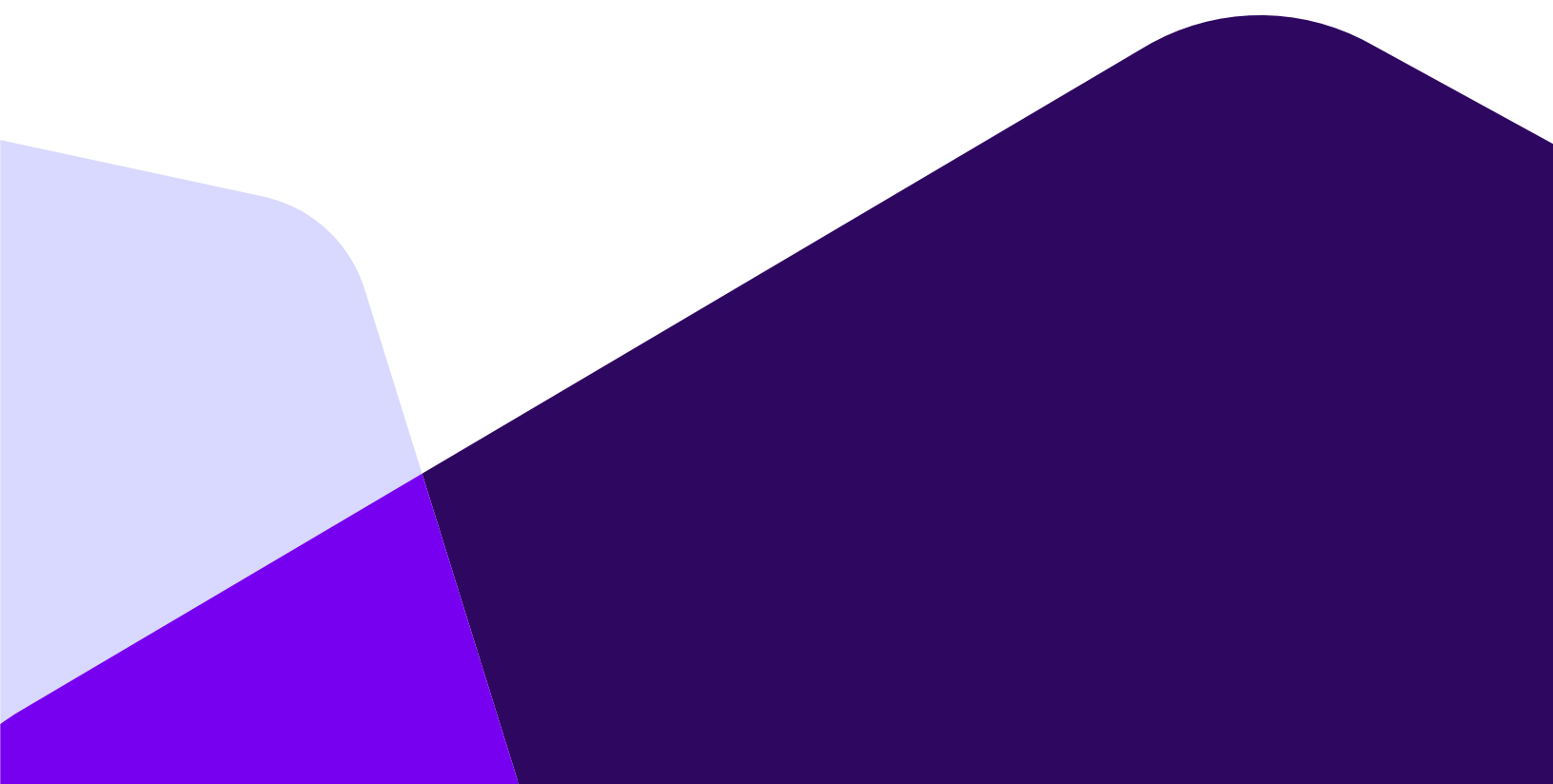Jemimah Andersen & Kaja Pedersen

BookTok Books in the Classroom

A Study of Diversity in Popular BookTok Books and its Relevance for the English Subject Curriculum

University of South-Eastern Norway

Faculty of Humanities, Sports, and Educational Science

Department of Languages and Literature Studies

PO Box 4

3199 Borre

http://www.usn.no

This thesis is worth 30 study points.

Abstract

The Norwegian curriculum for the English subject emphasizes diversity, and gaining knowledge about this topic can be done through reading literature. In grades 5–10, the students are expected to read self-chosen books, and given current trends online, in publishing, in bookstores, and in libraries, it seems likely that many of them might reach for BookTok books. BookTok is a subcommunity within the social media app TikTok, an app which has become more popular in recent years. Within this subcommunity, readers share their mutual love for books, gain and give recommendations, and share their opinions. The publishing industry has been influenced by this phenomenon and bookstores recognize this as well as they often make designated tables for these books.

With this in mind, we wanted to research to what extent popular BookTok books represent different types of diversity. The research question we aimed to answer was:

> To what degree do popular books on BookTok, which teenagers tend to reach for when choosing literature for themselves, reflect the English subject curriculum's emphasis on diversity?

To research this, we first conducted a web content analysis to find out what books were trending at a certain time. After an initial data analysis, we determined the six most popular books. These were the books chosen as our primary material. Second, we analyzed our primary material using qualitative content analysis and coded the results abductively. We found varying degrees of diversity in the books analyzed, some better than others. Still, the majority of the characters were white, straight, cisgendered, able-bodied, and from the upper or middle class. However, we concluded that all of them reflect the curriculum's emphasis on diversity, as they all have some type of diverse representation. Based on previous research and our presence on BookTok, we believed that we would find more diverse representation than we did. We discuss the ramifications of our findings for English teaching in the discussion and conclusion, where we argue that the BookTok books we analyzed, to a certain degree, reflect the curriculums emphasis on diversity. However, we should aim for more diverse books, as these are students´ windows into other cultures and social groups. As well as reflections of themselves.

List of Contents

Acknowledgments

First, we want to thank our families for showing us support and for encouraging us on our journey of writing this thesis. We also want to thank our partners for being patient and for listening to us rambling about topics they know nothing about. Although they have been supportive, they do not realize the magnitude of effort put into writing a master thesis. Therefore, we want to thank our girls, who are also on the same journey as us. Thank you for sharing this experience with us, as it made writing a thesis less lonely. Thank you for your supportive and uplifting words. We are going to miss listening to your rants as well as the support in our mutual mental breakdowns.

We would also like to give a special thanks to our lovely supervisor, Jenny, a fellow bookworm. We appreciate all your help, as well as all our conversations on other engaging (sometimes all-consuming) topics such as mini-book-bindings, fanfiction and Wattpad. Your lightning-fast replies have broken all of our confusion and concerns. Also, your interest and enthusiasm in our project have motivated us from start to finish. We truly could not have done this without your knowledge and support.

To Kaja:

I want to thank you for coming on this journey together with me. I know that the way I normally work on projects might have been stress-inducing for you, so thank you for your ever-lasting patience with me doing stuff late. You have made me work better, and I would not have done as good of a job without you pushing me. In you, I have found a fellow bookworm to discuss theories and our mutual love for characters with shadow-powers and big wingspans. I have enjoyed reading and reacting to books, and all the memes sent to you. While we do not always have the same tastes in books, having someone to be as excited as me with new books has been such a fun experience! It is thanks to you that this whole experience with writing a thesis has not been as hard as I imagined it to be. So, thank you for your partnership in this thesis!

To Jemimah:

Thank you for tolerating my high stress levels and obsessive need for control. I know I can be strict and sometimes downright bossy, but you have learned to handle me at my worst. I am forever grateful that we decided to embark on this project together due to our mutual interest in reading. Your insightfulness, knowledge, and enthusiasm have made writing a master's thesis a lot more bearable. Your lively personality and bubbly laughter have made dark days brighter. I am going to miss our video calls and meetings at Espresso House. Writing with you has been an absolute joy. You are an amazing research partner and an even better friend.

1 Introduction

The Norwegian curriculum for the English subject emphasizes the importance of learning about culture and diversity. This is mentioned in all sub-sections in the curriculum which also mentions that gaining knowledge of various cultures and types of diversity will help prevent prejudice. Shortly put, the students are supposed to gain knowledge about diversity and culture through an exploratory approach to language and by investigating and working with texts in English. Some of the texts the students are expected to work with are supposed to be self-chosen. This is stated in the curriculum aims for years 7 and 10 (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training [hereafter, "Udir"], 2020).

Considering the curriculum's emphasis on culture and diversity, we argue that these self-chosen texts should have diverse characters. *Diversity* is defined by the We Need Diverse Books project as "all diverse experiences, including (but not limited to) LGBTQIA, Native, people of color, gender diversity, people with disabilities, and ethnic, cultural, and religious minorities" (We Need Diverse Books, 2023). The occurrence of diverse characters in literature is important when it comes to children's sense of worth in society. Bishop (1990) argues that children can feel devalued in society if they don't see themselves in the literature they read. It is also important that children see people from other social groups in the literature they read as well in order to prevent prejudice. Additionally, the absence of relatable characters in literature can possibly "deter children from minority backgrounds from reading and experiencing the associated benefits" (Bold, 2019, p. 6). The importance of seeing oneself and others in literature is also stated in the English subject curriculum. Under the core element "Working with Texts" it states that working with texts should "build the foundation for seeing their own identity and others' identities in a multilingual and multicultural context" (Udir, 2020, p. 3).

When reading self-chosen books, we believe that students in grades 5–10 in most cases would reach for *young adult books*. Crow (1998) defines "young adult" as a person aged 12 –17 (p. 121). This age group coincides with the grades 5 –10, as these pupils are 10 –16 years old. In short, young adult books are books that are tailored to those who are between the ages of 12 –17. Although there are YA books that have controversial topics, they might not be very explicit.

However, a new genre has emerged that is proving popular with teenagers: *new adult (NA) books.* Some of the older students who read at a higher level or are more experienced readers might reach for NA books. NA books are recommended to readers 18 and older, but there are younger readers who reach for these regardless. Although we only have anecdotal evidence, we can both attest to having seen pupils in grades 5 –10 reading NA novels by authors like Colleen Hoover, Rebecca Yarros, and Ana Huang while working part-time as teachers. We have also seen young readers reach for NA novels in bookstores. NA books tend to be more sexually explicit than YA but contain many of the same themes and tropes.

Over the last several years, many YA and NA books have been trending on the social media platform TikTok. TikTok is a video-sharing app whose popularity has increased exponentially in the last couple of years (Jerasa & Boffone, 2021, p. 219). The app is especially popular amongst generation Z — the generation born between 1997 and 2012 (Dimock, 2019). The students in grades 6 –10 are a part of this generation, and it is safe to assume that many of them have TikTok accounts. In fact, a Norwegian study supports this: 73 percent of young people ages 9 –18 use TikTok (Medietilsynet, 2022, p. 24). This study also shows that students in lower grades in Norway, who are not a part of generation Z, also use the popular video-sharing app. TikTok is algorithm-driven and presents each user with a unique feed which is called the "for you page" (FYP). This feed is tailored to each user based on their interests and their interactions and engagement on the app (Anderson, 2020, p. 8). This specialized algorithm has contributed to the emergence of sub-communities within the app. One popular sub-community is BookTok, a community interested in reading and discussing mostly YA literature (Jerasa & Boffone, 2021, p. 219). Moreover, because of BookTok's influence on the publishing industry, one does not need to have a TikTok account to get BookTok recommendations. In bookstores in Norway and abroad, there are now dedicated BookTok tables or shelves where popular BookTok books are displayed. Some books even have a BookTok sticker to convey the fact that they are trending. Therefore, one can argue that many young readers will likely read books that have been trending on TikTok when deciding which self-chosen books to read.

Both of us have personal interest in this field, as we often read much in our free time. We also use social media when deciding which books we want to read, and are heavily influenced by what

online book-communities have to say about books. More, we noticed that our pupils often carried copies of books trending on BookTok. Because of this, we decided to research popular BookTok books. We noticed that there were some authors who had more diverse characters than others and were fascinated by how this would affect younger readers. We know from our own experience that when one can be considered "diverse", which one of us can, one gets more excited when authors include characters with similar characteristics as opposed to characters who belong to the majority — that is, we have personally experienced Bishop's (1990) theories affectively. Whenever we have encountered these characters, we have taken extra notice of them. Given the fact that this experience is so important to us, we see the value of seeing diverse characters in literature for young readers. However, it is important to mention that one does not need to be considered "diverse" to feel excited when reading characters belonging to a minority. The English subject curriculum clearly states that texts can "build the foundation for seeing their own identity and others' identities in a multilingual and multicultural context" (Udir, 2020, p. 3). As mentioned, children need to see themselves in literature to not feel devalued in society. Additionally, they need to see other social groups represented in order to not get an egocentric view of the world (Bishop, 1990). Therefore, diversity in literature is essential, especially for young readers. With this in mind, we hoped that books trending on BookTok would include diverse characters, because many of the people in the BookTok-community are young adults. We therefore sought to investigate this.

Previous research on diversity in popular BookTok books is limited, because this is a very new and narrow field of research. However, Kleppestø and Omdahl (2022) have written a master's thesis in which one of the topics they explored was diversity in books which have been trending on BookTok. They analyzed 15 books and found that four of the protagonists were queer (p. 28) and one central character had an ethnic minority background: however, most of the characters were white (p. 32). Furthermore, Boffone and Jerasa (2021) have explored the queer YA community on BookTok (p. 10). Their findings imply that some popular BookTok books have diverse characters, at least in this particular sub-community. However, they did not analyze specific books, and books that are trending in one sub-community are not necessarily trending across BookTok. Moreover, Johanson, Rutherford and Reddan (2023) have written an article about the lack of diversity in the publishing industry and decided to explore the reader's position

in the publishing process (p. 91). One of the aspects they researched was young readers' use of social media to review, recommend, and explore books (p. 101). The authors and publishers they interviewed had contradictory views on the matter: Some argued that publishers get the chance to have a direct relationship with their readers due to their social media presence, whereas others argued that they did not think social media mattered for what books young people chose to read (p. 101). While Johanson, Rutherford, and Reddan (2023) argue that BookTok is an accurate representation of younger readers' taste in books, none of the authors and publishers they interviewed mentioned TikTok in the interviews (p. 102). Finally, Garcia (2023) has written a chapter about the bookish community in her master's thesis and argues that there is a lack of diversity on BookTok. However, some BookTok creators have started to recommend more diverse books in order to reverse this trend (pp. 30–31). Moreover, Garcia argues that everyone is entitled to read what they want, but that the BookTok community should acknowledge the influence they have and start to recommend and review books by diverse authors (pp. 35–36).

Based on the limited previous research into the topic, we therefore chose to examine diversity in trending BookTok books. The study combined ethnographic methods to gather data with qualitative analyses of the top six trending books. The theories we have used in the analysis are divided into two groups: theories related to media and consumers and theories related to diversity. The theories we have utilized to analyze BookTook and online book cultures are encoding/decoding by Stuart Hall (2009) and convergence culture by Henry Jenkins (2006). Furthermore, the theories we applied when analyzing our primary material were Bishop's (1990*)* concepts of windows, mirrors and sliding glass doors combined with queer, transgender, class, race, and disability theories (see section 3, below). The latter theories were chosen because they can be directly related to the codes we used when coding our data.

On the basis of the emphasis on diversity in the English subject curriculum, the requirement that students in grades 5–10 read self-chosen books, previous research, and theory, the research question we aim to answer is:

> To what degree do popular books on BookTok, which teenagers tend to reach for when choosing literature for themselves, reflect the English subject curriculum's emphasis on diversity?

Because we are looking at popular BookTok books, we found it imperative to get our primary material from BookTok. Therefore, we set up new accounts and influenced our algorithms by engaging with BookTok content. Then we scrolled through BookTok in the span of an eight-week period at the end of 2023. The books we encountered were then noted down and put into a spreadsheet, and we limited our search to books released in 2023. This method can be characterized as a quantitative web content analysis (Krippendorff, 2019; Herring, 2009). The books we ended up using for our primary material were *Wildfire* by Hannah Grace (2023), *A Curse for True Love* by Stephanie Garber (2023), *Divine Rivals* by Rebecca Ross (2023), *Powerless* by Lauren Roberts (2023), *Fourth Wing* by Rebecca Yarros (2023a), and *Iron Flame* by Rebecca Yarros (2023b). We analyzed these six books using qualitative content analysis (Mauer & Venecek, 2021). Specifically, we looked for quotes and passages that conveyed the diversity of the characters and coded the data. Some of the codes were predetermined while others emerged as we read and analyzed the material. Our coding process was therefore abductive (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019; Neuendorf, 2017).

We believe that diversity in BookTok literature is an important field of research because many young diverse readers use BookTok for inspiration when choosing their next read. According to Bishop (1990), amongst others, it is imperative that the books they read reflect themselves and the societies they live in. Bishop (1990) argues that children can feel devalued in society if they cannot find themselves in the books they read or if the images they see of themselves in books are negative, distorted, or laughable. Additionally, this is a new and constantly developing field of research, and it is thus important to contribute to our understanding of BookTok's influence on young readers' choices. The Centre for Literacy in Primary Education's [hereafter, CLPE] (2023) annual *Reflecting Realities* report shows that there is a continuous upward trend in the number of children's texts with representation of racially minoritized characters (p. 7). In the 2023 report, they found that "30% of the children's picturebooks, fiction and non-fiction titles published in 2022 featured racially minoritised characters" (p. 6). In their report from 2017, this number was drastically lower, only 7 percent (p. 6). The Cooperative Children's book Center's [hereafter, CCBC] *Diversity Statistics* also show an upwards trend in representation of BIPOC characters in literature for children and teens. They also consider other aspects of diversity, and in their latest report they found that 7 percent of the books they received featured representation of disability, and 7 percent featured representation of the LGBTQ+ community (CCBC, 2024). It is important

to keep aiming for diversity in literature and make sure that this positive trend continues. Also, these reports only look for some types of diversity, but it is important to also aim to include all types of diversity in literature.

2 Background and Previous Research

2.1 Culture, Diversity, and Self-chosen Texts in the English Subject Curriculum

Culture and diversity are mentioned in many places the English subject curriculum. Clearly, this is important in Norwegian education. In this section, we are going to systematically go through the curriculum and discuss the parts where culture and diversity are emphasized. Additionally, we are going to mention what the curriculum says about reading self-chosen texts and its attitude toward reading for pleasure.

Firstly, the subject's relevance and values states that "English is an important subject when it comes to cultural understanding" and it emphasizes that "[t]he subject shall give the pupils the foundation for communicating with others, both locally and globally, regardless of cultural or linguistic background" (Udir, p. 2, 2020). This section also mentions that

> "[k]nowledge of and an exploratory approach to language, communication patterns, lifestyles, ways of thinking and social conditions open for new perspectives on the world and ourselves" (p. 2).

Additionally, this section underlines the fact that the English subject will help develop the student's "understanding that their views of the world are culture dependent" (p. 2). According to the curriculum, this can help prevent prejudice (p. 2).

Secondly, under the core element 'Working with texts in English' it says that

> "[w]orking with texts in English helps to develop the pupils' 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" (p. 3).

This will help develop the pupils' intercultural competence. Additionally, this section states that the students "shall build the foundation for seeing their own identity and others' identities in a multilingual and multicultural context" (p. 3).

Culture is also mentioned under the interdisciplinary topics discussed in the English subject curriculum. The interdisciplinary topic "democracy and citizenship" is expected to help pupils "develop their understanding of the fact that the way they view the world is culture dependent" (p. 3). This topic also aims to help prevent prejudices. Also, the importance of cultural competence is briefly mentioned under the interdisciplinary topic 'health and life skills' as well. Here, they emphasize the fact that cultural competence can "open for new ways to interpret the world, and promote curiosity and engagement and help to prevent prejudices" (p. 3).

These values are repeated in the learning aims for specific grades. For example, one of the competence aims after year 7 says: "The pupil is expected to be able 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" (p. 7). A similar competence aim after year 10 is: "The pupil is expected to be able to explore and describe ways of living, ways of thinking, communication patterns and diversity in the English-speaking world" (p. 9). Another aim related to culture after year 10 is: "The pupil is expected to be able to explore and reflect on the situation of indigenous peoples in the English-speaking world and in Norway" (p. 9). This shows us that culture and diversity are a big part of the English subject curriculum. Our research is therefore important and relevant, because it explores diversity in books which are popular among the age group which we are going to teach.

The English subject curriculum also emphasizes the importance of reading for pleasure. This is mentioned under the basic skill "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" (p. 4). By the end of year 7 and year 10, there are aims related to reading self-chosen texts: By the end of year 7 "[t]he pupil is expected to be able to read and present content from various types of texts, including self-chosen texts" (p. 7) and by the end of year 10 "[t]he pupil is expected to be able to read, discuss and present content from various types of texts, including self-chosen texts" (p. 9). This indicates that the curriculum values reading for pleasure and reading motivation. When choosing books to read for themselves,

we believe many young readers would reach for YA and NA books that have been or are currently trending on BookTok. In section 2.2.5, we will explain and discuss YA and NA books and substantiate this argument.

2.2 Diversity in Young Adult- and New Adult Books

2.2.1 Diversity and its Occurrence in Literature

The We Need Diverse Books project defines *diversity* as "all diverse experiences, including (but not limited to) LGBTQIA, Native, people of color, gender diversity, people with disabilities, and ethnic, cultural, and religious minorities" (We Need Diverse Books, 2023). This is the definition we will rely on in our thesis. The codes in our analysis are heavily influenced by this definition and the We Need Diverse Books project. They also emphasize the importance of seeing ourselves and other members of our society in literature. In one of their campaign videos featuring John Green, he argues that we need diverse books because "we need to reflect the reality of our communities and that reality is a very diverse one" and that "it is important to see yourself in stories" and to imagine the lives of others (We Need Diverse Books, 2014, 0:06). This is something we strongly agree with, and this view also reflects the curriculum's emphasis on diversity. Additionally, we will rely on Bishop's (1990) theory of windows, mirrors and sliding glass doors which emphasizes the same sentiment.

Bold (2019), similar to Bishop and the We Need Diverse Books project, emphasizes that being exposed to people from different cultures and backgrounds is a way to "reduce prejudice and stereotypes" (p. 17). It is important that readers should be able to see themselves in the characters they read, and yes this is true, but being able to interact with other cultures can teach the reader something as well. Meeting new people from different cultures and backgrounds broadens one's view, but one might not always have access to people with different backgrounds. The next best scenario would then be in literature. Therefore, having literature that is inclusive and that portrays different cultures and ethnicities is not only beneficial, but necessary. Not only to showcase different cultures and backgrounds, but also to show that being from a different background does not affect what type of profession you can have.

The publishing industry, however, often uses *diversity* to "describe books written by, or featuring, people of colour, and/or publishing professionals of colour" (Bold, 2018, p. 386). This means that books marketed as having diversity, oftentimes only include ethnoracial diversity — a diversity which has long been lacking in English language literature for young readers. Bold (2018) has demonstrated that there is a lack of diversity in the Anglo-American book publishing industries. The industry is dominated by "white, middle-class, able-bodied, cisgendered, heteronormativity (in its workforce, authors, and characters)" (p. 385). Similarly, according to Booth and Narayan (2021) "Australian young adult fiction did not begin featuring protagonists from marginalized communities until the 1990s" (p. 6). They mention that "authors from marginalized communities still face several challenges" and that there is an under-representation of diversity among both the authors and the characters in the YA books (p. 8). Australia imports most bestselling YA literature from the US, and most of the authors are white. This means that these books take up space on the shelves that could have been used for books written by Australian authors and representing marginalized communities (p. 8). In the UK, CLPE (2023) does an annual survey of the "extent and quality of ethnic representation in children's literature published" (p. 3). In their most recent *Reflecting Realities* report from 2023, they considered 3,195 children's picture books, both fiction and non-fiction, all of which were published in 2022. Their findings showed that:

> "Of these titles, 954 featured racially minoritised characters. This indicates that 30% of the children's picturebooks, fiction and non-fiction titles published in 2022 featured racially minoritised characters, compared to 20% in 2021, 15% in 2020, 10% in 2019, 7% in 2018 and 4% in 2017" (p. 6).

These findings show us that there is a continuous upward trend in the number of texts with representation of racially minoritized characters (p. 7). Addressing the lack of diversity in YA literature is important, because it is crucial for young readers to see themselves and their society reflected in the literature they read. This is emphasized by CLPE (2023), who mention how "[t]he term Reflecting Realities was inspired by Dr Rudine Sims Bishop's fundamental body of work and advocacy for inclusive literature" (p. 6). In the US, The Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC) does a similar survey, the annual *Diversity Statistics*. CCBC have since 1985 documented the books for children and teens that they receive. First, they only documented books by and about black people, but have since started to consider additional aspects of identity,

including Indigenous, people of color, disability, LGBTQ+ and religion. Their latest report from 2023 showed little increase of representation of BIPOC characters from the last report from 2022:

> "In 2023, 49 percent of the books CCBC documented had significant BIPOC content (up from 46 percent in 2022), and 40 percent had at least one BIPOC primary character (up from 39 percent in 2022)" (CCBC, 2024).

Furthermore, 7 percent of the books the CCBC received in 2023 "featured a primary or secondary character/human subject with a disability or were about one or more disabilities" (CCBC, 2024). Also, 7 percent of the books included LGBTQ+ themes or characters (CCBC, 2024). In this next section, we will discuss the representation of LGBTQIA+, people of color (POC), and disability in literature and on social media.

2.2.2 Representation of LGBTQIA+

BookTok acts as a safe space for queer teens and allies to engage with queer YA literature. Books with queer characters are oftentimes not included in school settings, and therefore young readers will not meet these characters unless they seek out these books themselves (Boffone & Jerasa, 2021, p. 10). Queer YA literature has in fact become very popular on BookTok, especially books written by authors of color (p. 11). In recent years readers have gotten to see more diverse characters in primary as opposed to background roles (p. 12). BookTok makes it easier for readers to find books where they can see representations of themselves. In Flood's (2021) article, BookTok creator Faith Young says that the most popular books on BookTok usually have straight, white characters, but it is easy to find books with other representations. She goes on to say: "I'm bisexual, and when I first joined, I only ever read books about straight couples. So finding these books that I saw myself reflected in was life-changing" (Flood, 2021).

Young people often view characters that they've read about or characters from other media as their role models. This is because they can relate to these characters in some form. Not having relatable characters, especially in literature, can possibly "deter children from minority backgrounds from reading and experiencing the associated benefits" (p. 6). This may very well be one of the reasons why BookTok books are popular, as they cater to a wide audience with different tastes in genres. Bold (2019) mentions in her article that "the books we read as children have the potential to shape our minds and lives" (p. 16). When reading a book where you can see yourself in the characters, it is easier to imagine yourself in the same professions or aspirations

those characters have. Also, when having characters with different backgrounds or ethnicities as the main character, it normalizes that all people can be the main character or hero in a story.

In another paper, Booth and Narayan (2018b) researched the output of YA fiction with LGBTQIA+ characters and noticed that after the legalization of same-sex marriages in Australia, the number of queer representations grew continually (p. 40). There is still a gap when it comes to the inclusion of stories by and for marginalized communities, the same is true for stories by and for the queer community (p. 41).

2.2.3 Representation of BIPOC

When it comes to content created on TikTok, you can see a diverse group of content creators on the app. With apps such as TikTok, or even Instagram, there has emerged something that one can call "creator economy". This is a term in which content creators make a profit for the content they create. There are many who live off of the profit they make from these apps (Harris et al, 2023, pp. 1–2). Even though there are people making a profit off the content they make,

> "[m]arginalized communities including but not limited to LGBTQ+ individuals, Black, Indigenous, and people of color, people with disabilities, and individuals at the intersections of these groups have experienced inequities in the creator economy" (pp. 1–2).

These creators might encounter unfairness within the creator communities, this be that their content is not showing up in people's algorithms. Therefore, they might be passed up for different forms of partnerships. While they encounter these issues, they also encounter a greater risk for "harassment, hate speech, unequal pay, and lack of opportunities to grow their platforms and reach wider audiences" (pp. 1–2). Even though these issues exist, black creators and creators from marginalized groups have to find a way to make content around the challenges they face, in order to be successful in the creator economy (pp. 1–2). This is something we noticed while scrolling through TikTok. Throughout our time scrolling, we came across many creators, but most of the creators we saw were white females in their twenties. The people of color (POC) whose content that came on our FYP, appeared significantly less frequently. While our research did not look at the demographics of BookTok creators, we did notice that there exists a bias against POC and queer content creators on TikTok, but we also see this bias against POC and

queer authors that get their books shown on TikTok. We feel that this is an important area for further research.

While this is important to mention for our thesis, we must also note that BIPOC representations in media and in literature are underrepresented according to Thomas (2019). In our own experience when it comes to TV shows or movies, people from minority backgrounds are often typecast, meaning that the roles they play are stereotypical for their ethnicity. When this is the representation of one's own ethnicity in mainstream media, it can be difficult to aspire to be something greater. This is the reason for having a diverse cast, not only in mainstream media, but in literature as well. When one can see one's own ethnicity in professions that are considered aspirational and of higher status, it is easier to imagine oneself in the same position. The more authors who include characters with different cultures and backgrounds in their books, the more it broadens the number of characters that may act as role models for young readers.

Rumsby (2017) has written a thesis about racial representation in fantasy literature. While his thesis is specifically tied to the fantasy genre, most of it can be related to other genres. He writes that if "a culture is accepted as racist, then one would expect its language – an indispensable transmitter of culture – to be racist as well" (Cheney, Lafrance & Quinteros as cited in Rumbsy, 2017, p. 12). He continues to argue that "racial representations made by non-racialized individuals" might lead to "dehumanization of the racialized" (p. 15). This is in line with what Dyer (2017a; 2017b) writes as well and will be further explained in section 3.2.3.

2.2.4 Representation of Disability

One definition of disability is that it "encompasses a broad range of bodily, cognitive, and sensory differences and capacities" (Adams et al, 2015). Also, disability can be fluid as one can suddenly or gradually become disabled due to various reasons, and some disablements might not be considered disabilities at all, e.g. "the gradual disablement of aging or a progressive illness" (Garland-Thomson as cited in Meyer, 2013, p. 267). Disability has been viewed in various ways both historically and presently; "as a problem, a condition, an identity, and a source of pride" (Meyer, 2013, p. 267). In modern and contemporary American literature, disabled people have for the most part been portrayed as "feared, reviled, misunderstood or pitied" (Beauchamp et al., 2010, p. 1). For example, in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the townspeople first fear Boo, a

developmentally disabled character, and consider him dangerous (Lee as cited in Beauchamp et al., 2010, p. 3). However, he is ultimately "revealed as both compassionate and brave" (Beauchamp et al., 2010, p. 3). Disability will be further explained in section 3.2.5 where we present disability theory.

2.2.5 Young Adult- (YA) and New Adult (NA) Books

On TikTok books are often categorized into genres, tropes, or if they are a YA- or NA book through the hashtags included on the videos. At the same time, many readers also use websites such as goodreads.com and storygraph.com to figure out how to label a book. These labels help readers understand what they can expect from a book, whether they´ll be reading a book including controversial themes, or whether a book can be considered easy reading. In this section we will explain and discuss YA and NA books as we argue that readers in grades 5–10 likely will choose to read these types of books when choosing books for themselves, as emphasized by the LK20. As mentioned, we have experienced this working part-time as teachers and we have also seen young readers reach for these books in bookstores. Also, the majority of this age group have TikTok accounts and can therefore be influenced to read these types of books, and they can also be influenced to read BookTok books by simply stepping into a bookstore. This will be further discussed in section 2.3.

Differentiating the types of children´s literature has long been difficult. Crow (1998) argues that non-adult books have a wide breadth, as they "range from wordless picture books to fairly sophisticated novels" (p. 120). As a result, books for young readers are often categorized according to form (picture book, graphic novel) or by the age of the intended readers, such as "juvenile, middle grade, adolescent, young adult, etc." (p. 121). However, such categories have not really solved the problem of how to differentiate children's books.

Crow (1998) defines a *young adult* as a person between the ages 12–18 (p. 121). In YA books, "the protagonist (...) is rarely an adult by the end of the narrative" (Trites as cited in Pattee, 2017, p. 221). Therefore, one must take into account that young adults are not actually *adults*, but still minors, which is why YA is often considered children's literature, broadly defined. Definitions of literature based on age ranges are not perfect. However, Crow (1998) acknowledges that YA

books are marketed to and intended for teenagers. He recognizes that teenagers often read literature intended for younger and older readers. The advantage of YA books is that they are likely to be relevant for teenagers. If you have teenagers in your classroom who do not like to read, giving them a fast-paced YA book can encourage them to be more interested in reading (Crow, 1998, p. 121). The themes of YA books are often about finding yourself, the journey that you take, and the friends you make. This has historically been seen as *Bildungroman*, which is an "inherently Romantic genre, with its optimistic ending that affirms the protagonist's entry into adulthood" (Seelinger as cited in Daley-Carey, 2018, p. 468).

That said, with the extension to schooling caused by wider expectations of higher education (Statistics Norway, 2015), another group of people who might be too old for YA, but do not relate to *adult* books has emerged. This is where the category *New Adult* (NA) comes in. Books that fall under this category often target university-aged readers, between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four (Pattee, 2017, p. 219). Those in the NA category are no longer in compulsory schooling but have yet to enter the full-time workforce, and as such do not identify as adults yet: "You may call yourself an adult (as will others), but deep down inside you are petrified because you don't feel like one" (Carmack as cited in Pattee, 2017, p. 220). One can compare this category to Bildungsroman, since "[n]ew adult literature is characterized by its depiction of its protagonists 'com[ing] of age as (…) adults'" (Pattee, 2017, p. 221). Thematically, then, NA and YA overlap.

However, while some use NA to refer to all books intended for university-aged readers, others use NA "to describe a specific subgenre of romance, erotic romance" (Engberg et al, 2014, p. 5), often referred to as "spicy" books (Kruse, 2022, p. 10). By this definition, NA books can be compared to what was known as "chick lit" at the start of the century. In our view, the NA genre appeals both to those who want to read erotic books and to those who have outgrown books that fall under the YA genre "and are looking to find characters that share their age and interest[s]" (p. 5). Many of the books that become popular on TikTok portray the transition between high school and college, sexual development, and how one traverses this new and exciting time (Engberg et al, 2014, p. 5).

According to Rose Hillard, NA "is an offshoot of romance and is not connected to YA, because it's so sexy" (as cited in Cart, 2014, p. 10). More, as NA books are often self-published and are

only available digitally "NA began and continues to be a vital presence in the e-world" (Cart, 2014, p. 10), which strengthens its ties to online book cultures on platforms like TikTok. In other words, many of the authors who self-publish their books do so by publishing only digital texts, not physical books. With the help of smartphones and e-readers, for example Kindle, it is easy for people to access e-books. Indeed, it is sometimes easier to get a hold of an e-book rather than a physical copy of a book, particularly when someone in Norway wishes to read in English. This might be because the selection of English books available online is usually much wider than those carried by bookstores, and particularly Norwegian bookstores. More, while the NA genre was popularized "as a subgenre that bridged the gap between contemporary YA and contemporary romance, it´s gradually expanding to include paranormal romance and romantic suspense stories as well" (Cart, 2014, p. 10), widening its possible audiences. Cart (2014) mentions that NA books have a large following online, and this is reflected by the books that are popular on TikTok. The majority of the books that are recommended on TikTok are what could be categorized as NA books, as the characters are often in the age range eighteen to late twenties.

Although the intended age range for NA books is higher than what pupils in grades 5–10 are, we do acknowledge that pupils in these grades reach for such BookTok books. The intended age range for books are strongly influenced by the idea that minors should continue to be sexually innocent until they reach 18, even though the sexual curiosity is present in earlier ages during puberty. Because of this, spicy books are in a grey area — it has to marked 18+, but they might appeal to younger readers whose curiosity and interest in physical relationships go beyond kissing and hugging.

2.3 TikTok, BookTok and Online Book Cultures

2.3.1 TikTok and BookTok

The rise of TikTok has had and continues to have a great influence on society. The social media app's popularity skyrocketed during the Covid pandemic in 2020 due to lack of entertainment. Movies and TV-shows were put on hold, so consumers of entertainment had to get their fix elsewhere (Jerasa & Boffone, 2021, p. 219). TikTok reached 1.5 billion users in 2023 and this number is expected to continue to grow (Iqbal, 2024). The app, created by the Chinese company ByteDance, first launched in September 2016. It was heavily inspired by Musical.ly, a video-

sharing app on which creators could make short, looping lip-syncing and dancing videos which ByteDance purchased in 2017 and merged with TikTok in 2018 (Anderson, 2020, p. 7).

Today, TikTok is a video-sharing app where the users can share short videos. Videos they create using the app itself can be up to 60 seconds, while videos they film on other softwares and upload can last up to 3 minutes (TikTok, 2024). Users can interact with videos by commenting, liking, or stitching (using part of someone else's video in their own video) (Jerasa & Boffone, 2021, p. 219). Videos can also be combined with "sound bites, music clips, hashtags and short texts" (Martens et al, 2022, p. 707). The app is especially popular amongst Generation Z, which is the generation born between 1997 and 2012 (Dimock, 2019). According to Jerasa and Boffone (2021) this is because "competitors, such as Instagram, promote a filtered, picture-perfect view of reality, [while] TikTok aesthetics are largely messy, chaotic, campy, and genuine" (p. 220). A unique feature of TikTok is its FYP. This is the first page one sees when one opens the app and it presents users with one video at a time. To get to the next video, the user must swipe up. This algorithm-driven video feed will show content that is tailored "for you". The user can also choose to look at another feed limited to the users that they follow (Anderson, 2020, p. 8).

Because of TikTok's algorithm, sub-communities on the app have emerged. The app's algorithm provides the users with content that is specifically adapted to their interests (Boffone & Jerasa, 2021, p. 11). One very popular sub-community called BookTok is "dedicated to reading and discussing (mostly) young adult literature" (Jerasa & Boffone, 2021, p. 219). The hashtag #BookTok has 212.7 billion views as of January 5, 2024. This sub-community can be compared to a book club, because the users share videos about their favorite books and recommend authors, genres, and books to each other (Harris, 2021). Additionally, the users make videos about books using the latest popular 'sounds' (sound effects and songs used in TikTok videos) or adapt their content to a current trend. By doing this, the users make "YA literature memeable, fun, engaging and socio-culturally relevant" (Jerasa & Boffone, 2021, p. 221). Due to length limitations, we will not discuss other spaces of online book and reading cultures, such as YouTube or fan fiction archives in detail in this thesis, but we acknowledge that these cultures spaces and their histories likely influence BookTok.

2.3.2 BookTok's Influence on Young Readers and the Publishing Industry

In a 2021 study, Merga examined how the BookTok community is a resource that libraries can use when promoting books for young people (Merga, 2021, p. 1). One of the difficulties with engaging young people in reading "is that they are not a homogenous group of individuals with interests that remain static over time" (p. 2). Therefore, it is essential to figure out what engages the young people who are already readers and explore their reading communities (p. 2). As mentioned earlier, the books trending on BookTok are the books that young readers usually reach for, and these are the books that are most prominent in the YA section in bookstores. Therefore, BookTok clearly has a significant effect on the books carried and promoted by bookstores. In the United States many Barnes & Noble locations have put up so-called "BookTok tables" that display books currently trending on TikTok (Harris, 2021). This is also a common practice among bookstores in Norway, such as Norli and ARK (figure 1) These tables are often accompanied with a poster that says something along the lines of "as seen on BookTok." Some stores do not have the space for designated #booktok tables, so instead they use stickers to convey that the books are trending on #booktok (figure 2). ARK's online store has its own page dedicated to BookTok books as well (figure 3).

Figure 1

BookTok Book Display

Note. Image of a BookTok book display taken in Norli in Arkaden, Skien on January 19, 2024, by Kaja Pedersen.

Figure 2

TikTok-sticker on a book
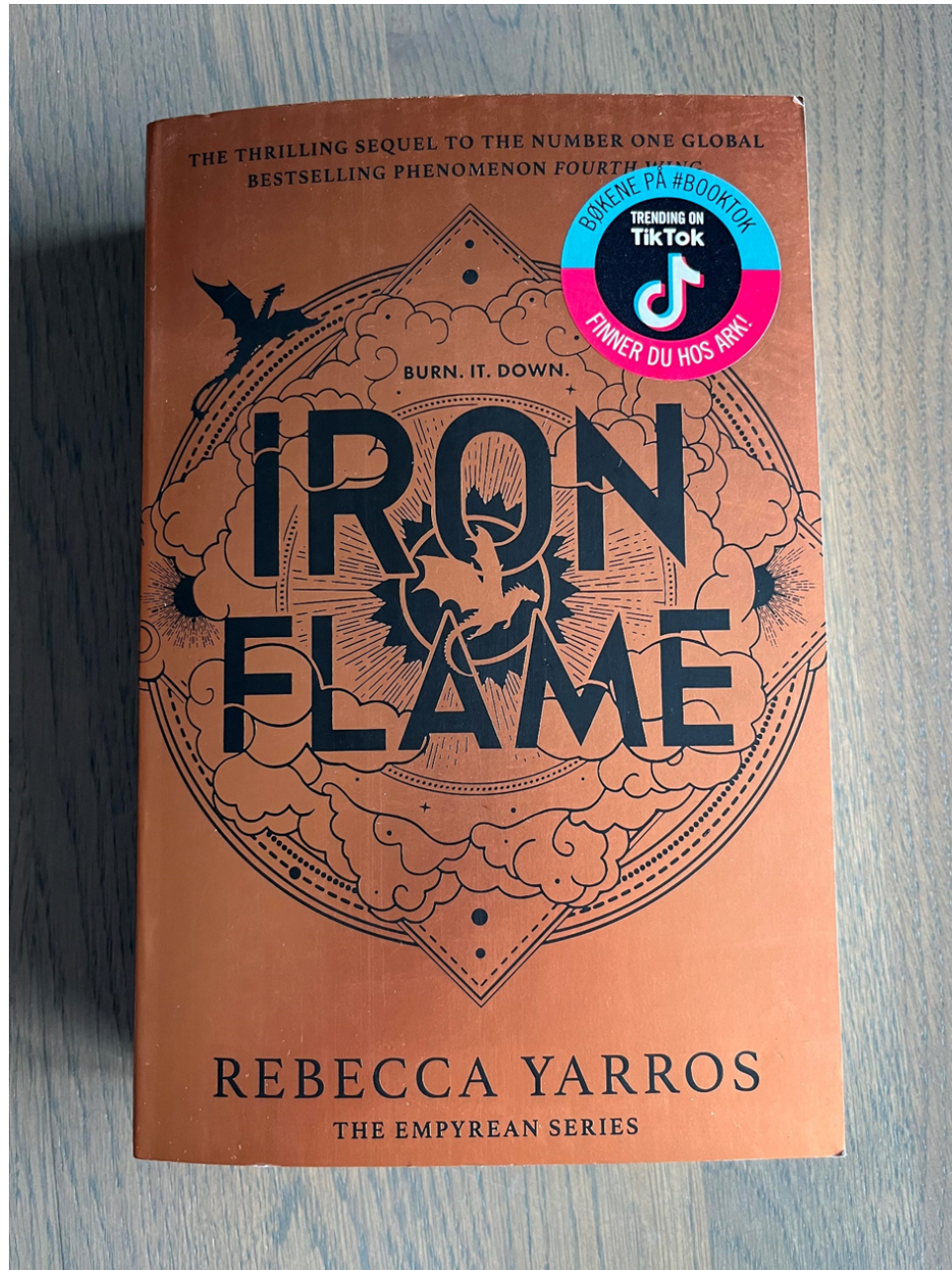
Note. Image of Iron Flame by Rebecca Yarros with a TikTok-sticker that bookstores in Norway use to show which books are currently trending on TikTok. Taken February 1, 2024 by Kaja Pedersen.

Figure 3

ARK's online BookTok-section
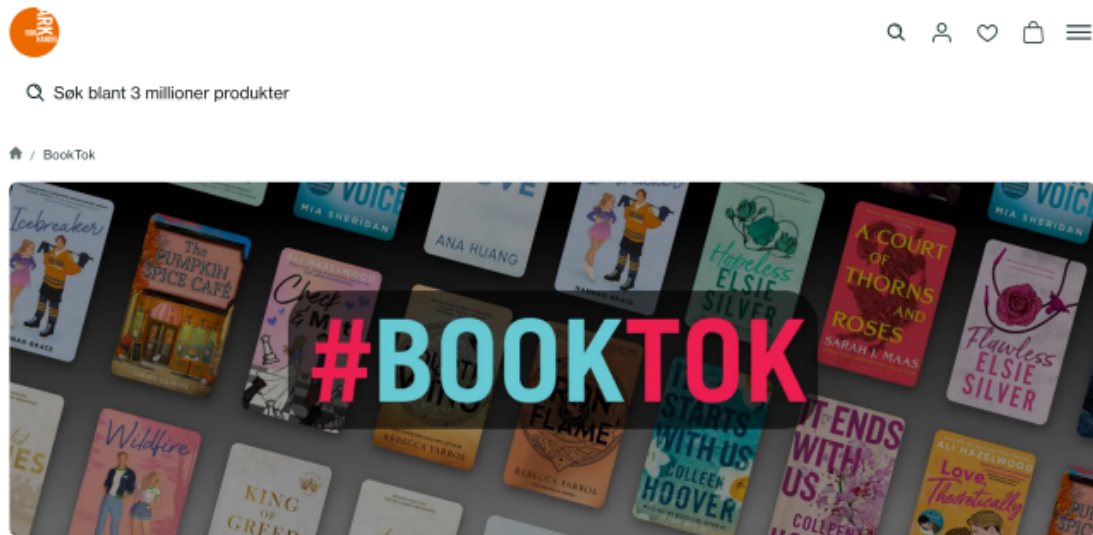
Note. Screenshot taken from ark.no from their online BookTok section taken January 5, 2024 by Kaja Pedersen. https://www.ark.no/kampanje/booktok

BookTok's influence on book sales have surprised BookTok-creators and authors (Harris, 2021), but publishers have started to notice, and are contacting BookTok creators with big followings on the app. They either offer free books or a payment in exchange for publicity on the creators' platforms (Harris, 2021). BookTok-creators are predominantly young women, and they often make videos about YA books (Flood, 2021). The rise of BookTok has made many young readers fall in love with reading again, while others have developed a love for reading for the first time through BookTok. In Flood's (2021) article, she quotes a marketing and brand consultant specializing in children's and YA books, Kat McKenna, who states that BookTok creators make videos that act as trailers for books in a way that the publishing industry have been trying to do for many years. BookTok creators manage to make the books come to life in under a minute, and this is often more engaging for many than reading the backside of a book (Flood, 2021).

As mentioned above, Merga (2021) did a study where she examined how libraries can use the BookTok community as a resource. She conducted a hybrid content analysis of TikTok videos from the BookTok community in which she analyzed the presence of hashtags, which authors and books were mentioned and recurring themes that were promoted (p. 1) One of her findings was that hashtags on the platform build communities within the app and strengthen bonds within already established communities. Some of the hashtags were directly related to specific titles or authors, for example #harrypotter or #sarahjmaas, while other hashtags were broader but still book-related, such as #bookclub or #bookrecommendations (p. 4). Hashtags are a great way for TikTok users to find more of what they like, and exploring hashtags will prompt recommendations for more similar content on their FYP. In other words, if a young reader is searching hashtags related to Harry Potter, they will most likely get more Harry Potter content and other related content on their FYP, and in this way they will receive recommendations for similar titles as well.

Recommendations were another recurring theme in the videos Merga (2021) explored. The unique thing about BookTok recommendations is that they are not just based on the creator's personal opinions, but also literature-specific factors such as tropes, themes, plot twists, and genres. Merga discovered that some recommendations attempted to ensure that the book was not spoiled when the book starts trending on TikTok. Recommendations can also take the form of warnings about books or themes that may be unpopular or controversial, while anti-

recommendations are books that the creator does not recommend (p. 5). Finally, Merga emphasizes that the emotional responses that books evoke are an important part of the reading experience for young readers. This seems to be BookTok's strength because the creators can share videos and recommendations with a focus on precisely this. Readers' emotional responses to literature have been researched in a study by Pianzola, Rebora and Lauer (2020). They analyzed how fiction was transmitted through Wattpad, a social web-reading platform. This study is extensive, but the part that is interesting for our project is their analysis of the readers' comments and emotional engagement (p. 1). Some of their findings here were that "readers like when characters react to violence, bullies and rude people" (p. 36) and "in many cases the emotional valence of a story has a direct effect on reader response" (p. 37). According to project CHYLSA, Children's and Youth Literature Sentiment Analysis, "[e]motional involvement is of pivotal importance when children learn to read, tell and share stories" (CHYLSA, n.d.). In sum, the BookTok community provides readers with recommendations based on their interests and the emotional responses other readers experience when reading certain books. Emotional responses to BookTok books could be an interesting area for future research. This will be discussed further in section 7.

In this section, we have reviewed previous research on BookTok and showcased what influence it has on young readers. As mentioned earlier, by the end of years 7 and 10, Norwegian students are expected to read self-chosen books in the English subject. We believe, based on the previous research presented and our own experiences as teachers that many students will choose books that are or have been popular on BookTok when choosing what books to read. According to a Norwegian study about young people and media, 73 percent of young people ages 9–18 use TikTok (Medietilsynet, 2022, p. 24). This means that most students in years 5 –10 have TikTok accounts. While that does not necessarily mean that they are a part of the BookTok community, BookTok's influence goes beyond the app, since you can hardly enter a bookstore without getting BookTok recommendations. Also, as Merga (2021) mentioned in her study, libraries often use BookTok as a resource, so there is a great chance to get BookTok recommendations there too. In the next section, we will review previous research on diversity in BookTok literature.

2.4 Previous Research on Diversity in BookTok Literature

Even though TikTok and BookTok are widely researched as of today, we have not found much research on diversity in BookTok literature. This is not surprising as it is a very narrow and very new field of research. In this section we will present an overview of the research that does exist.

Firstly, Kleppestø and Omdahl (2022) wrote a master's thesis about the BookTok community and popular BookTok books. They analyzed BookTok trends and user behavior with the use of innumerable TikTok videos, but they also analyzed 15 novels that had been trending on BookTok (p. 21). Their selection of books was based on books that had gotten attention under the BookTok hashtag in addition to being bestsellers in the Norwegian bookstores ARK and Norli in the period between August 2021 to May 2022 (p. 22). They did not specifically look for diversity in their analysis, because their goal was to see what characterizes a BookTok book. Still, they had some interesting findings about diversity in the books they chose. Three of the 15 books they chose had male protagonists and all of these men were either homosexual or bisexual, but only one of the female protagonists was queer (p. 28). All four books with queer protagonists were about queer relationships and the challenges of queer identity (p. 31). They also found that ethnic diversity is somewhat represented, because in seven of 15 novels, one of the central characters had a minority background. Still, most of the main characters were white (p. 32).

Secondly, Boffone and Jerasa (2021) have written an article in which they explored "the rise of TikTok literacies and how teen readers are using TikTok to create affinity spaces centered on queer YA literature" (p. 10). Within BookTok, smaller sub-communities have emerged; one of them is catered to young readers of the LGBTQIA+ community. Literature with queer characters has often been excluded from in-school libraries and can therefore have been hard to stumble upon for young readers (p. 10). However, the accessibility of recommendations for queer YA literature changed with the rise of BookTok: "Digital hallmarks such as hashtags allow underrepresented YA titles to become the centerpiece of an affinity space, offering an easy gateway or entry point to join the reading community" (p. 13). Even though Boffone and Jerasa's research did not specifically look for diverse characters in books that have been trending on BookTok, their findings do suggest that there is some diversity in popular BookTok books. Readers in the LGBTQIA+ community have created a sub-community where they recommend

books with queer characters, and this shows that this community is represented in BookTok literature. However, this does not mean that these books are trending across all of the sub-communities within BookTok.

Thirdly, Johanson, Rutherford, and Reddan's (2023) article considers the lack of diversity in the publishing industry and focuses on the reader's position in the publishing process (p. 91). What is most interesting for our project, is what they have written about how young readers use social media to review and recommend books as well as to find their next read. One of the publishers they interviewed argued that young readers' social media presence enables publishers to have a direct relationship with their readers and can therefore get to know firsthand what their opinions are about various books (p. 101). On the other hand, an author they interviewed argued that they did not think that social media played a part in how young people chose what books to read and that despite their social media presence, young people had no interest in engaging with the literary community (p. 101). Johanson, Rutherford and Reddan (2023) do not contradict this statement, because on any social media platforms, it can be difficult to know the age of the participants because of anonymity. Also, older readers read YA books as well, so a review of a YA book is not necessarily written by a young reader (p. 102). However, many users on TikTok are not anonymous, because they can be identified by their appearance, and we do know that the majority of TikTok users are young people "with almost 68 per cent being between the ages of 13 and 24" (p. 102). Therefore, they argue that BookTok more accurately represents the taste of younger readers. Yet, none of the publishers they interviewed mentioned TikTok when asked about where they could find knowledge about teenage readers (p. 102). One of the closing statements in the article is "publishers seek to publish for diverse readers and get pleasure from believing they have produced a book that teenagers find engrossing, yet they operate with little knowledge of whether and which young people read their books" (p. 103). This is interesting because another article we mentioned earlier by Harris (2021) suggested the opposite. However, Harris's article focused on the publishing industry in the US, whereas Johanson, Rutherford and Reddan's (2023) article focused on Australian publishers, who may hold different attitudes.

Lastly, Garcia (2023) wrote a chapter about the bookish community in her master's thesis. She argues that there is a lack of diversity within the BookTok community and states that BookTok "heavily focuses on popular romance tropes and sexually explicit writing, or 'smut', that revolves

around white, heterosexual main characters and targets almost exclusively white and heterosexual female readership" (p. 30). TikTok is especially popular among the younger generation, and it can be harmful to only recommend the same books by the same white authors. However, she does mention that BookTok is changing, and the users want more diversity and representation in literature (p. 36).

To sum up, research on diversity in BookTok literature is varied and contradictory. This is not surprising as the BookTok community is divided into smaller sub-communities for example, the queer BookTok community as Boffone and Jerasa (2021) researched in their study. The diverse BookTok sub-communities will naturally recommend different books based on their interests. Therefore, some of these studies suggest that BookTok books are diverse, while others suggest the opposite. What we can gather from this is that the 'surface-level' BookTok community is not the most diverse when it comes to recommendations of books and authors. However, if you enter the smaller sub-communities, there is a higher chance of getting recommendations with diverse characters from diverse authors. Additionally, according to Garcia's (2023) thesis, influencers, and BookTok creators aim to recommend more diverse books. When it comes to our project, these studies suggest that we can expect to find both ends of the scale: books with diverse characters and books with hardly any diversity at all.

3 Theory

3.1 Theories on Media and Consumers

3.1.1 Encoding/Decoding (Stuart Hall)

According to Hall (2009) "[m]ass-communications research has conceptualized the process of communication in terms of a circulation circuit or loop" (p. 28). This model for communication has been criticized for being too linear (sender-message-receiver), and its "concentration on the level of message exchange and (...) absence of a structured conception of the different moments as a complex structure of relation" ignores the significance of interpretation (p. 28). There is another model for communication, one that conceives communication as circulatory (production-circulation-distribution/consumption-reproduction), in which the ways audiences influence content are elucidated. This then leads to there being a "complex structure in dominance" (p. 28).

We must consider that Hall was writing about broadcast television, and the views on how messages are conveyed on TV are different from social media. However, this circular model of communication coincides best with how the average user uses TikTok. A creator makes a video (production), posts the video on their account (circulation), it is then viewed by other users on the app (distribution/consumption), and then other creators might react to, reproduce, or remix that video (reproduction). Hall explains (2009) that

> "we must recognize that the discursive form of the message has a privileged position in the communicative exchange, (…) and that the moments of 'encoding' and 'decoding', though only 'relatively autonomous' in relation to the communicative process as a whole, are *determinate* moments" (p. 29).

He uses an example to further explain this sentence: "a 'raw' historical event cannot, *in that form*, be transmitted by, say, a television newscast" (Hall, 2009, p. 29). To put it differently, to make the "historical event" a newscast, it would be adapted for television. Unless you were present for the event, what you see on the TV or read in the news would be derived from someone else. In his theory, he argues that those who make the content have more power compared to those who

consume the content. In short, there is an imbalance in the power between producers and consumers. With this, Hall argues that the creators hold the power in what they want to, and how they want a message to be conveyed (encoding). However, consumers have some power in how they interpret (decode) the messages they receive.

An example of this within the BookTok community is when a creator gives a review of a book they have read. Let us use *Fourth Wing* by Rebecca Yarros (2023a) in this example. Many BookTok creators raved about this book, and it became popular because of these creators. Of course, the opposite would also be true. If the reviews of *Fourth Wing* from creators were bad, the book would not be as popular as it is today. Nonetheless, while creators are free to convey a message, consumers also have the power in how they receive a message (decoding). There is negative content made about *Fourth Wing*, but it is up to the consumer if they want to receive the message in a video in the intended way or not. While creators necessarily include a subjective bias in how they frame a message, consumers also have subjective biases in their interpretations.

More, Hall (2009) argues: "Before [a] message can have an 'effect' (however defined), satisfy a 'need' or be put to a 'use', it must first be appropriated as a meaningful discourse and be meaningfully decoded" (p. 30). This is relevant to not only BookTok, but to TikTok in general. All of the users on the app, especially within the subcommunities, have an understanding of the content they'll have access to. By joining a subcommunity on TikTok, one eventually picks up on the language used within the community. This language might not be understandable to the people who are not a part of these subcommunities. When it comes to BookTok, this language is of course related to books. An example of the language used within BookTok would be related to the trope of the book. Such as "grumpy x sunshine," "enemies-to-lovers," "found family," or "slow burn." Often a video about a book will list the tropes, or the creator that made the video will mention it in the video, or with hashtags. When the tropes are listed, or mentioned, it helps other users on BookTok, as they are able to find books that meet their own preferences. At the same time the more they view, like, and interact with videos on their FYP, the more content that matches their preferences will appear.

3.1.2 Convergence Culture (Henry Jenkins)

Even though Henry Jenkins' (2006) theory about convergence culture is nearly two decades old, it is still highly relevant in today's mediascape. His theory builds on Hall's (2009) encoding/decoding and is about the relationship between three concepts "participatory culture", "collective intelligence", and "media convergence" (p. 2) which will be thoroughly defined below.

Participatory culture refers to the fact that consumers not only consume media content, but also participate in the making and development of media by interacting with each other. However, not all participants are equal; some consumers have greater power to participate than others or have more influence (Jenkins, 2006, pp. 3 & 137). For example, influencers, publishers, authors and various media companies have a great deal of power on social media. Their content reaches many people who in turn convey that content to other people by liking, commenting, and reposting. Jenkins (2006) therefore feels that it can be useful to distinguish between *interactivity* and *participation*: "Interactivity refers to the ways that new technologies have been designed to be more responsive to consumer feedback," while participation "is shaped by the cultural and social protocols" and is controlled less by media producers than consumers (p. 137). Through interactivity and participation, consumers develop *collective intelligence,* meaning they do not know everything alone, but rather share knowledge with each other, with each consumer having specialist areas of knowledge. By combining knowledge, consumers can know more than they could individually (p. 4). Social media is a space of collective intelligence because users can collectively know more than they could as individuals. Finally, participatory culture is what essentially fuels *convergence culture* as participants share and discuss their thoughts about various media by creating media of their own, and this in turn circles back into the mediascape.

By convergence, Jenkins (2006) means:

> "[T]he flow of content across multiple media platforms, and the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behavior of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want" (p. 2).

It is important to note that convergence does not occur through media platforms or media appliances, even though these are always evolving, because convergence is something that takes place in the minds of the consumers as well as through their interactions with other consumers (p. 3). Convergence is therefore expressed through and made more efficient by media platforms rather than a direct result of them. The circulation of media content relies on the consumers and their participatory cultures. Therefore, convergence represents a shift in culture where the consumers now are encouraged to participate in media and share and interact with content rather than to passively ingest content (p. 3).

Jenkins' (2006) theory about convergence culture is extremely relevant when it comes to understanding how BookTok has become a subculture on TikTok. As mentioned above, technologies have been designed to be more responsive to consumer feedback. This is easy on TikTok, as one can simply share a video, comment on a video to give one's opinion, or remix and reuse content. Authors have taken advantage of this, because readers can now easily communicate with the author of their favorite books. Many authors choose to use TikTok to communicate with their readers and promote their books. Additionally, some authors were originally self-published have gained popularity on BookTok and have been discovered by publishing houses. Writing ideas are also shared in these media spaces, making writing a more open and collaborative process. Finally, users have gained collective power, as they are able to promote books and influence authors and the publishing industry through their consumption and production.

That said, certain users have more power than others to promote books, authors, and ideas. This can benefit publishers, as they can find talented authors who are already gaining popularity before signing a contract. But it can also mean that certain affinity groups can gain more power and influence than others (which explains why certain trends and markets dominate the BookTok discourse). This again, coincides with Jenkins' (2006) theory, because he says that "[c]onvergence requires media companies to rethink old assumptions about what it means to consume media" (p. 18). In other words, the authors and the publishing industry need to use the platforms that are most relevant when promoting their books, and TikTok users have the "power" to influence what books are popular. For example, BookTok creators can recommend and "hype up" books, but whether or not they become popular depends on the responses of the users.

Is it the consumers and participants who decide what is trending on BookTok, or is it really a part of the authors' and publishers' well-calculated plan to sell more books? According to Jenkins (2006), it can be both: "Convergence, as we can see, is both a top-down corporate-driven process and a bottom-up consumer-driven process" (p. 18). On one hand, powerful actors like media companies, famous authors and publishing houses are trying to use media to expand revenue opportunities, broaden their markets and boost consumer commitment. In other words, authors and publishers are learning how to use TikTok to draw in more consumers who can buy more books and share content about them to influence more people to buy even more books. On the other hand, consumers are learning how to use different media platforms like TikTok to bring the creation and flow of content into their control and to interact with other consumers (p. 18). Sometimes, consumers can use the power of their numbers to exert influence over publishers by subverting expectations and upending predicted patterns. However, there is a fine line between being a consumer and being associated with powerful actors like publishing houses because as mentioned earlier, some BookTok creators get paid to promote books, and suddenly the flow of content is controlled by authors and publishers as opposed to the creators themselves. Therefore, it is difficult to know whether a creator is being authentic when recommending a book on BookTok. That said, if users cannot trust that a creator is authentic, their content can lose value for the consumers.

Jenkins' (2006) theory about convergence culture demonstrates how consumers have become empowered. They actively engage in media creation and consumption by commenting, discussing, and critiquing and even creating new media content based on the media content they have consumed. This participatory culture is highly relevant to our project, because our primary material is based on books that have been trending on BookTok, and consumers largely control these trends. BookTok users both create content in which they review and recommend books and engage with this content, making some posts popular. However, publishers and authors also make content about their books to influence consumers. Consumers also engage with this content, which makes it more popular. In other words, our primary material is a result of interactive, participatory culture in a convergence mediascape.

3.1.3 Relevance to our Thesis

Stuart Hall's (2009) theory about encoding/decoding and Henry Jenkins's (2006) theory about convergence culture are relevant to our thesis because we conducted a web content analysis (see section 4.1.1, below) of book-related content on TikTok. The flow of content on TikTok is heavily influenced by each user's personalized algorithm. It is here Jenkins's (2006) theory comes into play, explaining how technologies have become more responsive to consumer feedback. Additionally, Jenkins theorizes how consumers have become participants in the making and development of media by interacting with each other. This is as mentioned called participatory culture and is highly relevant on TikTok as consumers engage with each other's content by liking, commenting on, reposting and stitching videos, making certain books popular on BookTok. This in turn relates to Hall's (2009) theory of encoding/decoding as it in encompasses the power imbalances between producers and consumers and the circularity of encoding/decoding within convergence culture.

3.2 Theories on Diversity

3.2.1 Windows, Mirrors and Sliding Glass Doors (Rudine Sims Bishop)

Bishop (1990) theorizes that books sometimes act as windows, meaning that we can look into other worlds that may be real or imagined, or as sliding glass doors that "readers have only to walk through in imagination to become a part of whatever world has been created or recreated by the author" (Bishop, 1990, n.p.). At times, she explains, windows or doors can become mirrors:

> "Literature transforms human experience and reflects it back to us, and in that reflection, we can see our own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience. Reading, then, becomes a means of self-affirmation, and readers often seek their mirrors in books" (Bishop, 1990, n.p.).

Bishop uses these three terms to explain that children can feel devalued in society if they cannot find themselves in the books they read or if the images they see of themselves in books are negative, distorted, or laughable. Therefore, children need books that can act as mirrors, books in which they see themselves. While children from dominant social groups usually have access to these mirrors, children from minority groups may not. More, Bishop argues all children need to

read books about other social groups — they need books that act as windows because "[i]f they see only reflections of themselves, they will grow up with an exaggerated sense of their own importance and value in the world — a dangerous egocentrism" (Bishop, 1990, n.p.). As we have discussed in our background section, books available to children have until recently largely featured white, heterosexual, able-bodied protagonists (section 2.4.2 above). However, research has shown that more minority protagonists are slowly starting to appear more frequently (CLPE, 2023, p. 6; CCBC, 2024). Nonetheless, we observed that many of the books trending on BookTok had a low variety of diverse characters, which we felt was a negative development for the YA fiction industry. Bishop's theory has therefore deeply influenced the design and topic of our project, because like Bishop, we believe that young people need to see both themselves and other social groups in fiction, whether print- or media-based.

3.2.2 Queer and Transgender Theory

The term *queer* has historically been a homophobic slur but was taken back by activists in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The slogan was supposed to "capture the radical energies of struggles for sexual and gender freedom in the face of the AIDS crisis" (Love, 2014, p. 172). *Queer* also became a term that could include those who didn't feel like *gay*, or *lesbian* defined their identity. In other words, it was meant to "indicate a range of nonnormative sexual practices and gender identifications beyond gay and lesbian" (p. 172).

Queer theory has several definitions, which are clearly outlined by Heather Love (2014). First, "queer studies defines itself as a critical field that questions stable categories of identity" (p. 172). Second, queer studies are primarily associated with "nonnormative desires and embodiments" (p. 172), that is, with nonheteronormative sexualities and nonnormative gender expressions and identities. Third, queer studies both criticize and oppose gender and sexual norms (p. 172). Finally, queer studies resist disciplinary and methodological norms, particularly as the human sciences have historically viewed people with embodiments and sexual practices outside the norm as objects to be studied (p. 173).

Despite its focus on otherness, however, queer studies have been critiqued for not being inclusive enough. Although queer theorists claim that the term *queer* includes a wide range of differences

and social exclusions, some scholars believe that queer studies has mainly focused on the concerns of gays and lesbians and that transgender people have been excluded. Transgender studies and queer studies are in fact very similar in their origin, values and beliefs, yet queer studies are in a stronger position. Transgender studies are thus "often taught as an addendum to queer studies or gender studies" (Love, 2014, p. 174).

In the introduction to her book *Bodies That Matter*, Judith Butler (2011) writes about embodiment and gender performativity. These two terms are quite significant in queer and transgender theory. When it comes to embodiment, Butler is trying to show us how the concept of "sex" is in fact a social construct based on norms for how bodies of a certain sex should not only look but behave (pp. x–xii). She states that "[s]exual difference (...) is never simply a function of material differences which are not in some way marked and formed by discursive practices" (p. xi). What she means by this is that the differences between sexes always go beyond the biological reality of sexed bodies as our sexed bodies are always imbued with cultural meanings that shape what we can do and how we can be in the world. There is more to sexual differences than just "male" and "female" genitalia for example. Further, she links this to gender performativity by explaining that performativity must not be understood as a singular act but, "rather, as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names" (p. xii). She elaborates on this and states that performativity is a reiteration of norms or sets of norms that have been established in society and that this "performance" is so natural for us that we don't even register that we are "acting" as a gender. Yet, this "performance" is not theatrical, because one is not really performing or acting. Gender norms are so indoctrinated within us that we actually manage to conceal the history behind them (p. xxi). An example of this is that girls are oftentimes considered bad at math. This prejudice can cause girls to become insecure about their math skills, and therefore cause them to perform badly at tests or avoid the subject. In this way they are "performing" without even knowing it, thus perpetuating that they are "bad" at math.

3.2.3 Race

In the introduction to *White,* Dyer (2017a) writes that "[r]acial imagery is central to the organisation of the modern world" (p. 1) as it determines aspects of life such as "[a]t what cost

regions and countries export their goods (…), [or] who get what jobs" (p. 1). It is because race is a central organizing factor in the world that people make judgment calls "based on what [others] look like, where they come from, how they speak, even what they eat" (p. 1). All of these judgments are all racially motivated (p. 1). While, as Dyer mentions, race is one of many factors that govern these thoughts and while many try to overcome these challenges of racial prejudice, "[it] is never not a factor, never not in play" (p. 1).

Dyer (2017a) emphasizes that there is a lack of studies on white people compared to BIPOC people. In the global north, when people say that they are interested in other races, this is equivalent to meaning the imagery of those that are not white (p. 1). Moreover, ignoring whiteness also ignores its cultural power; being "just" human is something powerful, as being "just" human has the power to speak for the majority. This is something racialized people cannot do "[as] they can only speak for their race" (p. 2). Even though white people have the best intentions, they will probably refer to other people of different races with a racialized label while not labeling whiteness, as when race is unmarked, it is assumed they are referring to another white person (p. 2). This elision of whiteness is prevalent in media, including literature. When referring to a character without giving any specifics of their gender identity, sexuality, race, or disability, people most likely just assume that the character is a healthy, white, heterosexual person who identifies with the gender they were assigned at birth. If this were not the case, it would have been specified.

Dyer (2017b) found it difficult "trying to think about the representation of whiteness as an ethnic category in mainstream film" (p. 141). It is often other groups that are viewed in relation to whiteness, and these groups are often "defined as oppressed, marginal or subordinate — women, the working class, ethnic and other minorities" (p. 141). The way whiteness is represented "[t]o be everything and nothing, is the source of its representational power" (p. 142). Because of this it is difficult to properly define whiteness as a category. At the same time, it is pertinent that one is aware that "there are advantages to being white in western societies" (p. 143); for example, the colors black and white have always had connotations to safety and danger respectively (p. 142). Dyer (2017b) continues to say that when nothing is specified about a character in literary texts or media, it is assumed that the character is white with a relatively good upbringing. If the character

had any other type of background, or was a part of a marginalized group, it would be explicitly mentioned. Moreover, "[a]ny instance of white representation is always immediately something more specific, (...) [The] Godfather is not about white people, [but] about Italian American people" (p. 143).

While it seems that the possibilities are endless for those "without" a race, this might not be the case for those "with" it. This was the case for Ebony Thomas, an African American born into a working-class family in Detroit (Thomas, 2019, p. 1). For her, there was no escaping to a fantasy world with magic, as according to her mother, there were enough problems awaiting young black girls, and to survive, Thomas had to face reality. Thomas (2019) argues that "[when] people of color seek passageways into the fantastic, [they] have often discovered that the doors are barred" (p. 2). What she means by this is that BIPOC characters are so underrepresented in media and in literature that BIPOC readers feel they are not allowed to have the same dreams and aspirations as white people. Moreover, she argues, characters of color are often associated with evil rather than good in speculative fiction, further marginalizing them and blocking them from opening "sliding glass doors" to other worlds.

3.2.4 Class

The word "class" and its definition have a long history. It first derived from the Latin word *classis* via the French word *classe*. Thomas Blount used this word in *Glossographia* (1656) and defined it as "an order of distribution of people according to their several Degrees" (as cited in Bullen, 2021). Since then, the word has historically had similar definitions or connotations, but it was not until the word reappeared in the English language in 1772 that it was used about social division or grouping. Therefore, the use of the word "class" is according to Bullen (2021) "historically associated with the Industrial Revolution and the rise of capitalism." What separates class from other terms describing social positions such as "rank," "estate," "order," and "degree" is the fact that "social position is made rather than merely inherited" (Williams as cited in Bullen, 2021). This phenomenon is essential in children's literature, for example, through tropes like "rags-to-riches and triumph-of-the-underdog stories" (Bullen, 2021). These types of stories show that class is a hierarchical system in which social mobility is achievable. In other words, one can move between the social classes: the upper, middle, lower, and under class (Bullen, 2021).

Children's literature does not always clearly show "the unequal distribution of social and economic resources, or how power and privilege inhere in class structure and impedes social mobility" (Bullen, 2021). This is because "class" is a difficult term — there are different ideas about the word's connotation. These discrepancies about the connotation of the term first began in the late eighteenth century. Before "class" had referred to people's social position, whether they were rich or poor, but then Adam Smith started to use the term to differentiate between "productive" and "unproductive" classes, and this caused class to "become an expression of an economic relationship" (Bullen, 2021). This model was completed by Karl Marx "as a relation to modes of production" (Bullen, 2021). Simply put, his definition of class is a division between "those who own the mode of production and those who sell their labor" (Marx, 1859 as cited in Bullen, 2021). However, although these two ideas of class are connected, the economic model and the status model are not the same: Someone from the middle class can have a job but still be viewed as "above" someone in the working class.

Class is challenging to represent in children's literature, especially the economic aspect of it, because children are not a part of the workforce (Bullen, 2021), so representing how class affects them is difficult. Despite this, labor is occasionally depicted in children's literature, but oftentimes labor is viewed as "play", "an evil" or related to the historical past when children actually worked (Bullen, 2021). Even in more recent stories that deal with poverty or unfair treatment, other aspects of identity like ethnoracial identity might be a bigger focus than class itself. This does not mean that we cannot use Marxist criticism to analyze and understand children's literature but analyzing it through this lens might make us miss the importance of looking at social standing (Bullen, 2021). Children's literature is a great medium for representing various social positions in society. However, historically children's literature has been dominated by the dominant class. For example, Jack Zipes has criticized "how the folk tales of the common people were transformed into literary fairy tales that reflected and subverted the values of aristocracy" (as cited in Bullen, 2021). Furthermore, Bob Dixon emphasized that in English children's literature, working class characters were oftentimes included only as minor characters and depicted in a negative manner (as cited in Bullen, 2021). This is because children's literature has for a long time been made and consumed by the middle and upper classes.

Bullen (2021) emphasizes that a great deal of children's literature has depicted characters who get the opportunity to climb the social ladder; however, this usually refers to social status rather than labor, as child characters in children's literature rarely work. An ascent is possible because of a certain behavior; the characters "learn" to act like the middle or upper class and are thus rewarded with social mobility. This is not a realistic representation of class, as it ignores the bigger issue of money, one of the biggest contributors to the social hierarchy. One cannot become a part of the middle or upper class by simply acting like it (Bullen, 2021).

Class awareness is equally weak in British and American children's literature (Bullen, 2021). American books oftentimes make it seem like the majority is part of the middle class and include a strong belief in the "American dream" which suggests that everyone can get rich. However, this is not actually the case; it ignores that class is also about factors other than money such as social status, values, education, and behaviors (Bullen, 2021).

3.2.5 Disability

Adams, Reiss and Serlin (2015) describe *disability* as something that "encompasses a broad range of bodily, cognitive, and sensory differences and capacities" and this "is more fluid than most other forms of identity in that it can potentially happen to anyone at any time" (Adams et al, 2015). Throughout history, disabled people have been looked down upon by the able-bodied majority, used for profit as entertainment "in courts, street fairs, dime museums and sideshows" (Garland-Thomson, 2002, p. 56). As Garland-Thomson (2002) writes, disabled people have always been stared at, be it in "awe, scorn, terror, delight, inspiration, pity, laughter, or fascination" (p. 56). This created an "us-them" scenario, where the able-bodied hold the power (p. 57). However, while disability is often viewed as permanent, most humans will at some point in their lives be disabled, whether by injury, illness, or age. As such, attitudes have been changing. From the start of the twentieth century, viewing disabled people as entertainment has become something "inappropriate in the same way that public executions and torture came to be considered offensive" (p. 57).

The term *disability* has changed throughout the years, and in turn what it compasses has become wider. While it used to encompass only physical disability, it now encompasses those who struggle with mental health, deaf people, and those who are blind (Adams et al, 2015). In the field of disability studies, there is a view that the mainstream representation of disability has been regressive (Schalk, 2016, p. 72). Scholars like Schalk (2016) have called for studies of "representation[s] which are, problematic or not, influential" (p. 72). In this thesis, we will rely on Garland-Thomson's (2002) four models of the framing of disabilities when considering how disability is depicted in BookTok books: the "wondrous" or "supercrip," who performs "feats the able-bodied viewer cannot imagine doing" with a disability (pp. 59–63); the "sentimental," who "produces the sympathetic victim or helpless sufferer needing protection or succor and invoking pity, inspiration, and frequent contributions" (pp. 63–65); the "exotic" model who "domesticates the disability figure, making it familiar and comforting" (pp. 65–69); and the "realistic" who "minimizes distance and difference by establishing a relation of contiguity between viewer and viewed. (...) Realism domesticates disability." (pp. 69–74). While Garland-Thomson's (2002) analysis considers visual images, her model is nonetheless relevant for depictions in literature.

3.2.6 Relevance to our Thesis

All of the theories discussed above are related to diversity in some way. Our society has always been diverse, but this has not necessarily been reflected in literature. Bishop's (1990) theory emphasizes the importance of representation in literature to ensure that children don't feel devalued in society as well as to prevent an egocentric view of the world. We have therefore included theories relating to aspects of identity that could lead to minoritization, such as ethnicity/race, gender, sexuality, class, and disability. The theories will be applied in our analysis section (see section 6, below) when we examine what diversity is represented in the books trending on BookTok during the period of the study and to what degree the characters in these books reflect the curriculum's emphasis on diversity.

4 Methods

4.1 Data Analysis

Our study can be characterized as mixed methods, as the data have been studied quantitatively and qualitatively. Firstly, we spent eight weeks last year (2023) collecting data from TikTok. We noted down the books we saw in videos on our FYP and the frequency of their appearance. These quantitative data allowed us to analyze which books appeared most frequently on BookTok, informing our choice of texts for qualitative analysis. The qualitative part of our research is the analysis of our primary materials, in other words, the books which were most frequently shown in TikTok videos during the period we collected the quantitative data. We have selected the six books with the highest frequency and done a qualitative content analysis of them.

4.1.1 Quantitative Analysis

Quantitative analysis can broadly be defined as analysis that involves numerical data (Whatley, 2022, p. 1). The numerical data in our study are based on what books were trending on TikTok in a two-month period in 2023. Simply put, we did an ethnographic analysis of BookTok creators' content. This data collection was participatory, even if minimally so, as we mimicked the behavior of the average TikTok user, as well as observational. The approach can be categorized as a quantitative web content analysis. Content analysis is defined by Krippendorff (2019) as "[a] research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use" (p. 24). However, the phrase "web content analysis" can be interpreted in two different ways according to Herring (2009):

> "1) the application of traditional CA techniques, narrowly construed, to the web [web [content analysis]] and 2) the analysis of web content, broadly construed, using various (traditional and non-traditional) techniques [[web content] analysis]" (pp. 2 –3).

Our approach is more similar to the latter interpretation given that we have used both traditional and non-traditional techniques in our analysis of BookTok content. In the traditional sense, we coded symbolic content, in our case TikTok videos (Bauer, 2000, cited in Herring, 2009, p. 2).

However, in the non-traditional sense we became participants and influenced the TikTok algorithm in order to get the type of content we were looking for. Below we will explain in detail how we set up TikTok accounts with the purpose of conducting a web content analysis of BookTok content. The codes for our analysis were predetermined, we were looking for videos containing or mentioning books that were published in 2023.

Kaja had a personal TikTok account from before, but Jemimah did not have one. To figure out what books were trending on TikTok, each of us made new, neutral TikTok accounts. These accounts were specifically made for this research project and have not been used for personal entertainment, with the aim of collecting data that were not deeply influenced by personal algorithms. We both chose to use our student emails when registering our accounts to ensure that no other social media accounts were connected to our email accounts. Despite this, we believe that Kaja's personal TikTok account on the same device may have impacted the algorithm to some extent. Jemimah got the option to "choose her interests" when setting up her account, while Kaja did not.

With the possibility of TikTok tracking our movements on the other apps on our devices, we chose to turn off personalized ads to ensure that this did not happen. We then worked on creating an algorithm by searching #booktok and looking at the videos under this hashtag. We decided to like all the videos containing book content to encourage the algorithm to produce even more book-related content. While we started off with the aim of watching the first fifty videos that appeared on #booktok, we noticed that this would not be an accurate representation of how people use TikTok. Instead, we decided to measure it in the time we spent scrolling on our respective accounts. Whilst scrolling we made sure to watch the full videos, even if some of these were very long. In total we both spent around an hour watching videos on #booktok and then about the same amount of time watching videos on our FYP on another day. This was done to create our algorithms on our FYPs when setting up our accounts, and we did this over five days.

After setting up our accounts, we started to track trending books on TikTok. We would scroll on our FYP for two hours each week while noting down all the books that were mentioned, shown, or talked about in the videos for eight weeks, from October 18, 2023, to December 13, 2023. How we divided the two hours over the week was up to us. We continued to like all the book-related videos to maintain the established algorithm. In order to narrow down the number of

books, we decided to focus on books released in 2023. We noted all the books we saw in each video, but later used the app/website GoodReads to see when the books were published. If the books were published in 2023, we noted them down in a spreadsheet. When we finished tracking what books were trending on TikTok in our chosen period of time, we added up our data in a joint Excel sheet to see which books we had noted down most frequently. The most popular books were then used for our qualitative analysis.

4.1.2 Qualitative Analysis

After finding our primary material using a quantitative web content analysis to figure out what books were trending in the period of time we were tracking, we selected the six books with the highest frequency which we in turn analyzed using qualitative content analysis. Above we used Krippendorff's (2019) definition of content analysis, but this type of analysis has historically been quantitative. However, this view was challenged when "numerous writers in the postwar years (...) challenged content analysts' simplistic reliance on counting quantitative data" (p. 17). Qualitative content analysis is characterized by identifying thematic patterns in a text, often with the use of thematic codes. According to Linneberg and Korsgaard (2019), an inductive approach is quite traditional in qualitative research. By developing the codes directly from the data as opposed to using predetermined codes, "the codes stay close to the data, mirroring what is actually in them" (p. 263). The inductive approach is suitable when "no theoretical concepts are immediately available to help you grasp the phenomenon being studied (p. 263). We analyzed the data in this study abductively, however, meaning some of the codes were predetermined, while other codes emerged as we read the material (Neuendorf, 2017, p. 10). Our research method can also share some elements with the approach "close reading". When using this approach "you should summarize the literary work briefly and quote meaningful passages, being sure to introduce quotes and then interpret them" (Mauer & Venecek, 2021, p. 102). In our analysis, we did a close reading of the material and quoted meaningful passages, in the sense that they fit into our codes. We chose these approaches to strike a balance between the central cultural theories informing analyses of diversity in literature and inductive themes evident in the data. The data we analyzed were, as mentioned, six books published in 2023 and trending on TikTok during the data collection period. Within these books, we specifically looked for personal descriptions of the

characters that conveyed aspects of diversity, such as physical descriptions and descriptions of social behaviors that could represent specific vectors of identity.

4.2 Materials

The six books that were most frequently shown or talked about on our FYP in the period from October 18 to December 13, 2023, were: *Heir of Broken Fate* by Mads Rafferty (2023), *A Curse for True Love* by Stephanie Garber (2023), *Divine Rivals* by Rebecca Ross (2023), *Powerless* by Lauren Roberts (2023), *Fourth Wing* by Rebecca Yarros (2023a), and *Iron Flame* by Rebecca Yarros (2023b) (for our tally, see Appendix 1). All these titles were published in 2023. However, the book *Heir of Broken Fate* by Mads Rafferty (2023) was excluded from the data because its representation on TikTok was inaccurate: while the other titles we noted down were mentioned by avid readers making content on the app, the only time we saw *Heir of Broken Fate* on our FYP was in videos made by the author herself. Therefore, we decided to replace this book with the seventh most mentioned book on our spreadsheet, *Wildfire* by Hannah Grace (2023). Both titles were mentioned a similar number of times: *Heir of Broken Fate* was mentioned 26 times, while *Wildfire* was mentioned 25 times. The books we analyzed in this project were therefore: *Wildfire* by Hannah Grace (2023) (25 times), *A Curse for True Love* by Stephanie Garber (2023) (27 times), *Divine Rivals* by Rebecca Ross (2023) (58 times), *Powerless* by Lauren Roberts (2023) (67 times), *Fourth Wing* by Rebecca Yarros (2023a) (156 times) and *Iron Flame* by Rebecca Yarros (2023b) (52 times).

4.3 Limitations and Affordances

A limitation concerning the content analysis is our preconceived thoughts about the books we have chosen as our primary material, as we had read four books on earlier occasions: *Fourth Wing* by Rebecca Yarros (2023a), *Wildfire* by Hannah Grace (2023), *Divine Rivals* by Rebecca Ross (2023) and *A Curse for True Love* by Stephanie Garber (2023). However, as we are not considering aspects of reader response such as affective reactions to the books' plots and are instead limiting our analysis to considerations of the characters' descriptions, having read the books before is unlikely to affect our judgment.

Another limitation is how we have selected our primary material. As mentioned, we made new TikTok accounts for the sole purpose of using them for research. We did this to avoid any bias, yet the algorithm on TikTok is very sensitive, and everything we do on the app — and possibly on the other apps on our devices — may influence it. For example, if we watch a video more than once, this can indicate that we really liked that video, and TikTok will recommend similar content. We contemplated various methods for the selection of primary material, for example, looking at top 10 lists in various bookstores or looking at how many times a book title had been hashtagged on the app. However, we agreed that even though bookstore sales are influenced by TikTok, what they sell the most may not reflect what is currently trending. When it comes to the hashtags, the numbers shown are the total number of videos in which each hashtag has been used. That means that books published most recently would likely have been tagged in fewer videos than an older book, even though the new book is trending, and the older one is not.

As such, we believe that using TikTok profiles to collect data is the most authentic method given that it reflects how many young readers look for book recommendations. We believe that we have authentically used the app by scrolling in intervals varying from 30 minutes to 2 hours, as this reflects how the majority of young people in Norway use social media. According to *Ungdata*, 37 percent of respondents use social media more than three hours per day, 20% use social media for 2–3 hours per day and 19% use social media for 1–2 hours per day. Usage is highest amongst girls (Bakken, 2022, p. 27). This survey does not specify what social media young people use the most, but according to the "Barn og medier undersøkelsen" by Medietilsynet, 73% of young people ages 9–18 use TikTok as mentioned in section 2.2.2 (Medietilsynet, 2022, p. 24). The percentage is even higher when it is divided by age and gender. For example, 94% of girls ages 15–16 use TikTok (p. 26). With this in mind, we believe that our use of TikTok reflects young females' behaviors, and we therefore believe that our results are reliable.

4.4 Ethical Considerations, Credibility, and Reliability

Although our project does not have any research participants, there have still been some ethical concerns to consider. In the early stages of working with this thesis, the question of whether we needed approval from SIKT arose, because we both knew that we wanted to collect data from TikTok. With the help of our supervisor and a careful analysis of SIKT's guidelines, we concluded that this was not necessary as we were not processing any personal information. According to the Guidelines for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities by The Norwegian National Research Ethics Committees (NESH) "researchers are ethically obliged to obtain consent from the research participants" (2022, p. 18). However, as we focused on the books discussed, not the creators themselves, and we made no notes of creators' names or other personal information, this does not apply to our research. As mentioned, our data collection was simply an ethnographic survey of their content. Again, we only collected data of which books were mentioned or shown in the various videos.

Furthermore, it is also essential to consider the reliability of our research project. A study's reliability refers to its trustworthiness (Nyeng, 2012, p. 105). Trustworthiness simply refers to whether the findings can be trusted (Korstjens & Moser, 2018, p. 120). Moreover, reliability is also about whether one would get the same results if one conducted the research again at another time, in other words, consistency over time (Nyeng, 2012, p. 107). However, this is not realistic in our project as the results would change over time because of TikTok's constant flow of new content. Therefore, it is much more pertinent to look at the quality criteria for qualitative research in our project. The quality criteria for qualitative studies differ from those for quantitative studies, and the best-known criteria for qualitative studies are according to Korstjens and Moser (2018) the project's "credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability" (p. 120). Not all these quality criteria are relevant to our study as some of them refer to research with participants. However, credibility and confirmability are highly relevant. Korstjens and Moser (2018) define credibility as "[t]he confidence that can be placed in the truth of the research findings" (p. 120), and this refers to whether one can trust the findings that have been drawn from the data. Furthermore, they define confirmability as "[t]he degree to which the findings of the research study could be confirmed by other researchers" (p. 120).

In our quantitative analysis section, we have described in detail how we set up TikTok accounts with the purpose of conducting a web content analysis of BookTok content (see section 4.1.1, above). As mentioned, we did our best to not influence the algorithm with data from our devices or email accounts to create the least amount of algorithm bias and to jeopardize the credibility of our project. Despite taking all these precautions, we are aware that the results of our web content analysis could have been affected by data on our devices. Still, we argue that these results are reliable because as mentioned in section 4.1.1, this data collection was to a small degree participatory: we mimicked the behavior of TikTok users. Under normal circumstances, the content on a TikTok user's FYP would have been influenced by other data on their device, too.

Additionally, another one of our concerns was while reading and analyzing our material because we had to make sure that we only used the presented text as material and not any images or ideas that we created in our minds. After all, this could jeopardize the transferability of our project. This became a challenge with two of the chosen books, because the covers included illustrations of both the female and male lead characters. We therefore decided to consider the cover and other peritextual elements as part of the whole reading experience. When reading literature, it is not uncommon to imagine the characters in your head, so we had to make sure that we didn't use our perception of the characters as data, only the text, and peritext. This was important to us because according to NESH (2022): "The truth norm is indispensable to all scientific activity: The search for truth, commitment to truth, integrity, and honesty are preconditions for quality and reliability in research" (p. 5). Because two of us were involved in gathering and interpreting the data, we were better able to control for lapses, ensuring we interpreted only material presented in the text and peritext.

5 Presentation of Qualitative Data

The data in our project is obtained from a qualitative content analysis of the six books that are our primary material. These six books are *A Curse for True Love* by Stephanie Garber (2023), *Divine Rivals* by Rebecca Ross (2023), *Powerless* by Lauren Roberts (2023), *Wildfire* by Hannah Grace (2023), *Fourth Wing* and *Iron Flame* by Rebecca Yarros (2023a; 2023b). The results were coded abductively, meaning that some of our codes were predetermined while others emerged as we were reading and analyzing the material. The codes are all related to different kinds of diversity: the ones we ended up with were *sexual orientation and gender identity*, *skin color and ethnicity*, *socioeconomic status*, and *(dis)ability*. By *sexual orientation and gender identity*, we are referring to whether the characters are straight or queer and whether they are cisgendered or have other gender identifications, e.g., transgender. *Skin color and ethnicity* refer to the characters' skin color and/or ethnic heritage. The reasoning behind including both is that in some of the books, skin color is mentioned but not ethnicity, as most of the books are set in fantasy worlds, so characters' ethnicities are not always directly correlated to our world. By *socioeconomic status*, we mean the classes that the characters represent based on their status and economy. Lastly, by *(dis)ability* we mean whether characters are presented as able or disabled and how those who are not able-bodied are represented.

Not all of the characters described in the books are a part of our analysis. Characters were excluded from consideration if they had no personal descriptions. While some characters who are not included could have been included as "implied cisgendered" under the code "sexual orientation and gender identity," we chose not to include them because their descriptions were too limited, and we did not want to make assumptions.

The structure of this section is as follows: Each book will be presented with a short synopsis followed by a table with the codes and the names of the relevant characters. The data for each code is based on character descriptions of the characters. If a cell in the table is left blank, it means that we found no descriptions of that character related to that specific code.

5.1 *A Curse for True Love* by Stephanie Garber

A Curse for True Love is the third and final book in the *Once Upon a Broken Heart* trilogy by Stephanie Garber (2023). In this book, the main character, Evangeline, has lost her memories. But she is quickly told that she is married to Prince Apollo Acadian. What Evangeline doesn't know is that it is in fact Apollo who has taken away her memories, because he learned that Evangeline is in love with Jacks, the Prince of Hearts. Apollo is therefore determined to kill Jacks. Jacks has chosen to stay away from Evangeline to ensure her safety, but he has to interfere when bad actors attempt to murder Evangeline on multiple occasions. Evangeline starts to sense that something is wrong and tries to regain her memories.

Characters	Sexual orientation/gender identity	Skin color/ethnicity	Socioeconomic status	(Dis)ability
Evangeline Fox	Implied straight (Garber, 2023, pp. 14, 93, 105, 159, 345 & 349) Implied cisgendered.		Middle or working class, but becomes upper class (royalty) after marriage (Garber, 2023, pp. 5 & 63)	Implied able-bodied.
Apollo Acadian	Implied straight (Garber, 2023, pp. 29, 97 & 123). Implied cisgendered.	Olive skin (Garber, 2023, p. 73).	Upper class (royalty) (Garber, 2023, p. 5).	Implied able-bodied.
Lord Jacks (Prince of Hearts)	Implied straight (Garber, 2023, pp. 98, 166 & 352). Implied cisgendered.	Implied white (Garber, 2023, pp. 111 & 349).	Implied upper class.	Implied able-bodied.
Wolfric Valor (Lord Vale)	Married to a woman, therefore implied straight (Garber,2023, p. 35) Implied cisgendered.		Upper class (royalty) (Garber, 2023, pp. 33 & 34)	Implied able-bodied.

Honora Valor (Lady Vale)	Married to a man, therefore implied straight (Garber, 2023, p. 35) Implied cisgendered.		Upper class (royalty) (Garber, 2023, pp. 33 & 34)	Implied able-bodied.
Aurora Valor (Aurora Vale)	Implied straight (Garber, 2023, pp. 261 & 307) Implied cisgendered.		Upper class (royalty) (Garber, 2023, pp. 33 & 34)	Implied able-bodied.
Castor Valor (Chaos)	Implied cisgendered.		Upper class (royalty) (Garber, 2023, pp. 33 & 34)	Implied able-bodied.
Lala Merrywood	Implied straight (Garber, 2023, p. 375) Implied cis-gendered.			Implied able-bodied.
Lyric Merrywood	Implied straight (Garber, 2023, p. 307).			Implied able-bodied.
Dane	Implied cisgendered.		Upper class (royalty) (Garber, 2023, pp. 33 & 34)	Implied able-bodied.
The other Valor brother	Implied cisgendered.	Tan, golden skin (Garber, 2023, p. 376)	Upper class (royalty) (Garber, 2023, pp. 33 & 34)	Implied able-bodied.
Vengeance	Implied straight (Garber, 2023, p. 307).			Implied able-bodied.
Martine	Implied cisgendered.		Working class (Garber, 2023, pp. 17 & 63).	Implied able-bodied.
Various guards: Yeats, Brixley, Quillborne, Rockwood, Hansel, Victor, Joff and Hale.	Implied cisgendered.		Working class (Garber, 2023, pp. 66, 84 & 178).	Implied able-bodied.

5.2 *Divine Rivals* by Rebecca Ross

Divine Rivals is the first book in the *Letters of Enchantment* series by Rebecca Ross (2023). It is about how the two rivaling journalists, Iris Winnow and Roman Kitt, find love through the magical connection of their typewriters. Iris starts writing letters to her brother who is fighting in the war and put them over the threshold in her closet. The letters disappear, but Iris doesn't think anything of it until she one day gets a letter in return. Little does Iris know that the letters are in fact appearing in her rival, Roman's, bedroom. Roman remains anonymous in his letters to Iris, but he knows that he is writing to Iris. When Iris decides to become a war correspondent, Roman follows her to the front lines out of worry for her well-being. Iris starts to fall in love with her anonymous pen-pal, and Roman falls in love with Iris.

Characters	Sexual orientation/gender identity	Skin color/ethnicity	Socioeconomic status	(Dis)ability
Iris Winnow	Implied straight (Ross, 2023, pp. 257, 259 & 278) Implied cisgendered.	She is white on the cover art. Implied white (Ross, 2023, p. 105).	Working class (Ross, 2023, pp. 3, 7, 19, 21, 25, 28, 45 & 81).	Implied able-bodied.
Roman Kitt	Implied straight (Ross, 2023, pp. 54, 250, 257 & 278). Implied cisgendered.	No description in the book, but he is white on the cover art.	Upper class (Ross, 2023, pp. 10, 11, 28 & 64)	Implied able-bodied.
Forest Winnow	Implied cisgendered.	Implied white, (Ross, 2023, p. 336).	Working class (Ross, 2023, p. 25)	Implied able-bodied.
Marisol Torres	Married to a woman, therefore implied lesbian (Ross, 2023, p. 126). Implied cisgendered.	Light brown skin (Ross, 2023, p. 121).	Working class (Ross, 2023, p. 112)	Implied able-bodied.
Attie	Implied cis-gendered.	Brown skin (Ross, 2023, p. 116)		Implied able-bodied.
Keegan	Married to a woman, therefore			Implied able-bodied.

	implied lesbian (Ross, 2023, p. 286). Implied cisgendered.			
Aster Winnow	Implied cisgendered.		Lower class (Ross, 2023, p. 21).	Implied able-bodied.
Daisy Elizabeth Winnow	Implied cisgendered.		Working class (Ross, 2023, p. & 148).	
Mr. Ronald Kitt	Married to a woman, therefore implied straight (Ross, 2023, p. 51) Implied cisgendered.		Upper class (Ross, 2023, pp. 10 & 11).	Implied able-bodied.
Roman's mother	Married to a man, therefore implies straight (Ross, 2023, p. 51).		Upper class (Ross, 2023, pp. 10 & 11).	Implied able-bodied.
Dr. Herman Little	Implied cisgendered.		Implied upper class (Ross, 2023, p. 51).	Implied able-bodied.
Elinor Little	"You're in love with someone else, (...). You should be with them, not me." (p. 168). Not stated whether she is in love with a man or a woman.	Implied white (Ross, 2023, p. 51).	Implied upper class (Ross, 2023, p. 51).	Implied able-bodied.
Richard Stone	Implied cisgendered.		Upper class (Ross, 2023, p. 111).	Implied able-bodied.
Soldier in the infirmary	Implied cisgendered.	Implied white (Ross, 2023, p. 133).		Implied able-bodied.

5.3 *Powerless* by Lauren Roberts

Powerless by Lauren Roberts (2023) is the first book in the Powerless Trilogy. It is set in the kingdom of Ilya, where the people are divided into two groups: the Elites and the Ordinaries. The Elites have different magical powers, gained as a response to the Plague, while the Ordinaries are those who did not gain magical powers through the Plague. The king of Ilya — who has two sons, heir to the throne Kitt and his brother, Kai — has pronounced that all Ordinaries must be banished from the kingdom to preserve the Elite society. Paedyn Gray is an Ordinary who has been able to blend in by pretending to be a Psychic. She was taught by her father to be observant, so she is able to fool those who question her powers. An orphan, she has to survive the Slums of Ilya by being a talented thief. One day, she saves Kai from a gruesome fight, and resultantly, the people of Ilya vote for her to participate in a series of gladiator-style fights called the Purging Trials. This competition's purpose is to show off the Elites' powers, which Paedyn does not have. She must therefore try to maintain her facade as well as survive.

Characters	Sexual orientation/gender identity	Skin color/ethnicity	Socioeconomic status	(Dis)ability
Paedyn Gray	Implied straight (Roberts, 2023, pp. 180, 194 & 265). Implied cisgendered.	Implied white (Roberts, 2023, pp. 149, 174, 407 & 431).	Lower class (Roberts, 2023, pp. 11, 12, 16, 24, 116 & 130).	Implied able-bodied.
Kai	Implied straight (Roberts, 2023, pp. 148, 176, 204, 230 & 254). Implied cisgendered.	Tanned skin, implied white (Roberts, 2023, pp. 35 & 109).	Upper class (royalty) (Roberts, 2023, p. 23).	Implied able-bodied.
Kitt	Implied straight (Roberts, 2023, pp. 93. 118. 155). Implied cisgendered.	Tanned skin, implied white (Roberts, 2023, pp. 19, 109 & 296	Upper class (royalty) (Roberts, 2023, pp. 19 & 20).	Implied able-bodied.
Adena	Implied cisgendered.	Brown skin (Roberts, 2023, pp. 16 & 456).	Lower class (Roberts, 2023, p. 12)	Implied able-bodied.

Name				
Blair	Implied cisgendered.	Implied white (Roberts, 2023, p. 79).	Upper class (Roberts, 2023, p. 21)	Implied able-bodied.
Gail	Implied cisgendered.	Dark skin (Roberts, 2023, p. 22)	Working class (Roberts, 2023, p. 22).	Implied able-bodied.
Jax	Implied cisgendered.	Dark skin (Roberts, 2023, p. 78).	Upper class (adopted into royalty) (Roberts, 2023, p. 78).	Implied able-bodied.
Sadie	Implied cisgendered.	Dark skin (Roberts, 2023, p. 79, 96, 172 & 259).	Upper class (Roberts, 2023, p. 80).	Implied able-bodied.
King	Married to a woman, therefore implied straight. Implied cisgendered.		Upper class (royalty).	Implied able-bodied.
Queen	Married to a man, therefore implied straight. Implied cisgendered.		Upper class (royalty).	Implied able-bodied.
Ace	Implied cisgendered.		Implied working class (Roberts, 2023, p. 86).	Implied able-bodied.
Braxton	Implied cisgendered.	Dark skin (Roberts, 2023, p. 96)		Implied able-bodied.
Layla	Implied straight (Roberts, 2023, p. 43) Implied cisgendered.	Dark skin (Roberts, 2023, p. 43).		Implied able-bodied.
Nathan	Implied straight (Roberts, 2023, p. 43) Implied cisgendered.			Implied able-bodied.

Abigail	Implied cisgendered.	Implied white (Roberts, 2023, p. 45).		Implied able-bodied.
Lenny	Implied cisgendered.	Implied white (Roberts, 2023, p. 90).		Implied able-bodied.
One of the sights in the trial		Dark skin (Roberts, 2023, p. 201).		Implied able-bodied.
Girl in the resistance	Implied cisgendered.	Olive skin, (Roberts, 2023, p. 300).		Implied able-bodied.
Another sight in the trial		Dark skin (Roberts, 2023, p. 490).		Implied able-bodied.

5.4 *Wildfire* by Hannah Grace

Wildfire is the second standalone book in the interconnected *Maple Hills* series by Hannah Grace. In this book we follow the two main characters, Russ Callaghan and Aurora Roberts. They both attend college in Maple Hills. Russ and Aurora meet at an end-of-year party, and they end up spending the night together. Before anything between them can officially start, Aurora leaves Russ's room without leaving any sort of information that he might use to contact her with. They both leave their college campus for the summer and work at a summer camp called Honey Acres as camp counselors. Unexpectedly meeting at the camp, they grow closer as friends, as there is a no fraternizing rule among the counselors. Their feelings for each other continue to grow, and they end up together. While finding their way to each other, they also struggle with personal problems. The book follows their journey in trying to change their lives. *Wildfire* uses homodiegetic narrators and switches between Aurora's and from Russ's points of view between chapters.

Characters	Sexual orientation/gender identity	Skin color/ethnicity	Socioeconomic status	(Dis)ability
Russ Callaghan	Implied straight (Grace, 2023, pp. 42, 46, 190)

Implied cisgendered | White with suntanned skin, explicit (Grace, 2023, pp. cover illustration & 18) | Middle class (Grace, 2023, pp. 221, 251, 254 & 255) | Able-bodied, implied (hockey player) |

Aurora Roberts	Implied straight (Grace, 2023, pp. 12, 49) Implied cisgendered	White, explicit (Grace, 2023, pp. cover illustration, 89, 105, & 126)	Upper class (famous father), explicit (Grace, 2023, pp. 129, 153, 221, 251, 255, 263, & 294)	Able-bodied, implied
Mason Wright	Straight, implied (Grace, 2023, p. 10) Implied cisgendered	White, explicit (Grace, 2023, p. 10	Upper class, implied (Grace, 2023, p. 11)	Able-bodied, implied (basketball player)
Emilia	Lesbian, explicit (Grace, 2023, pp. 25, 37, 183) Implied cisgendered	White, explicit (Grace, 2023, p. 14)		Able-bodied, implied (ballerina dancer)
JJ	Queer, explicit (Grace, 2023, p. 24) Implied cisgendered			Able-bodied, implied (hockey player)
Chuck Roberts	Implied cisgendered		Upper class, implied (Grace, 2023, pp. 55 & 57)	Able-bodied, implied
Sarah Roberts	Implied cisgendered	White, implied (Grace, 2023, pp. 61, 308, & 310)	Upper class, implied (Grace, 2023, p. 57	Able-bodied, implied
Elsa Roberts	Implied cisgendered	White, implied (Grace, 2023, pp. 62, 308, & 353)		Able-bodied, implied
Xander (Alexander Smith)	Straight, explicit (Grace, 2023, p. 237) Implied cisgendered			Able-bodied, implied
Jenna	Implied cisgendered		Upper class, implied (Grace, 2023, p. 244)	Able-bodied, implied
Maya	Implied cisgendered	British, explicit (Grace, 2023, pp. 84, 91, & 102)		Able-bodied, implied

5.5 *Fourth Wing & Iron Flame* by Rebecca Yarros

Fourth Wing is the first book in the uncompleted *Empyrean* series by Rebecca Yarros (2023). It follows twenty-year-old Violet Sorrengail in her journey to becoming a dragon rider at Basgiath War College. It is not by her own choice that she is there, but her mother´s. Because of a weaker body constitution, and being the daughter of Commander Sorrengail, she has to battle people's preconceived opinions of her. She is severely underestimated by some of her peers, but she finds her group of friends that not only believe in her, but also encourage her to become stronger, for her own sake as well as for theirs. She meets Xaden, who she is advised to stay away from. Unfortunately, because of circumstances they cannot control, they have to trust each other with their lives. Along the way, they develop feelings for each other, but there is still something that Violet feels Xaden is hiding. In short, this book is about Violet finding herself, proving everybody who doubted her wrong, and learning to accept that she is now one of the strongest dragon riders at the college.

Iron Flame is the second book in *The Empyrean* series by Rebecca Yarros (2023) and is a direct continuation of *Fourth Wing*. While trying to survive the War Games, Violet learns about the secrets her country is hiding from the population. That Venin is not just a part of their creation myth but is now threatening their way of living. Trying to shield this truth from her squad-mates, she learns that even history is altered in order to hide this secret. While becoming second-years as riders, with new classes, she struggles with keeping the secret from her most trusted friends. Eventually the secret is out, and she is now fighting with what the nation considers a rebellion, as they want to save everybody they can. Forming alliances that ought not to have been possible, because of the secret, grates on people. They now need to learn to cooperate with those who were enemies not long ago. At the same time Violet and Xaden´s relationship is struggling, and they need to redevelop trust in each other after she discovers he has been keeping his involvement in the rebellion and the fact that her brother is alive secret from her

Characters	Sexual orientation/gender identity	Skin color/ethnicity	Socioeconomic status	(Dis)ability
Violet Sorrengail	Straight, implied (Yarros, 2023a, pp. 18, 31, 86, 135, 199, & 203) (Yarros, 2023b, pp. 4, & 113) Cisgendered, implied	White, explicit (Yarros, 2023a, pp. 3, 41, & 202) (Yarros, 2023b, pp. 8, & 251)	Upper class (military ties), implied (Yarros, 2023a, pp. 5, 19, & 33) (Yarros, 2023b, p. 113)	Disabled, explicit (Yarros, 2023a, pp. 3, 4, 9, 35, 60, 73, 100, & 225) (Yarros, 2023b, pp. 8, 47, 102,)
Xaden Riorson	Straight, implied (Yarros, 2023b, pp 251) Cisgendered, implied	Brown/bronzed, explicit (Yarros, 2023a, pp. 18, 105, 224, & 266) (Yarros, 2023b, pp. 4)	Upper class (military) (Yarros, 2023a, pp. 19, 84, 266) Upper class (nobility) (Yarros, 2023b, pp. 346, 454, 465, & 466)	Able-bodied, implied
Dain Aetos	Straight, implied (Yarros, 2023a, p. 190) Cisgendered, implied	White (tanned skin), implied (Yarros, 2023a, p. 69)		Able-bodied, implied
Rhiannon Matthias	Bisexual, implied (Yarros, 2023a, pp. 90, 193, 243, & 401) Cisgendered, implied	Dark skin, explicit (Yarros, 2023a, pp. 13 & 400)	Working class, implied (Yarros, 2023b, pp. 273 & 438)	Able-bodied, implied
Ridoc	Bisexual, implied (Yarros, 2023a, pp. 242, 243, & 425) (Yarros, 2023b, p. 42) Cisgendered, implied	Brown, explicit (Yarros, 2023a, p. 48) (Yarros, 2023b, p. 66)		Able-bodied, implied
Liam Mairi	Cisgendered, implied	White, implied (Yarros, 2023a, pp. 81, 240, 241, 272, & 471) (Yarros, 2023b, p. 7)	Upper class (military) (Yarros, 2023a, p. 250)	Able-bodied, implied (knows how to sign) (Yarros, 2023a, p. 250)
Heaton	Nonbinary, explicit (Yarros, 2023a, pp. 135, 197, & 426)			Able-bodied, implied

	(Yarros, 2023b, p. 330)			
Jesenia	Cisgendered, implied			Mute/deaf, implied (Yarros, 2023a, pp. 208 & 250) (Yarros, 2023b, pp.32 & 57)
Quinn	Lesbian, explicit (Yarros, 2023a, p. 197) (Yarros, 2023b, p. 81) Cisgendered, implied	White, implied (Yarros, 2023a, pp. 196 & 197) (Yarros, 2023b, p. 38)		Able-bodied, implied
Sawyer	Straight, implied (Yarros, 2023a, p. 193) (Yarros, 2023b, p. 347) Cisgendered, implied	White, implied (Yarros, 2023a, pp. 47 & 64)		Able-bodied, implied (wants to learn how to sign) (Yarros, 2023b, p. 347)
Brennan Sorrengail	Queer, implied (Yarros, 2023b, p. 11) Cisgendered, implied			Able-bodied, implied
Aaric Greycastle	Bisexual, implied (Yarros, 2023b, p. 213) Cisgendered, implied		Royalty, explicit (Yarros, 2023b, pp. 63, 214, & 290)	Able-bodied, implied

6 Discussion and Analysis

In this section, we are first going to analyze and discuss the data in the tables above through the lens of our theoretical framework related to diversity. As mentioned earlier, the theories we are relying on are Bishop's (1990) concepts of windows, mirrors and sliding glass doors alongside queer, transgender, race, class and disability theories. This portion of the analysis is organized by code, and all of the theories are summarized in their respective section, with the exception of Bishop's (1990) theory, which is summarized in section 6.1. However, this theory will be applied in all subsections in the analysis. Second, we are going to relate our findings, the diversity found in the books we have analyzed, to previous research on diversity in literature. As mentioned earlier, the definition of diversity we are relying on in our thesis is the definition by the We Need Diverse Books project: "all diverse experiences, including (but not limited to) LGBTQIA, Native, people of color, gender diversity, people with disabilities, and ethnic, cultural, and religious minorities" (We Need Diverse Books, 2023). We are then going to consider our findings in light of the Norwegian curriculum for the English subject. As a reminder, the research question we aim to answer is:

> To what degree do popular books on BookTok, which teenagers tend to reach for when choosing literature for themselves, reflect the English subject curriculum's emphasis on diversity?

The English subject curriculum puts a great emphasis on diversity and culture. Additionally, the curriculum expects students in grades 5–10 to read self-chosen books, and we believe that books trending on BookTok are the books that students in these grades are most likely to reach for when choosing their next read because the majority of young people ages 9–18 use TikTok (Medietilsynet, 2022, p. 24), libraries often emphasize BookTok books for teens and the books that are trending on BookTok are highlighted by bookstores in their YA section. As shown in section 2.3.2, Norwegian bookstores are heavily influenced by BookTok and have dedicated "BookTok-tables" and "BookTok-stickers" conveying that the books are trending in BookTok.

6.1 Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

In this section of our analysis, we will rely on Love (2014) and Butler's (2011) thoughts about queer and gender identity respectively, as well as Bishop´s (1990) concepts of windows, mirrors and sliding glass doors. Queer and transgender representation in literature is essential because these groups have historically been marginalized and excluded as well as viewed as objects to be studied (Love, 2014, pp. 172 & 173). Representation of queer characters and queer relationships is also important as queer theory criticizes and opposes gender and sexual norms (p. 172). Butler (2011) states that the differences between sexes go beyond biology and that society has taught us to "perform" our genders in specific ways (pp. xi –xii).

Bishop (1990) emphasizes the importance of children feeling represented in literature to not feel devalued in society. This can be especially important for children who might identify as queer as this is a nonnormative sexual practice and can still be frowned upon by some people. However, queer representation in literature is important regardless, because according to Bishop (1990) all children need to read books with representation of various social groups, since literature can act as a window into a world that is similar to our own. At the same time, it can help them understand people from other social groups and who live in different ways and prevent prejudice. Including queer and transgender characters in literature can normalize nonnormative sexual practices and gender identifications, ensure that these groups feel represented, and help them feel valued (Bishop, 1990).

6.1.1 *A Curse for True Love* by Stephanie Garber

In *A Curse for True Love* by Stephanie Garber (2023) all of the characters appear to be heterosexual. This is implied but not stated, as their sexualities are not a topic that is described or mentioned. Additionally, all of the characters are implied to be cisgendered, as their genders are not a topic that is addressed. Their sexualities are implied in various ways, for example, Wolfric and Honora Valor are married, and Lala Merrywood is engaged to Dane (pp. 35 & 375). Moreover, Evangeline Fox is married to Apollo Acadian. Marriage does not necessarily equal infatuation, but Apollo does express that he is in love with Evangeline: "I'll always protect you, Evangeline. I meant what I said when I first returned from the dead — I'm never going to let you

go" (p. 97). Evangeline is also infatuated by Lord Jacks, The Prince of Hearts. This is expressed by her on many occasions, for example she mentions that "[s]he'd felt butterflies when she'd kissed Apollo, but Evangeline had a feeling that kissing Archer would be earth-shattering" (p. 159). She also confesses to Jacks that he is the love of her life and tells him: "You are mine Jacks of the Hollow" (p. 349). Jacks is in love with Evangeline too (p. 98). Lastly Lyric Merrywood and Aurora Valor are also implied heterosexual. Aurora is in love with Jacks (pp. 261 & 307) and Lyric used to be in love with Aurora (pp. 281 & 307).

This book severely lacks representation of nonnormative sexual practices and gender identifications (Love, 2014, pp. 172 & 173). Furthermore, the gender embodiments and performativity in this book are highly normative (Butler, 2011, pp. xi & xii). An example from the book is how Evangeline can be described as a damsel in distress and is regularly saved and taken care of by masculine men, such as Apollo and Jacks. Given that love and relationships take up a great part of the plot in this book, some of the characters could and should have had nonnormative sexualities. However, the characters' sexualities are implied through their attractions to and relationships with the opposite sex, it does not mean that they are exclusively attracted to the opposite sex. Yet, explicit representation of diverse characters in literature is crucial, especially for children, and this is emphasized by Bishop (1990). This can be one of the dangers of this book, given that it only represents normative sexual practices and gender identifications.

6.1.2 *Divine Rivals* by Rebecca Ross

Divine Rivals by Rebecca Ross (2023) mostly depicts heterosexual characters and all of the characters are implied cis-gendered. The main characters, Iris Winnow and Roman Kitt fall in love and end up marrying each other (pp. 257 & 278). Further, Mr. Ronald Kitt and Roman's mother are married (p. 51). However, two of the characters are homosexual. Marisol Torres and Keegan Torres, both women, are a married couple (pp. 126 & 286). Keegan is a minor character who does not appear until the second half of the book, but Marisol is present in many parts of the story. Moreover, Elinor Little's sexuality is undisclosed. While Roman states that she is in love with someone else, it is never disclosed whether he is talking about a man or a woman (p. 168). As mentioned earlier, one cannot claim that this is a representation of a nonnormative sexual

practice, because that is not implied. Vague allusions do not equal representation. However, the representation of a lesbian marriage in this book is included. Marisol and Keegan's relationship is not frowned upon by any of the characters and their queer identity is not their only character trait. They are dynamic characters who are important to the plot of the story. That said, they are not protagonists. Yet, queer representation is important nevertheless (Love, 2014). However, the lack of nonnormative gender identifications is concerning (Butler, 2011)

6.1.3 *Powerless* by Lauren Roberts

Powerless By Lauren Roberts (2023) has no representation of nonnormative sexual practices and gender identifications. All of the characters whose sexuality is implied are heterosexual and there are no descriptions of nonnormative gender identifications. The main characters Paedyn and Kai are infatuated by one another (pp. 148, 176, 180, 194, 204, 230, 254 & 265). Kitt is also implied heterosexual because of his great interest in Paedyn (pp. 93 & 118) and his having invited her to several balls (p. 155). Furthermore, the King and Queen are married and are thus implied heterosexual as well. Lastly, Nathan and Layla are married and implied heterosexual (p. 43).

Moreover, most of the gender embodiments and performativity as described by Butler (2011), are highly normative in this book. However, Paedyn is quite the opposite of a damsel in distress. She is strong, fearless and quite the fighter (Roberts, 2023, p. 75). In fact, she is mistaken for a man in one of her monthly robberies (pp. 11 & 13). Her fighting skills are so great that it even impresses the prince (p. 104). This strong female representation is important, because it shows that even though one is a woman, one does not have to engage in the gender performativity that is expected of the female gender (Butler, 2011, p. xxi).

The lack of queer and transgender representation in this book is distressing. On the one hand, the plot of this book is not as concerned with love and relationships as for example, *A Curse for True Love*. Therefore, one can argue that the representation of queer relationships is not as necessary in this book. On the other hand, *Powerless* has many of characters and it would not hurt the plot to have some characters with nonnormative sexualities or gender identifications. Moreover, romance does feature heavily, as both Kitt and Kai are attracted to Paedyn, and Paedyn is extremely attracted to Kai, although she tries to fight this attraction.

6.1.4 *Wildfire* by Hannah Grace

While there is representation of different sexual orientations in *Wildfire* by Hannah Grace (2023), most of the characters are implied to be heterosexual, and there are no nonnormative gender identifications that we know of in Grace's book. Heterosexuality is clearly implied through the attraction between Aurora and Russ (pp. 12, 42, 46, 49, & 190). However, Aurora's best friend, Emilia, is a lesbian, and it is often mentioned that she talks with her girlfriend (pp. 25, 37, & 183). Another character that identifies as something other than heterosexual is JJ, a teammate of Russ; he is described as "[someone] from the LGBTQIA+ society" (p. 14). Finally, another character that is important to mention is Xander. While he identifies as heterosexual, he does come out and say that he has experimented with the same sex. He says: "[n]ot into dicks, though, sorry, dude. Tried once not for me" (p. 237). The fact that Grace has included this representation is beneficial for those who might be questioning their sexual orientation, as it suggests it is normal and acceptable to experiment with same-sex sexuality.

As mentioned, queer and transgender representation is important due to histories of ostracism (Love, 2014, pp. 172 & 173). Grace's inclusion of queer characters and a cisgendered (implied), heterosexual man who is upfront with other people about his own sexual experimentations is crucial. As Bishop´s (1990) theory argues, it is important for readers to see themselves represented in literature. When people who might be struggle with identifying their sexual orientation encounter a character who is open about his experimentations, it allows them to do the same. They might feel a connection with Xander and ultimately figure out if they prefer one gender over another. However, it is important to note that the protagonists are straight; only side characters are queer or questioning.

6.1.5 *Fourth Wing* and *Iron Flame* by Rebecca Yarros

Most characters in *Fourth Wing* and *Iron Flame* by Rebecca Yarros (2023a; 2023b) are implied to be heterosexual. This is the case for the two main characters, Violet, and Xaden. Their sexuality is never a topic, and they are heavily implied to be straight as they are each other love interest (2023a, pp. 18, 31, 86, 135, 199; 2023b, pp. 4, 113, 251, 459). However, there are a couple of bisexual side characters in these books. They again are implied to be bisexual, as they do not come straight out and say they are bisexual. It is implied by other characters making

comments on who they are sleeping with. The characters who are implied bisexual are Rhiannon, Ridoc, and Aaric (2023a, pp. 90, 193, 242, 243, 401, 425; 2023b, pp. 42 & 213). There are two characters whose sexual orientation is a mystery, but they can be defined as queer: Heaton and Brennan. While Brennan presents as an implied cisgendered male, his sexuality is questioned by Violet when she wonders if a friend of his might have been more than just a friend (2023b, p. 11). Yarros also includes representation of a lesbian character in her books, Quinn (2023a, p. 197; 2023b, p. 81). Heaton is the only character in these books that is explicitly mentioned to have another gender identity. They present as nonbinary, as Yarros uses they/them pronouns for this character in both books (2023a, pp. 135, 197, 426; 2023b, p. 330). No characters besides Heaton present themselves as something other than cisgendered.

Yarros includes various sexual attractions in her books, and this is important as emphasized by Love (2014). More, while the gender identifications and representations in Yarros's books can be considered normative by Butler's rubric (2011), there is an understanding that any gender that crosses the Parapet is worthy of the chance in trying to become a dragon rider. However, in the case of Violet, who is viewed by many as too small, fragile, and easily broken (Yarros, 2023a, pp. 3, 4, 35 & 37; Yarros, 2023b, pp. 8, 47 & 102), she goes against what is expected of her. Since she is viewed as a damsel in distress by those who know her before entering the Riders Quadrant, she works even harder to prove everybody and herself wrong (Yarros, 2023a, pp. 6, 60, 114). Violet's finding strength in her own weakness is important as it goes against how females are described and expected to behave (Butler, 2011, p. xxi) as well as our expectation of disabled individuals (see section 6.4, below).

6.2 Skin Color and Ethnicity

In this section of our analysis, we will rely on Dyer (2017a; 2017b) and Thomas's (2019) thoughts about skin color and ethnicity, as well as Bishop´s (1990) concepts of windows, mirrors and sliding glass doors. Dyer (2017a) emphasizes that there is prejudice against people with races other than "white" (p. 1). Representations of people with races other than white have repeatedly been negative in mainstream media, while nonwhite people have been compared unfavorably with white people (Dyer, 2017b, p. 141). While books for children often include characters whose skin colors are not stated, and one could argue that the lack of description of skin color can

suggest that the characters could have any color skin, according to Dyer (2017a), this is not the case: people who are not white are more often labeled based on their race compared to white people. Those whose skin color is not specified are usually implied to be white (p. 2). Dyer (2017b) also explains this phenomenon by arguing that it is difficult for white people to "see" this color in media, because scientifically, white is the presence of all colors (p. 143).

Shortcomings in diverse representations of skin color are not uncommon and can lead to a sense of lack or invisibility for readers of color. Ebony Thomas (2019) explains how she rarely saw representations of herself in literature or other media growing up (pp. 1–2). Furthermore, Thomas (2019) argues that for many people of color, the lack of representation in literature makes them feel like they cannot have the same dreams and aspirations as white people (p. 2). This absence of representation can make young readers feel devalued in society, and underrepresentation of other races and skin colors than white, can lead to an egocentric view of the world for those who are white (Bishop, 1990).

6.2.1 *A Curse for True Love* by Stephanie Garber

Skin color is rarely described or implied in *A Curse for True Love* by Stephanie Garber (2023). In fact, she only describes the skin color of three characters: Apollo, Jacks, and the unnamed Valor brother who is referred to as "the other Valor brother" in the book. Apollo's skin is described as "a lovely olive" (p. 73). Further, Jacks is implied white because his skin is described as pale (p. 111). Lastly, the unnamed Valor brother is also implied white as he is described as "very tan and golden" (p. 376). It is worth mentioning, that *A Curse for True Love* is the last book in a trilogy. That means that some of the characters' skin color might have been described in the earlier books. Yet, that does not defend this lack of characters with diverse skin colors as emphasized by Dyer (2017a). This underrepresentation can make children of other skin colors than white feel devalued and perhaps even create an egocentric view of the world (Bishop, 1990).

6.2.2 *Divine Rivals* by Rebecca Ross

Iris Winnow and Roman Kitt are depicted as white on the cover art of *Divine Rivals* by Rebecca Ross (2023). Iris is also implied white in the book itself because of her freckled skin (p. 105) Other characters who are implied white are Forest Winnow, Elinor Little and a soldier in the

infirmary. Forest is implied white because he has freckles and looks very much like Iris. This is mentioned throughout the book, one example is when Iris is listing his features and says that "[t]hey were so much like her own features. They could have been twins." (p. 336). Furthermore, Elinor is described as a girl with fair skin (p. 51). The soldier in the infirmary's skin is described as pallid and therefore implied white (p.133).

There are two characters who are described as having a skin color other than white, Thea Attwood and Marisol Torres. Thea has brown skin (Ross, 2023, p. 116) and Marisol has light brown skin (p.121). The majority of the character were implied white, but not many characters' skin colors were described, so it is hard to argue that this is a shortcoming, because we do not know the skin colors of the remaining characters. However, as mentioned earlier we cannot defend a shortcoming of diverse characters with this argument. Nothing prevents the inclusion of a description of skin color to make people with said skin color feel represented. As argued earlier, Dyer (2017b) explains that many people assume that a character is white when nothing else is specified in literary texts (p. 143). Therefore, one cannot defend lack of representation of skin color by arguing that the characters' skin color could by any color when it is not specified.

6.2.3 *Powerless* by Lauren Roberts

In Lauren Roberts's (2023) *Powerless* there is a great diversity of characters with various skin colors: five characters are implied white, six characters are described as having dark skin, one character has brown skin, and one has olive skin. This means that the majority of characters are non-white, at least of those whose skin color is described. Some characters' skin color are not described, but their appearances in the book are minimal. However, the skin colors of those who are white are not explicitly described but implied. For example, Paedyn, Kai, and Kitt are described as tan and therefore implied white (pp. 109 & 174). Paedyn also has freckles which further implies this. Blair is described as pale and therefore implied white (p. 79). Moreover, the skin color of those with non-white skin are explicitly described: The skin of Jax, Sadie, Braxton, Gail and two of the sights in the trial are described as "dark" (pp. 22, 43, 78, 96, 201 & 490). Furthermore, Adena's skin is described as "brown" (p.16), and an unnamed girl in the resistance's skin is described as "olive" (p. 300). This diverse representation of skin color is impressive compared to some of the other books we have analyzed. This representation can

ensure that many readers feel represented and that they can see a reflection of the society they live in (Bishop, 1990).

However, despite the great representation of various skin colors, the female main character, Paedyn, and the male main character, Kai, are both implied white. The characters whose skin is not white are secondary or even minor characters. This could make young readers of races other than white feel like they cannot be the hero in the story. To quote Ebony Thomas (2019), "[when] people of color seek passageways into the fantastic, [they] have often discovered that the doors are barred" (p. 2). Although there is a great representation of people of color in this book, the main characters are oftentimes those who one wants to relate to as a reader. Therefore, it can feel devaluing for people of color when they are not represented as protagonists.

6.2.4 *Wildfire* by Hannah Grace

Wildfire by Hannah Grace (2023) is the only realistic romance book that is included in our data, as the other books are fantasies and "romantasies" (romance fantasies). The main characters and most of the side characters attend college. As it is a contemporary romance and is set in a world similar to our own, it is easier to identify people by their ethnicities and nationalities. Most of the characters are American, several (including the main characters) are explicitly white, and some of them are implied white (cover illustration, pp. 10, 14, 18, 61, 62, 89, 105, 126, 308, 310, & 353). Maya, on the other hand is explicitly written as British (pp. 84, 91, & 102). Despite the fact that skin color and ethnicity are not described for most of the characters, one can assume that they are white; as Dyer (2017b) explains, when nothing else is specified, readers often assume that characters are white (p. 143). While there appears to be a lack of representation in Grace's book, we cannot definitively argue that there is a lack of representation, as the characters' skin colors are not specified.

6.2.5 *Fourth Wing* and *Iron Flame* by Rebecca Yarros

As Yarros's (2023a; 2023b) books are set in a fantasy world, there is no ethnicity represented in the way we know it. Yes, there are different countries in her world, and one can argue that this will correlate to a character's ethnicity and help readers know what they look like. This is not the case, however, even though there are several characters stemming from different countries in the

books; knowing their place of origin does not give us any information about their coloring. Most characters in Yarros's books are implied to be white. Violet even makes a comment about her own paleness, as she easily burns in the sun (Yarros, 2023a, p. 41). There are, however, some characters that are described by their skin color, with Xaden, Rhiannon, and Ridoc being those who are central to the story. Xaden is described as having "warm tawny skin" (Yarros, 2023a, p. 18; Yarros, 2023b, p. 4), Rhiannon is described as having "skin as dark as her hair" (Yarros, 2023a, pp. 13 & 400), and lastly Ridoc is described as having brown skin (Yarros, 2023a, p. 48; Yarros, 2023b, p. 66).

It is not often that skin color is described in Yarros's books. Only those with skin colors other than white have their skin color described, with the rest being implied white. Having representation is important, as Thomas (2019) describes those who are not white might feel less important. More, in Yarros's books, especially within the Riders Quadrant, the skin color of a person does not define their performance in accomplishing a task or their place in society. In the Riders Quadrant, what defines you is how well you manage to get through all the tasks Basgiath College gives you to become a dragon-rider. This is good as children need to see positive images of themselves (Bishop, 1990).

6.3 Socioeconomic Status

In this section of our analysis, we will rely on Bullen's (2021) ideas about class, as well as Bishop´s (1990) concepts of windows, mirrors and sliding glass doors. The word "class" has had many definitions throughout history. Class is different from other similar terms, as "social position is made rather than merely inherited" (Williams as cited in Bullen, 2021). In other words, it is possible to move on the hierarchical ladder of class. Shifts in socioeconomic status are often present in children´s literature through for example rags-to-riches and triumph-of-the-underdog stories (Bullen, 2021). The rags-to-riches trope is evident in some of the books analyzed, as for example for Paedyn and Iris. Paedyn has the opportunity to marry either the heir, Kitt, or the prince, Kai, while Iris marries Roman, who is rich. There exist two ideas of class: the economic model and the social model, both of which are connected. The social model focuses on class as determined by, for example, aristocratic status, titles, or caste, while the economic model focuses mainly on wealth as a determinant of privilege. In reality, these two types of class often

intersect—that is, those who have social privilege through titles or inheritance also have economic power—hence why we use the adjective "socioeconomic"

As children are not a part of the workforce, class is difficult to represent in children's literature. However, labor is occasionally depicted in children´s literature, but not in the typical sense. Historically, literature for children have most often depicted the dominant class — the middle class. When other classes have been depicted, oftentimes as minor characters, they have been presented in a negative manner (Dixon as cited in Bullen, 2021).

6.3.1 *A Curse for True Love* by Stephanie Garber

In *A Curse for True Love* (Garber, 2023) the majority of the main characters are from the upper class. Most of these characters are royal: Apollo Acadian is a prince (p. 9) and everyone in the Valor family is royal as well (pp. 33 & 34). Furthermore, Evangeline is royal because she is married to Apollo, but originally she was a part of the middle or working class (pp. 5 & 63). Additionally, it is implied that Jacks is a part of the upper class even though his socioeconomic status is not explicitly revealed. However, given that he is an immortal fate, is quite known in the Kingdom, is well off, and is called the "Prince of Hearts" and "Lord Jacks", it is heavily implied that he is in the upper class.

Evangeline's story can be described as a rags-to-riches story (Bullen, 2021). She had a somewhat normal life but was able to climb the social ladder by marrying into royalty. Furthermore, this book heavily depicts the lives of those in the upper classes, which makes sense given that the majority of the main and supporting characters are royal or upper class. However, they are not necessarily positively represented. For example, Apollo is quite selfish: he stole Evangeline's memories and tricked her into trusting him. Also, he found a tree that would grant him immortality, but this had its price; he had to sacrifice the person he loved the most. Apollo thought that would be Evangeline and was willing to sacrifice her. However, it turned out that the person he loved the most was himself. Furthermore, Aurora Valor was the one who helped Apollo remove Evangeline's memories. Therefore, it is comparable to historical children's literature which almost exclusively painted characters from the middle class in a positive manner while depicting characters from the upper classes in a negative manner (Bullen, 2021). However,

the characters we know are a part of the working class in this book are Martine, Evangeline's maid, and eight different guards. They all work at the castle and are not portrayed negatively, which differs from historically negative depictions of the lower classes (Bullen, 2021). Finding representations of oneself in terms of social class in this book would be difficult for most people. As mentioned, the majority of the main characters are royal, and the characters representing the working class all work at the castle as guards and maids, which are not average jobs. However, we want to argue that the world this book is set in is a fairytale-like land, and princes and princesses are very typical in fairytales. Therefore, it would perhaps not be realistic to identify with the classes of the characters in this book regardless. Additionally, this is the third book in a trilogy, and diverse representations of class could have been more present in the first two books, especially as Evangeline has married up from the middle class. This does not mean that we defend the book's lack of diversity in terms of class, but as Bullen (2021) argues, considering class can be quite difficult in children's literature. The characters in this book are not children, but rather young adults. However, none of the main characters are a part of the workforce. It seems like class awareness is not of major focus in this book, although it could be said to imply that marrying up comes with benefits (not needing to work) and drawbacks (that your spouse could be selfish).

6.3.2 *Divine Rivals* by Rebecca Ross

In *Divine Rivals* by (Ross, 2023), the two main characters come from opposite social classes: Iris lower and Roman upper. The female main character, Iris Winnow is a part of the working class. This is portrayed through her clothing, apartment, and financial situation, all illustrated by various quotes:

> "Iris dashed through the rain with a broken high heel and a tattered trench coat" (p. 7), "She gritted her teeth as she noticed how much she couldn't afford" (p. 19) and "He could see the melted candles on the sideboard from all the nights she couldn't afford electricity, and the stray wine bottles she had yet to dispose of. How barren the living room was, and how the wallpaper was faded and falling apart." (p. 81).

Iris's socioeconomic situation is emphasized throughout the first part of the book. She describes how she and her brother had to share a closet, how she didn't have many outfits and that they "made most of what they had, patching holes and mending frayed edges and wearing their

raiment until it was threadbare" (pp. 3 & 25). Iris's family is like her, a part of the working class. Her brother, Forest is fighting in the war and her mother, Aster, is unemployed (pp. 14 & 21). Therefore, we can also argue that she is a part of the lower class. Iris's grandmother, Daisy Elizabeth Winnow, was also a part of the working or lower class. Her friends expressed that they "never cared about her social status (p. 148). Finally, Marisol Torres is a part of the working class, as she runs a bed and breakfast in Avalon Bluff and gives war correspondent food and lodgings while they work (p. 112).

Roman Kitt, on the other hand, is a part of the upper class. He comes from a family with money and went to a prestigious school (Ross, 2023, pp. 10–11). This is also expressed through his clothing: "his fashionable fawn-colored jacket and shined leather brogues and slicked-back hair" (p. 28). Roman's parents are naturally also a part of the upper class (pp. 10–11). Other members of the upper class in this book include Dr Herman Little and his daughter, Elinor Little. This is implied because they know the Kitt family, Dr Little has a PhD and Elinor is considered a possible spouse for Roman (p. 51). Also, Richard Stone is a rich and resourceful man, and it is therefore implied that he too is a part of the upper class (p. 111).

The contrasts between Iris's and Roman's families accurately portrays the struggles of the working and lower classes. Iris is barely getting by, and can rarely afford lunch, which implies that her job is not very well paid. Roman, on the other hand gets by fine on this salary, because his family is wealthy, and he doesn't need to use it for food or lodgings. This is a great example of how the different ideas of class, the economic model and the status model, sometimes contradict each other (Bullen, 2021): Roman is from the upper class but still has the same job as Iris who is from the lower- or working class. Roman is regardless viewed as "above" Iris because of his family's wealth and status. Additionally, the book portrays the generosity of the people from the working class — that those who have the least give the most. For example, Marisol, Attie and Iris donate their mattresses when all the beds in the infirmary are full (Ross, 2023, p. 164). This positive portrayal of the working class is important, because historically characters from the working class have been portrayed negatively in literature (Bullen, 2021). Additionally, literature can act as windows into worlds like our own, and it is therefore important for children

to read about this kind of positive representation of groups that historically have been depicted negatively (Bishop, 1990)

6.3.3 *Powerless* by Lauren Roberts

In *Powerless* (Roberts, 2023), the female main character, Paedyn, is living in the slums of Ilya with her friend, Adena, and their living conditions are awful. They do not have a roof over their heads and struggle daily to get food and supplies (pp. 11, 12, 116 & 130). Therefore, Paedyn has been making a living by stealing from the inhabitants of Ilya (pp. 13 & 24). Paedyn and Adena are in other words part of the lower class. The male main character, on the other hand is a prince and thus a part of the upper class (p. 23). His brother, Kitt, is the heir to the kingdom and naturally is a part of the upper class as well (p. 18). Their parents are the King and Queen who also are a part of the upper class given their royal status. The King and Queen also have an adopted son, Jax. Other characters in the upper class are Blair who is the daughter of the general and Sadie whose father is an adviser to the king (pp. 21 & 80). Moreover, Ace comes from a nicer area of the slums, so it is implied that he is a part of the middle- or working class (p. 86). Lastly, Gail works in the kitchen in the castle and is therefore a part of the working class (p. 22).

This book has a diverse representation of various social classes. The two main characters, Paedyn and Kai, come from opposing social classes: Paedyn is a part of the lower class and Kai is in the upper class. This contrast is interesting, because Paedyn is struggling to get by, while Kai is well off living in the castle. Furthermore, Paedyn's story appears at first to be a triumph-of-the-underdog story or rags-to-riches story (Bullen, 2021), but she joins an underground rebel group, the King sabotage her in order to make her lose the trials, and ultimately, she sacrifices her possible romances with Kai and Kitt for her political ideals. Because of this book's diverse representation of social classes, many readers could find someone to relate to. This is important according to Bishop (1990) for children not to feel devalued in society. Although, all readers necessarily would not find someone representing their social class, it is also important to read about characters from other social groups than our own in order to not get an egocentric view of the world (Bishop, 1990). That said, the fantasy world and classes represented are far from most people's experience, based on an idea of the classes of the past.

6.3.4 *Wildfire* by Hannah Grace

In *Wildfire* (Grace, 2023) there is a clear difference in how Aurora and Russ grew up. While Aurora comes from money and is well traveled (pp. 192, 153, 221, 252, 255, 263 & 294), Russ grew up with some financial struggles and envying those who had more (pp. 221, 252, 254, 255). As this book focuses on the relationship between Aurora and Russ, not much is written about the other characters and one can only assume what classes they belong to.

As the book is set in a world mirroring our own, the same class structures that we know can be applied. Class descriptions in Grace's (2023) book are not explicitly told, but one can make assumptions based on the information we are given. Aurora is from an upper-class family, as she grew up with a famous father and traveled the world with his Formula 1 team (pp. 57 & 127). Russ comes from a middle-class family, but his father struggles with a gambling addiction, so their socioeconomic situation varies (pp. 4 & 148). Bullen (2021) argues that one can traverse the different social classes, and this is evident with Russ. He plays for his college hockey team, is attending college on a sports scholarship, and has a chance to go pro in the NHL. However, he does not want this. His reasoning being that he likes his private life too much to give it up (Grace, 2023, pp. 251, 254 & 255).

6.3.5 *Fourth Wing* and *Iron Flame* by Rebecca Yarros

In *Fourth Wing* (Yarros, 2023a) and *Iron Flame* (Yarros, 2023b) there is an understanding that the military is of a higher class in Yarros´s fantasy world, where the military is almost akin to the royal family. This can be seen whenever Violet is recognized as Commander Lilith Sorrengail's daughter (2023a, pp. 5, 14, 15, 19, 22, & 37). At the same time, though, Violet works against the prejudice of being Commander Sorrengail's daughter. She wants to be recognized as herself instead of her connections to her mother. The same can be said for Xaden (Yarros, 2023a, pp. 19, 84, & 266), who is viewed by many to be a traitor because of his father's action when he was a child which resulted in his bearing a rebellion mark. While this diminishes his status, having one of the strongest dragons (pp. 51 & 95) in turn raises his status, at least amongst his peers. In *Iron Flame,* he is also implied to have a higher status than what was introduced in *Fourth Wing*. Here he is implied to be the next in line for the defunct throne in Aretia (2023b, pp. 251, 346, 454, 59,

465, & 466). There are several characters who also have military families, and one can assume, depending on the ranks of their parents, that they are from an upper-class family. There are, however, mentions of characters' being from working-class families, such as Rhiannon (Yarros, 2023b, pp. 273 & 438). Then we have Aaric Greycastle, who we find out is "King Tauri's third son" (2023b, p. 63), meaning he is from the royal family. However, he has gone undercover to the Riders Quadrant against his father's wishes. There are a few people who recognize him, but most do not (Yarros, 2023b, pp. 62 & 214).

As this is a fantasy world, it is difficult to compare the classes within it to our own modern classes. Other than the royal family, one can only make assumptions based on descriptions. At the same time, there seems to be an assumption amongst those in the Riders Quadrant that they are better than other quadrants (2023a, p. 4), perhaps because of the standing dragon riders have in the military. Again, as Bullen (2021) argues, it is difficult to see different classes within children´s literature.

6.4 (Dis)ability

There are no descriptions of or allusions to disability in *A Curse for True Love* (Garber, 2023), *Divine Rivals* (Ross, 2023), *Powerless* (Roberts, 2023), or *Wildfire* (Grace, 2023). In other words, most of the characters in these books are implied able-bodied because nothing else is mentioned. The fact that there is a lack of representation of characters that can be identified as having a disability is disconcerting. Referring to Bishop´s (1990) theory, children need diverse representation in literature in order for all children to feel valued in society. However, in *Wildfire's* case, we cannot be certain that there is no representation of disabilities, as it is the second book in an interconnected series, so some of the descriptions of characters' disabilities might be found it the first book. The same reasoning is also relevant for *A Curse for True Love*, as it is the third and final book in its series.

The only books that had any clear representation of or allusions to characters with disability were Rebecca Yarros's books: *Fourth Wing* and *Iron Flame.* However, we only found two representations of disability: Violet and Jesenia. Violet, is alluded to having EDS (Ehlers-Danlos syndrome). Having fragile ligaments and brittle bones makes training to become a dragon rider

much tougher for her (2023a, pp. 4, 172 & 286). She rises above her disability and proves everyone wrong, and this puts her in Garland-Thomson's (2002) model "supercrip," those who perform "feats the able-bodied viewer cannot imagine doing" with a disability (pp. 59–63). Not much is specified when it comes to Jesenia. However, based on the information given to the reader in the books, she might be deaf and/or mute. The reason we assume this is because in all interactions Jesenia has with other characters, she uses sign language and those communicating with her do the same (Yarros, 2023a, pp. 208 & 250; 2023b, pp. 32 & 57). It is because of her portrayal in the series that we put Jesenia into Garland-Thomson's (2002) model of the "realistic" (pp. 69-74). Violet and Jesenia are the only characters with a disability. The fact that there are no other characters is concerning. Garland-Thomson (2002) writes that it became inappropriate to use disabled people as entertainment (p. 57), as they historically had been, and it is possible authors do not feel they know enough about various disabilities to represent them well. However, we argue that there needs to be more representation, as there are people out in our society that have disabilities, and they should have the opportunity to see themselves represented in various media (Bishop, 1990).

6.5 Diversity in Popular BookTok Books

A total of 77 characters were analyzed. Nine of these characters were queer, while 28 were implied straight, and the rest of the characters' sexual orientations were unknown. Furthermore, one character was nonbinary whereas the rest were implied cisgendered. Twenty-three of the characters were described as or implied white, and 16 characters had other skin colors such as brown, dark, and olive. Some characters' skin color was unknown. Thirty-one of the characters represented the upper class, while one represented the middle class, 16 the working class, and three the lower class. The rest of the characters' socioeconomic statuses were unknown. Lastly, only two of the characters were implied disabled whereas the rest were implied able-bodied. This shows that the majority of the characters, at least those who had personal descriptions relevant to our codes, were straight, cisgendered, white, able-bodied, and from the upper class. This finding is concerning but not surprising as other researchers have previously gotten similar results.

For example, Kleppestø and Omdahl's (2022) master's thesis analyzed 15 books that had been trending on TikTok and showed that these included various representations of diversity. In short,

three of the protagonists were men, all of whom were either homosexual or bisexual. The remaining protagonists were female, but only one of them was queer (p. 28). Additionally, only one of the central characters had a minority background and most of the characters were white (p. 32).

Because Kleppestø and Omdahl (2022) analyzed books that were trending in 2022 with varying publication dates, while we chose to only analyze books that were published in 2023, we thought it would be interesting to see if we found more or less diversity in our research compared to theirs as their research is two years old, and BookTok trends are constantly changing. However, it is quite difficult to compare our results to theirs as they only considered the main characters while we considered all characters who represented some type of diversity. Also, we considered more types of diversity compared to them: They considered gender, sexual orientation and ethnicity, whereas we considered all of these in addition to socioeconomic status and (dis)ability. In this comparison, we will therefore consider the protagonists. In our material, there are 5 female and 6 male main characters. One of them has brown skin, the rest being implied as white, and none of them are queer. This shows that Kleppestø and Omdahl (2022) had a greater representation of sexual orientations and ethnicity in their material compared to ours. These findings coincide with Garcia's (2023) statements about the BookTok community, where she argues that the books that are trending usually include main characters who are white and heterosexual (p. 30). However, we also considered other types of diversity. The main characters in our material represent a wide variety of socioeconomic statuses and one of the main characters has a disability. Overall, however, the protagonists lacked diversity.

This lack of diversity is not limited to BookTok literature. As Bold (2018) explains, there is a lack of diversity in the Anglo-American book publishing industry as a while: the industry is dominated by "white, middle-class, able-bodied, cisgendered, heteronormativity (in its workforce, authors, and characters)" (p. 385). Johanson, Rutherford and Reddan's (2023) agree with this (p. 91). Our material certainly reflects the Anglo-American book publishing industry when it comes to the authors, as all of them are white, middle-class and cisgendered. Four of them are American, while Grace is British. Most of them are married to men ("About me" n.d.; "About Rebecca" n.d.; "Lauren Roberts" n.d.; Simon & Schuster n.d. & "Stephanie Garber"

2024; Egan, 2023). Only one, Yarros, is disabled (Alter, 2023). Moreover, the majority of the main characters in our material are white, able-bodied, heterosexual and cisgendered. However, some of the minor characters are non-cis, queer, or ethnoracially diverse.

However, even though we have presented a collection of research that shows a lack of diversity in literature, other research indicates it has been more common to see diverse main characters in stories published in recent years. For example, CLPE's (2023) annual *Reflecting Realities* report has shown an increase in children's literature including representation of racially minoritized characters (p. 7). More, CCBC's (2024) annual *Diversity Statistics* have similar results. Also, according to Booth and Narayan (2018a), "the publishing industry in the United States has been in the forefront of this change" (p. 196). It is with the help of social and mainstream media that stories where the main characters are a part of minority groups become popular. Boffone and Jerasa (2021) have also discovered that readers have gotten to see more diverse characters in primary roles as opposed to background characters in recent years (p. 12). Additionally, in another of their articles, Jerasa and Boffone (2021) argue that queer YA literature has become very popular on BookTok (p. 11). Therefore, we expected to find more diversity represented in our material that we did, especially among the main characters.

6.6 The Importance of Diverse Representation in Literature

While the main characters in our findings are not particularly diverse, we found a wide range of diversity amongst the secondary characters. While this is admirable, as Bishop (1990) explains in her article, it is important for children to see themselves mirrored in literature in order to not feel devalued. We are not claiming that one cannot see oneself mirrored in minor characters. However, only seeing main characters through windows might make one feel less important by those who see main characters as mirrors, and this can lead to feeling devalued as one is not able to see oneself mirrored as a main character.

Therefore, it is important to have diverse main characters, because it normalizes the fact that anyone can be the hero in a story, no matter their background, ethnicity, skin color, sexual orientation, social status, gender, or other vectors of identity (Bold, 2019, pp. 16–17). John Green also argues for the importance of seeing oneself in stories in a We Need Diverse Books

campaign, where he argues that "we need to reflect the reality of our communities and that reality is a very diverse one" (We Need Diverse Books, 2014, 0:06).

All of this ties in with Bishop´s (1990) theory of windows, mirrors and sliding glass doors. Her article explains how literature also can act as windows where one can look into worlds that are real or imagined, or mirrors, which allow us to see and imagine ourselves. Bold (2019) also argues for this in her article, and she mentions how in literature young people can see themselves and other cultures in, enables them to understand diversity better (p. 6). Children need to learn about other cultures as well as how diverse the society they are living in is to prevent prejudice and develop intercultural competence — both requirements of the English subject curriculum (see section 6.7, below). However, not everyone can travel to meet people from various cultures, and therefore it is essential to include diverse characters in literature that is accessible to young readers. In this way, children can experience and learn about other cultures and social groups through the windows literature provides. Bishop (1990) argues that if children only see "reflections of themselves, they will grow up with an exaggerated sense of their own importance and value in the world — a dangerous egocentrism" (Bishop, 1990, n.p.). Moreover, she argues that if they do not see themselves reflected, they will feel undervalued and lose self-confidence.

Despite our disappointment with the lack of diverse representation amongst the main characters, we do still feel somewhat satisfied with the representation amongst the secondary and minor characters. Even the fact that someone secondary is bi-curious, using sign language, nonbinary, queer, or has a skin color other than white can be validating for many people. Just seeing a glimpse of someone one can relate to creates a sense of belonging and acceptance. This is something we have noticed ourselves, when reading in our down time. The secondary characters do still have an important role in stories, as they help the main characters grow into their role. More, they sometimes even get their own main character moments, when then can save the day and be the hero.

6.7 BookTok Books in the Curriculum

The English subject curriculum places a great emphasis on diversity and culture. Additionally, it is mentioned in the curriculum that in grades 5–10, the students should be reading self-chosen

books, and we believe that books that are trending on BookTok are the books that students in these grades may select for themselves. The six books we analyzed have a varied number of diverse characters; some of them included a great variety of diversity, while others did not. Five out of the six books we analyzed are fantasy books and are set in a world that is not like our own. Therefore, these books do not give a depiction of the culture of specific countries, for example. Despite this, they may reflect aspects of identity and society, and thus allow students to achieve the following learning aim: "By reflecting on, interpreting and critically assessing different types of texts in English, the pupils shall acquire language and knowledge of culture and society" (Udir, 2020, p. 3). Although fantasy cultures are not the same as the cultures in our world, students may still learn about culture when reading fantasy. For example, many of the characters in the books in this research represent various social classes, which can relate to our world. In fantasy, characters are still poor and rich, even though the rich are often royalty or something similar. Additionally, aspects such as military ranking are also similar. *Wildfire* (Grace, 2023) has a good representation of American college culture and summer camps, as it is set in a world mirroring our own.

The curriculum also highlights prevention of prejudice. This is mentioned in several places, such as the subject's relevance and values and under the interdisciplinary topic "democracy and citizenship." We want to argue that the books in our research can contribute to this. Firstly, there is a great variation of skin color in some of the books, especially *Powerless*, *Fourth Wing,* and *Iron Flame*. Our code "skin color/ethnicity" started out as just "skin color". This changed while analyzing our primary material, as one character was described by her nationality (Grace, 2023, pp. 84, 91, & 102). Because of this, the original code was not elaborate enough.

Skin color or ethnicity is described in all of the books, some more than others. In the books we have analyzed, the characters' skin color rarely implied their ethnicity. This is because ethnicity in the fantasy world is not necessarily the same as in our world. For example, in *Powerless* and *The Empyrean series* the characters had diverse skin colors, although this did not imply their national and cultural origin. In other words, this creates the impression that they all could come from the same area. Still, representation of skin color and ethnicity can help prevent prejudice. Secondly, there is some representation of other sexualities other than heterosexuality. This is

most apparent in *Divine Rivals*, *Fourth Wing*, *Iron Flame* and *Wildfire*. Representation of a variation of sexualities is also important in order to prevent prejudice, and we applaud the fact that the queer sexualities that are represented are not limited to gay and lesbian. When it comes to representation of disability in our primary material, only *Fourth Wing* and *Iron Flame* explicitly mention any form of disability. Not everybody in the real world is able bodied, and therefore having representation of someone with a disability is valuable.

The core element "working with text in English" says the students "shall build the foundation for seeing their own identity and others' identities in a multilingual and multicultural context" (Udir, 2020, p. 3). We believe that while diverse identities are represented through our primary material, there is room for improvement when it comes to diversity in YA and NA literature. Some of the books showed a variety of diverse characters. Among these are *Powerless*, *Fourth Wing* and *Iron Flame*. Other books had a moderate representation of diverse characters, such as *Wildfire* and *Divine Rivals*. Lastly, *A Curse for True Love* had a very small number of diverse characters. Still, we believe that all of these books reflect the curriculum's emphasis on diversity simply because not all of the characters belong to the majority and therefore some of them have the ability to teach our students about culture and diversity. We cannot set the bar for diversity in literature too high, but we must have some demands. At the very least we should expect that the entire cast of characters to not be white, cisgendered, heterosexual, able-bodied, and upper class.

6.8 The Power of BookTok

To sum up, despite our disappointment with the lack of diversity of the main characters, we are still pleased with the diversity amongst the secondary- and minor characters in the trending BookTok books we analyzed. We hypothesized that we would find more diverse main characters based on previous research, on our own interaction with BookTok and online book cultures in general. Yet, some of the research on diversity BookTok literature is contradictory, as we have seen above: some research suggests that there is much diversity in BookTok literature, while other research suggest otherwise. We think this is because online, the subculture you are a part of relies heavily on algorithms, which in turn reflects the content you are privy to (Boffone & Jerasa, 2021, p. 11). We have come to the realization that if we had been in a more niche subculture on BookTok, for example queer YA literature, we would have seen an entirely

different group of books, and this would have affected our primary material, which in turn would affect the findings and results. We made sure not to be biased when compiling our primary material, and this led to us not being on any specific subculture of BookTok. If we had used our own personal experiences, we would most likely have gotten different results. We feel that we were only on the surface level of BookTok, as we interacted with all of the content and nothing specific. Garcia (2023) argues in her article that the most popular BookTok books severely lack diversity, and these books are likely books like those we encountered (p. 30). It is the creators and the consumers who keep the algorithm on TikTok alive. The more you interact with a certain type of content, the more you will receive similar content (Boffone & Jeresa, 2021, p. 11). At the same time, if the content available were more diverse — something the children's, YA, and NA book industry is not, as we have shown above — consumers would likely interact more with this content, and in turn would receive more diverse content. Therefore, the creators hold the power over the content made available, but it is up to the consumers to decide if they want to accept the content the way it was intended (Hall, 2009).

Additionally, Jenkins's (2006) theory about convergence culture is also relevant when it comes to which books are trending on BookTok in general and on our FYPs specifically. Firstly, TikTok is designed to be responsive to consumer feedback in the form of interaction (p. 18). If you interact with a video by liking, commenting, saving, reposting or even watching it over and over — it sends a signal to TikTok that you like this kind of content. TikTok's algorithm is extremely sensitive. Therefore, when we interacted with videos on TikTok, that sent a signal to the algorithm that we liked the content we were watching, and we therefore got more of that content on our FYPs. We believe that this also is one of the reasons why we just scraped the surface of BookTok. We liked all book content, and therefore our FYP did not cater to a specific niche of BookTok.

Moreover, publishers and authors might have had an influence during the period we were scrolling on TikTok as well. As mentioned earlier, some creators on TikTok get paid to promote books, and some authors and publishers also have their own accounts to promote their books. Despite the fact that we know that the different subcultures on BookTok had a great influence on the books which ended up as our primary material, we believe that BookTok in general has

promoted many great books with diverse characters, books that could have flown under the radar if it were not for the influence of BookTok creators and consumers.

7 Conclusion

This chapter will present the conclusion of our thesis. Firstly, we will provide a summary of the main findings in our research and then we will answer the research questions and comment on the implications these findings have for young readers. Lastly, we will discuss areas for future research. The purpose of our thesis was to explore whether popular BookTok books adequately represented diversity in line with the English subject curriculum. This field of research was interesting to us, as BookTok books are becoming the preferred reading material for many young readers. Therefore, we believed that when choosing a self-chosen book in English, a stated learning aim for grades 5–10, many students presumably would reach for a book has been trending on BookTok. To consider the diversity of these books, we chose to first conduct a web content analysis of BookTok content to accumulate our primary material, and then to do a qualitative content analysis of the six books that were trending the most.

Our main findings show varying degrees of diverse characters in the primary material. Some of the books were severely lacking representations of all types of diversity we were looking for — sexual orientation and gender identity, skin color and ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and (dis)ability — while other books showed representation of some types of diversity. However, the common trend within all the primary material was a concerning lack of representation of diversity amongst the main characters. All but one were white, all of them were straight and cisgendered, and all but one were able-bodied. The only type of diversity we found, with a varying degree of representation amongst the main characters, was socioeconomic status.

However, though the main characters lacked the diversity we hoped to find, many of the minor characters did not. For example, there were fifteen non-white minor characters, nine queer characters, and one non-binary character. Despite this, the majority of all the characters, at least those who had personal descriptions relevant to our codes, were straight, cisgendered, white, able-bodied, and upper class. We were hoping to find more diversity, as some the most recent research in this field has shown an increase in diverse characters in literature (CLPE, 2023, p. 7; CCBC, 2024; Booth & Narayan, 2018a, p. 196; Boffone & Jerasa, 2021, p. 12). At the same time, the research in this field has been contradictory, and other research has shown that the publishing

industry still has a long way to go when it comes to representation of diversity in literature (Kleppestø & Omdahl, 2022, p. 22; Bold, 2018, p. 385).

As this is an ever-changing field of research and because of TikTok constant flow of content, one needs to consider when the selection of primary materials was done as this is reliant on what the current BookTok trends were at the time of selection. If the selection of primary materials was done at a different time, we would most likely have gotten different results. We have also argued that the outcome of selection of primary materials was also determined by which sub-communities within BookTok we took part in. We believe that we only reached the surface level of BookTok, which mainly recommend books with normative characters. Perhaps if we went deeper into the different sub-cultures, we would have been presented with books including more diversity. This requires more—and more comparative—research.

The research question we aimed to answer was:

> To what degree do popular books on BookTok, which teenagers tend to reach for when choosing literature for themselves, reflect the English subject curriculum's emphasis on diversity?

Despite the disappointing degree of diversity represented in the primary material, we still believe that the primary materials in some way reflect what the English subject curriculum says about diversity. All of the books have some characters that are not white, cisgendered, heterosexual, able-bodied, or upper class. Having literary windows and mirrors like these provides students with the possibility to learn about other social groups or see a reflection of themselves. Such windows and mirrors are important as the windows provide insight into others' lives, experiences and perspectives, and this insight can help prevent prejudice and an "egocentric view of the world" (Bishop, 1990, n.p.). More, mirrors in literature make sure that children feel valued in society and that everyone, including marginalized groups, can be the hero of the story.

We would like to conclude by discussing possible directions for future research. As our study was limited to only six books, we believe it would be useful to conduct a similar study with a larger number of books as this would even more accurately represent the BookTok community. As we have discussed, we believe that our primary material was retrieved from the surface level

of BookTok. Therefore, an even more in-depth study could perhaps find more diverse books from other niche communities within BookTok, e.g. the queer community. Also, it could be relevant to consider more aspects of diversity such as religious, indigenous and cultural minorities. As we have seen, CLPE does an annual survey of representation of racially minoritized characters in children's literature and CCBC does a similar survey of books for children and teens. The latter consider people of color, Indigenous people, disability, LGBTQ+ and religion. These organizations consider children's and teen literature, but as we have shown, children and teenagers read YA and NA books as well. Thus, the diversity in these books is important too.

Further, it could be interesting to research readers' emotional responses to BookTok books. As mentioned in section 2.3.2, BookTok creators oftentimes share their emotional responses in their recommendations. This in turn influences others to read said book. Therefore, it could be relevant to look at what emotional responses influence others to read certain books. Additionally, it could also be interesting to research how masculinity and femininity is represented through characters in literature. Initially, we wanted to include feminism as one of the aspects to analyze but had to exclude this due to length limitations. Lastly, an important area for future research could be to explore the bias against POC and queer content creators on TikTok.

References

"About me." (n.d.). Retrieved May 24, 2024, from https://www.rebeccayarros.com/about/

"About Rebecca." (n.d.). Retrieved May 1, 2024, from https://rebeccarossauthor.com/about/

Adams, R., Reiss, B., & Serlin, D. (2015). Disability. In R. Adams, B. Reiss, & D.
Serlin (Eds.), *Keywords for disability studies*.

Alter, A. (2023, November 6). How Rebecca Yarros Packed Dragons, Magic and Steamy Sex
Into a Blockbuster Fantasy. *New York Times*.
https://www.nytimes.com/2023/11/06/books/rebecca-yarros-fourth-wing-iron-flame.html

Anderson, K. E. (2020). Getting acquainted with social networks and apps: it is time to talk
about TikTok. *Library Hi Tech News*, 37(4), 7–12. https://doi.org/10.1108/LHTN-01-2020-0001

Bakken, A. (2022). Ungdata 2022. Nasjonale resultater. *NOVA Rapport 5/22*. Oslo: NOVA,
OsloMet. https://hdl.handle.net/11250/3011548

Beauchamp, M., Chung, W. V. & Mogilner, A. (2010). Disabled Literature—Disabled
Individuals in American Literature: Reflecting Culture(s). *Review of Disability Studies: An International Journal*, 6(1). http://hdl.handle.net/10125/58432

Bishop, R. S. (1990). Mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors. *Perspectives* 1(3), ix-xi.

Boffone, T., & Jerasa, S. (2021). Toward a (Queer) Reading Community: BookTok, Teen
Readers, and the Rise of TikTok Literacies. *Talking Points (Urbana, Ill.)*, *33*(1), 10–16.
https://doi.org/10.58680/tp202131537

Bold, M. R. (2018). The Eight Percent Problem: Authors of Colour in the British

Young Adult Market (2006–2016). *Publishing Research Quarterly*, 34(3), 385–406. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12109-018-9600-5

Bold, M. R. (2019). *Representation of people of colour among children's book authors and illustrators*. BookTrust.

Booth, E. & Narayan, B. (2018a). Towards diversity in young adult fiction: Australian YA authors' publishing experiences and its implications for YA librarians and readers' advisory services. *Journal of the Australian Library and Information Association*. 67:3, 195-211, https://doi.org/10.1080/24750158.2018.1497349

Booth, E., & Narayan, B. (2018b). 'Don't talk about the gay character': Barriers to queer young adult fiction and authors in schools and libraries. *English in Australia*, 53(2), 40–48.

Booth, E. & Narayan, B. (2021). Identifying Inclusion: Publishing Industry Trends and the Lack of OwnVoices Australian Young Adult Fiction. *Research on Diversity in Youth Literature: Vol. 3: Iss. 1, Article 12*. https://sophia.stkate.edu/rdyl/vol3/iss1/12

Bullen, E. (2021). Class. In P. Nel, L. Paul, & N. Christensen (Eds)., *Keywords for children's literature* (2nd ed.). NYU Press. https://keywords.nyupress.org/childrens-literature/essay/class/

Butler, J. (2011). *Bodies That Matter*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203828274

Cart, M. (2014). YA or NA? Booklists intrepid trendspotter Michael Cart travels to the treacherous demilitarized zone between young adult and new adult and reports on his findings. In *The Booklist (Chicago, Ill. 1969)* (Vol. 110, Issue 22, p. 10). American Library Association.

CCBC (Cooperative Children's Book Center) (2024). *2023 CCBC Diversity Statistics news release*. Retrieved from: https://uwmadison.app.box.com/s/rn4ccrdx8f8a2nbbqb6spx16kxcy52r1/file/1490478755959

Centre for Literacy in Primary Education (CLPE). (2023). *Reflecting Realities – Survey of Ethnic*

Representation within UK Children's Literature. https://clpe.org.uk/research/clpe-reflecting-realities-survey-ethnic-representation-within-uk-childrens-literature-1

CHYLSA (n.d.). *Project CHYLSA*. Retrieved April 7, 2024, from https://chylsa.pages.gitlab.rlp.net/chylsa-website/#about

Crow, C. (Ed.). (1998). What is Young Adult Literature? (Young Adult Literature). *English Journal*, *88*(1), 120.

Daley-Carey, E. (2018). Testing the Limits: Postmodern Adolescent Identities in Contemporary Coming-of-Age Stories. *Children's Literature in Education*, *49*(4), 467–484. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10583-017-9317-7

Dimock, M. (2019). *Defining generations: Where Millennials end and Generation Z begins.* Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2019/01/17/where-millennials-end-and-generation-z-begins/

Dyer, R. (2017a). Introduction. In *White* (pp. 1–24). Routledge. (Original work published 1997)

Dyer, R. (2017b). White. In *The Matter of Images: Essays on representations* (pp. 141-163). Routledge.

Egan, E. (2023, November 2). Who Is Hannah Grace? And Why Won't She Show Her Face? *New York Times.* https://www.nytimes.com/2023/11/02/books/review/wildfire-hannah-grace.html

Engberg, G., Seaman, D., & Vnuk, R. (2014). What is new adult fiction? (SPOTLIGHT ON New Adult Fiction). In *The Booklist* (Vol. 110, Issue 22, p. 5). American Library Association.

Flood. (2021). The rise of BookTok: Meet the teen influencers pushing books up the charts. *The Guardian,* https://www.theguardian.com/books/2021/jun/25/the-rise-of-booktok-meet-the-teen-influencers-pushing-books-up-the-charts

Garber, S. (2023). *A Curse for True Love*. Hodder & Stoughton.

Garcia, C. (2023). *THE RACE OF PUBLISHING: THE TROUBLING WHITENESS IN*

PUBLISHING AND THE FORCES PUSHING BACK [Master Thesis]. Texas Christian

University.

Garland-Thomson, R. (2002). The politics of staring: Visual rhetorics of disability in

popular photography. In S. L. Snyder, B. L. Brueggemann, & R. Garland-Thompsom

(Eds.), *Disabilty studies: Enabling the humanists* (pp. 56–75). MLA.

Grace, H. (2023). *Wildfire*. Simon & Schuster.

Hall, S. (2009). ENCODING/DECODING. In *Media Studies* (p.28). Edinburgh University

Press. https://doi.org/10.3366/j.ctvxcrv1h.7

Harris, C., Johnson, A. G., Palmer, S., Yang, D., & Bruckman, A. (2023). "Honestly, I think

TikTok has a vendetta against Black creators: Understanding Black content creator

experiences on TikTok. *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction,* 7(2),

1–31. https://doi.org/10.1145/3610169

Harris, E.A. (2021, March 20). How crying on TikTok sells books. *New York Times,*

https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/20/books/booktok-tiktok-video.html

Herring, S.C. (2009). Web Content Analysis: Expanding the Paradigm. In: Hunsinger, J.,

Klastrup, L., Allen, M. (eds) *International Handbook of Internet Research.* Springer,

Dordrecht. https://doi-org.ezproxy1.usn.no/10.1007/978-1-4020-9789-8_14

Iqbal, M. (2024). *TikTok Revenue and Usage Statistics.* Business of Apps.

https://www.businessofapps.com/data/tik-tok-statistics/

Jerasa, S. & Boffone, T. (2021). BookTok 101: TikTok, Digital Literacies, and Out-of-School

Reading Practices. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 65(3), 219–226.

https://doi.org/10.1002/jaal.1199

Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence Culture*. New York University Press.

https://doi.org/10.18574/9780814743683

Johanson, K., Rutherford, L., & Reddan, B. (2023). Beyond the "good story" and sales history: where is the reader in the publishing process? *Cultural Trends*, *32*(2), 91–106. https://doi.org/10.1080/09548963.2022.2045864

Kleppestø, J. & Omdahl, M. M. (2022)*. Litteraturformidling på BookTok. En leserenessanse i de sosiale medienes tidsalder* [Master Thesis]. University of Oslo.

Korstjens, I., & Moser, A. (2018). Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 4: Trustworthiness and publishing. *The European Journal of General Practice,* 24(1), 120–124. https://doi.org/10.1080/13814788.2017.1375092

Krippendorff, K. (2019). Conceptual foundation. In *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology* (Fourth Edition ed., pp. 24-50). SAGE Publications, Inc., https://doi.org/10.4135/9781071878781

Kruse, M. L. (2022). *Pinnsamma läsningar: En affektteoretisk studie av #SpicyBooks på TikTok.* [Master Thesis]. Uppsala Universitet.

"Lauren Roberts" (n.d.). Retrieved May 1, 2024, from https://www.laurenrobertslibrary.com/

Linneberg, M. S., & Korsgaard, S. (2019). Coding qualitative data: A synthesis guiding the novice. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 19(3), 259–270. https://doi.org/10.1108/QRJ-12-2018-0012.

Love, H. (2014). "Queer." *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 1 (1–2): 172–76. http://read.dukeupress.edu/tsq/article-pdf/1/1-2/232/485677/19.pdf.

Martens, M., Balling, G., & Higgason, K. A. (2022). BookTokMadeMeReadIt: young adult reading communities across an international, sociotechnical landscape. *Information and Learning Science*, *123*(11/12), 705–722. https://doi.org/10.1108/ILS-07-2022-0086

Mauer, B. & Venecek, J. (2021). *Strategies for Conducting Literary Research* (2. Ed.). University

of Central Florida.https://pressbooks.online.ucf.edu/strategies2e/

Medietilsynet. (2022). *Barn og medier 2022 - en undersøkelse om 9-18-åringers medievaner.*

https://www.medietilsynet.no/globalassets/publikasjoner/barn-og-medier-
undersokelser/2022/231002_barn-og-medier_2022.pdf

Merga, M. K. (2021). How can Booktok on TikTok inform readers' advisory services for

young people? *Library & Information Science Research*, *43*(2), 101091.
https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lisr.2021.101091

Meyer, A. E. (2013). "But she's not retarded": Contemporary Adolescent Literature Humanizes
Disability but Marginalizes Intellectual Disability. *Children's Literature Association
Quarterly*, *38*(3), 267–283. https://doi.org/10.1353/chq.2013.0035

Neuendorf, K. (2017). *The content analysis guidebook*. SAGE Publications, Inc,

https://doi.org/10.4135/9781071802878

Nyeng, F. (2012). *Nøkkelbegreper i forskningsmetode og vitenskapsteori*. Fagbokforlaget.

Pattee, A. (2017). Between Youth and Adulthood: Young Adult and New Adult Literature.

Children's Literature Association Quarterly, 42(2), 218–230.

Pianzola, F., Rebora, S., & Lauer, G. (2020). Wattpad as a resource for literary studies.
Quantitative and qualitative examples of the importance of digital social reading and
readers' comments in the margins. *PLoS One*, *15*(1), e0226708–e0226708.
https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0226708

Rafferty, M. (2023) *Heir of Broken Fate*. Independently Published.

Roberts, L. (2023) *Powerless*. Simon & Schuster.

Ross, R. *Divine Rivals*. (2023). Magpie.

Rumbsy, J.H. (2017). *Otherwordly others: Racial representation in Fantasy Literature* [Master´s thesis, University of Montreal]. Papyrus, University of Montreal https://papyrus.bib.umontreal.ca/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1866/20108/Rumsby_John_Henry_2017_memoire.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y

Schalk, S. (2016). Reevaluating the supercrip. *Journal of literacy & cultural disability studies,* 10(1), 71–86.

Simon & Schuster. (n.d). *Hannah Grace.* Retrieved May 1, 2024 from

https://www.simonandschuster.com/authors/Hannah-Grace/201909284

Statistics Norway. Educational attainment of the population. 1 October 2015. [Online].

Retrieved from https://www.ssb.no/en/utdanning/statistikker/utniv/aar/2016-06-20#:~:text=The%20level%20of%20education%20through,Norway%20began%20recording%20education%20statistics

"Stephanie Garber" (2024, April 5). Retrieved May 1, 2024, from

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stephanie_Garber

The Norwegian National Research Ethics Comittees (NESH). (2022). *Guidelines for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities.* https://www.forskningsetikk.no/en/guidelines/social-sciences-and-humanities/guidelines-for-research-ethics-in-the-social-sciences-and-the-humanities/

The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (Udir). (2020). *Curriculum in English (ENG01-04).* Established as a regulation by the Ministry of Education and Research. https://www.udir.no/lk20/eng01-04?lang=eng

Thomas, E. (2019). *The dark fantastic*. NYU Press

TikTok. (n.d). *Camera tools*. Acquired 8th of February 2024 from

https://support.tiktok.com/en/using-tiktok/creating-videos/camera-tools

We Need Diverse Books. (n.d.). *About WNDB*, We Need Diverse Books. Retrieved November

23, 2023 from https://diversebooks.org/about-wndb/

We Need Diverse Books. (2014, October 28th). *John Green: Why we need Diverse Books.*

YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oBMYa-dJWm8

Whatley, M. (2022). *Introduction to quantitative analysis for international educators*.

Springer.

Yarros, R. (2023a). *Fourth Wing*. Little, Brown Book Group.

Yarros, R. (2023b). *Iron Flame*. Little, Brown Book Group.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Author	Title	Tally - Kaja	Tally - Jem	Tally - Total
Adams, Sara	Practice Makes Perfect	0	3	3
Adams, Taylor	The Last Word	0	1	1
Allison, Zoe	The Ex-Mas Holiday	1	0	1
Armas, Elena	The Long Game	3	4	7
Armentrout, Jennifer L.	Fall of Ruin and Wrath	2	1	3
Asher, Lauren	Final Offer	6	8	14
Asher, Lauren	Love Redesigned	5	13	18
Asten, Alex	Nightbane	1	6	7
Avery, Annaliese	The Immortal Games	1	0	1
Bailey, Tessa	Wreck the Halls	5	5	10
Bailey, Tessa	Secretly Yours	0	1	1
Bailey, Tessa	Unfortunatley Yours	0	1	1
Baldree, Travis	Bookshops and Bonedust	1	0	1
Bali, E. P.	Her Vicious Beasts	2	0	2
Bali, E. P.	Her Feral Beasts	1	1	2
Bardugo, Leigh	Hell Bent	1	1	2
Barnes, Lynn	The Naturals (Series)	2	0	2
Bates, Laura	Sister of Sword and Shadow	0	1	1
Bayliss, Jenny	A December to Remember	0	1	1
Beagin, Jen	Big Swiss	1	1	2
Benson, Brit	Between Never and Forever	0	1	1
Biel, Lauren	Hitched	0	1	1
Black, Alora	The Holy Academy of Witches	0	1	1
Black, Holly	The Stolen Heir	2	1	3
Blackgoose, Moniquill	To Shape a Dragon's Breath	1	1	2
Bonam-Young, Hannah	Out on a Limb	1	3	4
Borison, B. K.	In the Weeds	1	0	1
Borison, B. K.	Lovelight Farms	1	0	1
Boully, Angeline	Warrior Girl Unearthed	0	1	1
Brady, Fern	Strong Female Character	2	1	3
Broadbent, Carissa	The Ashes and the Star-Cursed King	2	4	6
Broadbent, Carissa	Six Scorched Roses	2	2	4

Author	Title			
Broder, Melissa	Death Valley	1	1	2
Brown, Pierce	Light Bringer	1	1	2
Burke, Andie	Fly with Me	1	1	2
Campbell, Elle	War on Christmas	2	0	2
Carrick, M. A.	Labyrinth's Heart	1	1	2
Center, Kathrine	Hello Stranger	0	1	1
Christy, Ann	The Never-Ending End of the World	1	1	2
Clare, Cassandra	Sword Catcher	5	5	10
Clare, Cassandra	Chain of Thorns	1	1	2
Cottingham, Kayla	This Delicious Death	1	0	1
Cove, Kay	Camera Shy	0	1	1
Cowles, Cathrine	Shadow of You	0	1	1
Daniels, J.	The Tragedy of Felix and Jake	2	0	2
Day, Jordan A.	A Ripple of Power and Promise	0	1	1
Dennard, Susan	The Hunting Moon	0	1	1
Dickerson, Melanie	Cloak of Scartlet	0	1	1
Doyle, Catherine & Webber, Katherine	Cursed Crowns	1	1	2
Dumas, Luke	The Paleonthologist	1	0	1
Duplessie, Andrew	Too Scared to Sleep	1	1	2
Elizabeth, Morgan	The Fall of Bradley Reed	1	1	2
Elizabeth, Morgan	Big Nick Energy	1	0	1
Elizabeth, Morgan	Cruel Summer	0	1	1
Elsbai, Hadeer	The Daughters of Izdihar	1	0	1
Everett, Lo	All on the Line	1	0	1
Fawcett, Heather	Emily Wilde's Encyclopedia of Faeries	2	3	5
Ferguson, Lana	The Fake Mate	0	1	1
Ferguson, Lana	The Nanny	0	1	1
Fields, Helen	The Institution	1	0	1
Fiorina, Nicole	Bone Island: Book of Danvers	1	0	1
Fitzgerald, Bea	Girl, Godess, Queen	1	1	2
Fortune, Carley	Meet me at the Lake	1	0	1
Garber, Stephanie	A Curse for True Love	11	16	27
Gessinger, J. T.	Fall into You	1	0	1

Author	Title			
Gillig, Rachel	Two Twisted Crowns	7	9	16
Gilmore, Laurie	The Pumpkin Spice Café	1	3	4
Godin, K.	Summoning of the Siren	0	1	1
Goffrey, Joya	My Week with Him	1	0	1
Goldbeck, Kate	You, Again	1	1	2
Gong, Chloe	Immortal Longings	2	1	3
Good, J.A	The Swindler and the Swan	0	1	1
Grace, Adalyn	Foxglove	0	1	1
Grace, Alanna	183 Reasons	0	1	1
Grace, Hannah	Wildfire	12	13	25
Griffin, Rachel	Bring Me Your Midnight	1	0	1
Groff, Lauren	The Vaster Wilds	0	1	1
Guanzon, Thea	The Hurricane Wars	1	0	1
Hall, Jescie	That Sik Luv	0	1	1
Hall, Karina	A Ship of Bones and Teeth	1	1	2
Hallet, Janice	The Christmas Appeal	1	0	1
Harding, Robyn	The Drowning Woman	0	1	1
Harlow, Melanie	Hideaway Heart	2	0	2
Harlow, Melanie	Runaway Love	1	1	2
Harrow, Alix E.	Starling House	1	3	4
Hart, Elodie	Unfurl	1	0	1
Hart, Elodie	Undulate	0	1	1
Hart, Emilia	Weyward	0	1	1
Hashem, Sara	The Jasad Heir	0	2	2
Hastings, Jessa	Never	1	2	3
Hawkins, Kelli	Apartment 303	0	1	1
Hawley, Sarah	A Witch's Guide to Fake Dating a Demon	0	1	1
Hazelwood, Ali	Love Theoretically	7	8	15
Hazelwood, Ali	Check & Mate	5	6	11
Helen, Elizabeth	Bonded by Thornes	0	1	1
Hendrix, Grady	How to Sell a Haunted House	1	0	1
Henry, Emily	Happy Place	10	11	21
Heywood, Claire	The Shadow of Perseus	1	0	1

Author	Title			
Hildebrand, Elin	The Five-Star Weekend	1	0	1
Holborn, Gray	The Protector Guild	1	0	1
Holton, India	The Secret Service of Tea and Treason	0	1	1
Huang, Ana	King of Pride	1	3	4
Huang, Ana	King of Greed	2	12	14
Hunter, Cara	Murder in the Family	1	2	3
Huntington, P. S. & Shen L. J.	My Dark Romeo	1	2	3
Ibañez, Isabel	What the River Knows	1	1	2
Jackson, Lauren	Die For You	2	1	3
Jackson, Lauren	Meant to Be	2	0	2
Jalaluddin, Uzma	Three Holidays and a Wedding	1	0	1
Jane, C. R.	The Pucking Wrong Number	1	0	1
Jay, Monty	The Blood We Crave: Part Two	1	1	2
Jewell, Lisa	None of this is True	3	2	5
Jimenez, Abby	Yours Truly	6	8	14
K., Nyla	For the Fans	2	2	4
Katz, Runya	Thank you for Sharing	1	1	2
Kennedy, Elle	The Graham Effect	1	2	3
Kent, Rina	God of Ruin	1	1	2
Kent, Rina	God of Fury	0	2	2
Khaw, Cassandra	The Salt Grows Heavy	1	1	2
Knoll, Jessica	Bright Young Women	2	1	3
Krause, Autumn	Before the Devil Knows You're Gone	1	0	1
Kuang, R. F.	Yellowface	3	1	4
Lacey, Catherine	Biography of X	1	1	2
Lark, Sophie	Grimstone	1	0	1
Laroux, Harley	Soul of a Witch	0	2	2
Lauren, Christina	The True Love Experiment	2	2	4
Leeds, Scott	Schrader's Chord	1	1	2
Legrand, Claire	A Crown of Ivy and Glass	1	0	1
Levine, Jenna	My Roommate is a Vampire	0	1	1
Lumsden, Katie	The Secrets of Hartwood Hall	1	0	1
Maehrer, Hannah Nicole	Assistant to the Villain	3	3	6

Author	Title			
Mafi, Tahereh	These Infinite Threads	3	3	6
Mainard, Erin	The Blood that Binds us	1	1	2
Makkai, Rebecca	I Have Some Questions for You	1	0	1
Maniscalo, Kerri	Throne of the Fallen	0	2	2
Marceau, Evie	White horse Black Nights	0	1	1
Massey, S.	Devious Obsession	1	0	1
Matlin, Lisa, M.	The Stranger Upstairs	1	0	1
Maxwell, Jessa	The Golden Spoon	0	1	1
McAllister, Gillian	Just Another Missing Person	0	1	1
McEwan, Stacey	Chasm	0	1	1
McFadden, Freida	The Housemaid's Secret	3	2	5
McIntire, Emily	Twisted	3	3	6
McIntire, Emily	Crossed	1	1	2
Monaghan, Annabel	Same Time Next Summer	1	0	1
Money-Coutts, Sophia	Looking out for Love	1	0	1
Moreno-Garcia, Silvia	Silver Nitrate	1	0	1
Morgan, Sarah	The Christmas Book Club	2	1	3
Morgan, Sarah	The Book Club Hotel	1	0	1
Morissey, Hannah	When I'm Dead	1	0	1
Munoz, Lauren	Suddenly a Murder	0	1	1
Murphy, Julie & Simone, Sierra	A Holly Jolly Ever After	1	0	1
Murphy, Tim	Speech Team	1	1	2
Nicole, Amber V.	The Throne of Broken Gods	1	1	2
Nix, P. H.	Ruthless Rejection	1	0	1
O'Reiley, Jeneane	How Does it feel?	2	3	5
Orlando, Carissa	The September House	2	4	6
Painter, Lynn	The Love Wager	7	2	9
Painter, Lynn	Betting on You	1	0	1
Parker, Sarah. A	To Flame a Wildflower	1	0	1
Patchett, Ann	Tom Lake	0	1	1
Pekkanen, Sarah	Gone Tonight	0	1	1
Pavlov, Laura	Into the Tide	1	0	1
Peñaranda, Chloe C.	The Stars are Dying	1	1	2

Author	Title			
Poston, Ashley	The Seven Year Slip	9	12	21
Presley, S.K.	The Pain We Nurture	0	1	1
Proby, Kristen	Cauldrons Call	0	1	1
Proby, Kristen	Salems Song	0	1	1
Quinn, Julia	Queen Charlotte	0	2	2
Quinn, Katherine	To Kill a Shadow	0	1	1
Raasch, Sarah	Night of the Witch	1	1	2
Rae, Kelsie	Don't Let me Break	1	0	1
Rae, Kelsie	Don't Let me Down	1	0	1
Rafferty, Mads	Heir of Broken Fate	15	11	26
Rath, Emily	Pucking Around	3	1	4
Ray, Lexi	Brooklyn Cupid	0	1	1
Reiche, Arianna	At the End of Every Day	1	1	2
Reid, Ava	A Study in Drowning	4	5	9
Reyes, Ana	The House in the Pines	1	0	1
Robert, Katee	Hunt on Dark Waters	1	0	1
Roberts, Lauren	Powerless	28	39	67
Rosenfelt, David	Twas the Bite Before Christmas	1	1	2
Ross, Rebecca	Divine Rivals	28	30	58
Ross, Retok	Summer Rental	0	1	1
Rubin, Gareth	The Turnglass	0	1	1
Saeed, Aisha	Forty Words of Love	0	1	1
Sage, Lyla	Done and Dusted	1	0	1
Sagen, Clare	A Kiss of Iron	1	2	3
Sager, Clare	Slaying the Shifter Prince	1	0	1
Sager, Riley	The Only One Left	1	0	1
Sanders, Nicola	Don't Let her Stay	0	1	1
Sanderson, Brandon	Tress of the Emerald Sea	2	1	3
Sanderson, Brandon	Yumi and the Nightmare Painter	1	0	1
Sanderson, Brandon	Defiant	0	2	2
Scheuerer, Helen	Vows and Ruins	1	0	1
Schwab, V.E	The Fragile Threads of Powe	3	2	5
Schwartz, Dana	Immortality - A Love Story	0	2	2

Score, Lucy	Things We Left Behind	10	7	17
Score, Lucy	Thing We Hide from the Light	4	6	10
Shannon, Samantha	A Day of Fallen Night	3	2	5
Silver, Elsie	Powerless	10	13	23
Silver, Elsie	Reckless	3	9	12
Silver, Elsie	Hopeless	5	6	11
Silver, Josie	A Winter in New York	1	1	2
Simon, Nina	Mother-Daughter Murder Noght	1	1	2
Sittenfeld, Curtis	Romantic comedy	1	0	1
Slaughter, Karin	After that Night	0	1	1
Soto, Julie	Forget me Not	2	2	4
Spears, Britney	The Woman in Me	1	0	1
Stark, Stacia	A Court this Cruel and Lovely	1	3	4
Steele, L.	The Agreement	1	0	1
Stephens, Caleb	The Girls in the Cabin	1	1	2
St. Graves, Avina	Skin of a Sinner	0	1	1
Sun, Miranda	If I Have to be Hunted	0	1	1
Swan, T. L.	My Temptation	1	2	3
Swanson, Peter	The Christmas Guest	1	0	1
Swanson, Peter	The Kind Worth Saving	0	1	1
Taylor, Z.W	The Bite	0	1	1
Thummler, Brenna	Lights	1	1	2
Tilly, S. J.	Nero	1	2	3
Tilly, S. J.	King	1	1	2
Tomforde, Liz	The Right Move	5	5	10
Tomforde, Liz	Caught Up	2	1	3
Törzs, Emma	Ink, Blood, Sister, Scribe	0	3	3
Underwood, Sarah	Lies We Sing to The Sea	0	1	1
Underwood, Sarah	Songs We Sing to the Sea	2	0	2
Vho, Nghoi	Mammoths at the Gates	0	1	1
Vine, Lucy	Seven Exes	0	1	1
Walsh, Chloe	Saving 6	7	1	8
Walsh, Chloe	Redeeming 6	5	2	7

Author	Title			
Walter, K. L.	What Happens After Midnight	1	0	1
Walter, Susan	Lie by the Pool	1	0	1
Waters, Martha	To Swoon and Spar	1	0	1
Weaver, Brynn	Butcher and Blackbird	3	5	8
Weeks, Brent	Night Angel Nemesis	0	1	1
Wells, Martha	Witch King	1	1	2
White, Kiersten	Mister Magic	0	1	1
Wiesner, Melissa	It All Comes Back to You	0	1	1
Wolf, Julia	Sincerely, Your Inconvenient Wife	1	0	1
Wolfe, Carley	It Never Happened	1	1	2
Wolfe, Leslie	The Surgeon	1	0	1
Wolfehart, Jenna	Forged by Magic	0	1	1
Woods, Harper L.	The Coven	0	1	1
Woods, Harper L.	What Lurks Between the Fates	1	0	1
Yarros, Rebecca	Fourth Wing	52	104	156
Yarros, Rebecca	Iron Flame	14	38	52
Yarros, Rebecca	In the Likely Event	1	1	2

Appendix 2

Medforfattererklæring

Denne erklæringen bekrefter at begge masterstudenter har vært aktivt deltakende i masteroppgaveprosjektet:

- Utforme problemstilling og forskningsspørsmål
- Fremstilling av teori og forskningsfelt
- Utvikling av metode, samt datainnsamling
- Analyse og diskusjon

Dato	Underskrift
31/05/24	Jemimah Marie Andersen
31/05/24	Kaj A Pedersen