An examination into the portrayal of deaf characters and deaf issues in picture books for children

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Abstract

This paper examines children's picture books that either feature deaf characters or are aimed at a deaf audience. It is drawn from my Master's thesis An Examination into the Portrayal of Deaf Characters and Deaf Issues in Books for Children (2003), which examined 14 primary texts that either feature deaf characters or are aimed at a deaf audience of young readers, those in later childhood and books for adolescents. My observations of books for the youngest readers are presented here. Two types of picture book are considered: those aimed at providing information about what it means to be deaf and those using a combination of pictures, sign symbols and words to tell a story. The methodology arises from two main critical perspectives. The first is Appleyard's theory of the needs of the reader in progressive stages of reader development and the second is based on a summary of the issues that surround the portrayal of "disability". My thesis acknowledges the political, social and cultural issues surrounding definitions of disability and looks at disability as a social rather than a medical issue. It also acknowledges the difference between having a hearing impairment and being part of Deaf culture. My analysis shows that those books that are most successful are shaped by the visual aspect of deaf culture and that these also reflect the narrative desires of the child reader as identified by Appleyard.

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HTML

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234-247. Deaf Characters in Children's Books: How are They Perceived? In Gallaudet University College for Continuing Education. Jan 1993. Brittain, Isabel. "An Examination into the Portrayal of Deaf Characters and Deaf Issues in Picture Books for Children." Disability Studies Quarterly, Winter 24 2004. 1. Retrieved April 24, 2005 from http://www.dsq-sds.org Burns, D.J. An Annotated Checklist of Fictional Works which Contain Deaf Characters. The following is a list of books for children from preschool age to eight years old that feature deaf characters: Carole Addabbo - Dina The Deaf Dinosaur - Dina runs away from home to the forest because her parents won't let her learn sign language. There she befriends an owl, a chipmunk, and a mole. Age: Five through ten. Lorraine Aseltine, Evelyn Mueller, Nancy Tait - I'm Deaf and It's Okay - A young boy describes the frustrations caused by his deafness and the encouragement he receives from a deaf friend. One recent study examined children's picture books for portrayals of deaf individuals in the text; however, examining illustrations may provide additional information for both hearing and d/Deaf (For the purpose of this paper, capital "D" Deaf refers to people who are recognized part of the Deaf community; "d" deaf refers to the inability to hear or people unable to hear; d/D includes both populations.) readers about deafness and the Deaf population. Deaf and hearing children go on a field trip to a museum. When the deaf boy, Seth, gets stuck in the elevator, his hearing friend helps by fingerspelling to him through the glass window. References. Ayala, E. C. (1999). An examination into the portrayal of deaf characters and deaf issues in picturebooks for children.