

RUN, FOREST, RUN! – THE ASSESSMENT OF INCLUSIVENESS OF A LITERARY WORK

Authors: Lejla Osmančević Katkić¹, Ivona Salaj², Emina Kovačić³

¹ Secondary School Center for Upbringing and Education Zagreb

² The Office of the Ombudsman for Children, Zagreb

³ Center for Upbringing and Education Tomislav Špoljar, Varaždin

ABSTRACT

Inclusive literature is an inseparable part of the process of inclusion. It can affect the promotion of positive attitudes towards the peers with different abilities and promote the development of positive self-image of students with developmental disabilities. Some authors, however, point out concerns over still present stereotypes of disability in literature and a small number of literary works with positive and accurate conceptualization of disability. The problems that arise in the context of observing the inclusive process and inclusive literature are focused on the awareness of the positive and negative presentation of disability in the literature, appropriate selection of literary works, proper analysis and discussion of the presentation of disability.

The aim of this paper is to analyze the literary work *Forrest Gump* (1986) written by author Winston Groom that is shielded and listed in elementary school reading, using the *Teacher's Guide for Using Literature to Promote Inclusion of People with Developmental Disabilities* (Menchetti et al., 2011, translation and adaptation Osmančević Katkić, Salaj, 2017). Considering the criteria from the Guide the following themes were analysed: Character role, Disability portrayal, Relationship between the character and plot, Stereotype and relation with others, Plot, Language and style of writing and Position of character with disability. The results of the content analysis of the literary work *Forrest Gump* in general indicate a positive presentation of the main character with disability, but inaccurate. In conclusion, the analysis of the presentation of disability in literary works, affects the construction of a constructive discussion in the teaching process, shaping the attitudes of students and improving the process of inclusion.

Key words: inclusion, inclusive literature, guide for teachers, the assessment of inclusiveness of a literary work.

Life is like a box of chocolates. You never know what you're gonna get.



INTRODUCTION



LITERATURE (CHARACTERS WITH DISABILITY)
Stereotypes: evil, saint, infantile, pitiable, superhuman, burden, etc.

Literature in some way constructs (deconstructs) the stereotypes of society towards people with disabilities!!!
(Piskač, Jurdana, 2013).

METHODS

AIM: analysis the inclusiveness of literary work *Forrest Gump* (1986) written by author Winston Groom.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

1. What is the relationship between the characters with disabilities and the plot?
2. How is the character with disability portrayed and how do others interact with him?
3. Is the portrayal of disability accurate?

CONTENT ANALYSES:

- Two researches (readers): a special education specialist and a speech therapist;
- *Teacher's Guide* (Menchetti et al., 2011, translation and adaptation by Osmančević Katkić, Salaj, 2017).

RESULTS

1. CHARACTER ROLE	MAIN MINORED MENTIONED
2. DISABILITY PORTRAYAL	POSITIVE BUT INACCURATE
3. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CHARACTER AND THE PLOT	DISABILITY SPECIFIC
4. STEREOTYPES AND RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS	STEREOTYPES, POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS
5. THE PLOT	UNREALISTIC DEPICTIONS, DISSIMILAR LIFE EXPERIENCES
6. LANGUAGE AND STYLE OF WRITING	PEOPLE FIRST LANGUAGE, UNACCEPTABLE DISABILITY-RELATED TERMS
7. THE POSITION OF CHARACTER WITH DISABILITY	"OUTSIDER"

CONCLUSION

Forrest Gump is an inclusive literary work of high quality with positive but inaccurate disability portrayal. **Main messages:**

- We encourage writers to take into account the criteria for assessing inclusiveness of a literary work in their work, and to make characters with disabilities more positive and more realistic.
- Publishers are invited to publish more inclusive books.
- Educators, librarians and parents are encouraged to be very careful in their selection of books and to be aware of the stereotypes that can pervade literary works which deal with the topic of disability.