Abstract

Novels that contain characters with communication disorders (medical or neurological problems with speech, language, and/or hearing) are rare. As a speech-language pathology student about to receive her degree, though, I am often confronted with how common communication disorders are in the real world. As these children grow up and reach the age where they are reading novels and thinking more critically about what they mean, it becomes even more important that they are being given stories and characters that make them feel understood. Unfortunately, there are authors that get this wrong and use disabilities and disorders to stereotype and ostracize certain characters. In this thesis, I formed a set of criteria with which to evaluate media content in order to determine whether it is appropriate for its intended audience. These criteria can be used on multiple types of media, including literature and cinema, and can apply to any and all disorders and disabilities of any age group. Following my major in speech pathology, I will be evaluating young adult novels that contain examples of individuals with communication disorders for this thesis. My goal is to give a handful of examples, both positive and negative, of novels that are evaluated for clinical accuracy, the portrayal of the individual with the disorder, and the depth and well-roundedness of character given to the individual.

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