

The Impact of Fiction on Perceptions of Disability

My sister, Peggy, had severe mental retardation. Five years older than me, she had no language ability, always wore diapers, and had to be fed every meal for the 53 years of her life. Many people who saw Peggy pitied her for what she lacked. Some even pitied my parents, brothers, and me, since we “had Peggy to deal with,” as though she were an uninvited visitor or an overdrawn bank account. But few realized what Peggy had to offer us. She grew up without ever feeling jealousy or pride, without knowing envy or self-doubt. Instead, she understood and responded to the love of her family, and returned it to us in her own unique way. She giggled when we approached her, and cooed when Mom or Dad or our grandmother took her for a car ride. She loved vanilla ice cream and crisp saltine crackers. Peggy taught my family and me many lessons. Among them is the lesson that the value of human life, through the power of love, transcends our limited definitions of “normal.”

—P. S. Carroll

Literature instruction in middle and high school classrooms can be a powerful vehicle for helping adolescents learn about the human experience (Applebee, 1993). Books and movies that feature characters who live with developmental disabilities can expand readers’ understandings and insights about the lives of those who live with these disabling conditions. Developmental disability, which is defined as a specific category of disability that comprises more severe

conditions—including intellectual disability (another name for mental retardation), cerebral palsy, and autism—represents a kind of diversity that is seldom included or celebrated in classroom discussions of differences. In fact, literature that features characters with developmental disabilities invites rich classroom conversation about these markers of diversity.

Often, however, even in today’s adolescent and young adult fiction, characters who are portrayed as having developmental disabilities are depicted stereotypically instead of realistically. These inaccurate portrayals, along with accurate ones, need to be examined by adolescent readers—readers who are building their own catalogues of criteria regarding human behavior and the human condition as they develop their own value systems. Teachers can introduce adolescents to fictitious portrayals of characters with developmental disabilities in books and movies, and help them analyze and evaluate these characters. In so doing, they are helping their students explore their own attitudes and assumptions regarding these types of significant disabilities.

A Research Project Emerges from Teacher Educators’ Conversations

We three, colleagues who work in the two areas of English Education and Special Education, talk often about the roles of K–12 special education teachers in general education classrooms. Not long ago, we

noticed that our informal conversations often circled around the question of how and when the university students in our special education teacher preparation program—those who would soon teach children and adolescents in K–12 classrooms—developed their perceptions and understandings of a key component of their specialized education: developmental disabilities. We wondered if they were drawn to special education because they had life experiences with people who live with disabilities, or if they relied primarily on media depictions to inform them about life for those with developmental disabilities and their families/caretakers.

In order to find answers to our questions, we decided to engage in a three-pronged project. First, we determined that we would find out more about the special education (or Education for Exceptional Students) preservice teachers' recollections regarding how they learned about developmental disabilities. We would probe especially the role of books and movies in informing their understanding, using a survey and an essay that preservice teachers in Education for Students with Exceptionalities (ESE, or Special Education) would complete. Next, we would develop a guide to help our ESE preservice teachers (and practicing teachers of all subject areas) evaluate, select, and teach works of fiction that include characters who have developmental disabilities. Finally, in order to increase attention to diversity and deepen understanding, we would provide teachers of all content areas with some initial resources to help them include more award-winning books that depict characters with disabilities in their classroom collections.

We enlisted the help of a cohort of 40 preservice ESE teachers to explore how contemporary books and films shape their attitudes and beliefs about individuals with developmental disabilities. The preservice teachers, most of whom were in their initial semester in the special education major, answered a survey and wrote an essay about their early experiences with books and movies and about the impact that those had on their current beliefs and assumptions about developmental disabilities. We compiled the survey responses and coded the essays for common themes in order to develop a picture of how the preservice teachers' early attitudes were shaped by the depictions of fictitious characters.

After we examined teacher preparation materials

in special education in light of their suggestions for the teaching of adolescent and young adult literature, we decided that we could contribute to beginning and veteran teachers' professional development by preparing a "Teacher's Guide for Using Literature to Promote Inclusion of People with Developmental Disabilities." This "Teacher's Guide," is a practical guide for teaching fiction that includes characters with developmental disabilities (see the Appendix, p. 59). The purpose of the *Teacher's Guide* is to assist teachers in all middle and high school content areas to select literary texts using criteria of literary quality *and* accuracy in portrayal of character(s) with developmental disabilities. The guide also provides suggestions for aligning literary goals with instructional goals for introducing students to developmental disability as diversity. Finally, we gathered information on awards given for children's and adolescent books that address disabilities in order to provide another resource for teachers and teacher educators.

The Lasting Impact of Fictional Representations on Future ESE Teachers

Our analysis of the preservice teachers' surveys and essay responses revealed myriad statements that we labeled "depictions," a general category for statements about how literary works portrayed characters with developmental disabilities in terms of accuracy or inaccuracy, optimism or negativity. A deeper analysis of our respondents' statements revealed four themes about the nature of literary depictions of developmental disabilities: positive and accurate; positive but inaccurate; negative but accurate; and negative and inaccurate. We describe each category and populate each with samples of the preservice teachers' comments in Table 1.

The study participants, like Beirne-Smith, Patton, and Kim in the popular textbook, *Mental Retardation: An Introduction to Intellectual Disabilities* (7th ed., 2006), frequently differ on whether or not they feel a work of fiction, whether book or movie, is a positive or negative portrayal of people with disabilities. Many of our 40 preservice teachers discuss *I Am Sam* (Nelson, Herskovitz, Zwick, & Solomon, 2001), for example, as an uplifting story demonstrating that a man with intellectual disabilities or mental retardation does not have to accept the boundaries that society dictates

Table 1. How teachers recalled early experiences with fiction depicting characters with developmental disabilities

Four main themes that emerged from ESE preservice teachers' essays	Excerpts from student essays about the impact of their fiction experiences on perceptions of disability
<p>Positive and Accurate The prospective teachers have been informed by fiction that has characters with disabilities and by authors whom they believe present the disabilities realistically. Tracie Vaughn Zimmer's 2008 Schneider Family Book Award for Middle School Books recipient, <i>Reaching for Sun</i> would be an example of this kind of text.</p>	<p>Individuals with disabilities have feelings and can fall in love. Individuals with disabilities can get a job, such as an actor in a movie. Individuals with disabilities can form friendships. Individuals with disabilities can live on their own.</p>
<p>Positive but Inaccurate The preservice teachers' perceptions have been influenced by fiction in which characters who have developmental disabilities are portrayed in a positive storyline or theme, yet they think that the depiction of the disability is implausible or presented through stereotypes. The eponymous character of <i>Forrest Gump</i> (Finerman, Tisch, Newirth, & Zemeckis, 1994) is an example. He is someone most of us would like to meet, but his blend of guilelessness, humility, trustworthiness, intelligence, and perseverance despite some cognitive limitations are unlikely.</p>	<p>Individuals with disabilities possess special powers (e.g., can save the world). Individuals with disabilities can be cured and become geniuses. People with disabilities are more generous with their time than other people. People with disabilities can work hard to overcome or outgrow most of them.</p>
<p>Negative but Accurate Preservice teachers recall the impact of fiction in which characters' disabilities lead to their being portrayed as negative people in the story (a focus is on the character's limitations, instead of what they can do, for example), even though the author accurately describes the developmental disabilities. Many preservice teachers commented on the power of <i>Rainman</i> (Guber et al.,1988) and its portrayal of a savant with pity for his limitations instead of celebration for his strengths.</p>	<p>Having a mental disability is difficult for the individual. Parents are often overprotective of their child with mental retardation. Having a child with mental retardation is difficult for the entire family. Individuals with disabilities often become objects of ridicule.</p>
<p>Negative and Inaccurate Several students remarked on fictitious characters who have developmental disabilities but who, instead of being fully drawn as people, are assigned negative stereotypes commonly associated with having a disability. The most obvious popular example named by preservice teachers is in the movie <i>Dumb and Dumber</i> (Krevoy, Farrelly, & Farrelly, 1994).</p>	<p>Individuals with disabilities are scary and dangerous. Individuals with disabilities are childlike and weird. Individuals with disabilities are helpless and need constant supervision. Individuals with disabilities are mischievous. Individuals with disabilities are non-social. People with disabilities are depressed even if they act happy.</p>

for him when raising his family. One writes: "One of my favorite movies is *I Am Sam* . . . about a man with mental retardation's struggle to fight this world's stereotypes about him . . . and he won. . . . It reinforced my belief that people with MR are not limited in anything as long as they have the proper supports." Another participant notes that *I Am Sam* is a "great catalyst in showing the world that people with MR can be independent and live on their own with little or no intervention from the outside world. . . . It is one of the most touching movies that I have ever seen."

Others vehemently disagree, stating that the portrayals of Sam and his daughter are unrealistic and staged primarily to appeal to viewers' sense of sentimentality. One participant explains that Sam and his daughter ". . . are almost being poked fun at. Even though *I Am Sam* is a very heartwarming film because everything works out for the best at the end, I still feel that as a whole we are looking down on those people." Beirne-Smith et al. (2006) identify *I Am Sam*, specifically, as one of the films that encourage a negative stereotype or "disablism" (p. 48).

This range of differences in interpretations is apparent in the preservice teachers' responses to canonical literature as well as popular movies. *Of Mice and Men* (Steinbeck, 1937), which is cited more often than any other book by study participants, received strong responses in terms of the message it presents regarding the negative portrayal of a man with mental retardation through the depiction of the character Lennie. Notice the variety of interpretations offered in the following excerpts from participants' comments about this often-taught literary work:

"In *Of Mice and Men*, Lennie . . . acts just like a child, . . . who does not know his own strength, which ends up being very, very dangerous. This is one of the reasons why I was scared of these particular people. I feared that they would try to touch me or grab me in some way and not realize their own strength or what they were doing."

"In *Of Mice and Men* . . . [the] story perpetuates society's belief that [people with MR] are dangerous b/c they do not know what they are doing and could potentially hurt someone. Growing up and even now, I love to watch Looney Tunes cartoons, but it wasn't until I read *Of Mice and Men* that I really understood the joke behind the character that always says, "Which way did he go, George, which way did he go?" It is just now hitting me how those cartoons are portraying people with MR in such a negative light."

"I remember reading *Of Mice and Men* in junior high school. When having the discussion about . . . Lennie, everyone in my class viewed him as a criminal, but I saw otherwise. . . . I have always been a shy student and usually never express my opinion in class discussions, and this was the first time I remember disagreeing and expressing how I felt . . . I felt that Lennie . . . didn't know how to act and he didn't understand the difference between right and wrong; it's something that he needed to have been taught and he wasn't, so therefore it wasn't his fault that he killed the girl."

These mixed interpretations demonstrate the wealth of possibilities that responses to characters with developmental disabilities offer to both students and teachers. Teachers can use literary texts, including movies and books, to examine with our students the problems and stereotypes promulgated by inaccurate and insensitive character portrayals, but we can also discuss the accurate character portrayals that often reveal realities of living with physical, cognitive, emotional, and social differences. More specific ideas for teaching texts that include attention to characters with developmental disabilities are found in the Appendix, which contains our "Teacher's Guide for

Using Literature to Promote Inclusion of People with Developmental Disabilities."

Appendix: Teacher's Guide for Using Literature to Promote Inclusion of People with Developmental Disabilities

Recommendations for Teachers

It is important to take advantage of the real impact that books and films have on preservice teachers' early ideas about people with developmental disabilities, regardless of the content areas for which they are preparing. This understanding creates ideas about how books and movies might be built into middle and high school curricula so that teachers can lead students to explore the depiction of characters with developmental disabilities in meaningful, informed ways. Some misconceptions and negative experiences can be avoided through teacher-led instruction across all content areas, in both regular and special classes. In addition, a better understanding and acceptance of developmental disabilities, and of people who have them, may emerge among middle and high school students.

One of the benefits of using literature in the general education curriculum, as well as in the special education curriculum, is that through discussions of texts in which characters with developmental disabilities are presented, honest, direct, informational classroom conversations about perceptions and preconceived notions can occur. It is during those discussions that myths can be dispelled and information can be introduced to replace suspicion and fear. To this end, we have developed a simple guide that teachers of all subject areas can use. Our goal is to assist all teachers and students in broadening their understanding of the lives of people with developmental disabilities.

This guide consists of two parts. Part I is the evaluation rubric, which incorporates suggestions from two fields of research: literature that promotes inclusion (Andrews, 1998; Landrum, 1998/1999; Nasatir, 2002; Prater, Dyches, & Johnstun, 2006), and literature that addresses selection criteria for adolescent and adult literature (American Library Association, 2008). Part II is a list of learning objectives based on the findings of our inquiry. The objectives in Part II are offered to assist teachers in accomplishing some of

the important goals for literature instruction identified by Applebee (1993).

Part I: Evaluation Rubric

Use the following rubric in any content area to evaluate adolescent and young adult fiction that includes individuals who have developmental disabilities.

Teachers who are unsure of 1/3 or more of these criteria (that is, 13 or more responses) might want to ask a second rater, particularly one who specializes in ESE, to evaluate the text using this rubric. Note,

too, that fiction that is first introduced to students in subject areas outside of language arts classes in order to familiarize them with characters who have disabilities should, ideally, present both positive and accurate portrayals of people who live with developmental disabilities. As adolescent readers/viewers become more aware of characteristics of disabilities and are able to recognize skillful, accurate depictions, they will be ready to engage in more challenging discussions of problems associated with inaccurate and stereotyped portrayals.

Book/Movie Title:				
Literary Feature	Criteria	Rating		
		Yes	No	Unsure
Physical Appearance of Book (American Library Association, 2008; Nasatir, 2002)	Format is appealing for young adults; sophisticated instead of childish.			
	Illustrations and images are realistic and/or appropriate.			
	Illustrations and images show the distinctive personality of the character with a disability. (They do not appear stereotypically alike, as if all people with disabilities look the same.)			
	Illustrations and images show the character with a disability actively involved in the environment.			
Characterization (Andrews, 1998; Landrum, 1998/1999; Nasatir, 2002; Prater, Dyches, & Johnstun, 2006)	Focuses on common traits of all people while showing human qualities of people with disabilities.			
	The character with the disability possesses dynamic qualities and is not only defined by his/her disability.			
	Character accepts his/her own disability and focuses on his/her abilities.			
	Characters with and without disabilities use correct terminology when referring to the disability itself.			
	Meaningful interactions exist among characters with and without disabilities.			
	The character is not presented as a stereotyped case (e.g. violent, laughable, asexual, a burden, pitiable, etc).			
	A positive portrayal of character's strengths exists.			
	Character is portrayed as confident and able to make own decisions.			
	Character is accepted by peers.			
	A balance of roles exists between the character with a disability and characters without a disability.			

Literary Feature	Criteria	Rating		
		Yes	No	Unsure
Literary Style (American Library Association, 2008, Andrews, 1998; Prater et al., 2006)	Person-first language is used appropriately (e.g. “a boy with mental retardation” instead of “the mentally retarded boy”).			
	Terms used to describe characters and settings are appropriate.			
	Language/vocabulary is appropriate for adolescents/clear style/appropriate vocabulary.			
	The narrative and dialogue portraying characters with disabilities is appropriate for age of reader.			
	Descriptions provide colorful imagery without being lengthy.			
	Dialogue among characters is genuine.			
	Catches interest within first 10 pages.			
Plot (American Library Association, 2008; Andrews, 1998; Landrum, 1998/1999; Nasatir, 2002; Prater et al., 2006)	The character with the disability plays a major role in the plot.			
	The character’s disability is naturally revealed throughout the plot.			
	The plot highlights the abilities of the character (not just disabilities).			
	Plot is realistic/believable (e.g., character with a disability is not portrayed as a superhero, the character is not cured, parents are not saints, etc.).			
	The plot shows the character with a disability having similar life experiences as peers without disabilities (e.g., similar conflicts, similar goals, similar likes, etc.).			
	Accurate information regarding the disability is provided throughout the plot.			
	All characters are well developed.			
	Interesting plot throughout story.			
	Dialogue and action are used to develop the plot.			
	Uses humor appropriately.			
	Plot progresses in a chronological order.			
Setting (Prater et al., 2006)	The setting allows the character with the disability to be included in society (school, work, recreation).			
	Portrays up- to- date practices regarding living with disabilities.			
	Accurate historical/current perspective of people with disabilities living within society.			
Theme (American Library Association, 2008; Andrews, 1998; Prater et al., 2006)	The theme teaches a valuable lesson about interacting with people with disabilities.			
	The theme rectifies a stereotype/myth about people with disabilities.			
	The theme is familiar and appealing to young adults (making friends, parental conflicts, sibling conflicts, dating, school issues, etc.).			
Point of View (Prater et al., 2006)	Written from the perspective of the character with a disability.			
Total number of unsure responses				

Part II: General Learning Objectives

Teachers across the content areas can use items on the recommended list of learning objectives as examples of how a work of fiction that includes a character with a developmental disability may be used in a lesson. Teachers are encouraged to change the general objectives to meet the needs of their students. For example, teachers may wish to target appropriate alternative views of developmental disabilities to teach their students.

POSITIVE AND ACCURATE DEPICTIONS

Teachers who are interested in how students study a work of fiction such as the movie *Radio* (Gains, Robbins, & Tollin, 2003), in which characters with intellectual disabilities are depicted positively and accurately, might incorporate the following two general objectives:

- The learner will recognize positive accurate portrayals of individuals with intellectual disabilities.
- The learner will discuss the societal importance of positive accurate portrayals of individuals with intellectual disabilities within the media.

A note here: For many teachers in content areas outside of English language arts, the idea of increasing a classroom library by adding texts that include characters who have developmental disabilities may be daunting. The best place to start will be with books that have both literary quality and accurate portrayals, such as those identified by the annual Schneider Family Book Awards. These awards, which include categories for young children, middle schoolers, and teens, honor authors (or illustrators) whose books embody “an artistic expression of the disability experience for child and adolescent audiences.” (Please see “Other Resources for Teachers and Teacher Educators” below for more information on these and other recommended books.)

Recent Schneider Family Book Award recipients that can complement a collection on developmental disabilities include the following titles.

- *Rules* by Cynthia Lord (Scholastic) features a 12-year-old and her brother, who has autism, and a paraplegic and nonverbal teenager whom she meets. 2007 Middle School Award
- *Small Steps* by Louis Sachar (Delacorte) presents a young girl who has cerebral palsy and her unlikely

friend—a young, recently released, juvenile delinquent. 2007 Teen Book Award

- *Reaching for Sun* by Tracie Vaughn Zimmer (Bloomsbury USA) introduces Josie through free verse. Not only is Josie navigating adolescence, struggles with her mom, a new kind of relationship with her grandmother, and friendship with a new male neighbor, but also her cerebral palsy. 2008 Middle School Award
- *Jerk, California* by Jonathan Friesen (Speak/Penguin) follows a high school graduate as he travels across the country to find out about his dead father and deal with his Tourette Syndrome. 2009 Teen Book Award
- *Anything but Typical* by Nora Raleigh Baskin (Simon & Schuster) has readers pulling for Jason, a 12-year-old who wants to be normal, despite his autism and special talents as a writer. 2010 Middle School Award
- *Marcelo in the Real World* by Francisco X. Stork (Arthur A. Levine) introduces us to Marcelo, a teen who is very uncomfortable when his father insists he take a summer job at his law firm. Coping with both an unfamiliar situation and Asperger’s Syndrome, he grows to trust himself and others through the experience. 2010 Teen Book Award

NEGATIVE BUT ACCURATE DEPICTIONS

Teachers of middle and high school students who are interested in having their students study fiction that portrays a character with disabilities in a negative yet accurate way, as *Of Mice and Men* does, might implement these general objectives:

- The learner will discuss the impact on society (for both people with and without disabilities) of negative yet accurate portrayals of individuals with intellectual disabilities within the media.
- The learner will discuss how challenges for people who have developmental disabilities could be managed to lead a fulfilling life.

A note here: The study participants’ comments about negative yet accurate portrayals of people with disabilities echo a point also made in Beirne-Smith, Patton, and Kim’s textbook, *Mental Retardation: An Introduction to Intellectual Disabilities* (2006). The authors cite a 2004 list by Blackbourn, Patton, and Trainor of films that contribute to negative stereo-

types, or “disablisms” associated with disabilities; they contrast those films with a group of films that “accurately portray a person with mental retardation” (Beirne-Smith et al., 2006, p. 48). The pairing is a useful resource for teachers across content areas, serving as a quick reference that can be continually annotated with new movies that introduce characters who have developmental disabilities.

INACCURATE DEPICTIONS (POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE)

Opportunities for teaching abound when texts contain inaccurate depictions of individuals with intellectual disabilities. Inaccurate, dismissive, stereotypical, or other problematic depictions of disabilities in fiction can be useful in helping students understand issues associated with disabilities. Through classroom discussion, writing, and dramatic activities that highlight problems in inaccurate portrayals, students can gain a deeper understanding and appreciation for human experience and diversity. Following are a pair of general objectives that might be useful with the study of these texts.

- The learner will discuss how inaccurate portrayals of individuals with disabilities within the media produce negative consequences in society (for people with and without disabilities).
- The learner will demonstrate knowledge of common stereotypes given to individuals with intellectual disabilities and why these stereotypes are harmful.

Texts that present positive stories with accurate portrayals of all characters, such as the uplifting and inspiring movie *Radio* (Gains et al., 2003), are likely to pose few pedagogical problems. However, those that present negative stories, even if the portrayal of characters with developmental disabilities is accurate, still offer rich instructional opportunities. Sad or ambiguous endings, or ones in which a character with a developmental disability is unable to achieve her wishes, are often difficult for adolescent readers to tolerate, but offer many opportunities for teaching about character development while also teaching about specific characteristics of developmental disabilities. Many find that the motion picture *What’s Eating Gilbert Grape* (Hallstrom & Blomquist, 1993) is representative of this “negative but accurate” category.

Even texts that are negative in terms of story line and inaccurate, as noted earlier, provide grist for exploring, and exploding, societal stereotypes about people who have disabilities, and can present opportunities for rich class discussions. The movie *Dumb and Dumber* (Krevoy, Farrelly, & Farrelly, 1994), mentioned by one study participant as having an influence on his preconceived notions of mental retardation, comes to mind as representative of this category. The message that is most important, though, is that *all* texts that feature characters with developmental disabilities offer opportunities for class discussion. We have found that even the books and films that present negative and stereotyped views of a character with Down Syndrome, for example—texts that we first thought we could not include on a list for teachers—can be very useful. Why? Because those books and movies open up spirited conversations about how people really feel, about those with differences, about what society’s expectations are for teenagers who have Down Syndrome and the bases of those expectations. Even bad texts, if used to teach about how poorly informed many people in society have been, can have a place in classrooms.

CONCLUSIONS

Our collaboration was driven by the question, “How does literature shape the early ideas about disability of prospective teachers of special education?” In order to answer this question, we asked a cohort of 40 prospective ESE teachers to share with us their memories of experiences with literature and movies that feature characters who have disabilities. Our analysis suggests that experiences with fiction, both books and movies, shape beliefs through depictions about disability. The depictions that are recalled can be organized conceptually into four categories: positive and accurate; positive but inaccurate; negative and accurate; and negative but inaccurate. We suggest that works of fiction that fall into any of these categories can be used

The message that is most important, though, is that *all* texts that feature characters with developmental disabilities offer opportunities for class discussion.

by teachers to help their students understand disability. To that end, we have offered this guide for middle and high school teachers across content areas that focuses on how to use fiction to foster understanding of disability as a valuable form of human difference, or valuable human diversity.

Other Resources for Teachers and Teacher Educators

We conclude by offering additional resources that teachers and teacher educators might find useful: The Schneider Family Book Awards, presented by the American Library Association; the Dolly Gray Award, presented by the Council for Exceptional Children's Division on Developmental Disabilities and Special Needs; and the International Board on Books for Young People's Document Centre of Books for Disabled Young People. Each of these three recognitions gives teachers a place to start when seeking books that present individuals who live with disabilities—in other words, a place to start a conversation with students.

SCHNEIDER FAMILY BOOK AWARDS

In 2003, the American Library Association established the Schneider Family Book Awards to honor authors and illustrators of books for young adults and children that portray individuals living with a physical, mental, or emotional disability. These books should always be considered for inclusion in collections about disabilities. Each year an award is given in three categories: birth through grade school (age 0–10), middle school (age 11–13), and teens (age 13–18). Criteria for the Schneider Family Book Awards include:

- Must portray the disability as part of a full life, not as something to be pitied or overcome, and written so that children and adolescents can understand and appreciate the theme.
- Committee members will consider interpretation of the special needs theme or concept, presentation of information including accuracy, clarity, and organization, development of a plot, delineation of characters, delineation of setting, and appropriateness of style.
- For a picturebook entry, the committee will make its decision primarily on the quality of the illustration, but other components of the book will be considered. The committee will consider excellence

of presentation for a child and/or adolescent audience. In identifying a distinguished picturebook for children, committee members will consider excellence of execution in the artistic technique employed; excellence of pictorial interpretation of a special needs story, theme, or concept; appropriateness of style of illustration to the story, theme or concept; delineation of plot, theme, characters, setting, mood, or information through the pictures.

- The format and typeface must be appropriate, clear and free of typographical errors.

(Retrieved from <http://www.ala.org/ala/awards-grants/awardsrecords/schneideraward/schneiderfamily.cfm> on December 29, 2010)

THE DOLLY GRAY AWARD FOR CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

According to the website announcing the 2010 recipient, the Dolly Gray Award for Children's Literature in Developmental Disabilities was initiated in 2000 to recognize authors, illustrators, and publishers of high-quality fictional children's books that appropriately portray individuals with developmental disabilities. The award is a collaborative work by members of the Division on Autism and Developmental Disabilities (DADD) of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) and Special Needs Project (a distributor of books related to disability issues). Every even year, an award is presented to an author and illustrator (if appropriate) of a children's picturebook and/or a juvenile/young adult chapter book that includes appropriate portrayals of individuals with developmental disabilities.

(Retrieved from www.dddcec.org/DollyGray.htm on December 29, 2010.)

INTERNATIONAL BOARD ON BOOKS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE (IBBY) DOCUMENTATION CENTRE OF BOOKS FOR DISABLED YOUNG PEOPLE

IBBY is an international network, housed in Basel, Switzerland, that has sections representing 70 countries. Its Documentation Centre has introduced books that feature children and adolescents who have disabilities to an international audience. According to its website:

- The IBBY Documentation Centre of Books for Disabled Young People was established in 1985 at the Norwegian Institute for Special Education at the

University of Oslo. It remained at this location until the summer of 2002, and it moved to the Haug Municipal Resource Centre for Young People with Disabilities in Baerum, just outside Oslo.

- The Centre offers information, consultation, and documentation services for organizations, research workers, teachers, students, librarians, publishers, authors, illustrators, policy makers, and the media who work with young people with special needs. Due to its various international projects, which have been supported by UNESCO, publishers, and IBBY contact persons, the Centre has built up a large international collection of books catering to children and young people but also to adults with language disabilities and reading difficulties. The books are regularly shown at conferences, book fairs, and exhibitions.
- The 2005 and 2007 collections were exhibited around Japan—in Jakarta, Indonesia, and Tehran, Iran.

(Excerpted from www.ibbyorg/php?id=271 on December 29, 2010)

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