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Controversy of disability and its reception in children's literature

Disability seems to be controversial topic in children's literature. Some environments argue, that childhood should be carefree and there is no need to read books about sickness or handicap. In fact, children as developing human beings have to deal with stereotypes, media and information given to them by their own parents and teachers. What is more, contemporary culture seems to become more inclusive. On the other hand, there is large pressure on the youngest population: to achieve successes from the earliest childhood, to have a good education and job forever and – what is more important from the perspective of this presentation – to be always pretty, beautiful, rich, strong and healthy. Motives and narratives of disability in children's literature seem to rise vital discussion between the need of education toward empathy in contemporary reality and the dream about careless childhood. Disability itself seems to be controversial phenomenon, connected with the communitarian aspects of human existence (Vehmas, 2012). The aim of this speech is to present results of research made in school year 2019/2020. They include research of the process of reception of disability in children's literature among students of Polish elementary schools (9–15 years old). To check their own feelings and opinions there were chosen fragments of two books: *Kontancja's Week* (Polish *Tydzień Konstancji*, Olga Masiuk) and *Lord's of the Lighting Chest* (Polish *Skrzynia Władcy Piorunów*, Marcin Koziół). It will allow to answer the question: is disability a real controversy in children's literature as seen from the perspective of its real readers? The research will allow also to know better process of empathy development, understanding the disability narratives and their existence in local culture.

Keywords: disability, elementary school, empathy, narrative, reception.

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