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Disability Futures Otherwise: Forging Affective Pedagogies of Exposure in the Upper Primary EFL Classroom through Intersectional Multimodal Fantasy

Master's thesis in Primary and Lower Secondary Teacher Education for Years 5-10

Supervisor: Libe García Zarranz

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Abstract

In Norway, around 18% of the population is disabled, ranging from difficulties seeing, hearing, speaking, or walking, to different learning disabilities (Bufdir, 2021). In addition, 7% of the population identify as queer (SSB, 2021), and 14% of the population are first- and second-generation immigrants (SSB, 2018). These figures establish the importance of including literature that represents and reflects this diversity in the upper primary EFL classroom. However, according to a 2019 study, 3.4% of books published in the US portray a disabled character, and main characters that are BIPOC or identifying as LGBTQ+ are also absent. This master's thesis seeks to examine how disability is represented intersectionally across three contemporary multimodal middle grade fantasy texts. I further want to explore how these representations may contribute to the development of affective pedagogies of exposure (Dernikos, 2018) in the upper primary EFL classroom in Norway. In this thesis, I draw from two main theoretical foundations, namely critical disability studies and affect studies in education. Additionally, I apply intersectionality as a methodology, which has allowed me to focus on the complexity of my materials by seeing how different categories intersect and interact with disability. I also consider how the materials chosen, I as the researcher, and the authors of the texts also write and read intersectionally. Regarding my chosen research methods, I have implemented multimodal analysis and visual semiotic analysis, which have allowed me to investigate how different modes interact to portray and represent disability in intersectional ways. Furthermore, I have used multimodal analysis and visual semiotic analysis to examine the ideas, feelings, attentions, and responses that these texts and the different modes and symbols may elicit amongst pupils in the upper primary EFL classroom. The findings reveal that the intersectional representations of disability in the chosen materials show disabled characters as complex and capable of both triumphs, mistakes, relationships, and desires. The results also suggest how the fantasy genre opens for the interrogation of normative understandings of gender, disability, race, and its intersections. In turn, these representations may elicit a series of ambivalent affective responses. Consequently, this study concludes that pupils in the upper primary EFL classroom need literature that is on par with population statistics and engaging with multimodal fantasy texts with intersectional representations of disability, such as those analyzed in this thesis, can be a way to achieve this. In turn, this pedagogy of exposure can allow for affective experiences within the space of the classroom and heighten pupils' understanding of disability and other intersecting identities in line with the Norwegian core values of education.

Keywords: critical disability studies; affect studies in education; middle grade literature; fantasy; intersectional methodology; multimodal analysis; visual semiotic analysis

Sammendrag

I Norge har rundt 18 % av befolkningen en funksjonsnedsettelse, som spenner fra syns-, hørsels-, tale- eller gangvansker til ulike læreversker (Bufdir, 2021). I tillegg identifiserer 7 % av befolkningen seg som skeive (SSB, 2021), og 14 % av befolkningen er første- og andregenerasjons innvandrere (SSB, 2018). Disse tallene viser hvor viktig det er å inkludere litteratur i undervisningen som representerer og gjenspeiler mangfoldet på mellomtrinnet. Ifølge en amerikansk studie fra 2019 omhandler kun 3,4 % av utgitte bøker en karakter med funksjonshemming. Antallet hovedkarakterer som er BIPOC eller identifiserer seg som LHBTQ+, er også fraværende. Denne masteroppgaven søker å undersøke hvordan funksjonshemming representeres interseksjonelt i tre moderne multimodale fantasytekster for mellomtrinnet. Videre ønsker jeg å utforske hvordan disse representasjonene kan bidra til utviklingen av affektive pedagogikker og eksponeringspedagogikk (Dernikos, 2018) i klasserommet på mellomtrinnet i Norge. I denne avhandlingen anvender jeg to hovedteorier; kritiske studier av funksjonshemming og affektstudier i utdanning og undervisning. I tillegg bruker jeg interseksjonalitet som metode, noe som har gjort det mulig for meg å fokusere på kompleksiteten i materialene mine ved å se hvordan ulike kategorier møtes og samhandler med et tema som funksjonshemming. Dette betyr også å vurdere hvordan jeg som forsker, bøkene jeg har valgt, og forfatterne av disse, også leser og skriver interseksjonelt. Forskningsmetodene jeg har valgt er multimodal analyse og visuell semiotisk analyse. Disse har gjort det mulig for meg å undersøke hvordan ulike modaliteter samhandler for å fremstille og representere funksjonshemming på interseksjonelle måter. Videre har jeg brukt disse analytiske verktøyene for å undersøke ideene, følelsene, oppmerksomheten og responsene som disse tekstene og de ulike symbolene kan fremkalle blant elever på mellomtrinnet. Funnene viser at den interseksjonelle fremstillingene av funksjonshemming i det utvalgte materialet fremstiller funksjonshemmede karakterer som komplekse mennesker i stand til å oppnå triumfer, gjøre feil, og skape relasjoner. Resultatene poengterer også hvordan fantasysjangeren åpner for å stille spørsmål ved normative forståelser av kjønn, funksjonshemming, rase og skjæringspunktene mellom disse. Følgende representasjoner kan fremkalle en rekke ambivalente affektive reaksjoner. Følgelig konkluderer denne studien med at elever på mellomtrinnet trenger litteratur som er på nivå med befolkningsstatistikken. Å engasjere seg med multimodale fantasytekster med interseksjonelle representasjoner av funksjonshemming kan være en måte å oppnå dette på. Dermed kan denne eksponeringspedagogikken gi rom for affektive opplevelser i klasserommet og øke elevenes forståelse av funksjonshemming og andre interseksjonelle identiteter i tråd med de norske kjerneverdiene i utdanningen.

Nøkkelord: kritiske studier av funksjonshemming; affektstudier i utdanning; litteratur på mellomtrinnet; fantasy; interseksjonell metodologi; multimodal analyse; visuell semiotisk analyse

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List of Abbreviations

BIPOC	Black, Indigenous, and People of Color
EFL	English as a foreign language
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (or sometimes questioning), and others
LK20	Norwegian national curriculum of 2020
NTNU	The Norwegian University of Science and Technology

1 Introduction

In this section, I will present the background and context of my study. This will include my motivation for writing this thesis and why the topic of intersectional representations of disability concern the Norwegian upper primary classroom today. Second, I will establish the purpose and present my two research questions of the thesis. Following this, I have included some reflections on language, research positionality and citational practices that are important as I write this thesis. Finally, I discuss some previous research on using multimodal literature with intersectional representations of disability, before giving an overview of the thesis and its structure.

1.1 Background and Context

When I was young, I was always an avid reader, and I remember how the books I read mattered to me. When I started school, our school library was filled with books that appealed to me. As a white, able-bodied, cis girl, I had no trouble finding books where the main characters were somewhat similar to me and experienced the struggles and joys of my life. I remember how the books both grounded me in who I was, usually by depicting similar struggles with being insecure or shy, teaching me ways to stand up for myself or believe in myself, but also how they inspired me and made me gain a liking for writing and more complex reading through my years in school. In *Keywords for Children's Literature*, children's literature scholar Louise Joy (2021) describes how literature that we read as children often "hold[s] sway over the reader's affects, often well beyond childhood" (p. 8). This is something I clearly see as these are books that I can still name today, and that have and probably always will have a proud place in my bookshelf. As I have grown older, reading is still a big part of my life, but my relationship with literature is also different. As a preliminary English, Norwegian, and special pedagogy teacher, I know literary texts will be part of my classroom, and my wish is that everyone will have experiences such as mine. Rudine Simone Bishop (1990), known for her groundbreaking work on American children's literature research, puts into words what I feel very well: "Those of us who are children's literature enthusiasts tend to be somewhat idealistic, believing that some book, some story, some poem can speak to each individual child [...]" (para. 11). However, through exploring literature used in today's classrooms during my years at NTNU, it is obvious that not all children, especially minoritized children, find the same experiences in literature as I did. This makes me want to do more and is part of my motivation for writing this master's thesis. Having learned in what ways literature can matter, I have also understood how literature can be damaging for some children who cannot recognize themselves or their experiences in literature.

The US based 2019 Diversity in Publishing survey, developed by Lee & Low Books, shows that 76% of the publishing world (publishing staff, review journals, and literary agents) are white/Caucasian, 81% are straight/heterosexual, and 89% are abled-bodied. Although most publishers agree that diversity is both important and positive in publishing, these figures show a clear lack of diversity in the publishing industry. This corresponds with the claims by American cartoonist and comics theorist Scott McCloud (2000) made 23 years back where he emphasizes how minoritized authors have had to

overcome numerous obstacles over the years, one of them being the prejudice against the creators themselves, leading to not necessarily a limited content of works, but rather limited opportunities to get their work out there (p. 99). Statistics from the US-based Cooperative Children's Book Center further show the percentage of children's books depicting main characters from diverse background, revealing that:

11.9% of main characters are Black/African, 1% are Native/First Nations, 5.3% are Latinx, 8.7% are Asian/Asian American, .05% are Pacific Islander, 41.8% are white, and 29.2% are animal/other. Additionally, 3.4% of books have a main character with a disability and 3.1% have a main character who identifies as LGBTQIAP+. (We Need Diverse Books, n.d.)

In agreement with this, professor of gender and women's studies Sami Schalk (2020b) also found that in fantasy, the amount of disabled or Black characters is not adequate nor follows the population statistics (p. 138). In Norway, around 18% of the population has a disability per 2020, ranging from difficulties seeing, hearing, speaking, or walking, to different learning disabilities (Bufdir, 2021)¹. In addition, 7% of the population identify as queer (SSB, 2021), and 14% of the population are first- and second-generation immigrants (SSB, 2018). Many of these will also be intersecting categories of people who fall into several of these groups. Since the years when I was in primary school and experienced literature that helped me develop my childhood, society has become increasingly diverse. Within the foundational core values of the education and training in Norway, which was laid down by Royal Decree in 2017, it is emphasized that we are "in a time where the population is more diversified than ever before [...]" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017, p. 8). To me, this creates an even greater motivation for writing this thesis, knowing that the classrooms I will enter as a teacher will belong to pupils of varying minoritized identities.

In 1994, Norway signed The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education, which emphasized how "inclusion and participation are essential to human dignity" (UNESCO, 1994, p. 11-12). This agreement laid a foundation for inclusion in Norwegian schools, a term that is still emphasized as essential for pupils' overall health. This can be seen in the foundational core values of the education and training which highlight how everyone is equal regardless of what makes us different, and that there should be an appreciation of the diversity of pupils, as "We may all experience that we feel different and stand out from the others around us" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017, p. 6-7). The "Act relating to Primary and Secondary Education and Training" (1998) also states that education in Norway must provide insight into cultural diversity and promote democracy and equality (The Education Act, 1998, § 1-1). When it comes to mentioning minoritized groups in Norwegian society specifically, the curriculum (2017) states that "protecting the minority is an important principle", but otherwise only mentions the national minorities of Norway such as Jewish peoples, Kvens/Norwegian Finns, Sami peoples, and a couple others (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017, p. 8, 10). These core values further state the reality of our society becoming more and more diverse and emphasize the need for Norwegian schools to reflect this. However, this notion has not yet seen itself realized in schools, as research shows that disabled children are amongst those who feel left out, are met with low expectations, and are the ones who have to adapt to the school environment rather than

¹ From 2021 the survey "Arbeidskraftundersøkelsen" (AKU) was changed, leading to a new figure of 8% of the population being disabled. The new questionnaire had changed from asking an overall question of whether people experienced that they themselves had a disability, to whether they have had a health issue for longer than six months, and whether or not that leads to daily limits in their day-to-day, and if they considered that a disability (SSB, 2022).

the other way around (Kermit, 2018, p. 15). Similar surveys also show that queer people in Norway are less satisfied with life, especially concerning mental and economic health (SSB, 2021). What this shows is that people who are minoritized in Norwegian schools do not, as it is per now, feel included. This means that the principles of the core values are in many ways not being applied into our schools.

Keeping in mind the need for implementing further change, this thesis seeks to consider literary texts that extend the archive I read as a child. Schalk (2018) highlights how the examination of intersectional identities predominates in studies in film and television, with less attention to mainstream fictional literature, and most readings of fiction focus on gender and sexuality, with less attention on disability (p. 114). I therefore wanted to examine intersectional representations of disability in contemporary, multimodal literature. Learning more about the genre of fantasy, which was the genre that most interested me as a child, is key to this thesis, since Schalk (2020b) reports how most research on disability and intersectional categories in speculative media focuses on science fiction and futuristic representation, while more work is needed particularly in regard to the fantasy and magical realism genres (p. 143). I therefore hope that my MA thesis can contribute to this field of research by looking into contemporary fantasy and multimodal representation together. The idea and personal experience that literature can hold sway over the reader long after they have read a book has stirred me to investigate these contemporary representations in connection to affect theory and critical disability studies. After exploring the purpose and two research questions that will guide this thesis, it is important to state my own position as a researcher in this thesis and the importance of considering language and positionality when writing about topics of which I do not have lived experience with.

1.2 Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to examine how disability is represented intersectionally² in multimodal fantasy literature and analyze and how these representations can forge affective³ experiences and pedagogies of exposure (Dernikos, 2018) in the upper primary EFL classroom. I have chosen middle grade literature and upper primary students as my target because I believe that this is a central age in which pupils can use literature in their life as I did during my childhood. The first research question this study aims to answer is therefore: "How is disability represented intersectionally in contemporary multimodal middle grade fantasy texts?" With this

² Intersectionality is an analytical, theoretical and methodological notion that encompasses race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, religion, citizenship, ability, appearance, age, and all other categories that shape individual identities (Tefera et al., 2018, p. vii). However, when analyzing intersectional representations of disability in this thesis, I chose to focus on some of the categories that have been most highlighted by scholars I have drawn from. Thus, there are other intersectional categories I have not included that are just as important, but that have not fit the scope of this thesis.

³ In this thesis, I follow the explorations of affect by scholars such as Seigworth and Gregg (2010), Dernikos (2018) and Dernikos et al. (2020) which highlight how affects are not interchangeable with emotions or feelings, but rather intensities, either subtle or forceful, that can be felt before, during, and after a bodily sensation or emotion. Additionally, affect scholar Erik Shouse (2005) emphasizes how affect determines the intensity of a feeling: "affect is what makes feelings feel" (para. 5). Thus, affect is understood not as what we feel, but what forces us to feel (Shaviro, 2016, para. 3). Several scholars agree that affect is always unconscious, but that conscious experience may well issue from it: "Our perceptions and our emotions are always drenched in affect and driven by affect" (para. 4). Therefore, at time, the terms feeling, emotion, and affect are used as synonyms in this thesis, although I am still attentive to their differences.

question, I hope that the corpus I have selected for this thesis can be relevant to show an intersectional representation of disability that reflects society and the diversity in Norwegian schools. Intersectional representations of disability in middle grade literature are not something that was introduced to me as an upper primary student in Norway, and therefore, I find it interesting and relevant to investigate how these kinds of texts can work in the EFL classroom in Norway. The second research question for this thesis is thus as follows: "How can multimodal fantasy literature contribute to the development of an affective pedagogy of exposure in the upper primary EFL classroom in Norway?" The aim of this second question is to connect the analysis of intersectional representations of disability to the upper primary EFL classroom. The analysis and discussion of the texts will focus on how the narratives might target upper primary pupils and what it means to read these texts with middle graders in Norway. Through the analysis and discussion, I want to show how the multimodal works can both show authentic and realistic representations that may include trauma, pain, and sorrow, while simultaneously emphasizing a desirable future for minoritized people. Highlighting the role of affect as central to a pedagogy of exposure allows to both look at trauma and pain, but also hope, compassion, and especially joy. Through that, I hope that I can avoid damage-centered research, but rather find space for desire and opportunity within these multimodal texts (Tuck, 2009, p. 413). In my view, imagining *disability futures otherwise* means to open possibilities for, as feminist, queer, and disability theory specialist Alison Kafer (2013) claims, "new answers, shifting answers, unforeseen answers" (p. 18). I believe that the multimodal and intersectional fantasy depictions presented in this thesis can encourage such questions through the affective responses and experiences these texts elicit.

1.3 Language, Positionality and Citational Practices

Reflecting upon my own positionality in writing this thesis, it has been important to be humble in the way I write about various minoritized identities. Warren Cariou (2020), a Métis writer and professor who specializes in Indigenous literatures, writes that humility is the first requirement for someone seeking knowledge, and in order to be humble to literature, one needs to be "a listener of stories, more than a teller" (p. 3). One ethical strategy that I have followed in my research consists of citing experts in the field who have experiential knowledge with the topic. This has both meant citing disabled authors, but also reading different texts from disabled authors that might not be part of this thesis to broaden my understanding of the topic and how to write about disability. To mention some of the scholars who have guided this thesis, I can emphasize the central work of Alison Kafer (2013; 2021), Eli Clare (2017), and Rosemarie Garland-Thompson (2017; 2019). Professor of critical race and Indigenous studies Eve Tuck (2009) considers how it is not necessarily the research that will make the difference, but rather who participates in the research, how data are gathered, and who conducts the analysis, and that the actions taken in these steps are towards the purpose of the research (p. 423). My positionality and who I am is entangled in every aspect of this study, and even though I try to be objective to the materials that I read, someone of different abilities, race, gender, or sexual orientation than me might see the representations of these works another way.

Tuck (2009) discusses how Indigenous research often become damage-centered, meaning that researchers often document pain or loss in an individual, community, or tribe (p. 413). These insights can also be applied to other minoritized groups, such as disabled people who have often been portrayed in narratives as broken or unworthy of a future (Kafer, 2013). As I am able-bodied, it is important that I consider my position as

such when analyzing my chosen corpus. My goal is not to represent minoritized people as victims or damaged, but rather to understand the “complexity, contradiction, and the self-determination of lived lives” (Tuck, 2009, p. 416). Although I hope that this thesis can contribute to ongoing research in the fields of critical disability studies and education for upper primary EFL classrooms, I also wish that it happens through a point of humility instead of authority. By being humble and not assuming I can find set answers to the research, I do not limit the rigor of the research, but rather the opposite; I strengthen it as I approach it from a space of exploration and interaction (Cariou, 2020, p. 10). By exploring these topics within and for myself, I also develop the way I can help pupils to grow their competence according to the core values of education in Norway, which highlight concepts of exploring, being curious and questioning, and developing their competence through this.

In writing this MA thesis, I continue to learn and change the way I read and write about this topic, the terminology I use, and the way I position myself. Another important aspect is highlighted by PhD candidate Ro Averin’s website *Unlrn Prjct*, where they work with establishing practices that allow us to *unlearn* something and dismantle the systems of power and thought that exit (Averin, n.d., para. 3). Dunne (2016) similarly describes pedagogies of unlearning as the need to shake things up, let go, fail, and take risks (p. 13). In my third year at NTNU I wrote an FOU undergraduate thesis on the representations of disability in film, which is when my interest started to grow on these topics. Thus, the un/learning process already started some years ago and continues to develop as I write this thesis. When referring to disability, there are two common ways to do so by using people-first or identity-first language (National Center on Disability and Journalism [NCDJ], 2021). People-first language acknowledges how someone is a person first, and that the disability comes second, such as “a person with a disability”, rather than “disabled person”. Alternatively, identity-first language claims identity up front, for instance by referring to “Deaf community” rather than “someone who is deaf” (NCDJ, 2021). Many disability study scholars and disability rights activists now use identity-first language rather than people-first because disability is an ordinary aspect of their life, and they reject the notion that their disability should be set aside from their identity (Liebowitz, 2015). Many also feel that their identity and communities are a vital part of who they are and how they experience life⁴. In my view, the best practice in order to choose between people-first or identity-first language is to ask the people you are talking to or about. Since that is not possible for this thesis, I have tried to listen to the community of which I write about. Active listening is one of the ways to begin to think about critical humility, according to Cariou (2020, p. 8). I have then decided to use identity-first language, meaning that I write *disabled* person, rather than *person with a disability* as a way to respect and honor disabled identities (Liebowitz, 2015).

1.4 Previous Research

Extensive research has been conducted on using literature with different representations of disability and the effect that it has on children in school. For instance, Rieger and McGrail (2015) have examined 12 children’s literature books with what they claim to be authentic representation of disability, finding that the use of such literature can promote inclusive behaviors among pupils through identifying similarities and

⁴ Some scholars, such as Rosemarie Garland-Thompson and disability activist Kathie Snow, use people-first language, whereas other scholars, such as Annie Elaine, Eli Clare, Alison Kafer and Cara Liebowitz, use identity-first language.

addressing negative social behavior. Similar research findings can be found as done by Blaska (2004), Curwood (2013) and Garland-Thomson (2017). Jensen et al. (2021) have investigated the representation of disability in Norwegian textbooks in the subjects of Norwegian language and literature, science, and social studies, where they found that the representation was scarce. They also interviewed the textbook authors and found that the most common explanations for the lack of disabled narratives was that these were either overlooked, or that the Norwegian National Curriculum does not explicitly mention disability as a minority (Jensen et al., 2021). As most teachers are depending on the use of textbooks for a lack of resources and time to find their own literature, this means many Norwegian classrooms are reproducing ableist structures through their texts. Other studies find that this is also the case for texts about race, sexuality, Indigenous stories and other minoritized categories (Brown & Habegger-Conti, 2017; Fylkesnes, 2019; Smestad, 2018). However, there is less research that examines representations of disability in literature alongside other minoritized intersecting identity categories such as race, gender, or sexuality (Marshall, 2021). Former NTNU MA student Amalie Flo (2022) did an intersectional comparative analysis of two YA books in her master's thesis, where she found that there is still a need to increase and improve the use of literature to teach gender and disability in intersectional ways. Considering the representation of literature with disabled people in Norwegian classrooms, Flo (2022) also examined in her master's thesis the use of young adult (YA) literature taught in intersectional ways in the Norwegian EFL classroom. She found that teachers rarely based their choice of literature on intersectional categories of gender and disability, and that the books about disability they chose were limited.

Furthermore, there is some research done on the representation of disability in multimodal middle grade literature. Kersten-Parrish (2018; 2019) has studied the graphic novel form as a vehicle to explore conversations about deafness by using the award-winning memoir *El Deafo* by Cece Bell. In the study, she found that the combination of image and text allowed readers to step inside the narrative of Cece Bell, and that it helped broadening the understandings and experiences around disability (p. 46). On the specific use of multimodal literature, Olsen (2019) has researched the use of graphic literature in the Norwegian ESL classroom, where he found that the multimodal form of expression made graphic literature well suited as a reading alternative in Norwegian upper secondary ESL teaching, while emphasizing the need for specific skills and knowledge of graphic novels and how to read them. This literature review shows that representations of disability that exist in society are still lacking or stereotypical. However, the authentic literature that does exist can promote inclusive behaviors and pedagogies, as is also emphasized in the curriculum of Norwegian schools. Specifically multimodal literature and fantasy have significant potential within the EFL classroom. In addition, there is little research to be found on intersectional representation of disability specifically focusing on more than one minoritized category, which is something I hope to engage with and thus contribute to through this thesis.

1.5 Thesis Overview

The overall structure of this thesis takes the form of five chapters, including this introductory one. Chapter 2 lays out the theoretical dimensions of the research and presents the theoretical fields of critical disability studies and affect studies in education. Additionally, the chapter also makes some important remarks on crip studies, and recent developments in middle grade fantasy literature. Chapter 3 is concerned with the methodology used for this study and examines why I have chosen to employ an

intersectional methodology combined with multimodal and visual semiotic analysis. Chapter 4 provides the analysis and discussion of the three multimodal novels chosen for this thesis, namely *The Tea Dragon Society* (2017) by Kay O'Neill, *Secrets of Camp Whatever* (2021) by Chris Grine, and *The Secret of Haven Point* (2022) by Lisette Auton. As I conducted the analysis of the multimodal texts chosen for this thesis, it made sense to simultaneously draw upon the different theoretical frameworks, and I have therefore decided to write a combined Analysis and Discussion chapter, which means that it also incorporates the findings and interpretations of the corpus in relation to the theoretical background and research questions. The fifth and final chapter presents the conclusion and implications from the study and looks at limitations and suggestions for further research.

2 Theoretical Frameworks

The following chapter will provide an overview and discussion of the main theoretical frameworks that ground this master's thesis. I have drawn on critical disability studies in order to support this thesis' examination of intersectional representations of disability. In addition, I include crip theory and crip time not as the main theoretical approaches, but to interrogate normative assumptions of time and temporality connected to the experiences of disability, queerness, and other minoritized representations. This chapter also includes theoretical approaches to affect studies in education, which were chosen because teaching and learning with literature means to enter affective and embodied experiences. Lastly, this chapter gives an overview of recent developments in middle grade literature and fantasy.

2.1 Critical Disability Studies

According to Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (2019), disabled author, educator and thought leader in disability justice and culture, critical disability studies emerged as an academic field that expands the understanding of disability as a health or medical perspective to consider it as a civil and human rights issue, a minoritized identity, and a category of critical analysis (p. 12). Traditionally, disability studies have focused on the paradigms of the medical and social models of disability. The medical model of disability was dominant in the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries, where disability was understood as a "fact" about someone existing in our world and followed frameworks that focused on conventional classifications of "impairments" and "handicaps" (Elcessor et al., 2017; Dunn, 2010). Today, we understand that words such as these are problematic because they describe disabilities in terms of deficiency (NCDJ, 2021, "Impaired/Impairment"), and depend upon normative expectations about how human beings should look and act (Garland-Thomson, 2017, p. 6). Norms and normativity, as used in this thesis, can be defined as culturally generated standards of beauty, independence and competence that exclude and disable many human bodies (Garland-Thomson, 2017, p. 7). Garland-Thomson (2017) further states that "If one attempts to define the normate position [...] what emerges is a very narrowly defined profile that describes only a minority of actual people" (p. 8). Considering how this thesis seeks to examine middle grade literature, texts that reproduce normativity rather than reflect diversity would not convey the reality of a Norwegian upper primary EFL classroom.

Around the 1960s and 70s, feminist and civil rights movements led by activist voices with lived experiences of disability, began advocating for a social model of disability, which claims that disability can be as much produced by environmental and social factors as by bodily functions (Adams et al., 2015, p. 5). Richard Rieser (2006), a disabled international writer, teacher, and the director of *World of Inclusion*, claims the following: "We are of the view that the position of disabled people and the discrimination against us are socially created" (p. 135). A term that highlights these social factors is "ableism", which refers to how disabled identities are given force in laws, social policy, and cultural values (Campbell, 2021, p. 13). The social paradigm challenges the ableist notion of overcoming disability, and instead focuses on how disability can be as much produced by environmental and social factors as by bodily functions (Adams et al., 2015; Barker & Murray, 2017). Although the term *disability* has been part of the English

language since the sixteenth century, it was through these movements that disabled people re-claimed the word as a positive and strengthening term and turned focus to social reaction and disabling environments (Adams et al., 2015; Alaniz, 2021).

While it is important to focus on accessibility and ableism in society, disability cannot be solely remedied by removing structural and systemic barriers and changing social and cultural perceptions of disability (Sweed, 2020, p. 195). Kafer (2013) claims that the social model pays little attention to the causes and details of impairment, particularly the presence and persistence of pain, panic attacks, trauma, or loss (p. 5). These questions are especially important for this thesis that seeks to investigate how literature can function as a vehicle to forge affective pedagogies of exposure (Dernikos, 2018). Several scholars have, over the years, adapted a hybrid stance between the medical and social model, as the lived reality of disability is far too complicated to be addressed solely with one paradigm or the other (Kafer, 2013; Sweed, 2020). A critical view on disability studies, or critical disability studies as is the theoretical focus of this thesis, further challenges the normative assumptions, and focus of some of the more traditional disability studies frameworks (Adams et al., 2015; Garland-Thomson, 2019). One important view that attends to the critical aspect of critical disability studies is highlighted by Kafer (2013):

[...] attending to violence and trauma does not run counter to but is actually an essential part of critical theories of disability. Or, to put it differently, an acknowledgement of loss or a deep reckoning with the aftermath of trauma can co-exist with critical anti-ableist politics. (p. 6)

When considering the critical disability studies field, Kafer (2013) further stresses the importance of not only seeing how society can be accessible, but to imagine the world where disabled people can be seen as desirable, valuable, and integral (p. 9). This is important because it may cause different kinds of imagined futures for disabled people. This is especially central in relation to the genre of fantasy as examined in this thesis, since imagining societies otherwise can lead to a greater understanding for people with different conceptualizations of, and relations to, disability and other intersecting minoritized identities (Kafer, 2013, p. 12). This means to be critical to the way we learn about disability and the representation of disability in both society and in literature, especially in education. Trying to further understand how one might do this, Kafer (2013) argues that one must both recognize loss, while simultaneously remaining open to desire and possibility, much as Tuck (2009) emphasizes opportunity-based research rather than damage-centered approaches.

Inclusion and participation are highlighted in Norwegian society and schools. However, the lived reality for many children, including disabled ones, is that they are met with lower expectations, and they are the ones who have to adapt into the school environment (Kermit, 2018, p. 15). Kafer (2013) writes: "My future is written on my body" (p. 1). She further illuminates how her disability makes people judge, decide, and tell what is in store for her future. Sometimes that is a pitiable future that may never lead to a good life, while other times it is about life lived fully, possible, or whatever one might choose. Disabled author and activist Eli Clare (2017) also finds that people want to know "*what's wrong with you*" or "*what's your accident*" [emphasis in original] (p. 151-152). Dinkins and Englert (2015) similarly describe the term "positioning", meaning how people with disabilities are usually positioned by others primarily as disabled (p. 394). Similarly, Clare (2017) writes the following in his book *Brilliant Imperfection: Grappling with Cure*:

Sometimes disabled people overcome specific moments of ableism [...]. However, I'm not sure that overcoming disability itself is an actual possibility for most of us. Yet in a world that places extraordinary value in cure, the belief that we can defeat or transcend body-mind conditions through individual hard work is convenient. Overcoming is cure's backup plan. (p. 10)

Knowing the reality of disabled children in Norway and how they experience education, it is interesting to consider whether Norwegian society simply hopes that pupils will overcome disability, as Clare (2017) examines. It is the individual, the disabled pupil, who has to adapt in the end, rather than schools and society. This shows that although the social model of disability has brought aspects of looking at how society can accept disability as a key aspect of human experience and advocate for social change, schools and other educational institutions are still left with views of disability as needing to be cured or fixed. This is why it is so important to see the entire picture of disability, and why critical disability studies become essential for this thesis' attempt to examine how multimodal literature with intersectional representations of disability can work within the Norwegian classroom.

In Norwegian schools, it is the national curriculum that guides teachers in their work. One of the core values of education in Norway centers around democracy and participation, which emphasizes protecting and developing awareness of minoritized groups (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017, p. 10). Renewed in 2020 (LK20), the curriculum in Norway also added interdisciplinary topics that are supposed to guide the specific curriculum goals, and the English subject is emphasized as a space where pupils can experience "new ways to interpret the world and promote curiosity and engagement and help to prevent prejudices" (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020, p. 2). Through this, the English subject seeks to map different ways of being and thinking (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020, p. 2). Although diversity, different identities and cultural differences are emphasized, neither the English curriculum, nor the core curriculum, mentions disabilities or disabled people as belonging to one of these minoritized groups (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017; Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020a). Garland-Thomson (2019) claims that "who and what is excluded and excluded is at the heart of critical disability studies" (p. 13). The critical aspect of critical disability studies makes us keep questioning what we think we know about disability, especially from the perspective of someone non-disabled or not-yet-disabled. This illustrates why critical disability studies are essential to my research on intersectional representations of disability in multimodal fantasy texts and how those can function as pedagogies of exposure in the EFL classroom.

2.1.1 Crip Theory and Crip Time

The field of crip theory emerged as a way to reimagine and challenge dominant perspectives on disability. Writer and speaker Robert McRuer (2006) works at the intersection of queer theory, critical disability studies, and cultural studies, exploring how the two fields of disability studies and crip theory shape, challenge, and push each other to be critical and access alternative ways of being (p. 35, 42). According to Kafer (2013), disability studies and crip theory differ in orientation and aim, where crip theory and crip in general is more willing to explore potential risks and exclusions of identity politics (p. 15). However, she also exclaims how crip theory and disability studies "can be, and often are, intertwined in practice" (Kafer, 2013, p. 16), making room for approaches to identity practiced in crip theory, while also encompassing those who do not or cannot recognize themselves in crip. The framework of crip studies is not the main theoretical field of this

thesis, but I want to include some references to it because it adds value to the theoretical perspective that I have chosen. According to Kafer (2013), “disability studies has yet to take up crip temporalities and futures as sites of extended analysis” (p. 20). I therefore believe that moving somewhat into crip theory and crip temporalities can aid this thesis as I attempt to analyze intersectional representations of disability.

Elizabeth Freeman (2010), queer studies scholar, uses the concept of *chrononormativity* to describe how people are pushed toward a controlled regulation of time. She defines chrononormativity as “the use of time to organize human bodies toward maximum productivity” (p. 3). In contrast to this, Freeman (2010) looks at various films and aesthetic texts that challenge this normative and ableist organization of time and propose instead delay, pause, flashback, repetition, and other alternative temporalities (p. xii). Crip theory and a focus on crip temporalities means to look at how representations of disability can affect the orientation to time. Additionally, Freeman’s (2010) term also identifies how positions of gender, race, or sexuality are affected by chrononormativity by being believed to be static truths of being (p. 3-4). Time in modern society is considered progressive and linear, and Wälivaara (2022) explores two normative ways of looking at time: time as progression and development, either medical, technological, in terms of progress or cure; or time as structure of lifetimes, meaning the expected phases of life to get a job, get married, have children, and retire (p. 239). Being queer or crip, in turn, means to move differently, out of sync with normative time (Kafer, 2013, p. 35).

In an educational context, Samuels and Freeman (2021), editors of the special edition *Crip Temporalities for the South Atlantic Quarterly*, point to how differences from the presumed norm means that disabled pupils do the same work as their peers in profoundly different temporalities (p. 247). Living in crip time but being expected to bend and fit into normative time can leave marks and trauma (Wälivaara, 2022, p. 239). This is why it has been important for this thesis to touch upon the theoretical field of crip studies and its exploration of crip temporality when analyzing intersectional representations of disability. To imagine disability futures differently and as integral and valuable as Kafer (2013) emphasizes, entails imagining disability as part of other, alternate temporalities that do not cast disabled people out of time (p. 34). Wälivaara (2022) demonstrates the connection between time and fantasy literature, a genre that often deals explicitly with relations to time and characters with alternative or non-normative experiences of time (p. 239). These depictions of non-realistic characters experiencing time in non-normative ways can assist in reimagining, and defamiliarizing or making strange, the familiarity of the organization of time (Freeman, 2010; Wälivaara, 2022). Circling back to this thesis’ focus on multimodal texts, an important aspect to consider is how these texts not only focus on time within the narratives, but also how reading them requires time from the pupils. One example is *The Tea Dragon Society*, a graphic novel that explores different arrays of reading, fonts, colors, and styles from what we are used to. This may not be an easy read for some pupils, as they can struggle to make sense of the new genre and format, the order, or contrasts of colors. In sum, reading the texts chosen for this thesis may elicit mixed emotions based both on the reading experience, and the context of the books themselves, such as frustration but also joy. These are emotions that cannot be determined when analyzing the books, but that can be explored as potential spaces of conversation and affective experiences.

2.2 Affect Studies in Education

Any classroom will always be constituted by different bodies with different abilities, but also of identities constructed in relation to different cultures, genders, and sexualities. This diversity invites the circulation of various feelings and emotions within an upper primary EFL classroom. In this thesis, I want to discuss and develop how affect is relevant and essential to the belief that texts can shape minoritized identities and discuss who belongs, and who does not, in the sense of different minoritized intersectional identities. As affect studies scholar Bessie P. Dernikos (2018) points to, texts function as active agents that have the power to shape children's interpretative and emotional responses to literature (p. 10). Within the Norwegian curriculum, texts are given this power and opportunity. Essential to this line of inquiry is one of the subject's core elements, which is important for this thesis' focus on teaching in the EFL classroom in Norway: "By reflecting on, interpreting and critically assessing differently types of texts in English, the pupils shall [...] build the foundation for seeing their own identity and others' identity in a multilingual and multicultural context" (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020, p. 3). Thus, by working with texts in the English classroom, literature is given authority to contribute to pupils' understanding of their own and others' identity. In my view, affect theory is essential to the upper primary classroom because this is an age where they go through different paces and changes, and thus the classroom becomes a space where different affects circulate.

Seigworth and Gregg (2010) describe affect as an in-between-ness of acting and being acted upon, of forces and intensities (p. 1). Dernikos et al. (2020a) understand affect as felt intensities that register in and across bodies, and that both produce and shape personal and emotional experiences (p. 5). Joy (2021) similarly describes how affect is "a sign that the body has recognized what is undergoing" (p. 7), while Dernikos (2018) uses the trope 'stick to' to describe the felt intensities of affect (p. 5). In this thesis, I focus on how affect can be found in different multimodal middle-grade texts that pupils are met with in the upper primary EFL classroom. Affect studies scholar Kathleen Stewart (2007) describes how moments of affect are events that create identities, dream worlds, bodily states, and public feelings of all kinds, which are initially powerful, such as recognition or confusion (p. 63). Scholars agree that affect is often implicit and may therefore precede both will and consciousness (Watkins, 2010; Stewart, 2007). This unconscious registration of movements or events create a readiness to act, such as to express an emotion or a feeling (Shouse, 2005, para. 8). Affect is thus an embodied capacity that is produced by interactions between subjects (Joy, 2021; Watkins, 2010; Dernikos et al., 2020b), or, as Ahmed (2010) highlights, in the interaction between people and objects, or people and the affects that touch them. In this thesis, I aim to show how affects emerge and circulate in the multimodal literature that I have selected, shaping the ways these texts represent disability intersectionally. Furthermore, I want to examine in what way these texts and affects can co-exist in the upper primary EFL classroom.

What is important about affects is not just what they are, but how they circulate. Ahmed (2014) resists the idea that emotions travel from one body to the next, and that the feeling that passes on is the same. Rather, she points to how even if two people have the same feeling, they might not necessarily have the same relationship to the feeling. These feelings, Ahmed (2014) continues, become "sticky, or saturated with affect, as sites of personal and social tension" (p. 10-11). In other words, the types of literature that pupils meet in the classroom will affect them in some way, creating many different

kinds of embodied feelings. It is not the thought of something, but rather the felt intensity of what the pupils may respond to or notice. In *The Tea Dragon Society*, one of the multimodal texts chosen for this thesis, two powerful stories about disability are told, stories that include both loss and grief but also hope and wonder. In these narratives, children may experience empathy, sympathy, or compassion, which are affects that can foster the ability to envision someone else's worldview differently to their own. Some may believe that sympathy or empathy are patronizing, but rather they grant one the ability to enter someone's emotional experience with compassion, while still doing so with objectivity (Pedwell, 2014, p. 6-7). The idea is that these affects can reorganize how we think, feel, and what we believe about disability and other intersecting categories. However, as affects are embodied differently by who we are, affects such as these can also have the effect of reproducing cultural, social, and political norms of exclusion (Pedwell, 2014, p. 1-2). This can happen if, as the next section on Middle Grade Literature will show, the literature used in the classroom reproduces heteronormative and ableist ways of being. As the Overview of Research Methodology and Methods chapter of this thesis will further explore, what we see depends on who we are. This is the same with affects and emotions; they hit us in different ways at different times. Thus, interactions with literature can be such events where embodied responses can happen.

According to Joy (2021), it is largely through children's literature that we first learn about affect: "Emotional education is always implicitly at work in children's literature" (p. 8). Debra Ferreday (2012), who does research within the fields of gender, feminist theory, sexuality, and embodiment, also agrees that affects are both generated and experienced through texts (p. 86). In other words, children are in some way feeling and connecting with the literature they are exposed to. Dernikos (2018) uses the term "literate bodies" to explain how pupils connect to literature is not simply an emotion or feeling, but rather through embodied forces (p. 2). In my childhood experiences with literature, the literature shaped my identity, and my connection to it gave me a way to recognize my struggles in someone else, but also my desires, dreams, and hopes for the future. However, this power that texts have is not just positive in and of itself, or more importantly it is not this way for many children. Understanding that texts have this opportunity, one can implicitly understand that texts can do the opposite as well. They do not only ensure positive spaces but also spaces of damage. According to Watkins (2010), recognizing oneself is to recognize affect, and that sensation or affective force is promoting a sense of self-worth. Alternatively, recognition can also function in a negative way, which can result in a force of negative affects, leading to emotional reactions such as rage, shame, or anger (p. 273). Affects and emotions are ambivalent, as Sianne Ngai (2005) shows well in her work *Ugly Feelings*, where she turns to different affects such as irritation, animateness, love, and anxiety. She argues how these kinds of emotions' ambivalence deserves attention in order to break the positive/negative affect binaries (p. 8). If the literature in classrooms simply reproduces normative ways of being, it stops minoritized children from "inhabiting space" in the literature (Dernikos, 2018, p. 2). By normative ways of being I am referring to the assumption that heterosexuality, able-bodiedness and whiteness are the "normal" categories and thus somewhat superior to LGBTQ+ or disabled identities (Ahmed, 2014; Butler, 2004; Dinkins & Englert, 2015).

Thinking about emotions that circulate in the classroom, it is well known that this space should be safe to be in (Zembylas, 2015, p. 165). The Core Curriculum of Norwegian schools (2017) claims that feeling anxious or uncertain in classroom spaces can lead to undermined learning (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017, p. 18).

Zembylas (2015) challenges this notion by pointing to how classroom spaces are never really safe for minoritized pupils that experience the constant power and privilege (p. 166). Ahmed (2014) similarly agrees: "Normativity is comfortable for those who can inhabit it" (p. 147). By critically engaging pupils in their beliefs on categories of race, disability, sexuality, or gender, some pupils may experience being uncomfortable, insecure, or even anxious or uncertain for a short period of time. These are feelings that the idea of a safe classroom might not entail. Nevertheless, these are feelings pupils might need to experience in order to unpack their "comfort zones" and deconstruct the ways in which they have learned to see, feel, and act (Zembylas, 2015, p. 166). For instance, Garland-Thomson (2017) describes how interaction between someone visibly disabled and someone nondisabled may often use charm, humor, or entertainment to relieve nondisabled people of their discomfort (Garland-Thomson, 2017, p. 13). Similarly, queer people may also be asked to not make heterosexual people feel uncomfortable by avoiding public displays of intimacy, which in itself is a painful feeling of restriction (Ahmed, 2014, p. 149). I would argue that not just actual interactions between people can do this, but also affective interactions between human bodies and literature. Thus, instances in school may elicit these uncomfortable affects upon pupils, which highlights what Zembylas (2015) teaches us in that sometimes feelings of discomfort are necessary within these spaces. If a work of fiction reproduces normative standards, disabled or otherwise minoritized pupils may feel they need to uncomfortably adapt who they are to these norms. An example from the book *The Secret of Haven Point* occurs around stories of remembering trauma that may include affects of shame and embarrassment. Zembylas (2020) discusses what he calls pedagogies of shame and how shame, which is considered a negative feeling of isolation, can actually function to make us care, and create a loss of indifference (p. 56). In other words, some varieties of shame might stir the ideas we have of normative standards and make us question these ideas as a way to self-transform and deal with and acknowledge past histories. Navigating such histories in the classroom does not mean making pupils feel bad or apologize for something they or others have done, but rather a form of pedagogy where the classroom can recapture the affective connections of solidarity and compassion (Zembylas, 2020, p. 64). In turn, these kinds of conversations can motivate students and educators to move and act towards histories of trauma, suffering, and inequality that many minoritized people experience (Zembylas, 2020, p. 64).

The reproduction of normative standards involves an orientation of the body towards someone, and away from others, which in turn affects how one can enter different kinds of social spaces because it "presumes certain bodies, certain directions, certain ways of loving and living" (Ahmed, 2014, p. 145). When this happens in literature, disabled people, and other people with minoritized intersectional identities are not able to enter the literature, but instead are forced to become "others" who do not belong (Dernikos, 2018, p. 2). This reproduction of normative ways of being and normative temporality, as explored in the previous section on Critical Disability Studies and Crip Studies, happens through the way teachers talk, what they say, or how they adapt their teaching, or in what materials they choose to include in their classes. When the Norwegian curriculum highlights "identity development" as one of the experiences that working with texts can give pupils (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020, p. 2), reading literature that only reproduces normative standards, rather than capture the complex reality of the world the pupils live in, would limit the ability texts have to affect pupils' experiences in positive ways. Theory on affect then offers a good resource, as it shows how the materials teachers bring into the classroom impact

children. Going back to the experience I had of literature in my childhood, finding myself and my struggles, hopes, and dreams depicted in what I read helped make me who I am. However, using normative literature in classrooms exclusively is depriving some pupils of having these encounters, and in turn inflicts what Dernikos (2018) points to as trauma and injury (p. 2). Thus, the aim of this thesis has been to find literature that contains intersectional representations of disability that resist a damage-centered approach. This is done in hopes of highlighting how these texts and the affective encounters they may elicit upon the students can create opportunities for what is stated in LK20 about using texts to learn about different ways of being and shaping pupils' identities. According to Ahmed (2010), how an object functions as affective can depend on its location, the when and where of the affective experience (p. 33). In this sense, working with literature that creates recognition in school, as a space where pupils are going through many emotions and experiences of belonging and insecurities, becomes an arena where affects especially belong. Precisely because of these complex and contested realities and everyday experiences, fantasy in particular becomes a genre of possibility for seeing the world otherwise.

2.3 Middle Grade Literature and Fantasy

For this thesis, it has been important to examine representations of disability in middle grade literature and fantasy within the upper primary Norwegian EFL classroom in the past 20 years. Although the genre of middle grade literature has a long history past this as well, it has been necessary to limit the framework to fit the scope of this thesis and the aim of researching contemporary middle grade literature.

2.3.1 An Absence of Representation

Echoing my experiences as a child, most white, Western children have found themselves overly represented in the books they have read. Bishop (1990) uses the theory of windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors to explain how dominant social groups have found themselves mirrored in the books that they read, meaning they can see their own life, identity, and world experiences within the chosen book (para. 5). Books acting as windows or sliding glass doors means that children can become part of another world unlike their own identity, being reminded of differences and diversity, and even entering the world of others (Bishop, 1990, para. 1). Myers (2014) complicates these metaphors by introducing the notion of maps in addition to mirrors, stressing how children are not only searching to see themselves in the literature, but also deciding where to go through the stories they are given, finding their possible destinations (para. 19). Continuing, Myers (2014) writes: "today's books remain blind to the everyday reality of thousands of children [...] They are navigating the streets and avenues of their lives with an inadequate, outdated chart, and we wonder why they feel lost" (para. 21). Thus, the absence of representation around disability and intersectional questions means that while some children feel recognition in literature and can "inhabit space" in the literature, as Dernikos (2018) stresses, others are forced to become "others" who do not belong or find their way (p. 2). It is then key, as I suggest in this thesis, to expose pupils to literature and affective experiences that allow dominant social groups to experience others' ways of being, while simultaneously offering maps for minoritized pupils to see themselves, carve their futures, and explore their dreams in literature.

Rieser (2006) examines how historically in literature, media, and film, depictions of disabled people were very different from the reality of disabled people's lives. This has led to many stereotypical depictions that are recognizable today, such as the disabled

and evil pirates, e.g., Captain Hook in *Peter Pan* (p. 150-151). Other common stereotypes are that disabled people are saints, sinners, freaks, victims, a burden, or someone to be pitied (Rieser, 2006, p. 134). Representation of other marginalized identities has also been stereotyped in literature. For instance, queerness in children's literature has often been focused on tragic or negative consequences of being gay or lesbian, enhancing shame and guilt (Mallan, 2021, p. 161). Similarly, race within children's literature has often reflected history's racist thinking and stereotypes of othering and prejudice (Capshaw, 2021, p. 164). The way disability and other intersecting categories are represented specifically in fantasy has also changed over the years. Historically, the genre would imagine worlds where social categories no longer mattered or even existed, reproducing systems of power where the norm was whiteness, able-bodiedness, masculinity, and heterosexuality (Schalk, 2020a, p. 22). These depictions often also consisted of disability transforming from a frightening, confusing, and stigmatizing reality, to the narrator becoming hyper-able or superhuman (Schalk, 2018, p. 60). Rieser (2006) questions whether these depictions stem from the idea that "we can, at any time, all become disabled [...]. Perhaps the need to distance ourselves from this reality makes it convenient to rely on negative attitudes and stereotypes of disability" (p. 143). Ahmed (2014) describes the consequence of this fear that proves to align bodily and social space: to enable some bodies to inhabit space through restricting the mobility of others (p. 70). Literature that reproduces normative standards rather than represents the diversity of our actual population enables some people to experience extended mobility in narratives where they can find their maps and worldviews represented. Minoritized people, however, experience a restriction and inability to move within the literature they are exposed to.

2.3.2 Fantasy and Affect in the Upper Primary EFL Classroom

Pupils today, especially in the ages of 9-12 that encompass the upper primary years of school in Norway, are surrounded by multimodal texts at any time. They are a generation that is constantly pressured to look in every direction: to read, listen, watch, and feel at the same time. Within the past 20 years, multimodal texts have become more complex and grown increasingly, and with that the pupils' literacies have also changed (Høyrup, 2017, p. 82). From 5th grade, pupils in Norway enter the upper primary classroom. Here, concepts and texts become more involved, and the pupils are expected to use varied texts in their own production, responses, and projects (Gilles & Dickinson, 2000, p. 512). Increased knowledge during the middle grades is also accentuated by the competence aims in the English subject in Norwegian schools (LK20), which states that the years 5, 6 and 7 are when the pupils demonstrate and develop their competence through oral and written texts about different societies in the English-speaking world (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020, p. 5). In other words, there is a shift from 5th grade where pupils are expected to have an improved set of literacy skills that can take them from the reading that they do from kindergarten to 4th grade and into the upper primary classroom-requirements. Additionally, as multimodal texts are constantly part of the pupils' everyday lives, it can be especially important to help them understand and interpret these kinds of texts critically also within the upper primary classroom. Critical thinking is also one of the essential core values in Norwegian schools that highlights exploring and thinking in ways that develop new knowledge and good judgement (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017, p. 7).

In addition to the shift in competence requirements, grades 5-7 are also a stage when pupils go through particular physical and emotional changes, and the pressure to

“fit in” increases (Gilles & Dickinson, 2000, p. 512). According to the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (2020), the English subject is an important space for identity development. Identity is formed by all that we do and experience, and also by every aspect of who we are, our bodies, and abilities alike. Identity is also about how we feel and understand ourselves, but also how others understand and position us. How we are affected also forms our identity, and how we experience finding out maps and mirrors in literature (Myers, 2014). The subject of English in Norwegian schools is meant to help the pupils understand different types of identities, such as ways of living, being, communicating and thinking as a way to promote curiosity, creativity and prevent prejudice (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020, p. 2). Knowing that disability is not explicitly mentioned in the curriculum, it is especially important to see that teachers have a responsibility to designate maps for minoritized. It is here that I argue affect and literature become important, because affect theory shows how literature can impact pupils through exploring and experiencing different kinds of affects connected to storytelling. Looking at these recent developments in middle grade literature and fantasy, it is clear that demands have changed. Yet, schools are still lacking in the materials and capacities of teachers to teach this diversity and allow pupils to experience the affects that this literature promotes. Classrooms are spaces where pupils, teachers and the curriculum are shaped by the practices that are performed there. Thus, the materials chosen for the classroom are essential in the idea that literature has the ability to expand our understanding of ourselves and others (Dinkins & Englert, 2015, p. 393). As emphasized, this cannot happen for all children if the literature does not reflect the society which it attempts to affect. However, when literature does prove to be diverse and highlights different types of abilities and intersectionality of BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and other peoples, it can help the situation of pressure and intensity of the upper primary years of school.

Maughan (2018) points to how the market of middle grade fiction has seen a shift in the stories it presents in recent years, where it now better reflects the diverse world that children live in with different representations of intersectional categories (para. 1). Especially the genre of fantasy has recently been gaining an increased steam of audience and has been emphasized as a space where affective experiences circulate (Maughan, 2018, para. 49). Several scholars contend that the unlimited possibilities of fantasy and other speculative fiction have important potentials for multiply marginalized people (Ferreday, 2012; Schalk, 2020ab; Sweed, 2020). Hoel and Helgevold (2006) describe how fantasy had only recently entered Norwegian schools and called it a “developing genre” (own translation, p. 22) that was first and foremost brought in only as part of the stimulation of a desire to read. However, the image of fantasy as mediocre literature for children is a trend that has been turning over the past years, and fantasy literature continues to invite a larger audience (Hoel & Helgevold, 2006; Maughan, 2018). With Black speculative fiction at the forefront, writers began to develop ways to represent people exposed to different intersectional oppressions, grappling with the challenges of racism, ableism, sexism, homophobia, and other marginalized experiences⁵ (Schalk, 2020a, p. 22). Although there is still a lack of literature which authentically represents these ideas, fantasy represents a genre that continues to develop in this direction.

⁵ The genre of Indigenous Futurism has also been important, which “envisions the future from a Native perspective in fiction and in visual arts [...] and is known for addressing a range of difficult topics, including the long impact of colonization, institutional racism, destruction of the environment, and genocide” (Fricke, 2019, p. 107).

The fantasy genre takes readers “to places far from their own worlds, giving them freedom to explore and create, and it releases their imagination in full and expressive ways” (Mikkelsen, 2005, p. 3). As Ferreday (2012) further claims, “Fantasy can be seen as an escape, not in the sense of escaping-from (the ‘real world’) [...], but as an escape-into or engagement-with (the text)” (p. 86). Fantasy as a genre embraces the unspoken stories and dreams, allowing the reader to recognize the ways in which affect is produced and experienced through texts (Ferreday, 2012, p. 86). By reading fantasy and being affected by these stories, pupils can see ways of being that are not constrained by the body as it is for them, and through that the literature alters accepted norms of what human bodies and behavior look and feel like (Butler, 2004; Schalk, 2020a). In addition, when this is done not just with disability, but with other intersecting categories as well, fantasy forces us outside of our realist, normative expectations of these categories (Schalk, 2020b, p. 142). Butler (2004) explains how fantasy can make us question reality: “The critical promise of fantasy, when and where it exists, is to challenge the contingent limits of what will and will not be called reality” (p. 29). For instance, the fact that barely any of the main characters in *The Tea Dragon Society* are merely “just human”, but rather more-than-human in different ways, can make us question the limits of what is real, and the boundaries of disability, sexuality, or gender. Schalk (2018) uses the term defamiliarization when she makes the point that the fantasy genre insists that fantasy “challenges not only what is recognizable as human, but also what is recognizable as belonging within the human-based categories of (dis)ability, race, gender, and sexuality” (p. 115). By representing a variety of differing realities, fantasy can critique the denial of individual experiences of reality without suggesting that disability is not real and without denying that different experiences of reality can be painful, frightening, or otherwise difficult (Schalk, 2018, p. 67).

Thus, we can understand that the fantasy genre opens up spaces for experiencing what Dernikos (2018) introduces as “pedagogies of exposure” and that these pedagogies can offer maps and ways of seeing the world of minoritized identities such as intersectional representations of disability. Ghiso et al. (2012) highlight how literature is one of the primary vehicles for intellectual and imaginative maturation, and that it is important that students engage with literature that reflects their identities, but also give opportunities of seeing others’ intersecting identities that are unlike their own narratives and histories (p. 15). Dernikos (2018) describes pedagogies of exposure as a term that refers to how schools are spaces where pupils can be exposed to literary texts, or literary embodied and affective experiences, that refuse to conceal past histories of violence and thus see histories unlike their own (p. 24). To create pedagogies of exposure where traumatic violence might be present ultimately means to create literacy environments where healing and possibilities also play a part (Dernikos, 2018, p. 14). For my thesis, this means to consider whether or not the novels I have chosen hide or show the traumatic histories and lived experiences of the intersectional minoritized groups they aim to represent, while still enabling disability and intersecting categories as valuable and integral. To enact a pedagogy of exposure further entails incorporating authentic texts that children can connect to and be affected by in new and open ways (Dernikos, 2018, p. 27). As Rieser (2006) points to, “Prejudicial attitudes towards disabled people and indeed against all minority groups are not inherited. They are learned through contact with the prejudice and ignorance of others. Therefore, to challenge discrimination against disabled people, we must begin in our schools” (p. 138). Authentic texts about disability can include, as Rieser (2006) highlights, “images of disabled people that have complex personalities, are capable of a full range of emotions, being equal, sexual, in

loving relationships, desired, and as an ordinary part of life in all forms of representation” (p. 153). To conclude this chapter, the literature identifies the need for a critical disability studies framework that emphasizes attending to the lived realities and trauma of disability, while also emphasizing desire and value. Further, this chapter suggests that crip theory and a focus on temporalities can be a positive addition to this thesis to challenge chrononormativity. This chapter also stresses how fantasy can provide affective pedagogies of exposure within the upper primary EFL classroom but also challenge normative binaries in society. It is therefore necessary to explain the process and tools used when analyzing multimodal middle grade literature in order to examine how such texts can create and forge such pedagogies of exposure.

3 Overview of Research Methodology and Methods

In this chapter, I will present and justify the methodology and methods used in this thesis and give an overview of data collection. First, I will provide reasons for a qualitative approach and describe the intersectional methodology that has guided this thesis. Second, I will discuss the methods of analysis used to answer my research questions, namely multimodal analysis, and visual semiotic analysis. Third, I will provide an overview of my data collection process. Finally, I will offer some ethical considerations and reflections on my positioning, and the validity and reliability of the project.

3.1 Qualitative Research and Intersectional Methodology

Choosing a qualitative approach in this thesis has allowed me to develop an in-depth understanding of what I am studying and provide details about my research questions (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2018, p. 275). According to Croker (2009), analyzing qualitative data means thinking about and exploring what one knows, look for patterns, and try to develop a complex understanding of the research context (p. 3). Because I wanted to study intersectional representations of disability, it was crucial for me to understand the entanglement of categories such as race, disability, sexuality, and gender. This requires me, as a researcher, to interact with the various multimodal texts I have chosen, which highlights another aspect of qualitative research: the researcher serves as a key instrument in the research, and that the answers the researcher comes up with are shaped by their view of the world (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2018; Croker, 2009). This is also why it is continually important for this thesis to explore my own positionality as a researcher.

In educational research such as this, it is critical not to be one-dimensional, but to expand the use of analytic categories to capture the complexity of peoples' circumstances and identities (Tefera et al., 2018). Therefore, the methodology chosen for this thesis is necessarily intersectional. Methodology can be defined as "a coherent set of ideas about the philosophy, methods, and data that underlie the research process and the production of knowledge" (McCall, 2005, p. 1774). This means that the methodology chosen is not just a navigational tool for analysis but rather a foundation for the overall research perspective. Thus, using a particular type of methodology will change the knowledge produced within the research (McCall, 2005, p. 1775). Intersectionality as methodology in qualitative research functions to create open-ended conversation and creative writing strategies (Davis, 2014, p. 27). Specifically, it stands as an appropriate methodology to examine how the categories of disability, race, and/or other axes of differentiation are interwoven and mutually constituted (Davis, 2014, p. 18). One of the criticisms of intersectionality is that it can seem like a vague concept or idea that is difficult to measure accurately (Tefera et al., 2018, p. xiv). However, when using intersectionality as a methodology, the goal is not to create an easy way to monitor research, but to raise new questions, stimulate curiosity and creativity, and critically engage with previously held assumptions (Davis, 2014, p. 21). This means that intersectionality interacts with all

aspects of this study, both in its theoretical framework, in thinking, in analyzing data, reading, writing, and discussing.

As an academic term, intersectionality is mostly credited to legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991) who, talking about Black women and women of color, explained the dangers of understanding someone's identity as an either/or, because this can result in Black women being marginalized within both gender and race (p. 1242). Since intersectionality has such a long history within this field, it has been criticized for focusing too narrowly on issues of identity and the experiences of women of color (Tefera et al., 2018, p. viii, ix). However, intersectionality only starts with identity and allows researchers to use the concept as a framework to consider the different ways in which intersecting social dynamics affect people within and between groups (Tefera et al., 2018, p. ix). Garland-Thomson (2017) examines how looking at disability intersectionally means to "move disability from the realm of medicine into that of political minorities, to recast it from a form of pathology to a form of ethnicity" (p. 6). She further compares social meanings attributed to women's bodies and those assigned to disabled bodies, examining how both are cast as deviant and inferior, excluded from full participation in public and economic life, and both are defined in opposition to a norm (Garland-Thomson, 2017, p. 19). Lutz (2015) introduces the term "doing intersectionality" (p. 41), explaining how one investigates diversity in the context of power relations and analyze in detail what specific aspects of all possible identities create unequal identities. With this understanding, the study I conduct is one way of *doing intersectionality* as my research may start with disability, but further understands that disability cannot be treated as a stand-alone category and is always and everywhere related to other differences (Davis, 2014, p. 23). In summary, combining a qualitative approach in education with an intersectional methodology has allowed me to focus on meaning and report the complexity of my materials by seeing how different categories intersect and interact with disability, while being attentive to the educational contexts and realities of the EFL classroom.

Davis (2014) asks the question "how does one actually go about thinking intersectionally?" (p. 19). Tefera et al. (2018) further explain how to engage with intersectionality, the research needs to explain the ways that different aspects of identity shape both power and inequality in both social space and personal identities (p. viii). Using feminism as a starting point, Garland-Thomson (2017) highlights how the conflicting and complex aims of politicizing the materiality of bodies and rewriting the category of woman combine the kinds of methods that should also apply to examinations of disability (p. 21). Hence, intersectionality looks at both the individual identities, but also the social dynamics within that group, because it is in social groups that our identities are shaped. Importantly for this study, intersectionality is not something that needs to be explored only on the level of the text or the analysis, discussion, or theory, but also of the researcher (Lutz, 2015, p. 41). Thus, I have examined my own research position, not just as different standalone categories of white, able-bodied cis female, but more about how these differences within me, and between me and the texts that I read, constitute part of how I analyze and interpret the world (Lutz, 2015, p. 41). Additionally, it also means to consider how the authors I examine in this thesis also write intersectionally.

3.2 Research Methods

Multimodal texts utilize a variety of cultural and semiotic resources, and the different design elements, visual images, and written language work in various ways to convey meaning and communicate information through the use of these resources (Serafini, 2014, p. 12-15). In this study, I have deemed it essential to analyze the semiotic signs of the multimodal literature in order to understand how disability is intersectionally represented in the texts, and to investigate how fantasy literature can contribute to the development of an affective pedagogy of exposure for upper primary EFL learners. To do this, I have applied multimodal analysis and visual semiotic analysis to this thesis. The two methods of analysis are further explained below.

3.2.1 Multimodal Analysis

There are several definitions of what *mode* means, but most imply that a mode operates within social and cultural understandings of possible ways to make sense (Hassett, 2016, p. 133). Examples include written text, photos, paintings, gestures, moving images, or illustrations (Serafini, 2014; Skulstad, 2018). Award-winning author, educator, and illustrator Frank Serafini (2014) states that for a text to be multimodal, it must be composed of two or more modes. Skulstad (2018), in turn, claims that monomodal texts do not really exist, explaining how even in written text, there is always modes of typography, color, and layout (p. 257). In addition to understanding what different modes mean, it is also important to emphasize that the term *multimodal texts* here is understood in a broad sense to refer to any combination of modes whether that is a website, a graphic novel, a textbook, a picture book, or an audiovisual story (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020; Serafini, 2014). Essential to multimodal analysis is the fact that during the process of collecting and analyzing data, one looks at how the different modes work together to create meaning potentials (Serafini, 2014, p. 16), which entails viewing the data several times, being engaged with it, and asking questions such as what would happen if the reader was not able to see the images, or if the text was different or not there at all. Doing multimodal analysis of intersectional texts also involves seeing if and how intersecting identities *and* modes interact and find the spaces where conversation can be made and questions can be asked, together with where power relations and ideologies become manifest (Bezemer & Jewitt, 2010, p. 186-7).

According to Serafini (2014), multimodal analysis entails researching not only what we pay attention to, but also what we do not pay attention to (p. 31). This thinking stems from the work of art critic, painter, and poet John Berger (1972), who talked about the difference between seeing and looking: "we only see what we look at [...] [and] we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves" (p. 1). More recent scholars such as Rose (2016) similarly distinguish between *vision*, which is what we see, and *visuality*, that additionally focuses on what we are allowed to see, including blind spots or what is hidden from us (p. 6). In other words, who we are as people, how we are raised, brought up, essentially programmed - causes us to accept, pay attention to and reject different images (Berger, 1972; Perkins, 1994; Rose, 2016; Serafini, 2014). David Perkins (1994), an art and cognitive development researcher, points to how by only seeing, the eye can overlook critical objections or miss connections: "the eye can be wrong" (p. 26). It is also important to question this understanding of visual perception and awareness. Ways of seeing, as Berger (1972) explores, also encompass other ways of perceiving the world through different senses, as not everyone rely on seeing or looking at all such as blind people. Especially amongst young learners, they tend to focus

on content and need assistance in seeing “the iceberg of the invisible” (Perkins, 1994, p. 32). In the context of my thesis, this critical genealogy has allowed me to consider what it means to look for what is hidden, and to explore how the chosen multimodal texts can create meaning potentials that may have been overlooked. This can also open spaces for intersectional representations of disability that can function as pedagogies of exposure, following Dernikos (2018). She explains how these kinds of pedagogies consider classrooms texts and how they promote either inclusion or exclusion of pupils, with a focus on how texts can actually inflict trauma on pupils, or alternatively a positive pedagogy of exposure to include disabled people and intersectional representations.

Serafini (2014) draws upon several important terms connected to multimodal analysis, but the one that I find especially important for this study is his use of *ideology*, which connects to this analysis in the sense that interpretation is commonly created based on not only who we are as people, but also of mainstream cultural meanings and dominant ways of understanding the world (Serafini, 2014, p. 38-39). In other words, ideology describes how representations often reflect the systems of power that already exist in the world, meaning that those who are oppressed stay oppressed in the representations around us (Rose, 2016, p. 107). However, essential to ideology is that these meanings or understandings can be renegotiated, called into question, and challenged. These become not *dominant* ideas, but rather *oppositional* (Serafini, 2014, p. 39). bell hooks (1992) coined the term oppositional gaze in film studies, claiming that viewers could critically assess the constructions they were exposed to of normative categories of whiteness and other norms (p. 122). In order to achieve such an oppositional gaze and resistance, viewers and readers must understand and be aware of the politics of minoritized identities (hooks, 1992, p. 127). In the context of this study, this can show that authors are doing work to create literature that does not recreate dominant ideas, but rather tries to challenge them, and that through the right work in the classrooms, teachers can also aid pupils as we try to turn the dominant ideas into oppositional ones (hooks, 1992; Serafini, 2014).

3.2.2 Visual Semiotic Analysis

The term semiotics can be defined as the study of *signs* (Rose, 2016; Serafini, 2014), and it encompasses drawings, pictures, paintings, words, illustrations, and photographs (Hassett, 2016, p. 136; Serafini, 2014). Rose (2016) states that “semiology [semiotics] offer a very full box of analytical tools for taking an image apart and tracing how it works in relation to broader systems of meaning” (p. 106). It is thus suitable to apply a visual semiotic analysis to this study to answer my research questions, especially since I am working with contemporary multimodal middle grade literature. With the impact of the social sciences, the definition of semiotics, or *social semiotics*, has evolved to put emphasis on how signs change meaning over time (Berger, 1972, p. 1), and have different meaning to different people (Perkins, 1994; Serafini, 2014). Just as with multimodal texts, our interpretation and understanding of the signs depend on who we are as people. Similar to ideology, it emphasizes how representation and interpretation are dependent on the society we live in, and the major cultural ideas that surround us.

Visual semiotic analysis looks at the way the different signs express meaning through an image, and it does so by looking at both the *compositional* modality of the image, which entails visual and textual elements, and the *social* modality (Rose, 2016, p. 107, 109). This analytical practice can “open our eyes and ears and other senses for the richness and complexity of semiotic production and interpretation, and to social intervention [...]” (van Leeuwen, 2005, p. xi). As Perkins (1994) further contends,

looking for visions of materials is not about figuring out the artist's technical tricks with composition or lines, but rather to dig deeper for features that the author meant for us to find, or to look at "what awaits us in the work, what invites our attention and our responses" (p. 37). Connected to Serafini's (2014) terms, the chosen texts in this thesis can become spaces of oppositional ideas, rather than dominant ones (p. 39), and potentially function as enacting pedagogies of exposure (Dernikos, 2018).

One of the limitations of these methods of analysis is their focus on vision and seeing, which, when seen from a critical disability studies perspective, can be problematic because graphic novels are not necessarily accessible to all readers (Athon, 2022). Another issue can be the reading of the written text in multimodal works. For instance, students with dyslexia or other reading difficulties can struggle to read speech bubbles or words that are spread across the pages, which can cause difficulties when reading graphic novels and other multimodal texts. Sometimes the fonts of multimodal texts are different and more difficult to interpret for someone with dyslexia. However, what critical disability studies also show is that there are other ways of interpreting the world than through the eye, and theories on affect show how it is not just pictures and words that affect us, but the entire embodied experience of reading texts. Reading is not just about seeing, but rather feeling, affecting, and being affected. It is thus still important to consider the fact that graphic novels can function as an opportune medium to discuss subjects of disability, race, class, or gender differences (Athon, 2022), while also contemplating whether or how it can also be an accessible medium for all readers.

3.3 Overview of Data Collection

According to Robin Brenner (2011), the format of graphic novels, and I would argue all multimodal texts as the term is applied in this study, appeals to a broad range of readers, especially those who are visual learners (p. 263). Young learners instinctively have a better grasp of reading multimodal texts due to their world being filled with media that "breaks apart and integrates text and images in new ways, from television and film to the Internet to video games" (Alverson, 2018; Brenner, 2011). The format also appeals in itself to the joy of reading texts and reels it together with the emotional connections of images, functioning as a unique way of both telling and receiving stories (Brenner, 2011, p. 257). In particular, multimodal literature is important because pictures and text together in books create excitement and constant tension between the moments and rhythm of pictures and words combined (Nodelman as cited in Høyrup, 2017, p. 86). Also, multimodality produces several meanings pointing in different directions, held together by the "text" or work in which we find it (Høyrup, 2017, p. 87). In turn, graphic novels and multimodal texts are very relevant to upper primary EFL pupils, and choosing literature for this thesis has thus consisted of finding multimodal literature that can appeal to this age group.

Selecting the corpus for this thesis has consisted of finding multimodal, middle grade fantasy books that in some way represent disability intersectionally⁶. As an able-bodied, white cisgender woman writing about the representation of disability intersectionally, it has been important to choose literature that not only ensures a diversity within the characters of the books themselves, but also to include diverse authors and illustrators. Therefore, the chosen literature for this thesis consists of

⁶ I have also developed and added a short Appendix at the very end of the thesis that incorporates other young adult and middle grade multimodal fantasy books with intersectional representations of disability to consider for the EFL Classroom

contemporary authors situated across a range of different abilities, national affiliations, gender, and racial identities. Representation of disabled characters is still not adequate, meaning they are not on par with population statistics (Schalk, 2020b, p. 138). As I describe in detail below, the authors I have chosen are thus writers who have been part of the recent years of development in middle grade multimodal literature by changing understandings of disability and intersectional categories through personal and secondhand experiences.

3.3.1 Selected Corpus

The first book chosen for this thesis is *Secrets of Camp Whatever* (2021), by American writer and illustrator Chris Grine (he/him). The graphic novel introduces eleven-year-old Willow, a deaf biracial girl who goes to a mysterious camp with suspected vampires, missing campers and a sinister fog that hides a generation of secrets. In an interview from 2021, Grine explains he was inspired by his nephew who was born with hearing loss and uses a hearing aid, like the main character of the book (Alverson, 2021). In addition, the book includes a multi-racial cast of secondary characters, as illustrated by Willow's friends at camp. The second book I chose is *Tea Dragon Society* (2017), by New Zealand author and illustrator Kay O'Neill (they/them), which tells the story of a young blacksmith apprentice who learns about the art of raising Tea Dragons. The comic includes a multi-racial cast of characters, a queer couple, and a disabled character who is a wheelchair user. These narratives are wrapped in a magical world of different creatures and fantastical elements. The third book chosen for this thesis' analysis is *The Secret of Haven Point* (2022) by Lisette Auton (she/her). Her work includes several disabled heroes with discussion about acceptance and inclusion, wrapped in a universe of mermaids and a magical storyline. Auton defines herself on her own website as follows: a "disabled writer, activist, poet, novelist, spoken-word artist, actor, film & theatre-maker and creative practitioner; some say word-artist, I say I do stuff with words" (para. 4). There are several illustrators of the novel but most of the illustrations are by Valentina Toro (she/her), who is a disabled illustrator and children's book writer from Colombia. The map of Haven Point and drawing of Old Ben the Lighthouse is by English illustrator Luke Ashforth (he/him).

What these three multimodal texts have in common is that they represent a variety of different disabilities and intersecting minoritized categories and identities. The books' different ways of using the multimodal genre further allow for upper primary pupils of the EFL classroom to identify with the narratives in various fantasy and magical worlds. In doing so, these books facilitate affective experiences within the space of the classroom and heighten pupils' understanding of disability and other intersecting identities in line with the core values of education, thus potentially forging pedagogies of exposure (Dernikos, 2018).

3.4 Ethical Considerations, Validity and Reliability of Project

Seeing as qualitative research is an interpretive process where the researcher is the primary research instrument (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2018), the last part of this chapter will discuss the different ethical considerations, validity, and reliability/trustworthiness of the project. Ethics become especially central to this thesis given the critical disability framework and intersectional methodology employed. The term *reliability* often refers to the extent to which research can be replicated. However, in qualitative research it is more relevant to talk about trustworthiness in connection to reliability rather than replication (Merriam & Grenier, 2019, p. 27). Croker (2009)

emphasizes how qualitative research is a form of *exploratory* research which does not seek to predict what will happen in the future or to generalize findings to other contexts, but rather to discover new ideas and insights (p. 9). In my view, it is not a weakness, but rather a strength that qualitative research is as descriptive as it is, which makes it easier for the individual reader to consider whether or not the features of the research are of relevance to them and their own context (Croker, 2009; Merriam & Grenier, 2019). One tool to ensure that readers can trust qualitative research is that there needs to be a strong theoretical framework that guides the study, and a strong correlation between the different elements of the research (Croker, 2009, p. 9). For my study, that means to show that my methodology and methods of analysis correlate with what I seek to answer, which I have explored through the intersectional methodology and theory on critical disability studies and affect studies in education.

According to Merriam and Grenier (2019), validity in research concerns the extent to which findings match reality, which further entails examining my own position as a researcher in connection to what I am studying (Cariou, 2020; Heigham & Croker, 2009; Lutz, 2015; Merriam & Grenier, 2019). In research, there is often an ethical dimension and problematic power dynamics of subject/object, oppressor/oppressed, and majority/minoritized. Historically, disabled people have been the object of research, and as such their realities have been defined and created by others, and their histories have been named in ways that define their relationship to those who are subjects (hooks, 1989, p. 43). In this thesis, I have already mentioned how one ethical strategy that I have utilized is to cite experts on the field with lived experiences of disability. By centering disabled activists and theorists as those who narrate the research story, I hope to turn the idea of disabled people as objects of research around, and ensure disabled people are subjects of the research, rather than objects: "As subjects, people have the right to define their own reality, establish their own identities, name their history" (hooks, 1989, p. 42). Continuing to consider my own position and role as an able-bodied researcher writing about a community from an outsider's perspective, I here follow hooks (1989) who highlights the importance of exploring privilege, motivation, and why a researcher feels that their perspective is important (p. 44). In this thesis, I hope that my explorations of these topics can strengthen the validity of the research and ensure that this study does not reinforce or perpetuate authority, but rather that it proves how "Learning about other groups and writing about what we learn can be a way to unlearn racism, to challenge structures of domination" (hooks, 1989, p. 46).

4 Analysis and Discussion of Research Findings

The following section will provide the analysis and discussion of research findings. The analysis is conducted using the previously explored methods of multimodal analysis and visual semiotic analysis. Additionally, the intersectional methodology applied will also underlie the results of the analysis. I have decided to combine the analysis results with the discussion as the two parts are intimately intertwined when analyzing multimodal works such as these. To enact pedagogies of exposure where traumatic violence might be present ultimately means to create literacy environments where healing and possibilities for recovery are also present (Dernikos, 2018, p. 14). The goal of the analysis and discussion is therefore to show desire and opportunity rather than the reproduction of damage-centered research (Tuck, 2009).

4.1 *The Tea Dragon Society* by Kay O’Neill

The Tea Dragon Society (2017) by illustrator and writer Kay O’Neill is narrated in the 3rd-person singular and follows the story of Greta, a blacksmiths apprentice that finds and rescues a curious Tea Dragon. When returning the Tea Dagon to its home, Greta discovers that Tea Dragons have unique personalities, and that they have the ability to produce tea from the leaves on their horns. The work of O’Neill depicts diverse characters in many intersectional ways, and has a varied representation of disability, race, different sexualities, queerness, and ethnicities (Gillingham, 2018, p. 399). These stories are wrapped in a magical universe entwined with topics of friendship and family. Kay O’Neill uses the pronouns they/them, and through the graphic novel format, they continue filling the gap of missing representations of disability in middle grade literature. The unique combination of more-than-human characters, fantasy elements, and representations of intersectional minoritized categories can make readers question static beliefs and truths, and thus contribute to affective experiences within the upper primary EFL classroom, potentially forging pedagogies of exposure (Butler, 2004; Dernikos, 2018).

4.1.1 Love and Value within Traumatic Disability Memories

The Tea Dragon Society was chosen partially for its representation of a physical disability in one of its main characters. Erik is introduced in the novel when the protagonist Greta visits him after being invited by Heseziel, the caretaker of the Tea Dragons. The first image of Erik is a wide shot in a panel that covers 1/3rd of the page depicting him in his wheelchair (p. 23). Erik is also portrayed as Black, has long, brown hair, wears earring accessories, appears as sturdy and strong, and has some visible scars on his neck. Here, O’Neill is portraying disability in a way that does not retort to a stereotype or reproduce an overly medicalized focus. Additionally, Erik is also depicted outside of normative stereotypes of male appearance (e.g., has long hair, wears accessories recognized as feminine). The graphic novel eventually tells the story of how Erik and Heseziel met, and how Erik became disabled in a fight with a dragon that he and Heseziel took to earn a large bounty (pp. 43-45, see Appendices 1-3). Erik becomes badly hurt during the fight, where he is seen falling bloody and lifeless towards the

ground (p. 43, see Appendix 1). On the next page, Hesekeiel is sat at Erik's side, repeating his name with tears rolling down his face (p. 44, see Appendix 2). Transporting the reader to sometime later, Erik is depicted in a wheelchair and has a hurt look on his face as he says "...This isn't what you signed up for [...] You shouldn't have to give up exploring and adventure because of me. You loved that" (p. 45, see Appendix 3). Here, Erik's sorrow makes him see himself as a burden to Hesekeiel, to which Hesekeiel answers: "I signed up to fight by your side. To treat your wounds, to never abandon you [...] It was never the adventure that I loved" (p. 45, see appendix 3). This scene depicts true and powerful emotions, through Hesekeiel's tearful reaction to Erik being hurt, and Erik feeling like a burden to Hesekeiel after his accident, questioning their relationship. However as this is a memory, Erik and Hesekeiel reminisce about this moment in the past in a cheerful way, emphasizing how what happened to them has created a new adventure for their life.

The Tea Dragon Society hence shows both the reality of pain and disappointment of the future Erik thought he would live, while also showing the ability to adapt both his own view, and the way Hesekeiel and Erik adjust their lives together. As emphasized in Chapter 2, neither the medical nor the social model of disability can address the lived reality of being disabled (Kafer, 2013; Sweed, 2020). By telling a tragic story of loss, O'Neill manages to show the wonders of care and acceptance without reproducing victimization. Furthermore, the present lives of Erik and Hesekeiel are not portrayed as ruined or missing because of Erik's disability. Rather, Erik is presented just as strong, knowledgeable, and important. Thus, O'Neill manages to show how one can experience trauma, while simultaneously presenting disability as valuable and integral (Kafer, 2013). As his partner, Hesekeiel also emphasizes how Erik is just as desirable to him now, as he was before his accident. Intersecting with Erik's identity as disabled is thus his experience as a queer character in an interracial relationship with Hesekeiel. In an analysis of *Princess Princess Ever After* by Kay O'Neill, Gillingham (2018) emphasizes how O'Neill uses roses to indicate desire and love between the two main female characters (p. 395). O'Neill also uses flowers as symbolic in *The Tea Dragon Society* to indicate what is blossoming and growing between Hesekeiel and Erik. In the depiction of Hesekeiel and Erik's first meeting, there is a close-up shot of them shaking hands at an eye-level framing (p. 41, see Appendix 4). The reader is observing the narrative where they are centered in the panel, and the placing of their hands can symbolize the centering of their marginalized identities as being queer. The next page is illustrated by silent panels, and rather than being divided by traditional panel-to-panel transitions, the panels are divided by a yellow thread of time (p. 42, see Appendix 5). Silent panels like these give the feeling of suspended time which "may linger in the reader's mind" (McCloud, 1994, pp. 102-103). The panels of the memories that the Tea Dragons and their owner share are also longer, which can indicate the feeling of greater length and time (McCloud, 1994, p. 101). In the bottom panel, Erik and Hesekeiel are seen in a closed embrace at eye-level framing, surrounded by flowers (p. 42, see Appendix 5). This image is mirroring the panel from the page before of their hands shaking, once again centering their queerness. Thus, O'Neill introduces intersectional representation of a disabled, Black man in an adult same-sex interracial relationship. Additionally, this depiction become even more complex since Hesekeiel is anthropomorphized, and thus O'Neill is inviting readers to consider a world where the value of human/animals are questioned. Working with texts such as these can speak to the relevance and central values of English in Norwegian schools that state how the English subject shall allow pupils to experience different ways of living and ways of thinking (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020, p. 2). To

depict queerness and disability as *The Tea Dragon Society* does can further be a way of simultaneously challenging beliefs of queer and crip time, but also a way of introducing realities that are recognizable in society (Ahmed, 2014, p. 144).

O'Neill is experimenting with time and temporality in different ways, challenging believed notions of chrononormativity, where disability, gender, or sexuality are problematically presented as static truths of being (Freeman, 2010, p. 3-4). The story revolves around the four seasons of a year, moving through autumn, winter, spring, summer, and an epilogue. The structure of the seasons creates a circular effect through the phases of a year, mirroring how the year will always return to the same place, rather than a linear timeline. Visually, each season begins with the title of the chapter, what season it is, and a circular illustration of one or more Tea Dragons (pp. 5, 19, 33, 49), thus repeating and visualizing this effect of circular time. Wälivaara (2022) explores normative ideas of time as linear, focusing on structure, development, and progression (p. 239). However, moving through the different seasons such as *The Tea Dragon Society* does, the graphic novel is creating time as a circular road of movement rather than linear or static. In the setting of *spring* in the book, for example, Greta explains how Hesekiel invited her to learn more about Tea Dragons, but that she thought she was too late to accept the offer (p. 21). Greta's mother answers: "Hesekiel is not like humans and goblins. He will live on for more than twice our lifespan. And Hesekiel himself is one who values patience in all things. I think he would barely notice your hesitation" (p. 22). Here, O'Neill is explicitly creating conversations about time, exploring how it can move otherwise for two different individuals. *The Tea Dragon Society* is hence making familiar crip and queer temporalities that do not follow a set type of moving in time, but rather emphasize taking time. Additionally, the queer representation of Erik and Hesekiel challenges chrononormative ideas of same-sex marriage and reproduction. Thinking about upper primary students as audience of this novel, reading about these explicit and implicit explorations of time exposes them to different temporalities that move away from chrononormativity, representing the lived realities of queer and crip time.

Literature that breaks with normative ideas of time can further disrupt knowledge and create an affective response that is implicit or even unnoticed by the pupils (Stewart, 2007; Watkins, 2010). Affective responses to literature can include moments of recognition or confusion of what the reader knows as truths (Stewart, 2007). O'Neill's novel does this through disrupting the reader from normative ways of reading literature and graphic novels. The novel is introduced by the words "Once upon a time, blacksmiths were as important as magicians" (p. 7, see Appendix 6), which creates connotations to familial tropes of fairy tales and children's adventures. However, O'Neill's graphic novel simultaneously breaks with expectations of traditional text and graphic novel reading by starting off with its introductory sentence with a frameless panel at the top middle of the page. There are also two identical panels on each side and one below this initial frameless panel, leaving no indication as to what the next panel would be to read, so the reader has to decide that for themselves. Throughout the novel, there are several spaces where the reader is interrupted in the usual way of reading and drawn into different parts of the page. When we read in traditional ways from left to right, each sequence or panel occupies a distinct time slot (McCloud, 1994, p. 97). However, multimodal narratives that disrupt the natural left-to-right and up-down reading such as *The Tea Dragon Society* does can, according to Dolmage and Jacobs (2016), physically reveal across panels "that disability *takes time*, doesn't move easily toward resolution, accommodation, cure, or rehabilitation" (p. 22). The exploration of time in *The Tea Dragon Society* thus allows

readers to imagine a world different to their own, which is also heightened by the fantasy genre that O'Neill's work honors.

4.1.2 Challenging Normativity: Compassion and More-Than-Human Depictions

The fantasy genre speaks back to realism by embracing dreams, imaginations, and possibilities that are obscured in "real life" (Ferreday, 2012, p. 86). Erik's partner Hesekiel is depicted as a more-than-human character, which can be a way of undoing categories of what is seen as normal (Schalk, 2020b, p. 140). Hesekiel appears as an anthropomorphized animal with human characteristics, thoughts, and feelings. He also wears clothes and accessories that can be recognized as belonging to a human as can be seen in the middle right panel of the page (p. 41, see Appendix 4). Similarly, the character of Minette also offers a perspective on this more-than-human breaking of binaries. Minette is drawn with pink hair, a blue and purple dress, antlers, has hooves for legs, and some distinct marks on her cheeks (p. 29 & 30, see Appendices 7 & 8). This depiction can be compared to what Ferreday (2012) names as the hybrid subject of human/deer mixture, which is a way to "queer the human/nonhuman binary through practices of nonhuman cross-dressing and performance [...]" (p. 88). The human/deer depiction is recognized as a non-violent narrative that can be associated with safety and care (Ferreday, 2012, p. 88). Similar to Hesekiel, this more-than-human depiction entwines the aspect of intersectionality into fantasy depictions, representing Minette as different to the unstable nature of what it means to be human (Schalk, 2018, p. 116). In turn, these narratives can challenge the constraints of chrononormativity by making readers question what counts as human as opposed to reliving positions of gender, race, or sexuality as static truths of being (Freeman, 2010). Questioning what it means to be human through Hesekiel and Minette can further challenge structured lifelines as progressive and linear by breaking expectations of what one is expected to do within normative time (Wälivaara, 2022).

In addition to challenging what is recognizable as human, more-than-human characters also challenge what belongs within the human-based categories of disability, race, gender, and sexuality (Schalk, 2018, p. 115). Although no definite definition of disability can exist, Garland-Thomson (2017) emphasizes mental illnesses, and temporary and permanent injuries (p. 13). Therefore, I interpret Minette's experience with memory loss, burnout, and short-term memory issues as a disability in the text, and I believe Minette offers an important representation that combines intersectional identities of belonging and mental disability. Minette admits that she has never been outside the tea shop before because she is scared that she will "forget the way back" (p. 29, see Appendix 7). Greta curiously and cautiously asks "Forget?", which leads Minette to tell the story of how her gift of seeing into the future caused her mind to erase every memory she had because of burnout (pp. 29-31, see Appendices 7-9). Minette's retelling of her past is introduced by a frameless wide shot of the monastery where she used to live, establishing the setting and context for the memory (p. 30, see Appendix 8). Panels that establish the setting of a scene like this can "set the mood or a sense of place for whole scenes through their lingering timeless presence" (McCloud, 1994, p. 103). In the middle panel, a look of uncertainty and sorrow can be seen on Minette's face. In her expression, a reader may feel her fear, sadness, and uncertainty. According to Ahmed (2014), fear is an unpleasant form of intensity that relates to the future, of an anticipation of hurt or injury (p. 65). In the last panel, which covers the entire lower page, the spell and power of Minette is breaking, and the people around her have

shocked expressions on their faces. The first top panel of page 31 shows a high angle, close-up shot of Minette's hands and a broken bowl beneath her (see Appendix 9). The high angle can signal Minette's loss of power and a sense of having taken on too much, and the close-up of her hands and the broken bowl brings these objects and their emotions into focus without having a clear picture of Minette's expression. Having fallen to her knees, she is in a position of vulnerability. Children often become emotionally involved in the narratives they read by engaging affectively with them (Hodges, 2010), especially in visual works (Joy, 2021). Thus, in anticipation of what is to come, upper primary pupils reading this book might sense the affects that circulate in Minette's story such as fear and sadness. They can connect and recognize these emotions, and thus the reading can become an affective and shared experience.

Being scared or fearing something, such as Minette's fear of going out and forgetting her way back, can shrink and restrict bodily mobility in social space (Ahmed, 2014, p. 64). Minette's experience of trauma and loss is explained as affecting her also in the present: "Even now, I forget stuff easily. When you said, 'Hey, again,' yesterday, I had already forgotten that we had met before. It's embarrassing. And scary" (p. 31, see Appendix 9). Minette's experiences are disruptions of her life activities, as they have led her to run away from home and stay closed off from people for months. Multimodal depictions such as these can thus illustrate how anxiety, fear, and uncertainty may restrict someone from doing something. This affective experience in disability depictions simultaneously illustrates the feeling of restriction that many minoritized pupils experience in school as well, such as queer people having to avoid public displays of intimacy (Ahmed, 2014, p. 149), or disabled people having to use humor or entertainment to relieve nondisabled people of their discomfort (Garland-Thomson, 2017, p. 13). It can also demonstrate how minoritized pupils will experience restriction if they are not able to find their maps or mirrors in the literature. This lack of movement can cause minoritized pupils to become "others" that do not belong (Dernikos, 2018). Children in the upper primary years of education in Norway are largely concerned with issues of identity, fitting in, and figuring out who they are and what they want to do (Høyrup, 2017; Myers, 2014). The characters of both Minette and Erik can function as offering complex representations for disabled children in Norwegian EFL classrooms, showing different aspects of being disabled and belonging to other minoritized intersectional categories.

The two different stories of disability told in *The Tea Dragon Society* and their possible affective responses can further illustrate care and compassion. Erik and Hesekeiel emphasize that they are sharing their memory with Greta, as they have grown to trust her and want to show her the memories between their Tea Dragon and themselves. I believe it is important that the graphic novel emphasizes how Erik and Hesekeiel wait to show their memory to Greta, as it highlights an important issue that critical disability studies are concerned with. Disabled scholar Clare (2017) mentions how physically disabled people are often questioned about what is wrong with them or what their accident is (p. 151-152). Kafer (2013) similarly explores how her "future is written on [her] body" (p. 1). Within this notion, Greta's reaction to Minette's story and Hesekeiel's reaction to Erik's trauma and ability to care for their friend and partner is also important. Schalk (2018) explains how marginalized individuals are often accused of overreacting or being sensitive when they share experiences with oppression (p. 65). I would argue that *The Tea Dragon Society* is representing a perspective that signals how disability is never something that has to be enclosed or explained. Reading this moment with the upper

primary EFL pupils can help them see a caring and compassionate view on disability where they can become aware of ways of living and temporalities unlike their own. The depictions of friendship, relationships and care challenge stereotypical depictions as the characters show care in emotional and supportive ways.

Ahmed (2010) highlights how affects can have the ability to leap from one body to another, evoking tenderness, shame, rage, or other affects. However, this does not mean that affect has passed from one body to another, but rather that it leaves the opportunity to be affected in such sense (p. 36). All pupils, however, may not experience these emotions or affects. If a pupil recognizes themselves in one of the characters, these representations may not be authentic or realistic to them. As an able-bodied researcher, I cannot speak to the lived reality of being disabled. The author Kay O'Neill is also not disabled, and therefore it is impossible to define these representations as authentic or not. However, I believe that reading these texts within the EFL classroom can highlight the dynamic experiences of being disabled, queer, or otherwise minoritized. This is also consistent with the social model of disability and especially of critical disability studies that emphasizes the need to see how society can be accessible and create different relations to disability (Kafer, 2013, p. 12). Disability or other minoritized intersectional identities are not standalone categories but rather dynamic and affected by aspects such as memories, trauma, and reactions to those. As English is a subject in Norwegian schools that is considered relevant to both cultural understanding and identity development, *The Tea Dragon Society* represents different identities that can both be recognized as similar and different to those of the pupils. In addition, fantasy encourages an ongoing questioning state of the reader, possibly creating less feelings of unauthentic representation because this genre is constantly situated somewhere between reality and fiction. In turn, these depictions become examples of characters living in non-normative time and explicit explorations of belonging to queer and crip temporalities.

Just as Kafer (2013) imagines a world where society can both be accessible *and* see disability as desirable, valuable, and integral (p. 9), I think that the intersectional representations of disability in *The Tea Dragon Society* show how disability is not a limit to life, but rather opens new opportunities. Rieser (2006) further emphasizes that images of disabled people should portray characters that have "complex personalities, are capable of a full range of emotions, being equal, sexual, in loving relationships, desires, and as an ordinary part of life in all forms of representation" (p. 153). An important aspect of this story is that O'Neill shows this without pretending that the story of disability itself is and has been traumatic, sad, and wounding as well. By depicting these images through more-than-human characters, pupils may understand how disability, race, gender, or sexuality are social constructions, which in turn can highlight the unstable nature of what it means to be human, and what it means to be recognized as disabled, Black, woman, and so on (Schalk, 2018, p. 116). It does so by creating and understanding the dynamic states of identity, rather than it being something static or definitive, and that what counts as these categories can be questioned. Thus, *The Tea Dragon Society* is opening up for affective responses to minoritized intersectional identities and disability, through depictions of trauma and violence, while simultaneously illustrating integral and positive lived experiences. In turn, these multimodal narratives of disability can do what Dernikos (2018) highlights as important to the development of pedagogies of exposure, where narratives expose readers to traumatic wounds, but also recovery.

4.2 *Secrets of Camp Whatever* by Chris Grine

In Chris Grine's (2021) fantasy graphic novel *Secrets of Camp Whatever*, the reader is introduced to the magical world of Camp Whatever. This unique place is a summer camp where the main character Willow is reluctantly sent after having moved to the town of Nowhere with her mother, father, and younger brother. Willow is deaf and uses a hearing aid, and her disability is introduced in the very first pages where her mother uses sign language because Willow has turned her hearing aids off in the car (p. 6-7). Willow is also cued as a biracial character, with a Spanish-speaking Latinx mother and White-appearing father. In the first pages, Willow's mother calls her son "mijo", and her husband "amor". Willow is a curious, adventurous, and fearless girl, and being deaf is only part of her identity. She never lets it hold her back or let anyone think any less of her, thus challenging medical models of disability where disabled children are often portrayed as "delightful", "innocent", or unable to be independent and confident (Michals & McTiernan, 2018, para. 2). *Secrets of Camp Whatever* exposes readers to uncomfortable, lived realities of ableism of disability, and offers opportunities for powerful affective experiences that can lead pupils to act towards compassion and care. As Campbell (2021) highlights, to look into ableism also means to think about other categories such as gender and sexuality (p. 14). When Mr. Tooter makes remarks about Willow the first time he meets her, he makes a point of stating that she has purple hair (p. 24, see Appendix 10). Through this, one can recognize that Mr. Tooter's ableism also connects to sexism, pointing directly towards Willow's appearance as a girl. Simultaneously, the novel is filled with other diverse humans, more-than-human characters, and other mythical and magical creatures and mysteries that make readers question assumptions and truths in the space of the fantasy graphic novel.

4.2.1 Disabling Ableism: Discomfort, Compassion and Care

Willow uses a hearing aid, which means she occupies a liminal space between disability and ability because her hearing loss can be partially remedied (Sweed, 2020, p. 193). The multimodal genre ensures a visual depiction of this which blurs the line between ability and disability to illustrate how even if she can hear, there are details of her disability present. Depicting this visually is consistent with the hybrid model of critical disability studies that centers around a reckoning of the lived reality of disability, while still portraying disabled narratives as characters who have positively imagined futures otherwise (Kafer, 2013). *Secrets of Camp Whatever* shows how Willow still has to navigate difficult aspects of her disability. During Willow's first meeting with the camp director Mr. Tooter, he is depicted talking about Willow to her father (p. 24, see Appendix 10). The two top panels of the page show a high-angle close-up of Mr. Tooter from behind, standing above Willow, conveying a feeling of powerlessness or overwhelm. These visual techniques indicate the position of power and knowledge that Mr. Tooter feels he is in. Rather than listening to Willow's father try to say that she can hear, he bends down to Willow and yells at her: "Welcome to camp, Willow. Your hair is purple" (p. 24, see Appendix 10). The speech bubbles and text are large and bold, suggesting volume and size, creating the feeling of being yelled at. This highlights the force of Mr. Tooter's ableist manner and signals his social and cultural beliefs (Campbell, 2021, p. 13). To read and experience scenes like this one can create moments where pupils themselves sense insecurity and feeling powerless, which can be both powerful and embodied (Ahmed, 2010; Stewart, 2007). Mr. Tooter is also bending down to speak to Willow, as one would do to a small child. The idea of infantilization that this powerlessness conveys has been a common trope within medical models of disability

representation, often stereotyped with lack of growth or eternal children (Michals & McTiernan, 2018, para. 2). The mistreatment from Mr. Tooter continues throughout the story, emphasizing how that makes Willow feel uncomfortable, angry, and sad in different situations. At the first night of camp, he makes a point of positioning Willow as “its very first deaf camper. [...] Now everyone be sure to speak louder so she can hear you better” (p. 59, see Appendix 11). In the two panels at the top, Mr. Tooter is once again drawn at a high angle, while Willow is depicted in a low angle shot, sitting at the ground. Willow’s facial expression reveals a mix of sadness and discomfort, while her expression at the bottom panel conveys anger and annoyance. The scene of Mr. Tooter yelling, infantilizing Willow, and refusing to listen to her father signals Willow’s forced entry into chrononormative time and medicalization. Thus, scenes like these can indicate the marks and trauma of being expected to bend and fit into normative temporalities.

It can be uncomfortable to constantly watch Willow being disabled by Mr. Tooter, creating a combination of feeling empathy for Willow and distance towards Mr. Tooter. Ahmed (2014) describes discomfort as “a feeling of disorientation: one’s body feels out of space, awkward, unsettled” (p. 148). A similar feeling that may appear is irritation or frustration, which are often followed by affects like bother, annoyance, and aggravation (Ngai, 2007, p. 181). To experience embodied reactions such as these when reading a book can lead pupils to understand the discomfort of not fitting into normative standards and being treated differently because of it. Both Ahmed (2014) and Garland-Thomson (2017) emphasize how normativity and comfort zones are only comfortable for those who can inhabit it. Thus, being discomfited, annoyed, and irritated can lead to moments where pupils notice something they may have been indifferent to before (Zembylas, 2020, p. 56). To notice such instances can mean the pupils are affected by them, noticing the sensations of feelings way before realizing the feelings themselves, forcing the pupils to recognize and acknowledge that discomfort (Shivario, 2016; Shouse, 2005). The ableism present in *Secrets of Camp Whatever* shows the trauma and reality that can follow being disabled. However, I would also argue that it might minimize the representation of disability as integral and valuable. In other words, depending upon ableist views to create Mr. Tooter as a villain can reinforce the idea that these are the treatments that await disabled people. Additionally, the fact that it is the authoritative caretaker that represents these views might reinforce the idea that Willow and her friends have to solve their own problems alone.

Nevertheless, the events where Willow falls out of normative time can foster positive affects, activating pupils’ empathy, compassion, and showing care. Compassion is a complex affect that has been heavily theorized from different perspectives. This thesis follows Berlant (2004), where she explores how compassion implies a social relationship between spectators and someone vulnerable (p. 1). This complex relationship does not just entail feeling for someone who suffers, but also includes obligations and responsibility (Berlant, 2004, p. 6). As affect is what makes feeling feel (Shouse, 2005, para. 5), it is the intensity of these embodied reactions that can lead pupils toward change. At around the middle of the story, Willow loses the replacement batteries of her hearing aid, and when she wakes up the next morning, the batteries of her hearing aid are dead. This is illustrated by showing speech bubbles with no text in them (p. 114-115, see Appendices 12 & 13). The characters are addressing Willow, but as she is not in the shots, this can make the reader feel more involved and as an active participant in the narrative such as the second and third panel of page 114 (see Appendix 12), and the middle right panel of page 115 (see Appendix 13). The reader is positioned in the same situation as Willow, having to rely on other expressions, not knowing what

someone is saying, but clearly seeing that something is being said. In the Theoretical Frameworks chapter, I discuss how affects often show up when we notice or pay attention to something (Stewart, 2007, p. 27), and that different emotions and feelings may follow the affective experience. The empty speech bubbles create a disruption from the ordinary and usual, and make the reader stop to consider what is happening. When the reader can sense themselves in the image and feel as part of the story, the text becomes an affective, embodied, and shared narrative between the character and the reader. As a character minoritized on different levels, Willow is moving through alternative temporalities. Mr. Tooter's ableism, the fellow campers' questions, the need to use sign language and reading lips suggest that Willow is always somewhat living in crip time. However, losing her hearing aid batteries signals that she is falling even more out of normative time, which is depicted explicitly through multimodal strategies. As highlighted by Pedwell (2014), empathy and compassion can foster the ability to envision someone else's worldview different to their own (p. 6-7). I also believe this emphasizes why it is important to look for affective moments within texts like these, as they are instances depicting the reorganization of what people may think, feel, and believe about disability and other intersecting categories (Pedwell, 2014, p. 1-2). As stressed in the core curriculum, experiencing "different expressions and traditions help [the pupils] form their identity. A good society is founded on the ideals of inclusiveness and diversity" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017, p. 7). Thus, affective experiences of empathy and compassion are highly linked with the curricular idea of inclusive pedagogies and identity development.

Additionally, compassion considers an ethical response to, for instance, an experience seen in a book: "Compassion is the capacity not to turn one's head away but to embrace a sense of obligation to remember one had seen and, in response to that haunting, to become involved [...]" (Berlant, 2004, p. 7). Readers may notice contrast between the empty speech bubbles and when Violet uses sign language at the bottom left panel, which causes the text to reappear (p. 114, see Appendix 12). Violet also attempts to cheer Willow up and uses sign language to explain what the others are saying at breakfast, which shows her compassion and care for Willow (p. 115, see Appendix 14). Similarly, when speaking to the Stump twins and Rand at camp, Rand makes a remark about them being rude for questioning if Willow's hearing aids gives her "super-human hearing" (p. 52), to which Willow replies: "I don't mind answering questions. I lost some of my hearing when I was six after I got really sick. But I can hear just fine now, as long as I have my ears—I mean, my hearing aids" (p. 52, see Appendix 14). Here, Rand is attempting to become involved rather than ignore that someone questions Willow's disability, and although she does in fact not mind that someone asks her questions, it shows the capacity to stay in the moment rather than turn away. In this sense it is also clear how Willow's compassion and care for others come to be, proving her to be an agent of these affective experiences of compassion and care. According to the core value relating to critical thinking and ethical awareness within the Norwegian core curriculum (2017), in order for new insights and change to emerge, "established ideas must be scrutinized and criticized using theories, methods, arguments, experiences and evidence" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017, p. 8). In turn, this can allow pupils to understand that their own experiences and convictions may be incomplete or erroneous. Chris Grine makes readers realize that something they may not have considered or experienced themselves is actually an action that minimizes certain identities. This realization and the affective experiences can create moments of awareness where readers understand what it means to show compassion and care for

disabled or otherwise minoritized identities. When critically assessing images like this, readers can develop an oppositional gaze (hooks, 1992) where they are able to understand and be aware of the politics that minoritize some individuals. In turn, dominant ideas might become oppositional ones (Serafini, 2014). The intersectional and multimodal representation of Willow in *Secrets of Camp Whatever* fosters empathy and compassion and, in doing so, it can work towards forging inclusive pedagogies of exposure, as Dernikos (2018) highlights. Through traumatic experiences of ableism, *Secrets of Camp Whatever* presents a view that shows how Willow is minoritized because of her disability. In turn, Willow is presented as willful and caring, portraying disability as integral and valuable as highlighted by Kafer (2013). However, present in many of these aspects is also the characters' focus on gender, as Mr. Tooter's ableism also speaks for his sexism towards Willow. Within the fantasy genre that this story exists, the different mythological and mysterious creatures can help undo gender binaries, as I will explain next.

4.2.2 Challenging Normativity: More-than-human Gender Expectations

For people who are minoritized on multiple levels, investigating intersectional representations of disability means to look at diversity in the context of power relations and analyze in detail what aspect of intersecting identities create unequal identities (Lutz, 2015, p. 41). Thinking of crip temporalities and creating depictions where characters are not cast out of time, *Secrets of Camp Whatever* transports readers into a world that makes them question their expectations through more-than-human characters within the fantasy genre. These characters can contest what and who counts as human, and thus challenge categories of gender and disability as well (Schalk, 2018, p. 115). One example is the character of Mr. Elric, who is first introduced as mysterious and suspicious. It is later revealed, however, that his appearance deceives readers' expectations. In a scene where they are attacked by bird-looking animals, they are suddenly defended by a large, mysterious creature (p. 139, see Appendix 15). At first, Willow and her friends are afraid, as can be seen from the look on their eyes at the bottom panel. They are depicted from a high angle, signaling their fear and powerlessness against the size of the creature. They start running away in a chaotic scene until Mr. Elric appears to calm them down and introduces them to the scary creature, which turns out to be a harmless beast named Thatch, also known as bigfoot (p. 145, see Appendix 16). Here, the illustration encloses the entire panel with an eye-level framing where Thatch is no longer depicted as daunting or scary, but rather seen clearly without shadow. This multimodal representation, which includes changing colors and angles, heightens the effect it has on the reader. As the main theoretical field of critical disability studies show, exploring disability representations urges us to question and be critical to the beliefs we have about disability and other intersecting minoritized categories. Through these depictions, assumptions are challenged, and I believe that this is an affective process of change that can also help readers and pupils interrogate their preconceived beliefs about disability or gender, opening their mind to being wrong, and to change.

Schalk (2020a) argues that characters that defamiliarize realist categories, such as Mr. Elric and Bigfoot in *Secrets of Camp Whatever*, draw upon aspects of recognizable social categories which can allude to multiple social systems of privilege and oppression, without necessarily being directly or exclusively about that category or concern (Schalk, 2020a, p. 141). Kurt and Rand, two brothers in the story, are revealed to be werewolves, which are creatures that "queer the boundaries of the human" (Ferreday, 2012, p. 88). Additionally, the werewolf can be defined as a figure whose violent transformation from

human to animal is held to embody the expression of an innate animal nature that has been repressed (Ferreday, 2012, p. 88). This can be seen when Willow and her friends become locked up in Mr. Tooter's office, and they meet Kurt whose hair has grown longer, and his clothes have been ripped apart by himself (p. 219). When Kurt has revealed himself as a werewolf, Violet questions why he has transformed when there was not a full moon, to which Kurt replies: "Hey, don't believe everything you see in movies" (p. 222, see Appendix 17). As the middle panel of the page shows, Kurt is saying this as he looks at Willow, who is facing Kurt, and her hearing aid is visible in the depiction. Disabled people have a long history of being stereotyped in literature and other media, and thus *Secrets of Camp Whatever* both challenges this notion via fantasy elements of werewolves and other mythical creatures, and through Willow herself who defies stereotypes regarding disability and gender. The visual technique of having Kurt look towards Willow as he says this, and her hearing aid being present, creates a connection between these two. Thus, this narrative can create possibilities to discuss stereotypes in literature and movies with the upper primary EFL classroom, turning pupils towards a critical disability studies perspective that both looks at realities of disability, social views, and accessibility. Additionally, these more-than-human depictions defy expectations, thus interrogating static truths about what it means to be human, which can further queer the binaries of gender, sexuality, and disability.

Additionally, the novel creates moments where temporalities and static truths of what it means to be disabled and female intersect. Willow does not follow stereotypical character traits of being a girl, as she appears unafraid, adventurous, and fearless, and wears typically less feminine clothing such as t-shirts, baggy pants, or shorts, and has purple hair. Additionally, Willow's demeanour also challenges Mr. Tooter's ableist view of disability as an undesirable condition. This is a narrative that is needed in literature, as Marshall (2021) writes that the majority of books that feature empowered heroines that challenge gender stereotypes often ignore other intersectional identities and reproduce whiteness as the norm (p. 83). In Dernikos' (2018) study, she found that reading literature that presented female heroines that were feminine in appearance made pupils equate being beautiful with of the ideas of wearing dresses, having long hair, and wearing make-up (p. 19-20). I would therefore argue that *Secrets of Camp Whatever* challenges these normative representations by presenting Willow as a biracial and disabled willful character who challenges stereotypes on different aspects. This exposure can help erase normative ideas of beauty, femininity, race, and disability.

Speaking out against violence, power, and injustice has an important space in feminism (Ahmed, 2014, p. 168). Thus, it is important to consider the moments where Willow is teased for not fitting into normative standards of what it means to be a girl. For instance, Kurt immediately becomes a bully towards Willow and her friends (p. 30-31). When Willow stands up for herself and her friends, Kurt says: "I don't hit disabled kids. It's bad luck or something", a comment which Willow clearly dislikes, mumbling "I'll disable your face" (p. 33). Later at lunch, Kurt and Willow once again start arguing, and Kurt says: "Okay, purple princess, that's it" (p. 55). During a short amount of time, Kurt is treating Willow as unequal both because she is disabled, and because she is a girl. This can create affects of what it might feel like to experience this and the reader might feel empathy or compassion towards Willow. This ableist and sexist view, similar to Mr. Tooter's ableist treatment, minimizes Willow and restricts her movements. It makes her occasionally draw in on herself in looks of sadness and hopelessness, as if she feels she has tried defending herself but getting nowhere. By analyzing and discussing Kurt's remark with the pupils, they can become aware of the ableist comments that disabled

people's experiences. Additionally, through the multimodal format, readers might sense the emotions connected to it as well by understanding facial expressions and the rhythm of the multimodal strategies. The core curriculum states that the schools need to "develop the pupils' ability to make ethical assessments and help them to be cognizant of ethical issues" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017, p. 8). Teachers and pupils can discuss what ethical issues might arise in moments like these, what someone's response would or should be, and what bystanders might do if they ever overhear something like that.

Therefore, it is also important to consider that *Secrets of Camp Whatever* is written by an able-bodied cis heterosexual man, and as readers it is interesting to reflect upon what might be missed when someone writes about minoritized identities to which they do not belong. In 2015, the hashtag #OwnVoices appeared to promote marginalized authors who were incorporating their own realities into their books (Raughley, 2021, para. 2)⁷. Chris Grine does not have lived experience with the concepts of gender violence, or especially gender violence towards intersectionally minoritized women. This can be sensed in the representation (or lack) of Indigenous characters in the story. This is a significant omission, since the campers are drawn making dreamcatchers in their arts and crafts-lesson, without giving meaning or credit to the source of why they are making it (p. 88). This can be problematic, as this reproduces misconceptions of Indigenous traditions, which can create a loss of important Indigenous language and culture (Peterson & Robinson, 2020, p. 8). Given that Grine is not Indigenous himself, one cannot be certain if he was aware of this when creating the illustrations. And yet, regardless of intentionality, the risk of appropriating Indigenous cultures is still present, which is something that can be discussed with upper primary EFL pupils. As Dernikos (2018) highlights, to not conceal past histories means to actively question how books transmit gendered or racialized messages (p. 26). Critically assessing these texts and issues can therefore aid the pupils in acquiring language and knowledge of culture and society in the upper primary EFL classroom (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020, p. 3).

4.3 *The Secret of Haven Point* by Lisette Auton

The multimodal novel *The Secret of Haven Point* (2022) by Lisette Auton, with illustrations by Valentina Toro and Luke Ashforth, tells the story of the magical and secret adventure of Haven Point. Both the author Lisette Auton and the illustrator Valentina Toro are disabled artists, like all the characters in the book. Haven Point is presented as a magical place where Wrecklings live and that is surrounded by the Boundaries where only disabled people can access. The book is written in the first-person singular, and the main character and narrator of the story is Alpha Lux, a brave and curious girl. Alpha retells the story of many of the different Wrecklings and mermaids that exist at Haven Point, describing their abilities and personalities alike. To explain how Haven Point came to be, Alpha describes how the first inhabitant of the place was Cap'n, who settled there because he wanted to wait for his sister who got lost at sea. In an attempt to bring her back, he made up songs that would both make him feel safe, and that could guide his sister home (Auton, 2022, p. 11). Alpha further describes the sea-magic of Cap'n's songs because they erased Haven Point from all maps, and created an invitation: "You see,

⁷ The term has since been coined because its parameters became dictated by publishers rather than diverse authors. The non-profit organization We Need Diverse Books now emphasizes using "specific descriptions that authors use for themselves and their characters" (Saughley, 2021, para. 4-5).

everyone who finds this place and becomes a Wreckling is disabled. If you're not, you're an Outsider, and no Outsider has ever made it past the Boundaries" (Auton, 2022, p. 12). *The Secret of Haven Point* draws perspectives where disabled and otherwise minoritized children can find their maps in the world unlike what they may have seen in literature before (Myers, 2014).

4.3.1 Value and Integrity in Disability

The Secret of Haven Point, unlike the other novels, starts off with a note from the author "on language", where Auton explains how she uses identity-first language in her book because that is how she defines herself and how her characters define themselves: "It means that I focus on the fact that I think my body and brain are brilliant exactly the way they are" (Auton, 2022, p. viii). This is a view that is present throughout the entire book. In the fantastical world that Auton has created, Haven Point has forty-two Wrecklings, a name they use because they go on *wreckings* to "lure and rob unsuspecting ships" (p. 24), but only from those with "a 'dodgy reputation'" (p. 45). Alpha describes the agency of where their name originated from: "When I arrived, Cap'n called me his little Wreckling, and it stuck. When we get to choose a name and make it ours? There's power in that. We're proud of us, what we do, who we are, our bodies and brains" (Auton, 2022, p. 45). In connection to the medical model of disability, disabled people have a history of being named and made decisions about by non-disabled people, until the civil rights movement led by disabled people, where they began advocating for themselves rather than having someone else make decisions about them (Rieser, 2006). This note from Auton and explicit explanation from the main character and narrator of the book shows this aspect of portraying disabled people with agency. Like the name Wrecklings in the book, the word "disabled" was claimed as a positive and strengthening term by disabled people (Adams et al., 2015). Auton thus manages to challenge the medical model of disability.

As the narrator of the story, Alpha narrates different aspects of various identities throughout, ranging from appearance, abilities, personality, interests, and talents. There is a constant description of what makes people similar or different, exploring identity in a way that leaves for a rich description of intersectional identities and disabilities. In her concept of *pedagogies of exposure*, Dernikos (2018) describes how literature should never conceal or hide past histories of violence, and thus she urges teachers to incorporate authentic texts that children can connect to in new and open ways (p. 27). Most narrations of the different characters are descriptive and create knowledge about various disabilities. When describing Cap'n, Alpha explains: "The big word for the thing that started to creep inside Cap'n when he lost his sister is 'agoraphobia' [...] It means he doesn't go outside. He can force himself when it's an emergency [...] but Cap'n feels better when he's indoors" (Auton, 2022, p. 11). Another example is Peter, one of the other Wrecklings, who Alpha describes as follows: "Peter is Deaf so he uses BSL - British Sign Language - to communicate. BSL is speaking with your face, your hands, your whole body" (Auton, 2022, p. 68). What Auton does here that other authors do not is to spend time describing the different disabilities that characters have, which is consistent with her view initially described about being proud of different abilities. Furthermore, it also connects to critical disability studies in that it both acknowledges disability needs and accessibility, while also presenting these different characters as unique, knowledgeable, and valuable (Kafer, 2013).

Additionally, Auton explicitly challenges stereotypical representations of disability in *The Secret of Haven Point* when she mentions one of the most common tropes where

disabled people realize that their disability can function to make them hyper-able or superhuman (Schalk, 2018, p. 60). When describing her best friend Badger, Alpha says she has “a pitch-black Afro with one white streak, which is where her name comes from” (Auton, 2022, p. 8). Later in the novel, Alpha continues to describe her best friend:

Badger uses a cane, but she also does this thing called *ekko-low-kay-shun*, which is spelled in the dictionary as “echolocation”. It means she bounces clicks off walls and objects and it helps her tell where she is. It does not mean that she can see everything all fancy in her head as some comic-book superpower [...] Not all visually impaired people do it, can do it, or want to do it. It’s just if they’re “that way inclined” [...]. (Auton, 2022, p. 37)

This political strategy allows readers to recognize this aspect of agency in different ways. *The Secret of Haven Point* is a magical, fantasy story that can appeal to upper primary students in the EFL classroom. Pupils can be immersed in fantasy stories, and by creating Haven Point unlike anything the reader has seen, the narrative is able to transport them from their known world and into the world that Auton has created. Mikkelsen (2005) explains how this transformation into a different place can activate the pupils’ imagination in “full and expressive ways” (p. 3). Children use literature to find their maps in the world, guiding them towards what becomes their dreams and futures (Myers, 2014). This is especially true for children of the upper primary classroom, as they are at a particular age where they are finding and creating their place in the world, carving out spaces and forging new worlds. By creating a place with diverse bodies and minds, pupils will both feel unfamiliar and familiar to that space. In order to further transport the reader into the space of Haven Point, the book has illustrations of both the Old Ben lighthouse (see Appendix 18) and an overview of Haven Point (see Appendix 19), creating opportunities to explore the many different layers where the Wrecklings live. Thus, Auton is widening the metaphors around mirrors and windows by explicitly creating a map readers can be transported into and find their experiences and possible dreams.

4.3.2 Belonging and Shameful Memories

Alpha’s identification of herself centers around the concept of remembering and not knowing where she belongs, wanting to know who her mother is, and why she was left to be on her own. This also includes memories of trauma and shame. On the first page, Alpha describes her name, how she was raised by a mermaid, that she always tells the truth, and that her “face looks like a flame-grilled jellyfish” (Auton, 2022, p. 1). Later, the reader also learns that Alpha’s left eye and ear got burnt when she was a baby: “It melted, fusing my eyelid with my cheek” (Auton, 2022, p. 9). Alpha is also visually represented in a third person illustration (p. 129, see Appendix 20). Alpha and Badger have just sneaked out of Old Ben to explore what they call the pillbox, a small space where Alpha recons she has seen glints of lights. When herself and Badger get there, they notice that someone has built a door into the pillbox and they understand that a stranger has been living there. The compositional modality of this image, its visual and textual elements (Rose, 2016), show Alpha and Badger, together with their disabilities and appearances illustrated in the book. In this depiction, the reader can see Alpha as she looks at the scattered books, maps, and the diary of the stranger. Alpha’s burned eye is visible in the illustration, as well as Badger’s cane and distinct striped hair. Badger is also depicted making clicks towards the air, using echolocation to tell if anyone is coming. Alpha, having had recurring nightmares about her childhood, believes that maybe it is her mother who has come back to meet her. While Badger stays on watch, Alpha explores the mysterious books of *Clinical Anatomy* and *The Doctor Way*. Alpha thinks it is her mother that lives there and assumes she is training to be a doctor. Most

noticeably, however, is the frame at the corner of the table with the photo of two parents and a son, making Alpha question if she has a brother. This entire dream and view she has of her mother and family crash down in front of her when she finds a diary, noticing that whoever has written it refers to the Wrecklings as "invalids", and has made up names for them directly connected to their disability, such as "Fried", "Wheelchair-bound one", "Batty", and "Moonface" (p. 126). That is when she understands that it could never be her mother, but is rather a stranger, and possibly a dangerous one.

This understanding makes Alpha feel shame when she discovers that who she thought was her mother was someone with an intention of hurting the mermaids. She also feels shame for wishing it had been her mother, questioning herself and why someone would want to see the person who left them. Identifying and being exposed to manifestations of shame experienced by individuals, such as Alpha's experience, can allow pupils to recognize shame, and thus experience pedagogies of shame (Zembylas, 2020). These kinds of pedagogies can make the upper primary pupils discuss and consider the complex affect of shame. In Dernikos' (2018) definition of pedagogies of exposure, she highlights how pupils should be exposed to literary texts and experiences that refuse to conceal past histories of violence and trauma (p. 24). Lisette Auton never attempts to hide how disability or other intersectional minoritized experiences can include traumatic histories and memories.

Bezemer and Jewitt (2010) emphasize the need to see where spaces of conversation can be made in multimodal analysis of intersectional texts (p. 10). In *The Secret of Haven Point*, there are less illustrations than in the two other graphic novels analyzed, which also makes them more noticeable, as they create a bigger stop-effect. The photos are thus spaces to stop and think, where conversation can be made. The words and images in *The Secret of Haven Point* are also complementary, meaning that they add something different or new to the story. This can be illustrated well in a scene where Alpha and Badger are arguing. In the text, Alpha's first-person point of view creates a feeling of ambush and anger. In the illustration (p. 258, see Appendix 21), the reader can see the different looks of each Wreckling that are present. The image is composed as a third-person perspective, and suddenly the reader is transported to the outside-looking-in. Multimodal scenes as this one can illustrate the complexities of different emotions (Joy, 2021, p. 8). Rage or anger are unambiguous feelings that usually makes clear what one is feeling rage about, thus making it a forceful action that can make readers aware of the ethics of a situation (Ngai, 2007, p. 27). Pupils can recognize the feelings of annoyance or being angry when reading the book. This could encourage pupils to relate to their own knowledge and experience of certain feelings like empathy, as "narratives generate emotional identification in texts for young readers" (Joy, 2021, p. 9). In the combination between the previous story and the illustration, readers can make sense of the narrative in different ways. Some may lean on this illustration, taking it apart and curiously exploring the different aspects, characters, and other elements. Others might let the cliffhanger of the previous page take them immediately to the next page to read what happens, and then go back to the photo later. Price and Bahl (2022) explain that "multimodality" does not entail the sum of various modes, but instead a negotiation between modes, each offering its own path to meaning ("Navigating This Webtext", para. 9). Thus, the written text and the illustration work together to create complementary meaning to the story, leaving more to explore than just the written text itself. Additionally, what also moves within the text is the role of the sensorial and the affective modes too, allowing these illustrations open for opportunities

to make conversation about the story. These kinds of conversations can further make visible crip and queer temporalities.

4.3.3 Challenging Normativity: Queerness and Possible Temporalities

The Secret of Haven Point illustrates that difference should be appreciated and acknowledged not only through disabled characters, but also through the fantasy genre and intersecting categories of queerness. Living in unison with the Wrecklings at Haven Point are also the mermaids, who are described by Alpha as such: "None of the mermaids are alike: it's as though each of them has been coloured in differently" (Auton, 2022, p. 27). Hurley (2014) emphasizes how mermaids have a history of being analyzed as queer and trans symbols, being an icon of cultural circulation as an image of "bodily becoming and gendered self-affirmation" (p. 269). This quote on the fantastical mermaids can create connections to how we can see disability in society as well. Just like the mermaids of the story, people in society are colored differently, creating diverse uniqueness and distinctions. According to the core value of human dignity, pupils and society need to acknowledge and appreciate differences (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017, p. 7). For children, images of mermaids can function as a visual fantasy that allows them to live beyond the boundaries of their own body (Hurley, 2014, p. 260). Thus, this fantasy element can take readers away from their own reality and allow them to explore and engage with this narrative (Butler, 2004; Ferreday, 2012). *The Secret of Haven Point* illustrates its mermaids as different to gendered and normative stereotypes, as a visual illustration show where the mermaid is Black, with messy hair, facial hair, and a rough expression (p. 25, see Appendix 22).

Samuels and Freeman (2021), editors of the special edition of the *South Atlantic Quarterly* on *Crip Temporalities*, write that the affects of living in crip time and with crip temporalities include grief, anger, and exhaustion (p. 248). In *The Secret of Haven Point*, Auton highlights some of the different affects of living in crip time through various characters by showing how the disabilities in the novel are filled with possibilities rather than being seen as limitations:

Spot a skill - use it. As we do make it work, we'll discover solutions we didn't know existed that make other things work better too. You're blind and you want to be on watch? Let's get your ears so fine-tuned that they pick up on everything better than your eyes ever could. (Auton, 2022, p. 181)

Important to this aspect is also the fact that their disabilities never make them super-human; it just means that they do what they can with what they have, and that they will always be unique and powerful. When speaking of one of the other Wrecklings, Alpha explains the following: "She pulls her worth as much as anyone else, but on her own terms like we all do; we measure worth differently here" (Auton, 2022, p. 183). Auton here explicitly mentions both the concept of measuring time and worth differently. Kafer (2013) emphasizes how disability needs to be explored "in time" (p. 26). Crip studies hence show that disability is often measured in efficiency, such as the ability to participate or get a job. Auton manages to challenge this chrononormativity (Freeman, 2010) in continuing to emphasize different disabilities and what people need, but how that need never really matters because there is no measure of time that states how fast something need to be done or how much they have to do, as that is not how they value worth. Samuels and Freeman (2021) point to how disabled pupils do the same work as their peers, but in different temporalities (p. 247). Auton's notion of doing things in one's own time can thus create moments in the classroom where pupils recognize themselves and may feel seen or appreciated for their differences rather than feeling left out or like

they are “never enough”. Kafer (2021) points to how many disabled people refer to those without disabilities as “temporarily able-bodied” and refers to the spoken sentence: “We crips are here for you when you’re ready” (p. 418). At the end of *The Secret of Haven Point*, able-bodied people are allowed to enter Haven Point as visitors. This change indicates that they are still doing things in their own terms, but allowing others to enter their crip time, rather than adapting to normative standards. *The Secret of Haven Point* illustrate found families and allow for pupils to both identify with the characters and experience diverse ways of being. The focus on temporality and living according to one’s own temporality highlights how the novel makes readers move through crip temporalities. This can work towards pupils balancing different considerations and developing their ethical awareness in line with the core values of education (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017, p. 8).

5 Conclusion

In the following chapter, I will present the conclusions of this study. First, I will provide some final remarks on the study's findings and answer the two research questions of the study. Then, I will present the implications of these findings for teachers in upper primary EFL classrooms in Norway. Finally, I will provide an overview of the limitations of the current study and conclude the thesis with some suggestions for further research.

5.1 Final Remarks on the Study's Findings

In this study, I have hoped to offer answers to two research questions: "How is disability represented intersectionally in contemporary multimodal middle grade fantasy texts?" and "How can multimodal fantasy literature contribute to the development of an affective pedagogy of exposure in the upper primary EFL classroom in Norway?". I adopted Intersectional methodology to examine how categories of disability, gender, sexuality, and/or other axes of differentiation are interwoven and mutually constituted (Crenshaw, 1991; Davis, 2014; Garland-Thomson, 2017).

In order to answer the first research question, I used multimodal analysis and visual semiotic analysis, which proved to be useful tools to investigate these multimodal novels. The analysis showed that the three contemporary multimodal works chosen for this thesis utilize different modes to create tension and rhythms between the illustrations and words combined. This thesis has attempted to offer a complex understanding of multimodality beyond the concept of the image and seeing. In working with multiple texts such as these, the combination of different modes can allow meanings to be "changed, reshaped, developed, expanded, limited and modified" (Newfield, 2014, p. 104). As such, this becomes a transmodal process that can be described as a semiotic journey, where various modes encourage different opinions and understandings (Newfield, 2014, p. 104). In engaging with different senses and affects, the multimodal texts represent perspectives that signal the importance of accessible and acceptable societies and communities, and showing care, compassion, and help. Nonetheless, the works also illustrate how disability can still include trauma, pain, ableism, and prejudice. The authors additionally utilize the different modes, ranging from visual, written, sensorial, and affective, to create tensions and disruptions from normative reading, either by interrupting traditional top-to-bottom and left-to-right reading, as O'Neill does, or by removing text from speech bubbles, as Grine does. Working with the modes in this way allows readers to connect to crip and queer temporalities, to move out of normative time and interrogate the binaries of static, linear, and progressive temporalities.

The analysis has also shown that the fantasy genre opens for the interrogation of normative understandings of gender, disability, race, and its intersections. The anthropomorphized Hesekeel in *The Tea Dragon Society*, Bigfoot, Vampires, Werewolves, and other mythical creatures of *Secrets of Camp Whatever*, or the mermaids of *The Secret of Haven Point* are more-than-human characters who can undo normative categories. Seeing how intersectional representations of disability connect to fantasy elements has allowed me to discuss how these works can make pupils question their ideas and beliefs about reality. Regarding the first research question then, this thesis has attempted to show that the intersectional representations of disability in the chosen

materials show disabled characters as complex and capable of both triumphs, mistakes, relationships, and desires. The results of this analysis thus support the idea that the market of middle grade fiction has seen a shift in the stories it presents in recent years and that the unlimited possibilities of fantasy and other speculative fiction have important potential for multiply marginalized people (Ferreday, 2012; Maughan, 2018; Schalk, 2020ab).

The second research questions reflects both personal interest and a wish as a preliminary teacher to investigate how these kinds of texts can function in the upper primary EFL classroom, especially how they can contribute to the development of an affective pedagogy of exposure as presented by Dernikos (2018). Based on the findings from the analysis, all of these works include a series of ambivalent affective and thus also emotional experiences. These can be “ugly feelings” (Ngai, 2005) that foster empathy, compassion, and care, while simultaneously consisting of desired events that create joy, happiness, and love. The multimodal and visual semiotic analysis show that engaging with multimodal fantasy texts with intersectional representations of disability, such as those analyzed in this thesis, can be a way to see others’ ways of being and reflect the complex and diverse upper primary classroom. In turn, this pedagogy of exposure can allow for affective experiences within the space of the classroom and heighten pupils’ understanding of disability and other intersecting identities.

5.2 Implications

Within the core curriculum and the English subject curriculum of Norwegian education, diversity, cultural differences, differences in identity, inclusion, and participation are highlighted as important aspects (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017; The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). Since the curriculum does not explicitly mention disability, teachers are left with the responsibility of including disabled narratives in their classroom and ensuring that these stories portray lived realities of disability that may include trauma and pain. However, it is equally key to focus on being opportunity-centered rather than damage-centered (Tuck, 2009, p. 414). This entails that the reading of these books shows disability as valuable and integral, not retorting to stereotypes or normative assumptions. Children in the upper primary years of education in Norway are at an age where affective experiences can be especially important to help shape their futures and who they become (Høytrup, 2017; Myers, 2014). Engaging with intersectional representations of disability can thus be a way for teachers to enhance central aspects of the curriculum concerning identity development, inclusion, and seeing other ways of being.

What is also vital in multimodal works is what the reader does not notice, see, or pay attention to (Berger, 1972; Perkins, 1994; Rose, 2016). Thus, it is important to guide pupils towards gaps and what may be hidden from the reader, especially when working with these texts within the upper primary EFL classroom. As an able-bodied reader of these books, it is important to state that my own reading of these works may have a limited point of view, and there is no way that I have found everything there is to be analyzed in these books. Still, I have attempted to draw upon some important aspects of these works that can help a teacher guide their pupils in the upper primary EFL classroom into seeing and experiencing otherwise.

5.3 Limitations and Further Lines of Research

This study has researched how disability is represented intersectionally across three contemporary multimodal middle grade fantasy texts, and how these narratives can elicit multiple affective responses in the upper primary EFL classroom. There are various other interesting materials that could have also been examined. The development of alternative narrative structures in graphic novels has reached more accessible platforms, such as web-based comics where accommodations for blind/visually impaired readers can be built-in, for instance by adding textual descriptions of images that can be read aloud (Gray, 2016, p. 6). *The Tea Dragon Society*, which has been analyzed in this thesis, was first published as a webcomic that is accessible online. Researchers have also begun to investigate how children's poetry can stimulate affective pleasure (Joy, 2021, p. 9). Researching intersectional representations of disability and affective responses using web-based comics or poetry could therefore be other fascinating fields to examine in future research.

In this thesis, I decided to apply the theoretical fields of Critical Disability Studies and Affect Studies in Education, but an alternative could be to use other theoretical frameworks to analyze and discuss these materials from another perspective. For instance, I am aware that there is a field of study which connects the genre of fantasy and disability to posthumanist frameworks. Lundblad (2020b) explains how "Disability studies as a field has brought crucial attention to histories of disabled people constructed as somehow less than human, whether they have been explicitly animalized or dehumanized in other ways" (p. 766). This field would be especially relevant when considering intersectional representations of disability, since constructions of what it means to be human have long histories of discriminating against Black people and people of color as well (Lundblad, 2020a, p. iii). Another theoretical framework that can be discussed in relation to disability is environmentalism and ecocritical concerns. According to Kafer (2013), "the embodied experience of illness and disability presents alternative ways of understanding ourselves in relation to the environment" (p. 23). Both *The Tea Dragon Society* and *Secrets of Camp Whatever*, as part of the chosen corpus of this thesis, touch upon environmental topics regarding animals in danger, animal rescue and endangered species that can be discussed in relation to understanding of disability and intersectional categories. These are not frameworks I have followed, but they could be directions other researchers may take in the future when analyzing these works.

When analyzing the potential affective responses to my selected corpus using two main theoretical frameworks, I have made assumptions about how pupils may interpret and react to these multimodal works. Therefore, conducting classroom observations by reading these texts and examine pupils' responses to the fantasy literature would have been both relevant and interesting. These kinds of observations can show natural, interpretive, and spontaneous affective responses (Dernikos, 2018; Mikkelsen, 2005). To actually engage in the reading of these texts could highlight more about the pupils, their books, and their ways of reading and seeing the world (Mikkelsen, 2005, p. 180). The ideas and assumptions teachers bring into the upper primary classroom can be essential for pupils to discover their maps in literature. I hope that more students and scholars continue to explore how affective pedagogies can exist in literature in the process of imagining disability futures otherwise.

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Appendices

Appendices 1-9: Illustrations from *The Tea Dragon Society* by Kay O'Neill

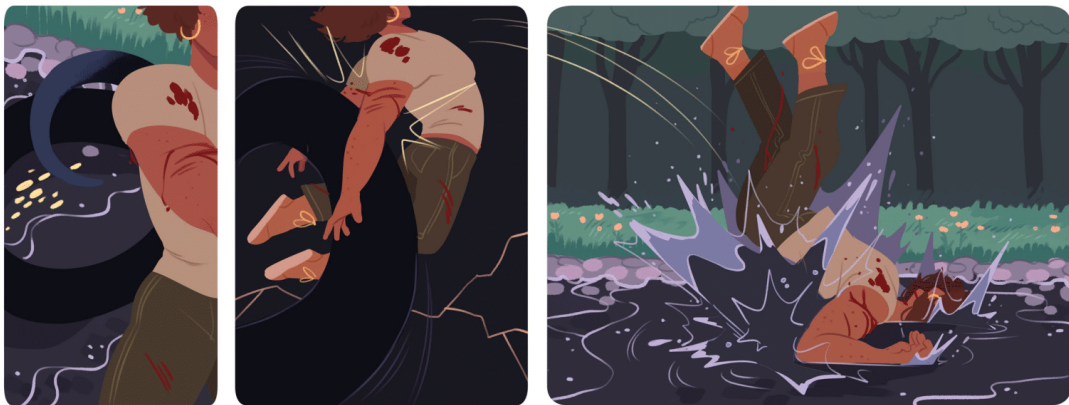
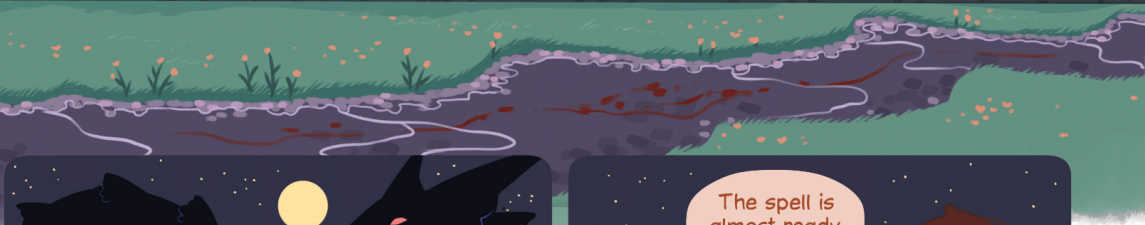
Appendices 10-17: Illustrations from *Secrets of Camp Whatever* by Chris Grine

Appendices 18-22: Illustrations from *The Secret of Haven Point* by Lisette Auton

Appendix 23: Young adult (YA) and middle grade multimodal fantasy books with intersectional representations of disability to consider for the EFL Classroom

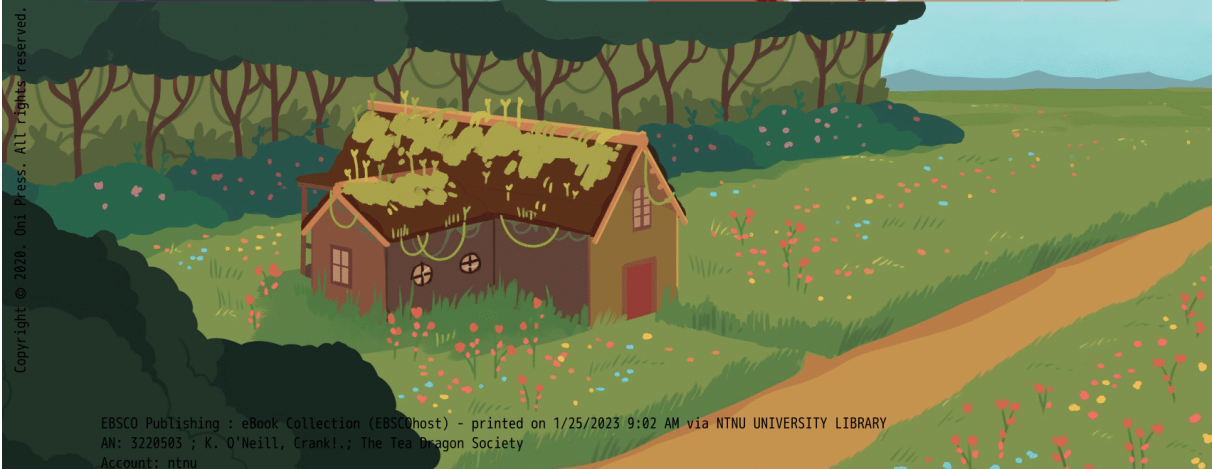
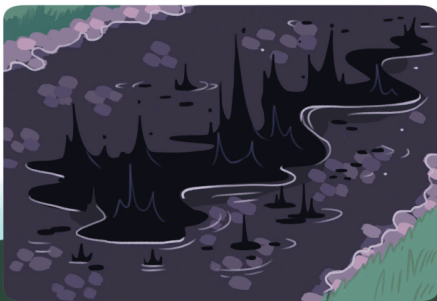
Appendix 1: The Tea Dragon Society page 43

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Appendix 2: *The Tea Dragon Society* page 44

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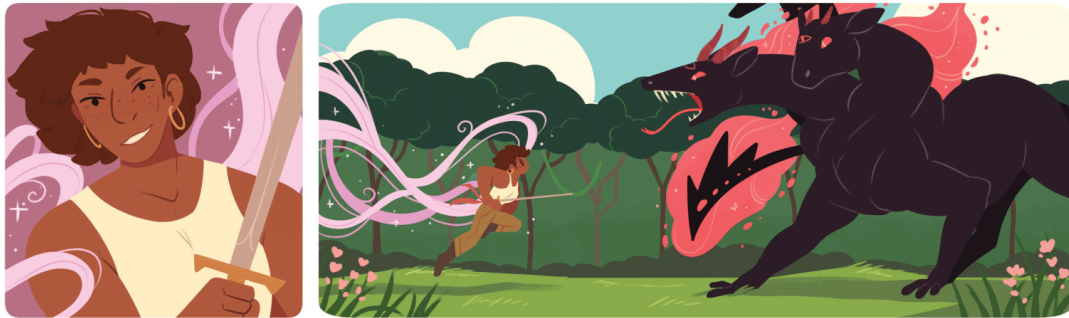
Appendix 3: The Tea Dragon Society page 45

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Appendix 4: The Tea Dragon Society page 41

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Appendix 5: The Tea Dragon Society page 42



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Appendix 6: The Tea Dragon Society page 7

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The world was forged in iron... Once upon a time...



Appendix 7: The Tea Dragon Society page 29

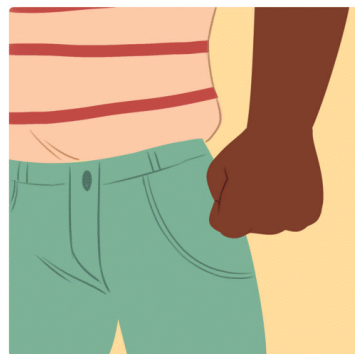


Appendix 8: The Tea Dragon Society page 30



Appendix 9: The Tea Dragon Society page 31

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Appendix 10: Secrets of Camp Whatever page 24





Appendix 12: *Secrets of Camp Whatever* page 114



Appendix 13: Secrets of Camp Whatever page 115



Appendix 14: Secrets of Camp Whatever page 52



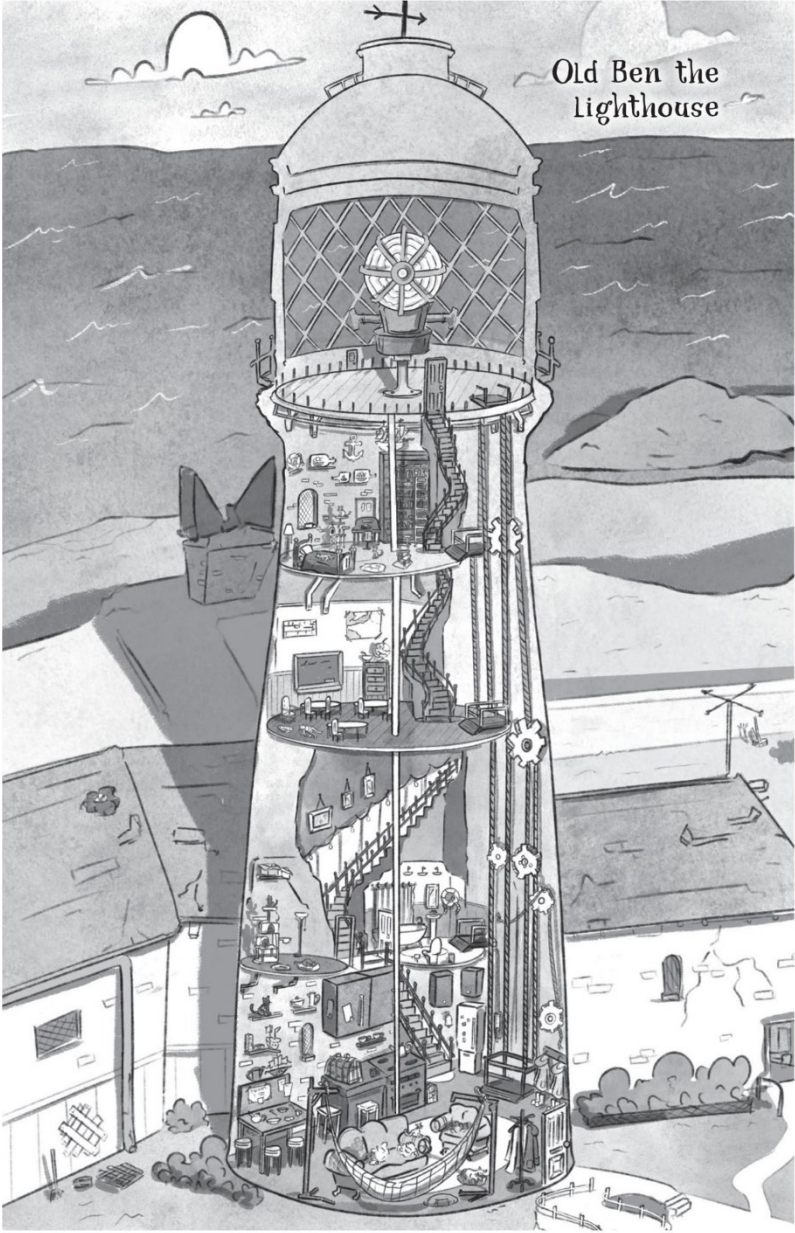




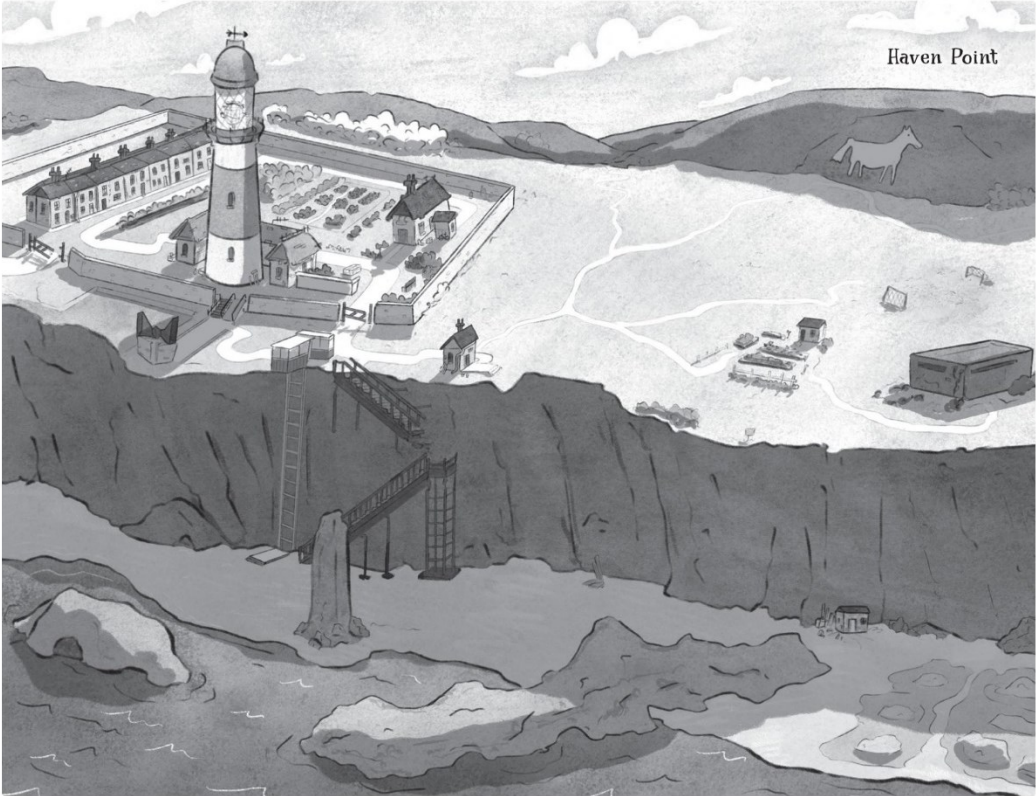
Appendix 17: Secrets of Camp Whatever page 222



Appendix 18: *The Secret of Haven Point* n.p.



Appendix 19: *The Secret of Haven Point* n.p.



Appendix 20: *The Secret of Haven Point* page 129

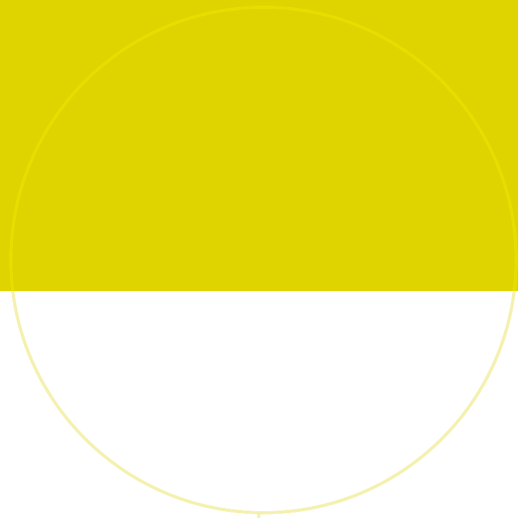






Appendix 23: Young adult (YA) and middle grade multimodal fantasy books with intersectional representations of disability to consider for the EFL Classroom

Title	Creator(s)	Publication	Representations
<i>The Tea Dragon Festival</i>	Kay O'Neill	2019	Deaf, LGBTQ+, BIPOC
<i>The Tea Dragon Tapestry</i>	Kay O'Neill	2021	Physical disability (wheelchair), LGBTQ+, BIPOC
<i>Zia Erases the World</i>	Bree Barton	2022	Mental health, chronic illness, depression
<i>The Ojja-Wojja</i>	Magdalene Visaggio, Jenn St-Onge	2023	Autism, BIPOC, LGBTQ+
<i>Mooncakes</i>	Suzanne Walker, Wendy Xu	2015	Deaf/HoH (Hard of Hearing), LGBTQ+, BIPOC
<i>Blackwater</i>	Jeannette Arroyo, Ren Graham	2022	Chronic autoimmune disorder, LGBTQ+, BIPOC
<i>My Aunt Is a Monster</i>	Reimena Yee	2022	Blind, LGBTQ+, BIPOC
<i>The Real Boy</i>	Anne Ursu, Erin McGuire (Illustrator)	2013	Autism, BIPOC
<i>Etta Invincible</i>	Reese Eschmann, Gretel Lusky (Illustrator)	2022	Hearing loss (Ménière's disease), BIPOC
<i>Snapdragon</i>	Kat Leyh	2020	Eye patch, missing limb, LGBTQ+, BIPOC
<i>The Stickleback Catchers</i>	Lisette Auton, Valentina Toro (Illustrator)	2023	Chronic illness, neurodiversity (and more), LGBTQ+, BIPOC
<i>Cress & Petra</i>	Ashanti Fortson	2023, forthcoming	Autism, BIPOC
<i>Buzzing</i>	Samuel Sattin, Rye Hickman	2023, forthcoming	Mental health, ODC, LGBTQ+,



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