

Creating Inclusive Books

Do name the country you mean rather than referring to 'Africa' (England is never called 'Europe').

In 'Around the World' type books: do ensure western countries are represented as properly multicultural to avoid creating the impression that western = white; non-western = non-white. Avoid the wholly inaccurate representation of Christianity as white/western!

If a Black/Asian character's ethnicity is mentioned, check the relevance – white is also an ethnicity/colour and should never be 'assumed'.

Don't use black as a value term rather than a description. For example, 'A black anger...'

Be aware of all too common phrases used to put boys/men down by using language which denigrates all things associated with girls/women. For example: 'screamed/squealed/giggled like a girl' 'throws/runs like a girl'.

Girls/women are frequently over-determined by their looks in fiction – are you giving boys/men the same appraisal or are they more often characterised by words and deeds?

Do make sure romantic storylines show both characters on an equal footing. Females shouldn't be shown to act as though they are weak in order to attract a man.

Be authentically inclusive – society is complex and identities overlap: showing a black disabled character isn't overly self-conscious; it is a mere reflection of our world.

Don't over-sentimentalise or sensationalise difference.

Is gender relevant in animal stories? If so, make sure you have an even spread of male/female characters and consider leaving the matter at pronouns! (Do you need extra femininity markers such as bows between bunny ears?)

Don't help perpetuate associations of disability signifiers with evil: hooked hands, patches, scars and artificial limbs are a lazy and damaging shortcut for depicting villains.

Wheelchair users can operate their own wheelchair! Don't label a person by their situation or impairment.

Do think about the language you use. Don't perpetuate stereotypes by using mental health terms for effect. Do not opt for discriminatory slang with the excuse that young people 'just speak like that' (gay – in the pejorative sense – bitch, cow, mental etc.); there are plenty of non-discriminatory terms of abuse available!

Do create disabled superheroes but ensure their disability isn't somehow turned into (or fetishised as) the source of their super-prowess!

Do embrace stories of refugees/asylum seekers who are simply getting on with their lives in the UK (rather than *always* beset by tragedy).