

Brenna, B. (2013). Mindful portrayals: Using fiction to create awareness, understanding, and support for people with autism and developmental disabilities. *Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities*, 48(4), 514-521.

**Mindful Portrayals:
Using Fiction to Create Awareness, Understanding, and Support for People with Autism
and Developmental Disabilities**

Beverley Brenna, University of Saskatchewan

ABSTRACT

Considering the arts model as a tool for promoting awareness, understanding, and support for people with autism and developmental disabilities, this paper discusses stories as a measure of societal thinking as well as a vehicle for societal change. The author's dual perspectives are shared as a researcher of books for children and young adults, as well as a writer of books for young people. Data from an ongoing qualitative study related to award winning North American picture books for young people offer understandings of current patterns and trends regarding

Brenna, B. (2013). Mindful portrayals: Using fiction to create awareness, understanding, and support for people with autism and developmental disabilities. *Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities*, 48(4), 514-521.

portrayals of characters who are differently abled, and this article has compelling implications for teaching, learning and further research.

My interest in portraying characters with developmental disabilities, as well as my current academic research platform related to an exploration of characters in contemporary children's literature, was inspired by the children with whom I worked in regular and special education classrooms over a span of twenty years. My students' gifts and challenges did not typically appear in our classroom texts, prompting my reflections on the young heroes we encounter every day and the need for these heroes, and their peers, to see a range of lived lives reflected in society's artefacts.

Galda's (1998) metaphor of books as mirrors and windows, illuminating how reading allows us to see ourselves and others through the revealing yet comfortable distance of text, is a compelling lens through which to examine books portraying characters with disabilities. If the landscape of school and community reading material is to offer children and young adults authentic pictures of self and other, a variety of content and form in quality literature is needed. Our classroom and public library collections must go beyond what have emerged as 'popular' aspects of difference—most notably, gender, social class, and ethnicity. Disability is the single category of difference that can present at any time during a person's life, eclipsing other differences with its very prevalence, yet it continues to be relatively uncommon in terms of fictional character traits.

Brenna, B. (2013). Mindful portrayals: Using fiction to create awareness, understanding, and support for people with autism and developmental disabilities. *Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities*, 48(4), 514-521.

Research on classic fiction involving characters with disabilities has uncovered previous patterns including the trend that characters with disabilities are either 'cured' or 'killed' during the course of a story (Keith, 2001), a tendency that suggests authors have not been able to envision a happy future for someone with a disability. My previous research on contemporary children's novels (Brenna, 2011; Brenna, 2010a; Brenna, 2010b; Brenna, 2009; Brenna, 2008) illuminates new trends, including the lack of travel opportunities for characters with disabilities and the absence of minority sexual orientations and particular cultural backgrounds in characters who are 'differently abled.'

A recent study of award-winning North American picture books (Emmerson, Fu, Lendsay, & Brenna, 2013) foregrounds texts available to North American readers at a time when schools and communities are working towards social justice through a healthy respect for human differences in self and other. In addition to supporting school curriculum through suggestions for diverse classroom resources, a focus on messages about disability conveyed through children's books provides an intriguing avenue for further research. A key question underpinning the current discussion is: what do contemporary North American picture books tell readers about disability?

North American Children's Picture Books: Patterns and Trends

First of all, numbers of North American picture books published since 1995, portraying characters with disabilities, are comparatively small. This matches a statement by Jaeger and Bowman (2005) who say, "Disability is ordinary. Yet disability is rarely considered as a societal

Brenna, B. (2013). Mindful portrayals: Using fiction to create awareness, understanding, and support for people with autism and developmental disabilities. *Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities*, 48(4), 514-521.

issue in a thoughtful and humane manner” (p. ix). If the landscape of picture books for children is to offer authentic selections as windows and mirrors, it is going to take some creative problem solving on the part of educators and parents, as well as some new work from writers. The following section provides a discussion of preliminary findings from a current study by Emmerson, Fu, Lendsay, and Brenna (2013) related to particular award categories for award-winning books published since 1995.

Canadian Governor General’s Award for Children’s Illustration

Only two of the 18 Canadian Governor General’s Award winners in the category for illustration contained representations of characters with disabilities, and none of the disabilities included involve autism or developmental disabilities. The first, Paul Yee’s (1996) *Ghost Train*, depicts a physical disability in the central character. The second, Cybele Young’s (2011) *Ten Birds*, offers an abstract view of physical disability in a vision of how seemingly flightless birds manage to use various innovative strategies to cross a river, with perhaps the most ingenious bird of all simply walking over the bridge. A third award winner, Kyo Maclear’s (2012) *Virginia Wolf*, may depict a character with childhood depression, however the interpretation of this diagnosis remains relatively ambiguous within the context of the story.

Canadian Governor General’s Award for Children’s Text

A single picture book award winner from the 18 winning titles has appeared in the category for text, and that is Rachna Gilmore’s (1999) title *A Screaming Kind of Day*—providing a striking portrait of a little girl whose hearing impairment is simply one aspect of her characterization rather than the employment of disability as a plot device.

Brenna, B. (2013). Mindful portrayals: Using fiction to create awareness, understanding, and support for people with autism and developmental disabilities. *Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities, 48*(4), 514-521.

American Caldecott Medal

A scan of the 17 American picture book winners of the prestigious Caldecott medal for children's illustration has turned up even fewer examples of characters who are differently abled. Only one book published since 1995 has depicted a character with a disability, and it is P.O. Zelinsky's (1997) *Rapunzel*, a version of the fairy tale that includes a prince who is temporarily blind.

Schneider Family Book Award

Since 2004, a separate awards category has been utilized by the American Library Association in addition to the Caldecott award, and this new award—the Schneider Family Book Award—uses portrayal of disability as part of the award criteria. When Dr. Katherine Schneider was nine years old, she began borrowing books in Braille and longed to find more books about children who were blind or had other disabilities. Dr. Schneider and her family have since set up this award to encourage authors and illustrators to produce books that will express disability as an authentic part of the human experience. To date, the Schneider Awards have been given to eight titles, and included in this list are three picture books portraying characters who are blind or visually impaired, three picture books depicting characters who are deaf, and two picture books presenting characters with orthopedic disabilities. Again, none of the award winners include characters with autism or developmental disabilities.

Dolly Gray Literature Award

The Dolly Gray Literature Award was established in 2000 by members of the Division on Autism and Developmental Disabilities (DADD) of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)

Brenna, B. (2013). Mindful portrayals: Using fiction to create awareness, understanding, and support for people with autism and developmental disabilities. *Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities*, 48(4), 514-521.

working with the Special Needs Project—a distributor of books related to disability issues. This award has served a very real need—to recognize, through a book award, authors, illustrators, and publishers of high-quality fictional and biographical children’s, intermediate, and young adult books that authentically portray individuals with developmental disabilities. A list of winners can be found at: <http://daddcec.org/Awards/DollyGrayAwards.aspx>. This list includes the two picture books that tied for the award in 2012: Rebecca Elliot’s *Just Because*, and Holly Robinson Peet & Ryan Elizabeth Peete’s *My Brother Charlie*, illustrated by Shane W. Evans. Also in 2012, Kathryn Erskine’s (2010) novel *Mockingbird* tied with *Waiting for No One*, one of my own published novels (Brenna, 2010c); both these two books deal with female protagonists who have Asperger’s Syndrome.

Other Picture Books

Widening the search outside of the specific awards mentioned, one Canadian title appears that presents a character with Down’s Syndrome: Nan Gregory’s (1995) *How Smudge Came*. This picture book narrates the story of a young woman living in a group home who is prevented from having a puppy. How the hospice where Cindy works eventually adopts the dog is a satisfying ending to a heartbreaking tale that emphasizes a society where decisions are made for and about people without thorough consultation. Not only is this book unique in its treatment of Cindy and her gifts—it uses the picture book format to present a story geared for older children and adults, with a protagonist who is clearly not a child. Ron Lightburn’s evocative illustrations carry messages beyond Gregory’s words, and it is through his depiction of Cindy, not in the text itself, that her Down’s Syndrome is evoked.

Brenna, B. (2013). Mindful portrayals: Using fiction to create awareness, understanding, and support for people with autism and developmental disabilities. *Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities, 48*(4), 514-521.

Another Canadian picture book worth noting is Sheree Fitch's *Pocket Rocks* (2004), illustrated by Helen Flook. While autism isn't mentioned, the character of young Ian suggests traits of people with Asperger's Syndrome, including naivety, fine-motor difficulties, meltdowns, sensitivity to smells, a unique perspective on things, an unusual and perhaps obsessive interest in collecting rocks, supported stress breaks, and the need for assistance at school. The book is an uplifting tale about the power of stories, and emphasizes without didacticism the positive application of strategies for self-management.

A local search of two major Canadian bookstores has offered the following information. Out of the collection of 252 Canadian picture books sampled in one store on August 7, 2012, only one portrayed characters other than 'typical' and, in the case of Epp's (2007) *Hope and the Dragon*, the storyline revolved around a boy who uses his imagination to help himself deal with a chronic illness. A survey of the second bookstore produced no results in terms of picture books presenting a character with a disability.

While there has been considerable research on gender and multicultural diversity with regard to classroom texts (Finazzo, 1997; Galda, 1998; Gilbert, 1997, 2001; Rueda, 1998), little treatment has been given to the characterization of ability (Keith, 2001), although there are select discussions of the treatment of particular disabilities within contemporary fiction (Dyches & Prater, 2000; Dyches, Prater, & Cramer, 2001; Greenwell, 2004; Kalke-Klita, 2005; Mills, 2002; Pajka-West, 2007). Picture book illustrations are illuminated as a particular lens for studying the inclusion of characters with disabilities in children's material (Matthew & Clow, 2007) and

Brenna, B. (2013). Mindful portrayals: Using fiction to create awareness, understanding, and support for people with autism and developmental disabilities. *Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities*, 48(4), 514-521.

another avenue for study involves how books about characters with disabilities may be evaluated and used with children (Dyches & Prater, 2000; Landrum, 2001; Smith-D'Arezzo, 2003).

Picture Books in a Wider Context of Fiction for Children

Dyches and Prater's (2005) content analysis of thirty-four children's fiction books published between 1999 and 2003 identified that the sample depicted characters with developmental disabilities as having either autism spectrum disorder or intellectual disability, within a rich and dynamic profile. Although significant of a positive trend in characterization compared with their 2001 study, because of the dynamic nature of newer portrayals, these researchers do suggest aspects worth consideration including the fact that the majority of characters presented were male. Another recent study examining graphic novels indicated that within the graphic novel form, people with disabilities are represented, however these portrayals most frequently fit a negative and stereotypical image (Irwin & Moeler, 2010).

A previous study related to novels for children and young adults (Brenna, 2010a) provides some interesting comparisons to the results of the current North American picture book study. Of the fifty Canadian novels in the Brenna study sample, there were characters represented with autism, intellectual disability, Down's Syndrome, and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), within a group of texts that included portrayals of characters with other disabilities. The inclusion of developmental disabilities in this study sample of novels contrasts with the lack of characters with these particular challenges in picture books. It appears as if particular disabilities are considered more 'appropriate' for inclusion in children's picture books

Brenna, B. (2013). Mindful portrayals: Using fiction to create awareness, understanding, and support for people with autism and developmental disabilities. *Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities*, 48(4), 514-521.

than other disabilities, just as polio and blindness were common disabilities included in classic texts (Keith, 2001), and this hierarchical treatment of ability is a finding worth further consideration by contemporary researchers, disability rights activists, and educators.

Comparisons between characters with autism and characters with FASD in another previous study (Barker, Kulyk, Knorr, & Brenna, 2011) demonstrated that North American novels for young people seem to present autism much more avidly than FASD, and, in fact, the single title dealing directly with FASD—*The Moon Children*—was one of my own books (Brenna, 2007). Certainly more investigation of the lack of representation of characters with FASD is warranted, especially when considering that incidences of autism and FASD are similar in number.

Writing Characters Who Are Differently Abled

As a classroom and special education teacher working with populations of children with FASD, I began to notice how few community resources were available to elicit discussions of this condition outside the traditional medical model. The children I worked with were complex and different from each other, and yet had challenges similar to those faced by other children—challenges related to acceptance and support of their unique profiles—in addition to the negative stigma associated with their biological mothers. The medical model didn't seem to be affecting prevention or further support in the context within which I was working, nor did it assist with positive parental engagement, and I wondered whether a model based on the arts could help. What if a travelling gallery containing artistic representations of FASD could visit communities

Brenna, B. (2013). Mindful portrayals: Using fiction to create awareness, understanding, and support for people with autism and developmental disabilities. *Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities*, 48(4), 514-521.

to elicit discussion and deepen understanding of children and their parents? In addition to assisting with additional support for the population of people with FASD and their families, could such a gallery—Faces of FASD, I thought it could be called—affect prevention? Not an artist myself, this idea, provocative as it was to me, slowly faded.

What replaced the idea of a traveling gallery was the notion of a children’s novel—accessible to adult readers as well—featuring FASD and including a non-negative depiction of a biological mother whose son was affected by prenatal alcohol consumption. It took some research, and a lot of time, but when I finished the manuscript that would become my novel *The Moon Children*, I hoped it would be a good story and, in addition, I hoped it might exemplify how people might become more mindful of FASD-related issues through response to literature.

Billy is a ten-year-old boy with gifts as a storyteller and an open loving heart. Because he can’t read, he doesn’t easily access what to others is simple communication, and this makes for challenging experiences that make him angry at the way he is. While the plot of the story involves a developing friendship between Billy and a girl with selective mutism, including for Billy the importance of winning a talent show in hopes his father might return to the family, the book is also about Billy’s special needs and the relationship he has with his mom. A few readers have suggested to me that the story’s close was less than satisfying—that Billy deserved a happier ending, although the ending as it stands is not exactly unhappy. The reason this isn’t a ‘happily ever after’ book is that for kids like Billy, happy futures are going to take more than what we are currently offering in our communities to people with FASD. I hope that readers of this book will begin to think more deeply about what kind of supports Billy and his parents need

Brenna, B. (2013). Mindful portrayals: Using fiction to create awareness, understanding, and support for people with autism and developmental disabilities. *Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities, 48*(4), 514-521.

in order to stretch into a happy future, as well as what kind of human heartaches prenatal alcohol consumption causes.

In addition to *The Moon Children*, I have written a number of other books spotlighting characters who are differently abled. *Something to Hang On To* is a collection of a dozen short stories for teens, and includes stories about characters who have Down's Syndrome, pervasive developmental disorder, and cerebral palsy in addition to a cameo of the character of Taylor Jane, a teenager with Asperger's Syndrome who appears as the protagonist in my trilogy of young adult novels: *Wild Orchid*, *Waiting for No One*, and *The White Bicycle*. The series about Taylor Jane took considerable research, as I wanted to make sure I achieved as authentic a voice as I could without actually understanding autism first-hand. I was lucky enough to attend a lecture by Dr. Tony Attwood where an introduction to the positive characteristics of Asperger's Syndrome made coherent the argument that Asperger's is a different, not defective, way of experiencing the world. Trying to see the world through Taylor's eyes taught me a great deal, and I am grateful for the perspective that working with her fictional characterization provided to me as an educator, a researcher, and a writer.

One of the decisions I made in the books about Taylor Jane was to concentrate on filling a gap in literature regarding characters who are differently abled in that these characters don't often travel. In my trilogy, Taylor spends time at Waskesiu—Saskatchewan's national park—then Cody, Wyoming, and then Lourmarin, France. The latter setting was achieved in part due to financial support from a Canada Council grant that allowed me research funding in order to capture the setting with as much real detail as possible. A conceptualization of gaps on the

Brenna, B. (2013). Mindful portrayals: Using fiction to create awareness, understanding, and support for people with autism and developmental disabilities. *Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities*, 48(4), 514-521.

contemporary landscape of books for children is important to authors as we attempt to produce original work that affects social justice. There is still more work to be done—in research as well as authorship—if we are to create a world in fiction that truly represents the world we have at hand.

Changing the World

In addition to representing the world and its contents, I believe that stories can change the world. By offering mirrors and windows to readers, stories build understandings of self and other critical to positive renderings of identity and community. As an educator, I think that the stories we offer to children in our homes and classrooms matter. As a researcher, I think there is important work yet to be done in cataloguing the messages children receive from contemporary texts portraying characters with different abilities, as well as noticing voices yet unheard on the textual landscape. As a writer, I know that my stories have changed me—have changed how I think about the navigation of disabilities from a personal standpoint as I attempted to create characters from the inside out. I predict that as more people who are differently abled are supported in telling their own stories, and as these authentic autobiographies follow biographies into supporting fictive works, we can improve the possibility of authentic mirrors and informative windows offered in children's reading—helping our leaders of tomorrow see and actualize the world in a more complete way.

Brenna, B. (2013). Mindful portrayals: Using fiction to create awareness, understanding, and support for people with autism and developmental disabilities. *Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities*, 48(4), 514-521.

References

Barker, C., Kulyk, J., Knorr, L., & Brenna, B. (2011). Open inclusion or shameful secret: A comparison of characters with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) and characters with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) in a North American sample of books for

Brenna, B. (2013). Mindful portrayals: Using fiction to create awareness, understanding, and support for people with autism and developmental disabilities. *Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities*, 48(4), 514-521.

children and young adults. *International Journal of Special Education*, 26, 171–180.

Brenna, B. (2007). *The Moon Children*. Calgary, AB: Red Deer Press.

Brenna, B. (2008). Breaking stereotypes with children's fiction: Seeking protagonists with special needs. *International Journal of Special Education*, 23, 100–103.

Brenna, B. (2009). Creating characters with diversity in mind: Two Canadian authors discuss social constructs of disability in literature for children. *Language & Literacy*, 11, retrieved on July 17, 2013 from

<http://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/langandlit/article/view/9748>

Brenna, B. (2010a). *Characters with disabilities in contemporary children's novels: Portraits of three authors in a frame of Canadian texts*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Alberta, Edmonton. <http://hdl.handle.net/10048/1110>

Brenna, B. (2010b). Assisting young readers in the interpretation of a character with disabilities in Iain Lawrence's juvenile fiction novel "Gemini Summer". *English Quarterly*, 41, 54–61.

Brenna, B. (2010c). *Waiting for No One*. Markham, ON: Red Deer/ Fitzhenry & Whiteside.

Brenna, B. (2011). Characters with disabilities in contemporary novels for children: A portrait of three authors in a framework of Canadian texts. *Language and Literacy*, 13, retrieved on July 13, 2013 from

<http://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/langandlit/article/view/9781/7981>

- Brenna, B. (2013). Mindful portrayals: Using fiction to create awareness, understanding, and support for people with autism and developmental disabilities. *Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities, 48*(4), 514-521.
- Dyches, T. T., & Prater, M. A. (2000). *Developmental disability in children's literature: Issues and annotated bibliography*. Reston, VA: Council for Exceptional Children, Division on Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities.
- Dyches, T. T., and Prater, M. A. (2005). Characterization of developmental disability in children's fiction. *Education & Training in Developmental Disabilities, 40*, 202–216.
- Dyches, T. T., Prater, M. A., & Cramer, S. F. (2001). Characterization of mental retardation and autism in children's books. *Education and Training in Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, 36*, 230–243.
- Emmerson, J., Fu, Q., Lendsay, A., & Brenna, B. (2013). *Picture Book Characters with Disabilities: Patterns and Trends in a Context of Radical Change*. Unpublished manuscript, College of Education, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada.
- Erskine, K. (2010). *Mockingbird*. New York: Puffin.
- Finazzo, D. A. (1997). *All for the children: Multicultural essentials of literature*. New York: Delmar Publishers.
- Galda, L. (1998). Mirrors and windows: Reading as transformation. In T. E. Raphael & K. H. Au (Eds.), *Literature-based instruction: Reshaping the curriculum* (pp. 1–11). Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon.
- Gilbert, P. (1997). Discourses on gender and literacy: Changing the stories. In S. Muspratt, A. Luke, & P. Freebody (Eds.), *Constructing critical literacies: Teaching and learning textual practice* (pp. 59–76). Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

Brenna, B. (2013). Mindful portrayals: Using fiction to create awareness, understanding, and support for people with autism and developmental disabilities. *Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities*, 48(4), 514-521.

Gilbert, P. (2001). (Sub)versions: Using sexist language practices to explore critical literacy. In H. Fehring & P. Green (Eds.), *Critical literacy: A collection of articles from the Australian Literacy Education Association* (pp. 75–83). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Greenwell, B. (2004). The curious incident of novels about asperger's syndrome. *Children's Literature in Education*, 35, 271–284.

Irwin, M., & Moeller, R. (2010). Seeing different: Portrayals of disability in young adult graphic novels. *School Library Research*, 13, retrieved on December 31, 2012 from www.ala.org/aasl/slr/volume13/irwin-moeller

Jaeger, P. T., & Bowman, C. A. (2005). *Understanding disability: Inclusion, access, diversity and civil rights*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

Kalke-Klita, T. (2005). Moving forward: The inclusion of characters with Down Syndrome in children's picture books. *Language and Literacy*, 7, retrieved on July 17, 2013 from <http://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/langandlit/article/view/16315/13093>

Keith, L. (2001). *Take up thy bed & walk: Death, disability and cure in classic fiction for girls*. New York: Routledge.

Landrum, J. (2001). Selecting intermediate novels that feature characters with disabilities: characters with disabilities can create opportunities for learning about and accepting differences. *The Reading Teacher*, 55, 252–258.

Matthew, N., & Clow, S. (2007). Putting disabled children in the picture: Promoting inclusive children's books and media. *International Journal of Early Childhood*, 39, 65–78.

Brenna, B. (2013). Mindful portrayals: Using fiction to create awareness, understanding, and support for people with autism and developmental disabilities. *Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities, 48*(4), 514-521.

Mills, C. (2002). The portrayal of mental disability in children's literature: An ethical appraisal.

The Horn Book Magazine, 78, 531–542.

Pajka-West, S. (2007). Perceptions of deaf characters in adolescent literature.

ALAN Review, 34, 39–45.

Rueda, R. (1998). Addressing the needs of a diverse society. In T. E. Raphael & K. H. Au (Eds.),

Literature-based instruction: Reshaping the curriculum. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers.

Smith-D'Arezzo, W. (2003). Disability in children's literature: Not just a black and white issue.

Children's Literature in Education, 34, 75–94.

Annotated Bibliography of Award Winners

Governor General Awards: Illustration

Maclear, K. (2012). *Virginia Wolf*. Toronto, ON: Kids Can Press.

Vanessa attempts to cheer up her sister Virginia, who is in a “wolfish” mood, and eventually succeeds by painting a magical scene on the wall. Illustrated by I. Arsenault.

Yee, P. (1996). *Ghost train*. Toronto, ON: Groundwood Books.

Choonyi, a teenager with a physical disability from China encounters her dead father's ghost on a train. Illustrated by H. Chan.

Young, C. (2011). *Ten birds*. Toronto, ON: Kids Can Press.

Ten birds who are differently talented cross a river in their individual ways.

Brenna, B. (2013). Mindful portrayals: Using fiction to create awareness, understanding, and support for people with autism and developmental disabilities. *Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities*, 48(4), 514-521.

Governor General Awards: Children's Text

Gilmore, R. (2001). *A screaming kind of day*. Markham, ON: Fitzhenry & Whiteside.

Scully, a little girl with hearing aids, experiences anger and redemption on a rainy day.

Illustrated by G. Sauve.

Caldecott Awards

Zelinsky, P. O. (1997). *Rapunzel*. New York: Puffin Books.

The familiar Grimm's tale—enhanced with early Italian and French elements and Renaissance illustration—in which a prince, blinded for several years, regains his sight when Rapunzel's tears fall upon him.

Schneider Family Awards

Bertrand, D. G. (2004). *My pal Victor/Mi amigo, Victor*. McHenry, IL: Raven Tree Press.

A bilingual book about friendship. A boy's disability emerges when he is pictured in his wheelchair at the end of the book. Illustrated by R. L. Sweetland.

Christensen, B. (2009). *Django*. New York: Roaring Brook Press.

A poetic story of the life of Django Reinhardt, jazz guitarist, who re-taught himself to play guitar after he was injured in a fire.

Lang, G. (2003). *Looking out for Sarah*. Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge.

Based on a true story about a guide dog and his owner—a teacher, dancer, and musician—this book illustrates the (wo)man-dog relationship.

Lyon, G. E. (2010). *The pirate of kindergarten*. New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers.

Brenna, B. (2013). Mindful portrayals: Using fiction to create awareness, understanding, and support for people with autism and developmental disabilities. *Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities*, 48(4), 514-521.

A young girl runs into things and faces ridicule until she is diagnosed with double vision and becomes the pirate of kindergarten. Illustrated by L. Avril.

Parker, R. A. (2008). *Piano starts here: The young Art Tatum*. New York: Schwartz & Wade.

An (auto)biography of Art Tatum, written from the perspective of the pianist as a youth with low vision.

Seeger, P., & Jacobs, P. D. (2006). *The Deaf Musicians*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons.

A jazz pianist loses his hearing but gains a band when he joins other deaf musicians on the subway. Illustrated by R. G. Christie.

Stryer, A. S. (2007). *Kami and the Yaks*. Palo Alto, CA: Bay Otter Press.

A Sherpa boy who is deaf rescues his family's yaks high in the Himalayan mountains of Nepal. Illustrated by B. Dodson.

Uhlberg, M. (2005). *Dad, Jackie, and me*. Atlanta: Peachtree.

Baseball player Jackie Robinson plays a special role in the lives of a boy and his father, who is deaf. Illustrated by C. Bootman.

Annotated Bibliography of Other Picture Books Featuring Characters with Disabilities

Elliot, R. (2011). *Just because*. United Kingdom: Lion.

Toby's sister Clemmie is his best friend. Without mentioning the word 'disability' this lyrical text promotes sibling friendship with humour and grace.

Epp, M. (2007). *Hope and the dragon*. Mississauga ON: Aspirations Publishing Inc.

A young boy uses his imagination to help him deal with cancer.

Fitch, S. (2002). *Pocket rocks*. Victoria, B.C.: Orca Books.

Brenna, B. (2013). Mindful portrayals: Using fiction to create awareness, understanding, and support for people with autism and developmental disabilities. *Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities*, 48(4), 514-521.

Ian Goobie collects rocks, and connects with a storyteller who does the same thing.

Illustrated by Helen Flook.

Gregory, N. (1995). *How Smudge came*. Markham, ON: Red Deer Press.

In the group home where Cindy lives, no dogs are allowed. How she befriends a puppy, and finds an opportunity for him to live at the Hospice where she works, offers opportunities for strong critical discussions about decision making and independence. A picture book for older readers where the disability—Down's Syndrome—is portrayed in the illustrations rather than the text. Illustrated by Ron Lightburn.

Peete, H. R., & Peete, R. E. (2010). *My brother Charlie*. New York: Scholastic Press. A young African-American girl shares affectionate stories of her twin brother who has autism.

Illustrated by S. W. Evans.