to see, and every child should be able to see themselves reflected in the texts they read. Moreover, it is important for children to read about other views of life to learn and develop empathy. This can also help prevent prejudice, which is relevant to the current curriculum (LK20). Diversity is included as an essential part of the English subject in LK20, and the children are expected to work with a variety of texts. However, this study shows that this aspect of the curriculum is not in focus when it comes to the English-language books available at school libraries.

# Table of contents

# Foreword

I have loved books since I was old enough to hold one. My parents would read to me, and I was able to read before I started school. As a child, I loved going to the library and would beam with joy when I left with a pile of books to read. Even today, I am very excited when I discover new books to read, and I take a lot of pride in my "library" at home. Literature has a special place in my heart, so it was not hard for me to find a topic for this master's thesis.

First, I want to thank my friends and family for motivating me and helping me however they could. I especially want to thank my parents and grandparents who fostered my love for books, for which I am incredibly grateful.

Though, this page is dedicated to my wonderful supervisor, Jennifer Duggan. You have been the best supervisor I could have asked for, and I could not have done this without you. Your feedback has been invaluable, and your excitement and effort pushed me to give everything I had. Thank you.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 English-language books in Norwegian school libraries

Libraries, and particularly school libraries, are an essential source of texts for many pupils, particularly those who have limited access to books at home – and access to books is essential for developing literacy (Dernikos, 2018; Leander & Boldt, 2013; Thiel, 2015). Yet, there is a research gap when it comes to school libraries, especially in Norway. In particular, there are very few studies that examine the books in English available at school libraries even though school libraries are essential resources for motivating children to read and enjoy books (Bergan & Fredwall, 2023, pp. 60-82). Furthermore, it is important to note that Norwegian schools are required to have a library as the law states that "the pupils must have access to a school library" (The Education Act, 1998, § 9-2). The regulation to this law further explains that the school must have a school library unless access to a school library is ensured through collaboration with other libraries. Libraries not located within the school premises must be accessible to the pupils during school hours, so that the library can be actively used in school's education. Furthermore, the library must be specially adapted for the school (Regulations to the Education Act, 2006, § 21-1).

When school libraries are lacking and the books available are old, worn out, and do not represent a large number of pupils, the children will not be eager to read, and reading might feel like a chore rather than something pleasurable. A library should feel inviting and spark a desire to read. A library should also prioritize regularly replacing their books and building their collection to provide the current generation of children with modern books that represent the current student body. However, my study suggests this is not the case. I have found books that I read myself when I was in elementary school over 10 years ago and they are worn down and falling apart. Furthermore, the English sections in the libraries observed before and during this study are poorly stocked. Norwegian books are being prioritized and English books are rarely taken into account. The English books are usually far older than the Norwegian books, and they are not very representative of the current population of Norway, nor of children's current daily experiences. The population in Norway is diverse, and the books the children read should reflect this diversity[1]. I wish to cast a light on the current

[1] The term diversity will be defined in 1.2.

situation so that the English sections in school libraries in Norway will be prioritized and upgraded. I hope that this study will draw attention to this issue, encouraging schools to properly stock their libraries with English-language books that reflect the aims of the subject curriculum. The students are expected to work with texts in English, which include different types of texts to develop literacy, and a variety of content to develop intercultural competence (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019, p. 3). They will be better able to achieve this curricular aim if the English-language books available at the school libraries reflect diversity and portray different ways of living.

## 1.2 Definitions of diversity

There are various definitions of diversity as Ebony Elizabeth Thomas clarifies in her overview of the history of the word. She explains that "while the word diversity is old, the way we are using it today in children's literature is quite new" (Thomas, 2021, p. 64). The word originally comes from the Latin word *diversitatem,* which means "contrariety, contradiction, disagreement;" however, the word "came into contemporary English usage from the medieval French *diversité*, which at the time meant difference" (Thomas, 2021, p. 64). Thomas continues to explain that "the shift in terminology from *multicultural* and *multiethnic* to *diverse* children's literature mirrors similar shifts in the larger educational world" (Thomas, 2021, p. 65, emphasis in original). The term multicultural was initially intended to include cultures beyond ethnicity and race, "but it did not sufficiently address recent attention to growing awareness of differences in gender, sexual orientation, religion, and immigration status; cultural and linguistic differences; disabilities, and Native peoples as sovereign nations" (Thomas, 2021, p. 65). Thus, the term *diverse* emerged to include "a broader range of identity in literature" (Thomas, 2021, p. 65).

## 1.3 Diverse literature in the English subject

Diversity and literature are essential parts of LK20, both in the core curriculum and the curriculum in English. When it comes to diversity, under section 1.1 "Human dignity" in the core curriculum, it states "all pupils shall be treated equally, and no pupil is to be subjected to discrimination" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017, pp. 6-7). The classrooms are diverse and the "school must consider the diversity of pupils and facilitate for each pupil to experience belonging in school and society" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017, p.

7). Identity and cultural diversity are elaborated upon in 1.2, where the curriculum states, "school shall give pupils historical and cultural insight that will give them a good foundation in their lives and help each pupil to preserve and develop her and his identity in an inclusive and diverse environment" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017, p. 7). Furthermore, "a common framework gives and shall give room for diversity, and the pupils must be given insight into how we live together with different perspectives, attitudes and views of life" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017, p. 7).

When it comes to the curriculum in English, the section "Working with texts in English" emphasizes the importance of diverse texts. This refers to diverse types of texts, but also diverse representation in the texts pupils read. It states:

> Working with texts in English helps to develop the pupil's knowledge and experience of linguistic and cultural diversity, as well as their insight into ways of living, ways of thinking and traditions of indigenous peoples. By reflecting on, interpreting and critically assessing different types of texts in English, the pupils shall acquire language and knowledge of culture and society. Thus the pupils will develop intercultural competence enabling them to deal with different ways of living, ways of thinking and communication patterns. They shall build the foundation for seeing their own identity and others' identities in a multilingual and multicultural context (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019 p. 3).

In other words, the texts the pupils read need to be both mirrors to see themselves, and also windows to learn about others. The concept of texts as mirrors and windows (Bishop, 1990) will be explained in depth in 2.2. Furthermore, the English subject "shall develop the pupil's understanding that their views of the world are culture-dependent. This can open for new ways to interpret the world, promote curiosity and engagement and help to prevent prejudice" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019 p. 2). Diversity in texts can help pupils achieve this curricular aim.

Diversity and literature are also included in the competence aims for years 2, 4, and 7, which are the relevant years to my study. The first competence aim that is relevant is: to "learn words and acquire cultural knowledge through English-language literature for children" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019 p. 5). This is expanded upon in year 4 to include phrases as well. For year 7 they are expected to "investigate ways of living and traditions in

different societies in the English-speaking world and in Norway and reflect on identity and cultural belonging" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019 p. 8).

## 1.4 Research questions

In this study I have chosen to focus on English books within a selection of Norwegian school libraries. School libraries are a particularly important source of texts for use in the English classroom, especially for pupils with limited socioeconomic means to prove diverse texts at home. To signify the importance of this study, I am referencing the curriculum's emphasis of the importance of texts in the English classroom and of English as a subject that should reflect the diversity of not only the Norwegian population but the wider world. As such, I wanted to link my study to diversity, and more specifically, diverse characters. A quantitative study of the English books available in libraries was a natural choice, and a qualitative study of the top three books I found was an appropriate addition to broaden the study. As a result, I formulated a research question for each method as follows:

1. To what degree do the English-language books in a selection of Norwegian school libraries appear to have been chosen to reflect the curricular aims to prevent prejudice and reflect diversity?
2. To what degree do the most frequent books reflect the diversity of the current student body?

## 1.5 The structure of the thesis

The thesis consists of seven chapters. Chapter one includes an introduction of the thesis, its relevance to LK20, definitions of key terms, research questions, and the structure of the thesis. Chapter two provides background for the study with a review of previous research and statistics. This includes a presentation of why school libraries are important, why diversity in books matters, and statistics of ethnically diverse, (dis)abled, and LGBTQIA+ characters in children's books. Furthermore, I present statistics censorship and challenges when it comes to diverse books. Chapter three presents the two main theoretical frameworks used in this thesis: reader response, including the affective turn and a consideration of this framework's affordances and limitations, and masculinity. Chapter four discusses the choice of research method and sampling, with a consideration of the methodological affordances and limitations, the ethics of the study, and my role as a researcher. Chapter five provides the

results of the quantitative data, while chapter six discusses the findings, provides qualitative analyses of the three most frequent books, and reflects on the correlation between the quantitative and qualitative results. Lastly, in chapter seven, I present the conclusion of the study.

# 2. Background and previous research

## 2.1 The importance of school libraries

A well-functioning school library is integrated into the schools' educational work and staffed with an educated school librarian; it contains a wide selection of texts, and the teachers and librarian collaborate (Bergan & Fredwall, 2023, p. 43). Several studies, reviewed by Gärdén (2017), have researched the connection between school libraries and student achievements. The studies, from the U.S., Australia, Canada, and the UK, all point to the fact that there is a connection between active use of school libraries and student achievements (Bergan & Fredwall, 2023; Gärdén, 2017).

*School library impact studies* have most often been conducted in the U.S., particularly in Colorado, which further show that "students in schools with endorsed librarians score better on standardized achievement tests in reading, compared with students in schools without endorsed librarians" (Library Research Service, 2013). Endorsed librarians are trained to be able to promote a wide selection of literature and help students choose what they want to read based on their needs and interests; as such, their presence is linked to reading enjoyment (Bergan & Fredwall, 2023, p. 76). Moreover, schools with libraries more often organize reading promotion activities, which increases the number of times students visit the library. This is directly linked to reading motivation, as the more times the students visit the library, the more they enjoy reading (Bergan & Fredwall, 2023; Gärdén, 2017).

Additionally, the school library is an important place for students who do not have access to books at home or do not have a relationship to books. Studies show that fewer and fewer adults in Norway read to their children. In fact, the proportion of adults who read to their children has fallen by eight percentage points over the last six years. The latest PISA survey shows that Norwegian students perform increasingly poorly in reading, mathematics, and science. Moreover, the decline in Norway is greater than in most other OECD countries. If the PISA figures are to be believed, this is likely because adults read less and less to their children. However, socioeconomic conditions and level of education also play a role. Statistically, parents with a good income and higher education living in urban areas are the ones who most often read to their own children, while those without higher education, living in rural areas, or with lower incomes are far less likely to read regularly to their children. The studies also show that a quarter of all young boys in this country do not read books at all.

Former Minister of Knowledge and Minister of Culture and newly appointed CEO of the Norwegian Publisher's Association Trine Skei Grande says that we will not solve this overnight (Kvistad, 2024). However, concretely, we can do a couple of things: we can equip the school libraries and make them more attractive and richer. She also believes that the purchasing system for the public libraries should be strengthened to purchase non-fiction for boys. If the boys think reading about love is stupid but want to read about dinosaurs, then it is important that books about dinosaurs are readily available and accessible for them (Kvistad, 2024).

Furthermore, the school library facilitates access to information and diverse texts, which are essential to developing literacy competence. *Print literacy* refers to decoding words to be able to read and write, but it is also about creating meaning using different signs in texts (Blikstad-Balas, 2016, p. 15). More broadly, literacy is a wide communicative competence that is explicitly connected to knowledge acquisition and community participation (Blikstad-Balas, 2016, p. 16). In other words, literacy is understood as "a means of identification, understanding, interpretation, creation, and communication in an increasingly digital, text-mediated, information-rich and fast-changing world" (UNESCO, 2024). A new term that has been introduced is *New Literacies* as a "critique of the school-based understanding of the term *literacy*," and to "promote the explicit focus on skills such as digital, critical thinking and problem solving in foreign language (FL) teaching" (Krulatz & Neokleous, 2018, p. 58, emphasis in original). *Digital literacy* can be defined as:

> The awareness, attitude and ability of individuals to appropriately use digital tools and facilitates to identify, access, manage, integrate, evaluate, analyse and synthesize digital resources, construct new knowledge, create media expressions, and communicate with others, in the context of specific life situations, in order to enable constructive social action; and to reflect upon this process (Martin as cited in Krulatz & Neokleous, 2018, p. 64).

*Critical literacy*, on the other hand, can be defined as being able to identify "the political and ideological nature of literacy" while simultaneously "being able to question how readers and writers are positioned socially by written texts" (Burns & Hood as cited in Krulatz & Neokleous, 2018, p. 65).

Literacy, access to texts, and reading enjoyment can be linked to the English subject curriculum. Literacy is discussed under the section "Working with texts in English" where it

states that “texts can contain writing, pictures, audio, drawings, graphs, numbers and other forms of expression that are combined to enhance and present a message” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019, p. 3) This refers to literacy competence as the message needs to be decoded and interpreted to extract its meaning. Access to various texts is also an essential part of the curriculum, especially under the competence aims. For instance, by the end of year 7, the pupils are expected to “read and present content from various types of texts, including self-chosen texts” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019, p. 7). Reader enjoyment is mentioned under basic skills and reading: “reading in English means understanding and reflecting on the content of various types of texts on paper and on screen, and contributing to reading pleasure and language acquisition” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019, p. 4). Furthermore, reading enjoyment is linked to higher literacy levels because pupils read more (Lao & Krashen, 2000; Krashen, 2004).

## 2.2 Why diversity in books matters

There is one thing that most, if not all, scholars can agree upon, and that is that diversity in books is important. In 1990, Bishop introduced the concept of books being mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors, which other scholars and authors have adopted. Bishop explains that “books are sometimes windows, offering views of worlds that may be real or imagined, familiar or strange” (Bishop, 1990, p. 1). Furthermore, “these windows are also sliding glass doors, and readers have only to walk through in imagination to become part of whatever world has been created or recreated by the author” (Bishop, 1990, p. 1). Lastly, Bishop explains that a window can also be a mirror: “literature transforms human experience and reflects it back to us, and in that reflection we can see our own lives and experiences as a part of the larger human experience” (Bishop, 1990, p. 1). When we read books that are windows, we can learn about other human experiences. We can learn about other cultures, other religions, what it is like to live with a disability or be a part of the LGBTQIA+ community and so many other experiences. When we read books that are mirrors, we are seeking a means of self-affirmation. However, “when children cannot find themselves reflected in the books they read, or when the images they see are distorted, negative, or laughable, they learn a powerful lesson about how they are devalued in the society of which they are a part” (Bishop, 1990, p. 1). On the other side, “children from dominant social groups have always found mirrors in books, but they, too, have suffered from the lack of availability of books about

others" (Bishop, 1990, p. 1). It is therefore important that children find both mirrors and windows in the books they read.

Grace Lin is one of many authors who have talked about this analogy and the importance of seeing yourself and others in books. She raises the question: "How can we expect kids to get along with others in this world, to empathize, and to share, if they never see outside of themselves?" (TEDx Talks, 2016, March 18). Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, another influential author, talks about the danger of a single story, which is to say the danger of "having a single story of what books are" and what people are (TED, 2009, October 7). This is because "the single story creates stereotypes," and "they make one story become the only story" (TED, 2009, October 7). Furthermore, the single story "robs people of dignity" and "makes our recognition of our equal humanity difficult" because "it emphasizes how we are different rather than how we are similar" (TED, 2009, October 7). It is therefore important that the representations we see are positive and accurate to battle prejudice and hate toward minority groups.

Multiracial people are particularly at risk of bigotry, with high racial discrimination from racist slurs to physical threats (Parker, Horowitz, Morin & Lopez, 2015), even though the ethnoracial diversity in the population is higher than ever before. The multiracial population is growing at a fast pace and has increased from 9 million people in the U.S. in 2010 to 33.8 million people in 2020, a 276% increase (Jones, Marks, Ramirez, & Ríos-Vargas, 2021). The Norwegian population is becoming more multiracial as well. The latest numbers show that 931 081 people in Norway are immigrants, which translates to 16.8% of the total population. Of these, 221 459 people (4%) are born in Norway with parents who are immigrants (Statistics Norway, 2024). However, although the students are becoming more ethnically diverse, the educators and teachers are predominately White[2] with a total of 80.3% in the U.S. 9.3% are Hispanic, 5.8% are Black, 2.4% are Asian and only 1.7% are multiracial (Taie, Lewis, & Spiegelman, 2022, p. 7). Similarly, the number of White teachers and educators in Norway is extremely high and few feel confident to talk about multiculturalism and ethnicity in fear of saying something wrong (Dowling, 2017, p. 256). The obvious effect of this hesitancy is that racialized identities and racial discrimination are rarely discussed in classrooms. This further emphasizes "the need for multicultural and international literature integration in classroom settings" (Newstreet, Sarker, & Shearer, 2018, p. 563). Books

[2] I have chosen to capitalize all racial nouns/adjectives to not further set people apart.

featuring “multiracial characters have clear value to students who share these identities, but it is important for all readers to see depictions of diverse populations” (Vazquez, 2023). Pupils who grow up in communities that are mostly White, need books that are windows into other cultures and ethnicities to learn, “that their views of the world are culture-dependent” and “develop an intercultural understanding of different ways of living, ways of thinking and communication patters” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019 p. 2), but also to develop empathy (Nikolajeva, 2014, pp. 75-99).

Diverse books are also important when it comes to developing literacy. Bessie P. Dernikos (2018) has analyzed various students’ responses to *Sleeping Beauty* and other children’s texts available in a diverse classroom in the U.S. One student, Peter, was Black and stated: “I don’t really like white people. […] I just keep going along in the book, and they just keep on showing white people. That’s not a good book” (Dernikos, 2018, pp. 1-2). Dernikos explains that “within this moment, Peter’s dislike of ‘white people’ is not simply an emotion or feeling. This affect or energetic force actually moves him to view – and consequently reject – a text featuring white characters as bad” (Dernikos, 2018, p. 2). She continues to state that Peter’s affective encounter with Whiteness “serves to momentarily ‘other’ his black body by stopping it/him from comfortably extending into the world of *Sleeping Beauty*” (Dernikos, 2018, p. 2). Therefore, “Peter’s environment and the things within it […] actively impact who he can become as a boy/reader, here by disorienting him and diminishing his capacity to act” (Dernikos, 2018, p. 2). He does not feel at home in traditional White fairy tales, therefore, “he has a difficulty fully inhabiting such spaces, which ultimately results in his refusal to finish reading *Sleeping Beauty*. Such actions, though, have consequences, especially for students of colour” (Dernikos, 2018, p. 2).

Another student response that Dernikos examine come from a group of girls. One of the girls, Beth, is African American and “seemed intensely excited by the prospect of *happily ever after*” as they read *Sleeping Beauty* (Dernikos, 2018, p. 19, emphasis in original). However, just like Peter, she could not “wholly relate to these characters – despite her fascination with them” (Dernikos, 2018, p. 19). The other girls would often comment how beautiful Sleeping Beauty was, especially how beautiful her long hair was and explained that “it’s not okay to have short hair because then it makes you look like a boy” and that “long hair is better [than short hair]” because it is beautiful (Dernikos, 2018, pp. 19-20). They are thereby saying that long hair is beautiful, while short hair is not and, by doing so, “they reify Eurocentric beauty standards that, as many scholars argue, girls of colour have been internalizing since the days

of slavery" (Dernikos, 2018, p. 20). Dernikos continues to explain how "historically, features ascribed to Whites (such as light skin and straight hair) signified social/economic advantage, rationality, good breeding and beauty, while features ascribed to blacks (such as dark skin and kinky hair) signified irrationality, barbarity and ugliness)" (Dernikos, 2018, p. 20). Dernikos references Hurley (2005) who states that children of color "tend to form ideas about what counts as beautiful through their exposure to mainstream fairy tales: ideas which both produce and reinforce racist stereotypes and negative self-images" (as cited in Dernikos, 2018, p. 20). The girls were showed a version of *Sleeping Beauty* with Black characters and Beth commented how she liked her hair better in this version; however, the other girls preferred the traditional version because she was "prettier". As a result, Beth started to conceal her black, short hair with hoodies and said "now, I have beautiful hair" (Dernikos, 2018, p. 21). Both of these stories show how the predominance of White characters can affect children of color in a harmful way and exhibit the importance of diverse books.

### 2.3 Ethnically diverse books and authors

Each year, the number of ethnically diverse books and authors increases. The Cooperative Children's Book Center provides yearly statistics on children's and YA books by and/or about Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPIC) in the U.S. and Canada. They have data from as far back as 1985, when they estimated that 2,500 books were published and only 0.72% of these were written by Black authors and illustrators. They have since expanded their analyses to cover books by and/or about Black/Africans, Indigenous, Asians, Latinxs, Pacific Islanders, and Arabs. The most recent numbers, from 2022, show 13.3% of books published or children were written by Black/African authors. Of the books received by CCBC in 2022, 45.3% were written by the BIPOC community, and 34.6% were written about BIPOC characters. In comparison, 35.6% of authors were from the BIPOC community in 2021, 28.6% in 2020, 24.8% in 2019, and 24.4% in 2018. Furthermore, the books written about the BIPOC community were 33.7% in 2021, 29.8% in 2020, 29.3% in 2019, and 29.7% in 2018 (Cooperative Children's Book Center, 2023a). This clearly demonstrates that the number of BIPOC authors and characters have increased over time.

The number of ethnically diverse books and authors is also increasing in the UK. Bold (2022) has conducted research since 2017 regarding the representation of people of color among children's book creators in the UK. The data show that the number of creators of color has

more than doubled from 2017 to 2021 going from 5.6% to 11.7% (Bold, 2022, p. 15). Bold (2022) provides numbers from as far back as 2007 when only 4% of authors and illustrators were people of color (p. 16). When it comes to diverse children's books, 30% featured racially minoritized characters, as compared to 20% in 2021, 15% in 2020, 10% in 2019, 7% in 2018, and 4% in 2017 (Centre for Literacy in Primary Education, 2023, p. 6). The research is carried out by the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education (CLPE), which has conducted a yearly survey of ethnic representation within UK children's literature called *Reflecting Realities* since 2017. Furthermore, the data show that 14% of the books that were published in 2022 featured a main character from a racially minoritized background, compared to 9% in 2021, 8% in 2020, 5% in 2019, 4% in 2018, and 1% in 2017 (Centre for Literacy in Primary Education, 2023, p. 8). It is therefore clear that the number of BIPOC authors and characters is also increasing in the UK.

## 2.4 LGBTQIA+ books

Books featuring characters from the LGBTQIA+ community are also on the rise. In 2017, CCBC expanded its diversity statistics to include books with LGBTQIA+ characters and/or content. This data shows that only 1.7% of the books CCBC received featured an LGBTQIA+ main character in 2017 (Cooperative Children's Book Center, 2018), but this expanded to 5% in 2022 (Cooperative Children's Book Center, 2023b). The percentage of books featuring any LGBTQIA+ character (primary, secondary, or background) is slightly higher.

However, just because LGBTQIA+ characters are present does not mean all are represented equally often. A study by Vaandering and Rosenzweig (2023) analyzed LGBTQIA+ representation in children's picture books published from 2018 - 2020. The project covers 185 books that feature primary, secondary, and/or background characters from the LGBTQIA+ community. The study aimed to "determine which members within the LGBTQIA+ community are most frequently represented in picture books and what types of stories are being shared about this community" (Vaandering & Rosenzweig, 2023, p. 1). Additionally, they aimed to explore how often LGBTQIA+ characters were also depicted as BIPOC or having a disability. The results show that 68.1% of the books depicted BIPOC LGBTQIA+ characters and 10.8% of the books depicted LGBTQIA+ characters with a disability. Furthermore, the most common LGBTQIA+ identity or orientation depicted was

gender nonconforming with a total of 59.5%. Next on the list are gay and lesbian characters with a total of 31.9% and 27.6%. Transgender is fourth on the list with 13.5% followed by nonbinary with 8.6%, genderqueer at 7%, and bisexual at 3.8%. Other representations were intersex, genderfluid, agender, pansexual, queer, polyamorous, aromantic, and asexual characters. However, these identities and orientations appeared fewer than five times and only covered a total of 16 books out of 185 (Vaandering & Rosenzweig, 2023, p. 9). On the other hand, the range of gender identities and sexual orientations represented in the total sample "may reflect a recent openness by children's book publishers to portray a more diverse array of LGBTQIA+ experiences" (Vaandering & Rosenzweig, 2023, p. 13). In conclusion, the number of LGBTQIA+ characters is increasing; however, the increase is slow and not very representative when it comes to other gender identities or sexual orientations than gender nonconforming, gay, and lesbian.

### 2.5 Disability in children's books

In the CCBC diversity statistics of 2022 in the U.S., only 4% of the books they received featured a main character with any form of disability (Cooperative Children's Book Center, 2023b). This does not correspond to the newest statistics that up to 1 in 4 (27%) adults in the U.S. have some type of disability (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2023). The definition of disability is in this case "a disability is any condition of the body or mind (impairment) that makes it more difficult for the person with the condition to do certain activities (activity limitation) and interact with the world around them (participation restrictions)" (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020). The percentage of books CCBC received about the subject of disability is slightly higher and lies at 6% (Cooperative Children's Book Center, 2023c).

### 2.6 Censorship and challenges

While children's books are becoming more diverse, books featuring diverse characters and topics are being challenged daily. In fact, recent research carried out by the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) shows that such incidents have increased significantly in recent years. Shockingly, a third of UK librarians are being asked to censor or remove books from their libraries (Shaffi, 2023). The most targeted books involve

empire, race, and LGBTQIA+ themes, and 82% of librarians have said they were concerned about the increase in such requests (Shaffi, 2023).

This is unfortunately also true in the U.S. The American Library Association (ALA) compiles a list of the Top 10 Most Challenged Books every year to inform the public about censorship in schools and libraries. The lists are based on "information from reports filed by library professionals and community members and from news stories published throughout the United States" (American Library Association). However, they state that many books are not reported to the ALA or covered by the press. Therefore, the data that is compiled represents only a snapshot of the books that are being challenged. In 2022 ALA documented 1,269 demands to censor library books and resources. This is the "highest number of attempted book bans since ALA began compiling data about censorship in libraries more than 20 years ago" (American Library Association). In comparison, the number of reported book challenges in 2021 was 729. Most of these books are challenged for LGBTQIA+ content. The top-challenged book of 2021, 2022, and 2023 was *Gender Queer: A Memoir* by Maia Kobabe. In 2023, it was challenged 106 times for LGBTQIA+ content and was claimed to be sexually explicit. In 2018, 2019, and 2020, the most challenged book was *George* by Alex Gino, which features a transgender protagonist and was challenged for its LGBTQIA+ content (American Library Association).

The adults and parents who are complaining about these books are often parents of children who are 4-6 years old or 14-16 years old. James LaRue, the director of the Office for Intellectual Freedom & The Freedom to Read Foundation, believes it is due to parents wanting to protect their children and keep their innocence for as long as possible. It is a form of care that the parents do not want their children to be exposed to the scary and dangerous world; however, a lot of people would consider this a disservice as the children will be less equipped to face the real world. A question that is worth asking is, what the parents see as "scary" and "dangerous." According to LaRue, the themes included in challenged books for children range from racist stereotypes to gay penguins to Halloween (Klungland, 2017). This can lead teachers and librarians to censor the books they choose in advance to try to avoid conflict with parents, or even other teachers, students, or administrators.

However, there are organizations and charities that work toward more diversity and representation in books. One of these is We Need Diverse Books which is a non-profit organization that is actively working to promote books featuring diverse characters. Their

mission is “putting more books featuring diverse characters into the hands of all readers” and they have a vision of “a world where everyone can find themselves in the pages of a book” (We Need Diverse Books, n.d.). They are also promoting resources on how to fight back against book bans and resources for teachers and librarians to include diverse books in their lesson plans.

Norway is not immune to censorship either, in fact, topics such as gender and sexuality are often being challenged in schools. In 2023 it was announced that students could select “other” in the student survey, which started a debate between teachers on Facebook that led to an article by NRK (Edvardsen, 2023). One of the teachers interviewed for the article wondered why we at schools convey to the children that they can be either boys, girls, or something else. At the same time, he states the importance of caring for children who experience gender incongruity. However, in his opinion, giving the students a third choice does not relate to science. On the other hand, many teachers supported the change to the survey. Another teacher who was interviewed reported that he often meets students who are not comfortable answering “boy” or “girl” on surveys and that he sees no problem in giving these students a third option they are comfortable choosing. He disagrees that the third category does not relate to science and states that gender is both cultural and social as well as biological. The reporter concludes that the science around gender is in development, and we do not have an answer as to what it means to belong to the different categories (Edvardsen, 2023).

The discussion of a third gender has also been discussed in an article from 2021 where a mother of three chose to withdraw her children from school because her 9-year-old son was being taught about the pronoun “hen” (Eie, Sommerset, & Olsen, 2022). This is a gender-neutral pronoun and can be translated to “they/them.” The fourth-graders were also told that boys and girls can be born in the wrong body, which the mother stated was a scary notion for the school to introduce. However, the school in question responded by stating they are following the curricular aims and that any change to the curriculum would be a national case. One of the people who involved themselves in this case was Esben Esther Pirelli Benestad, a professor in sexology. They dislike that the opinions of parents affect children and state that these opinions and attitudes kill people (Eie, Sommerset, & Olsen, 2022). In a similar case, one father thought teaching children about gender identity confuses them. His concern became apparent when his 8-year-old son had been asked by the teacher to write down which

gender he felt like. The father thinks this is too early for the children to take a stance on gender identity (Edvardsen, 2022).

On the other hand, many trans people have spoken up about the lack of education about gender identity. Jane-Victorius Gipling Bonaksen, upcoming leader of Skeiv Ungdom (Queer Youth) in 2022, stated that they believe it would have made an impact in their life if their teacher had told them there are more than two genders (Edvardsen, 2022). Similarly, Alexandra, a young transperson, had to turn to the internet to learn about themself (Sandnes, 2022). They explain that the word "queer" was finally mentioned in 8th grade, but it was far too late. They express their thoughts on the problem and believe that textbooks should teach students about gender and sexuality, so they do not have to google to find answers. Rosa kompetanse (Pink competence), which is a part of the organization Fri, teaches people about gender and sexuality. The department manager states that according to teachers, children are not confused about the education they are given about gender and sexuality. Rather, the knowledge they gain makes the children feel more secure. She continues by stating that in terms of young people's mental health, it is important to break down taboos. This is about basic human dignity (Edvardsen, 2022).

## 2.7 Previous research on Norwegian school libraries

In 2023, Kamilla Weka conducted a master's thesis exploring the perspectives of nine Norwegian school librarians in public upper secondary schools regarding collection development and the influence of school libraries on forming a literary canon. Weka used interviews as their method and the results show that, in general, "the librarians are mainly focused on providing students with literature they want to read, mainly to make up for the student's decline in reading habits and proficiency" (Weka, 2023, p. 27). One of the librarians stated that "as long as [the students] read, she will give the students whatever they want" (Weka, 2023, p. 27). The librarians are in charge of literature purchases, and "many teenagers prefer to do their leisure reading in English" (Weka, 2023, p. 27), so the librarians make sure that they offer a good English selection. The librarians interviewed stated that student requests, booksellers and publishers, lists developed for and by librarians, and BookTok[3] affected their decisions in their work on collection development (Weka, 2023, p.

[3] BookTok is a popular trend on TikTok where authors and influencers promote books.

27). Furthermore, they agree that broad selection of books is important for reader enjoyment (Weka, 2023, p. 31). In addition, several of the librarians state the importance of including books that address important issues. One of the librarians in particular explained that they "pay attention to lists of what books are banned in certain states in the US, so we have all of those" (Weka, 2023, p. 32). In fact, "many novels that appear on PEN America's list of the most banned books in US school libraries frequently appear in Norwegian school libraries," according to Weka (2023, p. 33).

The librarians also gave their thoughts on the purpose of the library. Overall, "the librarians explain that they are a library for the students" (Weka, 2023, p. 29). According to the informants in the study, the school library should have a low threshold and a collection that is catered toward their students (Weka, 2023, p. 29). The library is also important to students from households with lower socioeconomic power, who are less likely to not have access to a variety of literature at home. In this case "the school library becomes a natural arena for finding literature" (Weka, 2023, p. 50). Weka also noted down the novels that appear in the libraries they visited and found that there are four books that appear in all nine libraries: *Harry Potter, Lord of the Flies, The Hate U Give,* and *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (Weka, 2023, p. 40). This shows that the popular books are a mixture of classics, like *Lord of the Flies*, and modern books that may have appeared on BookTok or appeared on banned books lists, like *Harry Potter*, *The Hate U Give*, and *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*. However, the limitations of Weka's study are the small sample size and the schools only being located in urban environments.

# 3. Theoretical framework

This thesis aims to explore whether or not diverse books appear in English in school libraries in Norway. It does because the national curriculum emphasizes that the English subject must prevent prejudice and promote nuanced understandings of oneself and others through engagements with diverse texts (section 1.3, above). Moreover, research has shown that diverse texts are less likely to be published and more likely to be challenged, and therefore less likely to reach readers (section 2, above). Finally, it does so because research has shown both a lack of diverse characters and texts can negatively affect the literacy development of the diverse children who do not appear in those texts, as well as that limited access to such texts can negatively impact children's self-perception.

The theories used in the analysis of the data largely fall within the category *reader response theory* to explore the relation between the reader and the text. As Louise M. Rosenblatt has argued,

> Terms such as the reader are somewhat misleading, though convenient, fictions. There is no such thing as a generic reader or a generic literary work; there are in reality only the potential millions of individual readers of individual works… The reading of any work of literature is, of necessity, an individual and unique occurrence involving the mind and emotions of some particular reader (Rosenblatt 1938, cited in Rosenblatt 2018, p. 451).

This section will therefore present Louise M. Rosenblatt's transactional theory, Wolfgang Iser's phenomenological approach to reading, and Roland Barthes's death of the author theory. Additionally, this chapter will discuss affective responses to texts and will discuss the limitations of reader response theory. Reader response theory is a helpful theoretical lens because it focuses on the individual reader and their interaction with a text. The theory values the diversity of interpretations and considers the cultural, social, and historical contexts in which a reader encounters a text. Furthermore, reader response theory highlights the personal and emotional responses to literature as discussed in 2.2. These theories can therefore be helpful to explore why a diverse literature selection is important with an increasingly diverse classroom.

Finally, this chapter will also include theories relating to masculinity and boyhood studies. This is because the characters that will be analyzed in section 6.2 are all boys, and it is useful to explore how these boys appear according to theories regarding masculinity. Furthermore, these theories expand upon diversity and diverse characters.

## 3.1 Reader response theory

### 3.1.1 Rosenblatt and transactional theory

Louise M. Rosenblatt is a well-known critic within reader response theory who introduced transactional theory with *The Reader, the Text, the Poem : The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work* (1978). However, she wrote about the relationship between the reader and the text as far back as 1938 in *Literature as Exploration*. The transactional theory refers to the transaction between the reader and the text in which "the reader looks to the text, and the text is activated by the reader" (Rosenblatt, 1994, p. 18). Rosenblatt explains that a reading act is a transaction that involves "a particular reader and a particular pattern of signs, a text, and occurring at a particular time in a particular context" (Rosenblatt 2018, p. 455). The reader provides unique, individual experiences to the transaction (Rosenblatt, 1994, p. 20). Therefore, "the "meaning" does not reside readymade "in" the text or "in" the reader but happens or comes into being during the transaction between the reader and text" (Rosenblatt 2018, p. 455).

Rosenblatt differentiates between "the text" and "the poem." The "text" refers to the designated set of signs "interpretable as linguistic symbols" (Rosenblatt, 1994, p. 12). These signs can be visual or auditory which become verbal symbols, which then become words. The "poem" refers to the transaction between a reader and a text and the meaning they draw from it based on their past experiences and present personality (Rosenblatt, 1994, p. 12).

During the transaction between a reader and a text, the reader adopts a stance, which "reflects the reader's purpose" (Rosenblatt 2018, p. 457). Rosenblatt refers to two different stances called the *efferent* stance and the *aesthetic* stance. The term *efferent* is derived from the Latin word *effere,* which means to "carry away." This stance "designates the kind of reading in which attention is centered predominantly on what is to be extracted and retained after the reading event" (Rosenblatt 2018, p. 458). For example, if a person is reading to study for a test, they are trying to gather as much information as possible, and they will ignore elements

in the text that do not serve their present interests. On the other hand, there is the *aesthetic* stance. In simple terms, it refers to the kind of reading one does for pleasure where the reader is engaged with the text. Rosenblatt explains that "the aesthetic reader pays attention to – savors – the qualities of the feelings, ideas, situations, scenes, personalities, and emotions that are called forth and participates in the tensions, conflicts, and resolutions of the images, ideas, and scenes as they unfold (Rosenblatt 2018, p. 458). Both of these stances affect how the reader interacts with and interprets the text, which will change the meaning they deprive.

### 3.1.2 Iser and a phenomenological approach to reading

Wolfgang Iser is another critic within reader-response theory, and he writes about the phenomenological approach to reading. He refers to the phenomenological theory of art that "lays full stress on the idea that, in considering a literary work, one must take into the actions involved in responding to that text" (Iser, 1972, p. 279). With this, he states that a literary work has two poles, the *artistic* and the *aesthetic.* The *artistic* pole "refers to the text created by the author," while the *aesthetic* pole refers to "the realization accomplished by the reader" (Iser, 1972, p. 279). These poles can be compared to Rosenblatt's "text" and "poem." Similarly, Iser states that "the text only takes on life when it is realized" (Iser, 1972, p. 279). In this case, "realized" can be compared to a "transaction." Iser continues by talking about the "unwritten" part of a text, which is important to any literary work. The author should leave something for the reader to imagine, and the reader should not be given the whole story. This is because "reading is only a pleasure when it [imagination] is active and creative" (Iser, 1972, p. 280). The "unwritten" parts or the "gaps" of the text can be filled in many different ways as each individual reader will fill in the gaps in their own way (Iser, 1972, p. 285).

Furthermore, Iser talks about time-sequences while reading. He explains that "the reading process always involves viewing the text through a perspective that is continually on the move" (Iser, 1972, p. 285). This means that when one has finished a text and is reading it a second time, the "extra knowledge will result in a different time-sequence." (Iser, 1972, pp. 285-286). The second read will be viewed through a different perspective, therefore, there will be aspects of the text that were missed during the first read which assumes a significance during the second read (Iser, 1972, p. 286). For this reason, due to anticipation and retrospection, a time-sequence cannot be repeated. However, Iser states that "this is not to say

that the second reading is “truer” than the first – they are, quite simply, different” (Iser, 1972, p. 286).

The transactional theory is useful to this study since it addresses the individual experience that is part of a transaction. The theory references “the poem,” which is helpful when referring to the individual meaning of the text. Furthermore, the reader’s stance is an important part of the transaction, and it is useful to differentiate between the two of them. In this case, the study will assume that the books are read for pleasure and the text will be read from an *aesthetic* stance. The phenomenological approach is a useful theory in terms of this study because it can be linked to the transactional theory. Terms such as the “aesthetic” and “artistic” pole are useful to refer to just as “poem.” Additionally, this approach mentions the importance of an active imagination while reading which comes into play when the reader is not given all the information. This can be especially important for diverse readers to find mirrors in the books they read as discussed in 2.2. Time-sequences are not essential for this study; however, it is important to have knowledge of these different perspectives.

### 3.1.3 The death of the author

The death of the author is a statement made by Roland Barthes in a text where he talks about the role of the author. Here Barthes challenges the traditional notion that the author’s intentions and background are essential to understand the text. Instead, he suggests that a text exists independently of the author’s influence, and the meaning is derived from the reader’s interpretation (Barthes & Heath, 1977, pp. 142-148). He goes as far as to state: “to give a text an Author, is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing” (Barthes & Heath, 1977, p. 147). He adds how “the modern scriptor is born simultaneously with the text” (Barthes & Heath, 1977, p. 145), compared to the past when the author was “thought to *nourish* the book, which is to say that he exists before it” (Barthes & Heath, 1977, p. 145, emphasis in original).

### 3.1.4 Affective responses to texts

Affects can be explained as “intense surges and sensations that echo within the body” and “as non-conscious, visceral bodily experiences” (Thiel, 2015, p. 40). However, a set definition can be complicated as Brennan (2004) states who explains that the term is one translation of the Latin *affectus* which can be translated to “passion” or “emotion” (p. 3). Therefore,

Brennan chooses to use the term “transmission of affect” to “capture a process that is social in origin but biological and physical in effect” (Brennan, 2004, p. 3). By transmission, they mean “that the emotions or affects of one person, and the enhancing or depressing energies these affects entail, can enter into another” (Brennan, 2004, p. 3). Affective responses to texts can therefore be described as emotional reactions when engaging with a text. For example, if an individual is emotionally invested in a book, they may feel sadness when a beloved character dies. Similarly, they may feel excited and happy when a character fulfills their dream or wins a battle.

Leander and Boldt (2013) explore multiliteracies as they follow Lee, a 10-year-old Japanese-American boy, for a day while engaging in reading and playing with Japanese graphic novels. Despite being seen by his teachers as “failing within the framing of literacy” (Leander & Boldt, 2013, p. 23), Lee spent 12 hours “deeply engaged in reading and playing with the English translation of two Japanese graphic novel (manga) series” (Leander & Boldt, 2013, p. 26). This included pausing his reading to put on a Japanese headband, practice hand gestures or looks, verbalize sound effects, or try a particular pose or move (Leander & Boldt, 2013, p. 26). Together with a friend, they would act out their favorite scenes and battle with toy swords in between reading and discussing the manga books. This shows how texts “move with and through students, producing ongoing affective intensities that make new thoughts, feelings and identities possible” (Dernikos, 2018, p. 9).

Similarly, Thiel (2015) argues that “children’s play can be read as embodied literacies” in their study of a community center the children named “The Awesome Clubhouse” (p. 38). They follow Zack, an African American fourth grader as he transforms into Wolverine from *X-Men* by putting on a costume. Thiel explain how “the costumes generated affects in many of the children at the Clubhouse that would later lead to the performance of embodied popular literacies, and they seem to have been the trigger […] in the outdoor play that followed” (Thiel, 2015, p. 43). Zack and the other children contributed the knowledge they had about superheroes and movie storylines to create their own narrative in order to rescue Bumblebee, a character from the *Transformers* movies. This resulted in an “intra-action of affects, bodies, spaces and things” that “transformed students into text-producers and the clubhouse playground into a fictional adventure-land where porous bodies merged in ways that expanded children’s literacy learning and social world views” (Dernikos, 2018, p. 8). A lot of readers experience affective responses to texts, and it is important to promote and encourage these feelings.

### 3.1.5. The affordances and limitations of reader response theory

Reader response theory focuses on the reader rather than the text and is helpful to "explain how readers connect and engage with texts and emphasizes the role the reader has in the creation of the literary experience" (Brendler, 2014, p. 224). Furthermore, the theory values the diversity of interpretations and considers the cultural, social, and historical contexts in which a reader encounters a text, as well as highlights the personal and emotional responses to literature.

However, reader response theory focuses solely on the reader and does not acknowledge the author, though, when it comes to representation, authenticity, and reliability, that is not always possible. This is because there is "a controversial point in the production of diverse books – that is, who is allowed to tell what stories, and who should have the final say over whether the books are offensive or not" (Coats, 2017, p. 17). Because of this, a hashtag that has circulated on social media is #ownvoices which "explicitly calls for writers to draw from their own experience" (Coats, 2017, p. 17). Moreover, "many critics accuse writers who write about characters outside their culture or identity of 'cultural appropriation' or misrepresentation" (Coats, 2017, p. 17). Furthermore, authorial identity remains a central concern for marginalized groups, that is, those that do not occupy White, upper middle class, male, straight, able-bodied, cisgendered, and Western positions (Busse, 2013, p. 55). Therefore, Busse argues for the return of the author, "not as authorial intent maker but instead as the position of ethos" (Busse, 2013, p. 55). In this case, ethos encompasses the author's identity, the choices they make, the collection of their writings, utterances, and their overall character (Busse, 2013, p. 55). The ethos of the author can make an impact, for instance, many people turned away from the *Harry Potter* series once it was known that J. K. Rowling is transphobic (Ravell, 2023). Busse also makes a point to suggest that "authors have returned to the forefront of interpreting text not via interpretive privilege or singular access to the meaning of their writing but via their identity and how that identity affects reading and writing practices" (Busse, 2013, p. 55). They give an example by explaining that "the same racist expression, joke, or story functions very differently in the hands of a white writer than it does when a person of color uses it" (Busse, 2013, p. 55). This is equivalent to what Lester (1972) states, as cited in Coats (2017):

> We no longer (and never did) need whites to interpret our lives or our culture. White can only give a white interpretation of blacks, which tells us a lot about whites, but nothing about blacks… Whites will never understand the black view of the world until they get it straight from blacks, respect it, and accept it (p. 17).

Therefore, ethos, the background, reputation, and identity of the author can be important and may affect reader responses (Busse, 2013, p. 56).

Barthes wanted to symbolically kill the author figure, which is why Jonathan Gray has suggested the term "undead author" (Gray, 2010, p. 113). This term describes "an author who, in Barthesian terms, understands that metaphorically "killing himself" is an ideal way to "fashion himself as 'just one of the fans,' when he is decidedly privileged in the relationship" (Scott, 2013, p. 443). An "undead author" positions themselves as "working toward the same goal" as the readers, not "competing" with them (Gray, 2010, p. 112). Instead, the "undead author" "deliberately confuses" the roles of reader and author by "adopting part of the reader role," and "yielding part of the author role to the reader" (Gray, 2010, p. 112). Thereby, these examples show that it may be difficult to remove the author completely. However, in most cases, young readers are unlikely to be aware of author's identities and politics and will instead focus on the content of the texts. As such, Barthes's theory is most relevant to the below analysis.

### 3.2 Masculinity, reader response, and how boys appear in children's literature

Masculinity is an important if understudied topic in children's literature studies. Though, the book *Ways of Being Male* captures a lot of themes within masculinity. Nodelman (2002) raises a point how "even those of us who are committed to noticing the undermining stereotypes of femininity tend to be unaware of the degree to which our ideas about male behavior are equally stereotypical" (p. 2). "Boys will be boys" is an obvious example of this, which is a "common response to boys acting exuberantly or even violently, […] as if aggressive or antisocial behavior is an inherent and unchangeable aspect of maleness" (Nodelman, 2002, p. 2). Nodelman (2002) gave an assignment in class where the students were to switch the gender of a character in a text. One of the examples were Max who they turned into Maxine from *Where the Wild Things Are*. They state that:

> Students admired Maxine for doing what had annoyed them about Max. His wild was just being boyish – being loud, active, aggressive, violent and rude. We expect such

> behavior from boys and only hope they will eventually outgrow it. But Maxine, doing exactly the same things, seems admirably strong, self-possessed girl, a role model for other girls to follow. What was desirable for Maxine was just inevitable for Max (p. 4).

As the students further analyzed children's literature, it was apparent that "a female acting aggressively by choice does not deserve to be punished, presumably because the choice was a wise one that should be applauded. But a male acting the same way, we assume not by choice, but by virtue of his inherent maleness, deserves to be punished" (Nodelman, 2002, p. 4). These generalizations can be very harmful, and they are therefore important to address. Furthermore, "the visibility of masculinity has another significant resonance as a manifestation of homophobia" (Nodelman, 2002, p. 8). Nodelman is suggesting that "masculinity is becoming even more firmly defined as *not* feminine," which increasingly also means "not *gay* - which are, almost always, ways of seeming feminine or being effeminate" (Nodelman, 2002, p. 8, emphasis in original). Thus, the need to be seen as masculine arises. Disability, race, religion, and sexuality are vectors of identity that intersect with masculinity; thus, these topics will not be discussed in depth in this thesis.

To break with the aspect of being either masculine or unmasculine comes the New Age Boy. He is often depicted as an outsider and seen as different from the other children. The New Age Boy "stands in contrast both to the Old Age Boy (the child who is either aggressive or something of a rascal, self-regarding and physically assertive) and to the Mommy's Boy (the pampered and privileged child who is to an excessive degree fashioned by his parents, especially his mother, and who is implicitly still marked as 'unmanly, unmasculine')" (Stephens, 2002, p. 44). Characteristically, the New Age Boy acts without self-interest as his relationship with his peers is other-regarding. Furthermore, "he tends to lack physical prowess and physical courage, though his moral courage and other-regardingness will prompt him to act courageously" (Stephens, 2002, p. 44). The New Age Boy breaks typical male stereotypes, and he is a character that is becoming more common.

# 4. Methodology

For this research, I have chosen mixed methods: a combination of quantitative and qualitative data. Cresswell (2011, p. 5) defines the core characteristics of mixed methods research in the following list:

- "Collects and analyzes persuasively and rigorously both qualitative and quantitative data (based on research questions);
- Mixes (or integrates or links) the two forms of data concurrently by combining them (or merging them), sequentially by having one build on the other, or embedding one within the other;
- Gives priority to one or to both forms of data (in terms of what the research emphasizes);
- Uses these procedures within philosophical worldviews and theoretical lenses; and
- Combines the procedures into specific research designs that direct the plan for conducting the study".

## 4.1 Data collection and sampling process

This study considers diversity in English-language school library collections. The sample includes data from ten school libraries. Only English-language fiction was included in the sample, as I wanted to focus on what students read for pleasure. Leaflets and comic books were excluded from the study, as were textbooks used for teaching and learning English, like books within the Damm Galaxy and Stairs Readers series. Furthermore, books that feature anthropomorphic animals as their main character were not considered eligible for the study as the protagonists are not human. Fairy tales, myths, and religious texts like Cinderella, Snow White, and Greek mythology were also excluded because of their genericness. Lastly, I decided to not include books that were part of a long series if the library only had two or three books. For example, I did not include the *Hardy Boys*, a series with over 100 books, if the library only had numbers 16 and 40. However, it is worth noting that none of the school libraries could offer me a list of their English books in stock; therefore, I had to write down the books available to me based only on what titles appeared on the shelves. Thus, I may not have the full sample size, since some of the books could be loaned out.

In the libraries, I wrote down the titles of the English fiction books I encountered and how many times I encountered them. To simplify data collection and prevent skewing of the data, series were counted as one book. For instance, I did not write down the titles of each of the seven *Harry Potter* books, but simply noted them as the *Harry Potter* series. This decision was also made to provide realistic quantitative statistics, since the main character in the series remains the same.

The quantitative data consist of statistics. The books in the libraries' collections were analyzed to determine diversity among protagonists within the English fiction books considered. In this study, *diversity* encompasses gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality, religion, and disability (Thomas, 2021; section 1.2, above). To collect this data, I created a spreadsheet and wrote down what I could discover about the main characters. I analyzed the covers and summaries of the books, including not only, the summary that was provided on the back cover of the book but also those provided on Goodreads or sites that sell these books, to ensure accuracy. These data allow a distanced consideration of the diversity of protagonists in the English-language fiction available in Norwegian school libraries.

However, while such statistics provide an overall idea of how diverse the protagonists in the English-language books made available to pupils at school are, they do not allow for close consideration of how those characters are represented. For example, while they allow a consideration of how many Asian and Asian-heritage protagonists are present in the books, they do not allow a consideration of whether those characters are depicted stereotypically or in otherwise harmful ways. To balance this, a qualitative analysis was also carried out on a small selection of books from the overall sample. The qualitative portion of the study is a close literary analysis of the protagonists in the three books that appeared most frequently in the ten libraries' English-language fiction collections. These analyses are necessarily somewhat subjective, as all close reading of books involve some aspect of subjectivity – as demonstrated by the reader response theories discussed in section 3 (above).

The sample consisted of 1,105 books from ten public school libraries. However, with hundreds of public elementary schools in Norway, this still represents a small sample, and the study ought to be considered a case study. To ensure that my sample was as realistic as possible, I chose to visit a variety of urban, rural, big, and small schools to offer as wide a representation as possible. This means that even with a small sample size, it is possible to see some trends. The only prerequisite for the schools to participate in the study was that they

have a school library; a school librarian was not required. To gain approval to visit the libraries, I sent an email to the school principals in which I stated the purpose of the visit. All ten schools are within the same county; however, they are spread between three municipalities.

## 4.2 Affordances and limitations

The advantage of mixed methods is that one does not limit the study, as there are weaknesses to only using one method. For instance, quantitative methods can be considered weak in "understanding the context or setting in which people talk" (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 12). Furthermore, "the voices of participants are not directly heard" and "quantitative researchers are in the background, and their own personal biases and interpretations are seldom discussed" (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 12). While "qualitative research makes up for these weaknesses," it can be "seen as deficient because of the personal interpretations made by the researcher, the ensuing bias created by this, and the difficulty in generalizing findings to a large group because of the limited number of participants studied" (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 12). By combining these two methods, the "strengths of one approach make up for the weaknesses of the other approach" (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 12).

One of the challenges of using mixed methods is the requirement of a broad skill set. The researcher needs to be acquainted with "both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis techniques" (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 13). The researcher needs to understand the reliability and validity of both methods. Furthermore, using mixed methods is time-consuming and demands more resources than using only one method (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 14).

Specific limitations to this study are the scope and time aspects. With limited time, I have not been able to go in depth as much as I would have liked. For instance, I have not read most of the 227 books that were included in this study. This means the study did not allow for a full investigation of the protagonists, and I cannot be sure I characterized them correctly, as the summaries and covers analyzed may not have been accurate or included all vectors of identity considered. Furthermore, with more time and a higher word count, I would have increased the scope of the study to include the thoughts of the librarians and teachers I talked to as they showed me around the library. Many explained the reasons behind their choice of books and their purchasing processes which ranged from buying books based on requests to

receiving donations. Finally, with more time, I would have been able to provide qualitative analyses of more books, and I might have been able to choose which books I analyzed based on, for example, the ways in which specific vectors of identity appeared rather than which books appeared most frequently.

### 4.3 Credibility and Reliability

Credibility and reliability refer to the trustworthiness of the data and are important to consider when it comes to the ethical aspects of the research. I have made an effort to provide as accurate quantitative data as possible; however, with the time and scope of the study, there are aspects that remain uncertain. In section 4.1, I mentioned that the libraries were unable to give me a list of the English-language books they have in stock. I am therefore unable to verify the total number of books available, and there may be gaps in my research. Furthermore, as previously stated, I have not read most of the books that are a part of this study. Because of this, I relied on the cover of the book and the summaries I was able to find. This means that any information about the protagonist that was introduced in the text itself, I have not been able to retrieve. Although, while covers and summaries may not, in all cases, reflect the content of the books, taken together, they should in most cases reliably reflect who appears as a protagonist.

### 4.4 Reflection on my positionality as a researcher

Regarding my positionality as a researcher, I have not been as limited as I could have been. For example, it might have been hard for me, as a White Norwegian, to catch all nuances of stereotypical representations of Black Americans. However, since all the protagonists in the books analyzed qualitatively are White, Western, able-bodied, implied straight, implied nonreligious cisboys, this is not as relevant to the study as it could have been.

# 5. Results of quantitative data

In the ten libraries I visited, I counted 1,105 English books, leaflets, and comic books. Out of these, 227 unique titles were eligible for this study. The library with the largest collection had approximately 250 books, while the smallest collection consisted of approximately 20 books. The variation in books was extremely diverse, and there was not a single book nor series out of the 227 included titles that was present in all ten libraries. The libraries' collections also differed significantly: 192 titles were only available in one library, 35 titles appeared in two or more libraries.

Figure 1 shows that the main characters of these books are predominantly male, with a total of 123 books (54.1%) featuring male protagonists. A female main character is featured in 76 books (33.4%), while 28 books (12.3%) had multiple main characters, including both males and females. Furthermore, almost all these characters were cisgender, that is, their gender identity corresponded to their assigned gender at birth. Only one book (0.4%) featured a main character who challenged gender norms.

Figure 1: Representation of gender

| Total | Male (cis) | Female (cis) | Mixed group | Other |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 227 | 123 | 76 | 28 | 1 |
| 100% | 54.1% | 33.4% | 12.3% | 0.4% |

Sexuality is rarely a topic in the books that are aimed at 6- to 13-year-olds; therefore, most of the books do not specify a romantic preference. However, as shown in Figure 2, 33 books (14.5%) featured a main character that had a romantic interest in the opposite gender. It was not stated if they identified as straight; however, it was implied. Only one book (0.4%) featured a main character who showed interest toward both a male and a female character. No books featured characters who were romantically interested solely in their own gender.

Figure 2: Representation of sexuality

| Total | Unspecified | Straight | Other |
|---|---|---|---|
| 227 | 193 | 33 | 1 |
| 100% | 85% | 14.5% | 0.4% |

Figure 3 shows the representations of ethnicities. It is clear that there is an overwhelming number of White main characters, with a total of 175 (77%) of the books analyzed having featured White protagonists. That left only 22 books (9.6%) with a BIPOC main character. However, 30 books (13.2%) featured a multiethnic group of main characters or a protagonist whose ethnicity is unspecified.

Figure 3: Representation of ethnicity

| Total | White | Black | Arabic/ Middle Eastern | Indian | Latinx | (South)east Asian | Unspecified dark skin | Unspecified/ multiethnic group |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 227 | 175 | 7 | 5 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 30 |
| 100% | 77% | 3% | 2.2% | 1.7% | 0.8% | 0.4% | 1.3% | 13.2% |

As shown in Figure 4, the main characters were predominantly British (97 books, 42.7%), followed by American (47 books, 20.7%). Protagonists from European countries such as Ireland, France, Germany, and Italy featured in 4 books (1.7%). Protagonists with other nationalities, such as Palestinian, Indian, Native American[4], South-African, Brazilian, Afghan, and Middle Eastern, appeared in 13 books (5.7%). Some of the nationalities were not stated and have been listed based on the author's nationality if the location in the book is a

[4] While Native Americans can be considered "American", I have chosen to foreground Indigenous nations in the spirit of decoloniality.

generic location, such as a city or a forest. There is therefore a small level of uncertainty in the below numbers.

Figure 4: Representation of nationality

| Total | British | American | Norwegian, Swedish, or Danish | Australian or Canadian | Other European countries | Other | Unspecified or fantasy |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 227 | 97 | 47 | 14 | 6 | 4 | 13 | 46 |
| 100% | 42.7% | 20.7% | 6.1% | 2.6% | 1.7% | 5.7% | 20.2% |

*Religion*

Only three books (1.3%) included a religious main character. The religions that were represented were Christianity, Islam, and Judaism.

*(Dis)ability*

Six books (2.6%) included a main character with a disability or mental illness. If no disability was specified, I assumed the character was able-bodied.

Figure 5: Books that appear in four or more libraries

| **Title** | **Author** | **Year published** | **Appears in** |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series | Jeff Kinney | 2007- | 7 |
| *Harry Potter* series | J. K. Rowling | 1997-2007 | 5 |
| *Horrid Henry* series | Francesca Simon | 1994- | 5 |
| *Billionaire Boy* | David Walliams | 2010 | 4 |
| *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* | Roald Dahl | 1964 | 4 |
| *Matilda* | Roald Dahl | 1988 | 4 |

The *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series was present in seven out of ten libraries, as shown in Figure 5, followed by the *Harry Potter* series and the *Horrid Henry* series, which were available in five libraries. However, most of these libraries only carried a few titles of each series. The full series of *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* and *Horrid Henry* was not present at any libraries; however, a few libraries carried the entire *Harry Potter* series.

# 6. Analysis and discussion

## 6.1 Discussion of quantitative results

These data show that the most common main character is a cisgender, able-bodied, White male from Britain who does not subscribe to a religion. There is little diversity, as there is a clear lack of BIPOC characters, LGBTQIA+ characters, disabled characters, and religious characters. So, to what degree do the English-language books in a selection of Norwegian school libraries appear to have been chosen to reflect the curricular aims to battle prejudice and reflect diversity? As stated in 1.3, the English subject "shall develop the pupil's understanding that their views of the world are culture-dependent. This can open for new ways to interpret the world, promote curiosity and engagement and help to prevent prejudice" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019 p. 2). Unfortunately, most of these libraries do not have a high focus on their English selection. The results show that there are big differences between the school libraries in terms of quantity, which in turn says something about the quality of the books. With a small book selection, there is little room for diversity, and moreover, the results show that there is still little diversity overall.

Based on what these library collections show, the curricular aims in English are not in focus when librarians are choosing which books to buy and display. The relevance and central values of the English subject state that it is important "when it comes to cultural understanding, communication, all-round education and identity development" and the subject "shall help the pupils to develop an intercultural understanding of different ways of living, ways of thinking and communication patters" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019, p. 2). However, this is not reflected in the English-language collections if the books available for pupils to read are mostly about British and American, White, straight, able-bodied boys. This is, in fact, very problematic, as the responsibility to promote diversity in texts falls solely on the English teachers who have limited time to teach English each week and who clearly cannot rely on their school library for class sets of books in English that reflect the aims of the curriculum.

However, representation matters little unless the representation is positive and accurate. As stated in 2.2, "when children cannot find themselves reflected in the books they read, or when the images they see are distorted, negative, or laughable, they learn a powerful lesson about how they are devalued in the society of which they are a part" (Bishop, 1990, p. 1). Negative

or inaccurate representation can do more harm than good; therefore, it is essential to have knowledge about the books that are being presented in the library. Not only will poor representation affect the children who see themselves reflected in these characters, but such representation can be damaging for the other children; if they only see negative and inaccurate representations of other groups, they may develop prejudices or begin to believe certain stereotypes. For instance, if the only Arabic or Middle-Eastern characters the children read about are children trying to flee from a war, who are then taken in by White and wealthy families, it will distort their image of what it is like to be from one of these countries and suggest that Middle-Eastern people are helpless by themselves and need to be saved by a White person. Similarly, if all the Black characters are criminals or poor, it can create dangerous associations within the reader. I am not implying that the libraries in this study feature books like these; however, it is important to keep in mind not only *who* appears but also *how* they appear. This is evident as seen from Dernikos's study, which I reference in section 2.2.

In terms of reader response theory, diversity is essential because it recognizes that different readers bring unique perspectives, experiences, and cultural backgrounds to their interpretations of a text or transaction (Rosenblatt, 1994, p. 20). This opens up for a more comprehensive analysis and enriches the understanding of a text. Furthermore, each of these perspectives and interpretations are valid as there is not a correct interpretation within reader response theory.

## 6.2 Analysis of qualitative data

As indicated in sections 3 and 5, the three characters who appeared most often are boys: Greg, the protagonist of *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*; Henry, the protagonist of *Horrid Henry*; and Harry, the protagonist of *Harry Potter*. As such, I use theories of masculinity when considering the ways in which these boys appear in the books analyzed below. Because of Barthe's "death of the author" theory, I consider only the content of the books, not their authors.

### 6.2.1 Analysis of *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*

Jeff Kinney wrote the first book in the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series in 2007, and since then, it has remained a bestseller. More than 290 million copies have been sold around the world, and

the series has been adapted into several movies, both live-action and animated (https://wimpykid.com/). The books contain text and cartoons as they follow protagonist Greg Heffley while he documents his time in middle school with his friend and sidekick Rowley Jefferson.

The first book of the series introduces the main character, Greg, who is currently "stuck in middle school with a bunch of morons," as he phrases it (Kinney, 2008, p. 2). Greg takes the reader through his everyday life by writing a diary, or a "journal," as he insists on calling it (Kinney, 2008, p. 1), and drawing comics. He states very clearly that this was his mother's idea and not his, and he had specifically told her not to buy him a book that said "diary" on it because people may "get the wrong idea" (Kinney, 2008, p. 1). Furthermore, he explains that he will not be writing down his feelings "or whatever" (Kinney, 2008, p. 1), which all proves that he does not want to be associated with a diary because it is deemed feminine. This proves Nodelman's (2002, p. 8) point that being masculine is not appearing feminine.

*Popularity*

Greg is, like most kids his age, fixated on popularity and keeps close track of who is popular and who is not. He believes his current spot is "around 52nd or 53rd most popular this year", but he is about to move up a spot because Charlie Davies above him is getting braces next week (Kinney, 2008, p. 7). Greg introduces Rowley who is "technically" his best friend, "but that is definitely subject to change" (Kinney, 2008, p. 17). He explains that he has been avoiding Rowley, who "is probably hovering right over the 150 mark, by the way" (Kinney, 2008, p. 8), since the first day of school because he did something that really annoyed him. At the end of the day, Rowley had walked up to him and asked if he wanted to come over to his house and play, to which Greg explains that in middle school, you're supposed to say "hang out," not "play" (Kinney, 2008, p. 18). His image is important to him, and he tries to increase his popularity throughout the book.

It is therefore very important to him that he avoid the Cheese Touch. This stems from a dropped piece of cheese on the basketball court that has become moldy and gross, which led to people avoiding the court all together. Greg explains that the Cheese Touch is "basically like the Cooties. If you get the Cheese Touch, you're stuck with it until you pass it on to someone else" (Kinney 2008, p. 9). Therefore, no one wants to be near the person who has the Cheese Touch. At the end of the book, Greg and Rowley get into an argument and some other boys push them to fight each other until a group of teenagers show up. These are the

same teenagers Greg and Rowley had agitated earlier in the book. The teenagers force Rowley to eat the cheese on the ground, and since no one else have seen this happen, the pupils at school start speculating where the cheese have gone. Wanting to protect Rowley's image, despite their fight, Greg tells everyone that he had thrown it away, forgetting this meant that he got the Cheese Touch. They become friends again after this incident, which may prove that Greg learned to value friendship over popularity.

*Masculinity*

The topic of masculinity appears several times in the book. Near the middle of the book, it is announced that the boys will be doing a wrestling unit for six weeks while the girls are doing a gymnastics unit. Greg is the lightest kid in the class, alongside Fregley, and since they are the only ones in their weight class, they have to wrestle each other every day. Fregley beats Greg every time. Therefore, he wants to gain weight to be moved into the next weight class and decides to start gaining muscle. His mother seems unsure of this; however, his father is very enthusiastic. Greg writes that he believes his father was "just glad I had a change of heart from how I used to be when I was a kid" (Kinney, 2008, p. 88). To this, Greg includes a drawing of his father and himself from when he was younger. The father says: "If you work out regularly, you can get big muscles!," to which Greg replies: "Muscles are gross!" (Kinney, 2008, p. 88). However, Greg wants big equipment for his training, which he cannot get at the moment, and time passes. The wrestling unit ends, and Greg celebrates Christmas. His father gifts him a brand-new weight set, and he is clearly proud of his expensive purchase. Though, Greg does not share his enthusiasm and explains that "I didn't have the heart to tell Dad that I kind of lost interest in the whole weight-lifting thing when the wrestling unit ended last week. So I just said 'thanks' instead" (Kinney, 2008, p. 126). This shows that Greg does not think he needs muscles to be a man and does not conform to this idea of masculinity.

It is clear that the father wants Greg to be more masculine which is evident during another Christmas celebration. Greg talks about the Christmas when he was seven years old, and all he wanted was a Barbie Dream House. Though he clearly states that "this is NOT because I like girls' toy, like Rodrick said. I just thought it would be a really awesome fort for my toy soldiers" (Kinney, 2008, pp. 116-117). Because of this, his parents got into a big fight as his father refused to buy him a doll's house, however, the more open-minded mother, said it was healthy for him to experiment with whatever kind of toys he wanted to play with. However,

to Greg's surprise, his father won the argument. His father then told Greg to start his wish list over and "pick toys that were more "appropriate" for boys" (Kinney, 2008, p. 117). However, Greg has a "secret weapon," which is his uncle, who gets him whatever he wants for Christmas (Kinney, 2008, p. 117). Though, this did not go as planned when his uncle buys him a Beach Fun Barbie Doll instead. Greg explains that his father was not happy when he saw the doll and told him to "either throw it out or give it away to charity" (Kinney, 2008, p. 118). Though Greg decides to keep the Barbie anyway and admits that he may have "played with it once or twice" (Kinney, 2008, p. 118). This shows that Greg wants to form his own opinion of what being a boy means to him.

These are unfortunately situations many children can relate to, and this kind of toxic masculinity can instill harmful thoughts and behaviors in young boys especially. However, many children might find comfort in the fact that Greg is not easily affected by his father's pushing. Greg can therefore be seen as a New Age Boy (Stephens, 2002, p. 44) in many ways. He is out outsider who is struggling to fit in, he is not big and strong to overpower his "enemies," but he uses his wit instead. Furthermore, he does not identity as or see himself as masculine of feminine, but somewhere in between.

Greg is a relatable character for many children who are struggling to find their place in school or at home. He is a kid who likes to try out new things, have fun, and chase popularity, which is accurate for many children in middle school. Greg is therefore a "mirror" many children look for in the books they read. However, in terms of reader response, children will focus on different aspects of the book and extract different meanings from it. If the child reading the book can relate to Greg having an annoying little brother who receives everything he wants and never gets punished, that is the plotline they will focus on the most because of their own experience. While most children in Norway will find something relatable in this book, such as not always getting the present they wanted during an important holiday, others may be less able to relate.

### 6.2.2 Analysis of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*

The popular series *Harry Potter* is written by J. K. Rowling and consists of seven books. The first book, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, published in 1997, has since been followed by movies, games, and other companion books. In 2018, more than 500 million copies had been sold, while the final book in the series, *Harry Potter and the Deathly*

*Hallows*, is the fastest selling fiction book of all time (Wizarding World, 2018). The books follow Harry Potter through his years at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry while he transforms from a young boy living in ignorance of magic into the most powerful wizard in the world.

Harry Potter grows up with his aunt, uncle, and cousin - the Dursleys-, -living an ordinary life until he turns eleven years old. Up until this point, the only unordinary thing about him is the lightning scar on his forehead, that is, until he finds out he is a wizard, and his parents were killed by the cruelest wizard to ever live – Voldemort. However, Voldemort is unable to kill Harry, who is only a baby at the time, and the scar remains from the powerful, evil curse that touches him. He is thereby known as "the boy who lived" (Rowling, 2014, p. 18), and Voldemort mysteriously disappears. Throughout the book, Harry, as well as the reader, become familiar with the wizarding world as he gains friends as well as enemies.

When Harry was growing up under the Dursleys roof, he was never allowed to make any choices or stand up for himself, unless he wanted to be punished. However, at Hogwarts, he can be his own person and discovers his autonomy. This can first be seen when he meets Draco Malfoy after he has acquainted himself Ron Weasley. Draco scoffs as he looks at Ron with his red hair and freckles and immediately knows he is a Weasley. He turns to Harry and says: "You'll soon find out some wizarding families are much better than others, Potter. You don't want to go making friends with the wrong sort. I can help you there" (Rowling, 2014, p. 116). However, Harry shows how loyal he can be and stands his ground by saying "I think I can tell who the wrong sort are for myself, thanks" (Rowling, 2014, p. 116).

Harry also dares to have his own opinions at The Sorting Ceremony in which the first-years are being sorted in to the four houses of the school – Gryffindor, Hufflepuff, Ravenclaw, and Slytherin. Slytherin is notoriously known for being the house that every evil wizard or witch was placed in, in fact, Voldemort himself was placed in Slytherin. Therefore, Harry develops an aversion toward his house, especially after Malfoy proudly claims he knows he will be put in Slytherin. So, when it is Harrys turn to be sorted, he continuously thinks to himself "not Slytherin, not Slytherin" (Rowling, 2014, p. 130). The Sorting Hat picks up on this as it says: "Not Slytherin, eh? […] Are you sure? You could be great, you know, it's all here in your head, and Slytherin will help you on the way to greatness, no doubt about that – no? Well, if you're sure – better be GRYFFINDOR!" (Rowling, 2014, p. 130). Harry is surprised as his opinion has never mattered until this moment, and he realizes he can make his own choices.

The book centers its theme a lot around courage, which is one of the main characteristics of Gryffindor. This is evident as Harry goes to great lengths to protect his friends. Harry is used to being bulled by his cousin and his friends, so he does not hesitate to stand up for his friends when they are being bullied. During their first flying lesson, Neville falls off his broom and drops his Remembrall, a small round ball, on the ground. Draco thinks this is funny and picks it up. Harry sees this and, as he is used to being bullied by his cousin and his friends, he hates seeing others being bullied. He stands up to Draco and demands that he hand over the Remembrall, however, Draco does not want to hand it over that easily and takes off on his broom. Harry follows after him, stunned by how good he is, as this is his first try, which fills him with joy and determination. He is so confident that he even dares to threaten Draco as they are both in the air: "Give it here,' Harry called, 'or I'll knock you off that broom!" (Rowling, 2014, p. 159). For the first time ever, Harry has the upper hand in a situation, and learns that he is tougher and more capable than he thinks as he catches the Remembrall midair and is appointed the new seeker for the Gryffindor Quidditch team.

Another episode that truly shapes Harry as a character, is when a troll is let into the dungeons of Hogwarts. The students are being ushered to their dormitories; however, Hermione is elsewhere so Harry and Ron run to find and warn her. They find both Hermione and the troll in the girl's bathroom and they have no choice but to fight it to save Hermione. Somehow, they are triumphant in the fight, and Harry and Ron are awarded for their effort. In the end Hermione became their friend "as there are some things you can't share without ending up liking each other, and knocking out a twelve-foot mountain troll is one of them" (Rowling, 2014, p. 192).

As the title of the book references, the Philosopher's Stone is an essential part of the book. It is guarded within Hogwarts, and the trio is convinced Professor Snape is trying to steal it for Voldemort. Professor Snape is the mean Potions Master who is the Head of Slytherin House, and he has been suspicious from day one as he never liked Harry. The Headmaster, Professor Dumbledore is one of the strongest wizards in the world, and as Hermione puts it: "the only one You-Know-Who (Voldemort) was ever afraid of" (Rowling, 2014, p. 280) therefore, as long as Dumbledore is around, the Stone is safe, and so is Harry. However, Dumbledore goes on a journey which leaves the Stone vulnerable, and the trio takes matters into their own hands to protect it. There are many trials on the way to the Stone, and in the end, Harry has to make the final stretch alone. In the final room, he does not face Snape, but the new teacher who has sided with Voldemort and is using Professor Quirrell as a host. Even so, Voldemort

is not able to touch Harry as his hands immediately burns, and this way, Harry is able to keep him at bay. Everything goes black and Harry wakes up to find out Dumbledore saved him. When Harry asks why Voldemort was not able to touch him, Dumbledore says:

> Your mother died to save you. If there is one thing Voldemort cannot understand, it is love. He didn't realize that love as powerful as your mother's for you leaves its own mark. Not a scar, no visible sign… to have been loved so deeply, even though the person who loved us is gone, will give us some protection for ever. It is in your very skin (Rowling, 2014, p. 321).

With this, Harry truly understands the power of love, and it is a message for the reader as well. Another lesson that Harry learns is from Hermione who tells him that "there are more important things [than cleverness] – friendship and bravery" (Rowling, 2014, p. 308). The themes in this book are quite obvious, but powerful in the way they show themselves.

Harry Potter is a relatable character to many as he is constantly being pushed around by bullies but refuses to back down. He is a lot stronger than he thinks, which can give hope to many children in the same situations. Furthermore, he proves that things can get better. Growing up he did not have any friends, but he gains several at Hogwarts. Additionally, he finds a place to call home that is an escape from the abusive home he grew up in. Just as Harry finds comfort at Hogwarts, many readers find comfort in these books and sees them as their escape from reality.

When it comes to diversity, especially within ethnicity, the book is unfortunately lacking. It is clear that "characters of color do not play significant roles, […] especially when compared to Harry, Ron, Hermione, and all the Hogwarts teachers" (Dahlen & Thomas, 2022, p. 6). Dahlen and Thomas (2022) state that "the hypervisibility of the White trio and White adults in positions of authority, and the relegation of the people of color to the background, uphold White supremacist views that people of color are not essential, even in a fantasy world built in the imagination" (p. 6). This is a problematic and dangerous notion that allows for fewer mirrors and windows in this book. Additionally, representation of LGBTQIA+[5], religious, and disabled characters are nonexistent.

*Masculinity*

[5] Rowling has since made postcanon statements which includes Dumbledore being gay.

Masculinity can be linked to this book as well. Just as Greg, Harry can be seen as a New Age Boy (Stephens, 2002, p. 44). Harry is different from the others, which the reader is reminded of several times, he is not physically strong, however, his wit and courage gets him through most things. Furthermore, he is "unconventionally masculine in his choice of best friends" (Wannamaker, 2017, p. 29), as boys his age tend to show a preference toward male friends, while Harry has two best friends: Ron and Hermione.

That said, he certainly possesses some characteristics of the Old Age Boy. He can he hotheaded and say or do something without thinking it completely through, which gets him into trouble a lot. For instance, sneaking out late at night into restricted areas. He is also stubborn and does not always do as he is told, yet he is often rewarded for his actions. Additionally, he plays, and is good at Quidditch (a Wizarding sport), and he is not too interested in schoolwork, which is clearly more closely associated with femininity through Hermione. Harry's cousin, Dudley, on the other hand, is a typical Mommy's Boy. This is evident as they celebrate Dudley's birthday in the beginning of the book. Dudley is furious that he only receives thirty-seven presents when he received thirty-eight last year. To make him happy, his mother instantly suggests that they buy him two more presents. When they are going to the zoo, they are debating what to do about Harry and Dudley starts to cry loudly to get his way. Though he is not actually crying, but "he knew that if he screwed up his face and wailed, his mother would give him anything he wanted" (Rowling, 2014, p. 24), which encompasses his entire character. However, other important male characters in the book, like Ron, Neville, and Draco are more complex.

The book "establishes marked differences between the 'normal' Muggle World and the 'abnormal' Wizarding world – differences that are often articulated through different portrayals of gender" (Wannamaker, 2017, p. 24). Wannamaker (2017) explains how "gender in the Muggle world, as represented by the Dursley's, is portrayed as being normative, while gender roles in the Wizarding world are sometimes not as easy categorized" (Wannamaker, 2017, p. 25). The Dursleys are set up as killjoys by the first two sentences of the book by stating they "were proud to say that they were perfectly normal, thank you very much. They were the last people you'd expect to be involved in anything strange or mysterious, because they just didn't hold with such nonsense" (Rowling, 2014, p. 1). Furthermore, they dislike anyone who are different and call wizards and witches "freaks" (Rowling, 2014, p. 57). As a result, children who feel like "freaks" can find profound meaning in the separation between "normal" and "abnormal" because the protagonists "do not conform to the societal

expectations" (Wannamaker, 2017, p. 25). This is why the Wizarding world is far more attractive for many people because "otherness" is celebrated and welcomed compared to the "rigid values of the Dursleys" (Wannamaker, 2017, p. 25). The book can therefore trigger a vast range of affective responses, and a plethora of meanings can be extracted depending on the reader. That said, although they can appeal to those who are othered on a metaphorical level, as is pointed out above, the main character is a White, straight, middle class, cisgendered boy; few characters of color appear, no disabled characters appear in the first book (although Mad Eye Moody, who appears in the fourth book, is missing a limb), and the books only depict heteronormative relationships.

### 6.2.3 Analysis of *Horrid Henry*

The series of Horrid Henry is written by Francesca Simon and illustrated by Tony Ross with the first book published in 1994. The series is still ongoing with millions of copies sold around the world. Additionally, the series has been turned into an Early Reader series, a live-action movie, and an animated TV series. The books follow Henry through his everyday life while he gets up to all kinds of mischief.

The first few pages set up what kind of characters Henry and his family are:

> Henry was horrid. Everyone said so, even his mother. Henry threw food, Henry snatched, Henry pushed and shoved and pinched. Even his teddy, Mr Kill, avoided him when possible. His parents despaired. "What are we going to do about that horrid boy?" sighed Mum. "How did two people as nice as us have such a horrid child?" sighed Dad. When Horrid Henry's parents took Henry to school they walked behind him and pretended he was not theirs. […] Horrid Henry had a younger brother. His name was Perfect Peter. Perfect Peter always said "Please" and "Thank you". Perfect Peter loved vegetables. Perfect Peter always used a hankie and never, ever picked his nose. "Why can't you be perfect like Peter?" said Henry's mum every day. As usual, Henry pretended not to hear. He continued melting Peter's crayons on the radiator (Simon & Ross, 1994, pp. 7-9).

One day, Henry decides to act perfect, as he wonders what would happen. He even offers to help during dinner, to which his father, out of habit, instantly says, "Don't be horrid, Henry" (Simon & Ross, 1994, p. 15). Peter wants to help as well, and since "Henry will just make a mess" (Simon & Ross, 1994, p. 15), Peter is the one who is allowed to help. Henry decides to

lay the table instead and his mom assumes Peter did it and praises him. When Henry says he is the one who laid the table, he is met with "why?" and "you've done something horrid, haven't you, Henry?" (Simon & Ross, 1994, p. 17). The parents immediately assume he has done something wrong that he is trying to cover up or that he is trying to make up for something. When Peter says he will lay the table tomorrow, Peter is thanked; however, no one thanks Henry.

Henry chooses to be perfect during dinner as well. He eats with a knife, spoon, and fork; he does not throw peas at Peter; and he does not slurp. He does not chew with his mouth open, and he does not slouch. However, without looking up, his father tells Henry to sit properly, to which Henry replies, "I am sitting properly" (Simon & Ross, 1994, p. 18). His father is surprised by this and simply says, "So you are" (Simon & Ross, 1994, p. 18). Peter cannot stand Henry acting this perfect and questions why Henry is not throwing peas at him. So, to test Henry, Peter throws a pea at Henry instead when their parents are not looking. When Henry exclaims in pain, he is told to not be horrid. Henry instantly reaches for a fistful of peas to take revenge, but stops himself, which confuses Peter even more. The same happens when Peter kicks Henry from under the table, and yet again, Henry is the one in trouble. It is very clear that the parents expect Henry to misbehave, but Perfect Peter can never do anything wrong. However, that changes when Peter has had enough and throws his plate of spaghetti toward Henry, which hits their mother instead. Peter is sent to his room, and Henry cannot stop himself from laughing, which results in him being sent to his room as well.

*Masculinity*

When it comes to masculinity, the book clearly characterizes Henry as an Old Age Boy (Stephens, 2002, p. 44). Everyone calls Henry horrid for acting out, like throwing someone's jacket in the mud or squashing someone's beetle. Henry is the boy who, "fill in whatever terrible deed you like. Horrid Henry was sure to have done it" (Simon & Ross, 1994, p. 8). However, no one questions why Henry acts like this. He is punished for being mean, yet he is never asked how he is doing or met with empathy. Everyone expects him to be horrid for the sake of being mean when it more likely is a cry for help and a way to get attention.

The book is very problematic in many ways. Firstly, the fact that his mother tells her own son he is horrid is awful, no matter if she believes this to be a fact. Secondly, the parents do not take any blame for the fact that Henry most likely is behaving like this because of their parenting style. Instead, they see themselves as victims in this situation. Thirdly, they do not

even want to be associated with Henry when they are in public, which is bordering on child abuse. Lastly, poor Henry is constantly being compared to his younger brother, which is horrible for any sibling. The fact that Henry is destroying Peter's things shows that he may be jealous of his brother.

Henry possesses a lot of stereotypical male attributes; however, there are aspects of him that are more typical of a New Age Boy. Firstly, he takes dance classes together with his younger brother. In fact, Henry loves dancing. He loves dancing in his bedroom, up and down the stairs, on the new sofa, and on the kitchen table. What he does not like is dancing with other children, so he wants to start karate instead, but that is "too violent" according to his mother (Simon & Ross, 1994, p. 30). Secondly, the only other kid he plays with during the book is the neighbor girl who is called Moody Margaret. Even though Henry does not like Margaret, and Margaret does not like Henry, and they only tend to play together when Rude Ralph is busy, Clever Clare has the flu, and Sour Susan is Margaret's enemy, they have a lot of fun together.

Henry can be a retable character for many children, though he is not a good role model. However, the book is entertaining, which is likely why the series is so popular. Most children will not pick up on the dark undertones of the book; however, as an adult, the story of Henry is quite sad. Yet, the book tries to put a light and humorous spin of the situation. The book certainly triggers different affective responses depending on the reader, and the meaning of the book will be vastly different as well. In other words, the "poem" or "aesthetic pole."

### 6.3 Discussion of qualitative results

So, to what degree do the most frequent books reflect the diversity of the current student body? Unfortunately, the books do not reflect a lot of diversity. The protagonists of the three books are American or English, White, straight, able-bodied, nonreligious, cis boys. Even other important characters in the books do not stray far from this characterization – although they may occasionally be female. Greg, Harry, and Henry all possess some stereotypical male characteristics, and some attributes that counteracts these. All three of them are outsiders, and all three display traits from both the New Age Boy and the Old Age Boy. While there are many children who will see themselves reflected in these books, it is clear from the statistics discussed in section 2 that these children have plenty of mirrors as it is. What they require are more windows in the books they read. More importantly, children who do not associate with

White, straight, middle class, able-bodied, nonreligious cisboys deserve and need to see themselves represented as well. The current student body is diverse, yet the books that are most frequently found at the libraries included in the present study largely portray a slight variation of the "same" character.

A question worth discussing is: why are there so many male protagonists? "Write what you know" is a common phrase to encourage authors to write about what is familiar to them. This makes the writing easier, and they will not receive hate for writing something thar is "incorrect." For instance, as a Norwegian, it will be difficult for me to write about a character who lives in Japan without doing a lot of research, and I may still depict life in Japan inaccurately. This may explain why a lot of male authors chooses to write about boys and authors otherwise mirror themselves (White, straight, nonreligious) or their circumstances (able-bodied) as referenced in 3.5. However, J. K. Rowling is a woman, but her books feature a male protagonist. As referenced in 2.1, many boys in Norway do not read, and this is true for the rest of the world as well. Therefore, many authors may choose a male main character to cater to the male population. This is because boys tend to read books that feature a male protagonist, while most girls will read a book regardless of the protagonist's gender.

This is evident in a study by Dutro (2001) who found that "gender is a central tension in children's book-choosing behavior" (p. 376). What they witnessed was a 5-year-old boy who had picked out a book based on Walt Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* while the boy behind him started to make gagging noises. The other boys joined in by saying: "Oooh, you're going to read a girl's book?" and "Ha ha, he's a girl, he's a girl" (Dutro, 2001, p. 376). The accused boy quickly ran to exchange his book as a result. Masculinity plays a role yet again. *Beauty and the Beast* does not lack male characters, though "the other boys' judgements on whether or not the book was masculine or feminine seemed based on the sex of the protagonist (or perhaps the theme of romance)" (Dutro, 2001, p. 376). However, the girl's book choices appeared to not be influenced by gender. They chose books like *Lyle the Crocodile*, *Frog and Toad are Friends*, *Where the Wild Things Are*, and *Pinocchio* "without seeming to notice that they were all about males" (Dutro, 2001, p. 376). However, this boy would most likely never pick up a book without making sure he had made a suitable "masculine" choice again. Similarly, Dutro observed a group of fifth-graders as they were picking out which books to read between a selection that was chosen by the teacher. One of the books was *The Babysitters Club* which everyone referred to as a "girls' book." When asked what makes this a girl's book the responses were "there are girls on the cover," "it's pink," and "boys don't

really babysit much" (Dutro, 2001, p. 382). On the other hand, "boy's books" were described as "adventurous, scary, and sports centered" (Dutro, 2001, p. 382). The boys would describe boys' reading preferences as "football and boy stuff" that centered around sports and superhero comics" while they described girl's preferences to "read girl stuff" like "books about Barbies" (Dutro, 2001, p. 382). This shows that children "both respond to the gender stereotypes embedded in certain books" and "draw on their own assumptions" to "describe and explain the boundaries that surround 'girls' and 'boys' reading" (Dutro, 2001, p. 383). However, it is clear that when a girl crosses this boundary, it is encouraged and applauded, while boys are deemed as feminine in a negative way, which is often related to homophobia, as referenced in 3.4. A male protagonist on the cover of the book will prompt more boys to select it because it is seen as a more masculine choice.

## 6.4 The correlation between quantitative and qualitative data

There is a clear correlation between the different data. The results of the quantitative data correspond to the qualitative results. The quantitative data show that the most common protagonist is male, straight or unspecified, White, English, nonreligious, and able-bodied, which is evident in the protagonists of *Diary of a Wimpy Kid, Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone, and Horrid Henry*. These are not surprising results as this is what I expected to see, however, they are still disappointing. LK20 emphasizes diversity, and through working with texts, the pupils are expected to develop "knowledge and experience of linguistic and cultural diversity, as well as their insight into ways of living, ways of thinking and traditions of indigenous peoples" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019 p. 3), yet this is not reflected in the protagonists in the English-language books available at the school libraries analyzed in this study.

# 7. Conclusion

School libraries are important for promoting reading and reading motivation **(**Bergan & Fredwall, 2023; Gärdén, 2017). Studies show that students in schools with libraries and an endorsed librarian score better on reading tests and enjoy reading more than students without the same opportunities (Library Research Service, 2013). With a diverse library, the students will also develop literacy competence (Dernikos, 2018). The books available at the library should promote diversity with the choice of which protagonists are being represented not only because diverse protagonists will appeal to a variety of readers but also because representing a variety of ways of living and identifying is a central aim of the English subject. More, diversity in literature is increasingly important in an increasingly diverse classroom. LK20 states that the English subject "shall develop the pupil's understanding that their views of the world are culture-dependent. This can open for new ways to interpret the world, promote curiosity and engagement and help to prevent prejudice" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019 p. 2).

This study was conducted to find out to what degree the English-language books in a selection of Norwegian school libraries appear to have been chosen to reflect the curricular aims to prevent prejudice and reflect diversity. However, the quantitative results show that the books that are available hardly reflect diversity. The protagonists are repeatedly American or English, White, straight, able-bodied, nonreligious, cis boys. There are hardly any main characters that are BIPOC, from non-English-speaking countries, a part of the LGBTQIA+ community, religious, or disabled.

Furthermore, this study qualitatively examined to what degree the most frequently found books reflect the diversity of the current student body. Analyses of the three most frequently found books were therefore conducted. The titles that were analyzed were *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, *and Horrid Henry*. The protagonists of these books reflect the results of the quantitative data, which is not surprising.

This study shows the need for more diversity in the English-language books that are in school libraries, and I truly hope this thesis will make a difference. As a soon-to-be-in-service teacher, I will continue to promote reading and diverse literature in my classroom, and I hope others will do the same. This in an area within education that needs more attention, financing, and research. If I were to do a similar study in the future, my focus would be on the graphic

novels, manga, and comic books available in school libraries as this is an increasingly popular genre that could benefit from more exposure.

# Literature list


American Library Association. (n.d.). *Top 10 Most Challenged Books and Frequently Challenged Books Archive.* ALA. https://www.ala.org/bbooks/frequentlychallengedbooks/top10/archive

Barthes, R. & Heath, S. (1977). *Image, Music, Text*. Fontana Press.

Bergan, C. & Fredwall, I. E. (2023). *Skolebiblioteket som læringsarena : leseglede, utforsking, opplevelse*. Cappelen Damm Akademisk.

Bishop, R. S. (1990). *Windows, Mirrors, and Sliding-Glass Doors. Perspectives, 6*(3). https://scenicregional.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Mirrors-Windows-and-Sliding-Glass-Doors.pdf

Blikstad-Balas, M. (2016). *Literacy i skolen*. Universitetsforlaget.

Bold, M. R. (2022). *Representation of people of colour among children's book creators in the UK*. https://www.booktrust.org.uk/globalassets/resources/booktrust-represents/2022/research-reports/booktrust-represents-representation-of-people-of-colour-among-childrens-book-creators-in-the-uk.pdf

Brendler, B. M. (2014). Diversity in Literary Response: Revisiting Gender Expectations. *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science, 55*(3), 223–240. https://www.proquest.com/docview/1539529765/fulltextPDF/3E3CD3A8598E48B9PQ/1?accountid=43239&sourcetype=Scholarly%20Journals#

Brennan, T. (2004). *The Transmission of Affect*. Cornell University Press. https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy1.usn.no/stable/10.7591/j.ctt5hh05z

Busse, K. (2013). The Return of the Author: Ethos and Identity Politics. In J. Gray & D. Johnson (Eds.), *A Companion to Media Authorship* (pp. 48–68). Wiley-Blackwell. https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy2.usn.no/lib/ucsn-ebooks/detail.action?pq-origsite=primo&docID=1129725

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2023, May 15). *Disability Impacts All of Us*. CDC. https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/infographic-disability-impacts-all.html

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020, September 16). *Disability & Health Overview.* CDC. https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/disability.html

Centre for Literacy in Primary Education. (2023, November 20). *CLPE Survey of Ethnic Representation within UK Children's Literature (November 2023).* CLPE. https://clpe.org.uk/research/clpe-survey-ethnic-representation-within-uk-childrens-literature-november-2023

Coats, K. (2017). Teaching the Conflicts: Diverse Responses to Diverse Children's Books. In C. Beauvais & M. Nikolajeva (Eds.), *The Edinburgh Companion to Children's Literature* (pp. 13-28). Edinburgh University Press. https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy1.usn.no/stable/10.3366/j.ctv2f4vk7j.4

Cooperative Children's Book Center. (2023a, May 4). *Books by and/or about Black, Indigenous and People of Color (All Years).* CCBC. https://ccbc.education.wisc.edu/literature-resources/ccbc-diversity-statistics/books-by-about-poc-fnn/

Cooperative Children's Book Center. (2023b, August 16). *2022 CCBC Diversity Statistics PRIMARY CHARACTER/SUBJECT*. CCBC. https://uwmadison.app.box.com/s/rn4ccrdx8f8a2nbbqb6spx16kxcy52r1/file/1229843897759

Cooperative Children's Book Center. (2023c, August 16). *2022 CCBC Diversity Statistics: ABOUT (Diversity Subject).* CCBC. https://uwmadison.app.box.com/s/rn4ccrdx8f8a2nbbqb6spx16kxcy52r1/file/1229845217968

Cooperative Children's Book Center. (2018, July 5). *CCBC 2017 Statistics on LGBTQ+ Literature for Children & Teens*. CCBC. https://ccbc.education.wisc.edu/ccbc-2017-statistics-on-lgbtq-literature-for-children-teens/

Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2011). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (2nd ed.). Sage.

Dahlen S. P. & Thomas, E. E. (Eds.). (2022). *Harry Potter and the Other : Race, Justice, and Difference in the Wizarding World*. University Press of Mississippi. https://doi-org.ezproxy1.usn.no/10.2307/j.ctv2tsxkr7

Dernikos, B. P. (2018). ‘It’s like you don’t want to read it again’: Exploring affects, trauma and ‘willful’ literacies. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, Online first. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468798418756187

Dowling, F. (2017). Rase’ og etnisitet? Det kan ikke jeg si noe særlig om – her er det ’Blenda-hvitt’!: Lærerutdanneres diskurser om hvithet, «rase» og (anti)rasisme. *Norsk pedagogisk tidskrift*, *101*(3), 252–265. https://doi.org/10.18261/issn.1504-2987-2017-03-06

Dutro, E. (2001). "But That's a Girls' Book!" Exploring Gender Boundaries in Children's Reading Practices. *The Reading Teacher, 55*(4), 376–384. https://www.proquest.com/docview/203275787/fulltextPDF/BBD43907535F4781PQ/1?accountid=43239&sourcetype=Scholarly%20Journals

Edvardsen, I. (2023, November 29). *Nå kan 10-åringer velge «annet» kjønn i elevundersøkelsen*. NRK. https://www.nrk.no/norge/na-kan-10-aringer-velge-_annet_-kjonn-i-elevundersokelsen-1.16654308

Edvardsen, I. (2022, June 15). *Åtteåringer skulle oppgi hvilket kjønn de følte seg som. – Jeg ble sjokkert, sier far*. NRK. https://www.nrk.no/norge/attearinger-skulle-oppgi-hvilket-kjonn-de-folte-seg-som.-_-jeg-ble-sjokkert_-sier-far-1.15999492

Eie, L., Sommerset, T., & Olsen, K. (2022, January 16). *Ble undervist om kjønnet «hen» – tok barna ut av skolen*. NRK. https://www.nrk.no/sorlandet/holder-barna-hjemme-_-laerte-om-_hen_-pa-skolen-1.15416135

Gärdén, C. (2017). *Skolbibliotekets roll för elevers lärande : en forsknings- och kunskapsöversikt år 2010–2015*. Kungliga biblioteket. Nationell biblioteksstrategi. https://kalleguettler.files.wordpress.com/2020/02/skolbibliotekets-rolll-fc3b6r-elevers-lc3a4rande.pdf

Gray, J. (2010). *Show sold separately : promos, spoilers, and other media paratexts*. New York University Press. https://doi.org/10.18574/9780814733158

Iser, W. (1972). *The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach. New Literary History, 3*(2), 279–299. https://doi.org/10.2307/468316

Jones, N., Marks, R., Ramirez, R., & Ríos-Vargas, M. (2021, August 12). *2020 Census Illuminates Racial and Ethnic Composition of the Country*. United States Census

Bureau. https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/08/improved-race-ethnicity-measures-reveal-united-states-population-much-more-multiracial.html

Kinney, J. (2008). *Diary of a Wimpy Kid : Greg Heffley's Journal*. Puffin Books.

Klungland, I. T. (2017, October 17). *Sensur av barnelitteratur – i Norge og verden*. Norsk barneinstitutt. https://barnebokinstituttet.no/aktuelt/sensur-av-barnelitteratur-i-norge-og-verden/

Krashen, S. D. (2004). *The power of reading : insights from the research* (2nd ed.). Libraries Unlimited. https://books.google.no/books?hl=no&lr=&id=YH3DEAAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PR5&ots=VPojaGovbI&sig=z5ByX9aoXi2D7RWEOds-SKzwPTM&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false

Krulatz, A., & Neokleous, G. (2018). FOSTERING LITERACY IN ADOLESCENT EFL CLASSROOMS: AN OVERVIEW OF TECHNIQUES AND TEACHING IDEAS. *European Journal of Applied Linguistics and TEFL, 7*(1), 57-71. https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/fostering-literacy-adolescent-efl-classrooms/docview/2343012416/se-2

Kvistad, Y. (2024, April 19). *Norske barn leser mindre - og gjør det dårligere på skolen*. VG. https://www.vg.no/rampelys/bok/i/eMWvwQ/norske-barn-leser-faerre-boeker-og-gjoer-det-stadig-daarligere-paa-skolen

Leander, K., & Boldt, G. (2013). Rereading "A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies": Bodies, Texts, and Emergence. *Journal of Literacy Research, 45*(1), 22–46. https://doi.org/10.1177/1086296X12468587

Library Research Service. (2013). *School Libraries & Student Achievement (2013).* LRS. https://www.lrs.org/documents/school/school_library_impact.jpg

Lao, C. Y., & Krashen, S. D. (2000). The impact of popular literature study on literacy development in EFL: more evidence for the power of reading. *System (Linköping), 28*(2), 261–270. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0346-251X(00)00011-7

Ministry of Education and Research. (2019). *Læreplan i engelsk (ENG01-04)* [Curriculum in English]. Established as regulations. The National curriculum for the Knowledge

Promotion 2020. https://data.udir.no/kl06/v201906/laereplaner-lk20/ENG01-04.pdf?lang=eng

Ministry of Education and Research. (2017). *Core curriculum – values and principles for primary and secondary education*. Laid down by Royal decree. The National curriculum for the Knowledge Promotion 2020. https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/53d21ea2bc3a4202b86b83cfe82da93e/core-curriculum.pdf

Newstreet, C., Sarker, A., & Shearer, R. (2018). Teaching Empathy: Exploring Multiple Perspectives to Address Islamophobia Through Children's Literature. *The Reading Teacher, 72*(5), 559-568. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26801650?seq=1

Nikolajeva, M. (2014). *Reading for learning : Cognitive approaches to children's literature*. John Benjamins Publishing Company. https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy2.usn.no/lib/ucsn-ebooks/reader.action?docID=1715259

Nodelman, P. (2002). Making Boys Appear: The Masculinity of Children's Fiction. In J. Stephens (Ed.), *Ways of Being Male : Representing Masculinities in Children's Literature and Film* (pp. 1-14). Routledge. https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy1.usn.no/lib/ucsn-ebooks/reader.action?docID=1487098

Parker, K., Horowitz, J. M., Morin, R., & Lopez, M. H. (2015, June 11). *Multiracial in America: Proud, Diverse and Growing in Numbers*. Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2015/06/11/multiracial-in-america/

Ravell, H. (2023). RIPJKRowling: A tale of a fandom, Twitter and a haunting author who refuses to die. *Public Relations Inquiry, 12*(3), 239–270. https://doi.org/10.1177/2046147X231180501

Regulations to the Education Act. (2006). *Regulations to the Education Act* (FOR-2006-06-23-724). Lovdata. https://lovdata.no/forskrift/2006-06-23-724

Rosenblatt, L. M. (2018). The Transactional Theory of Reading and Writing. In D. E. Alvermann, N. J. Unrau, M. Sailors, & R. B. Ruddell (Eds.), *Theoretical Models and Processes of Literacy* (7th ed., pp. 451–479). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315110592-28

Rosenblatt, L. M. (1994). *The Reader, the Text, the Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work* (Paperback edition.). Southern Illinois University Press.

Rowling, J. K. (2014). *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. Bloomsbury.

Sandnes, K. (2022, January 16). *Føler seg hverken som gutt eller jente - lærte om seg selv på internett.* NRK. https://www.nrk.no/sorlandet/foler-seg-hverken-som-gutt-eller-jente---laerte-om-seg-selv-pa-internett-1.15606224

Scott, S. (2013). Dawn of the Undead Author: Fanboy Auteurism and Zack Snyder's "Vision". In J. Gray & D. Johnson (Eds.), *A Companion to Media Authorship* (pp. 440-462). Wiley-Blackwell. https://ebookcentral-proquest com.ezproxy2.usn.no/lib/ucsn-ebooks/detail.action?pq-origsite=primo&docID=1129725

Shaffi, S. (2023, April 20). *Third of UK librarians asked to censor or remove books, research reveals.* The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/books/2023/apr/20/third-of-uk-librarians-asked-to-censor-or-remove-books-research-reveals

Simon, F. & Ross, T. (1994). *Horrid Henry*. Orion Children's Books.

Statistics Norway. (2024, March 7). *Innvandrere og norskfødte med innvandrerforeldre*. SSB. Retrieved from March 14 2024 https://www.ssb.no/befolkning/innvandrere/statistikk/innvandrere-og-norskfodte-med-innvandrerforeldre

Stephens, J. (2002). "A Page Just Waiting to Be Written On": Masculinity Schemata and the Dynamics of Subjective Agency in Junior Fiction. In J. Stephens (Ed.), *Ways of Being Male : Representing Masculinities in Children's Literature and Film* (pp. 38-54). Routledge. https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy1.usn.no/lib/ucsn-ebooks/reader.action?docID=1487098

Taie, S., Lewis, L., & Spiegelman, M. (2022). *Characteristics of 2020–21 Public and Private K–12 School Teachers in the United States*. National Center for Education Statistics. https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2022/2022113.pdf

TED. (2009, October 7). *Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: The danger of a single story | TED*. [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9Ihs241zeg&ab_channel=TED

TEDx Talks. (2016, March 18). *The Windows and Mirrors of Your Child's Bookshelf | Grace Lin | TEDxNatick* [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_wQ8wiV3FVo&ab_channel=TEDxTalks

The Education Act. (1998). *Lov om grunnskolen og den vidaregåande opplæringa (opplæringslova)* (LOV-1998-07-17-61). Lovdata. https://lovdata.no/NLE/lov/1998-07-17-61

Thiel, J. J. (2015). "Bumblebee's in Trouble!" Embodied Literacies during Imaginative Superhero Play. *Language Arts, 93*(1), 38–49. https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/bumblebees-trouble-embodied-literacies-during/docview/1707856889/se-2

Thomas, E. E. (2021). Diversity. In P. Nel, L. Paul, & N. Christensen (Eds.), *Keywords for children's literature* (2nd ed., pp. 64-67). New York University Press.

UNESCO. (2024, January 31). *What you need to know about literacy*. UNESCO. https://www.unesco.org/en/literacy/need-know

Vaandering, A. G. & Rosenzweig, J. W. (2023). Every color of the rainbow: a framework for analyzing LGBTQIA + representation in children's picture books. *Journal of LGBT Youth, ahead-of-print*(ahead-of-print), 1–30. https://doi.org/10.1080/19361653.2023.2182395

Vazquez, A. (2023). The magic of seeing yourself in books. *Phi Delta Kappan, 104*(8), 52–55. https://doi.org/10.1177/00317217231174714

Wannamaker, A. (2017). Men in Cloaks and High-heeled Boots, Men Wielding Pink Umbrellas: Witchy Masculinities in the *Harry Potter* novels. *The Looking Glass : New Perspectives on Children's Literature, 20*(1), 19-33. https://ojs.latrobe.edu.au/ojs/index.php/tlg/article/view/865

We Need Diverse Books. (n.d.). *About Us*. Diversebooks. Retrieved from January 8 2024 https://diversebooks.org/about-wndb/

Weka, K. (2023). *"As long as they read": Norwegian School Libraries and the Literary Canon* [Master's thesis, Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet]. NTNU Open. https://hdl.handle.net/11250/3077855

Wimpy Kid. (n.d.). *Wimpy Kid*. Retrieved from March 11 2024 https://wimpykid.com/

Wizarding World. (2018, February 1). *500 million Harry Potter books have now been sold worldwide*. https://www.wizardingworld.com/news/500-million-harry-potter-books-have-now-been-sold-worldwide