

#toylkeme



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*“What happened to your leg?”*  
Using Story Stem Completion to Examine Children’s  
Changing Representations of Disability

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# Overview

- Our project looks at how play with representative toys may affect children's attitudes to disability.
- The integration of play and representation into the school curriculum is an ideal outlet for tackling discrimination and fostering positive attitudes towards disability.

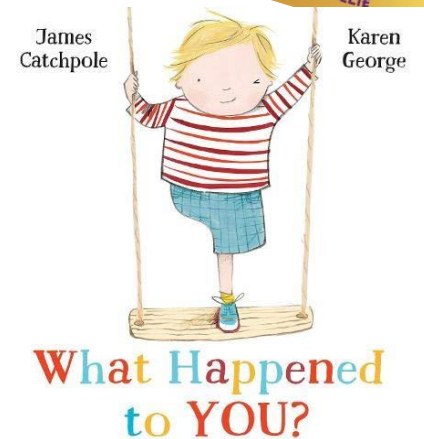


# Representation and Inclusion

*Representation* can help foster positive attitudes towards school-age children with disabilities.

Positive representation in books and other media lend children higher self-esteem, a sense of belonging, and more positive attitudes towards others (e.g., Cameron et al., 2011).

Kim et al. (2016) highlight how integrating diversity into the literacy curriculum can encourage the acquisition of specific information, and socio-emotional skills.





# Times a changin'

Lego (2016):

"Any minifigure in our assortment can be deaf if the child decides to play that it is..."

"We have recently introduced a LEGO element that resembles a wheelchair.

We have not as such launched a disabled minifigure."

-Lego

## Lego (2020/2022)

*" [we] understand the importance of representation in toys. ... [we] want every one of their fans to imagine themselves as part of the action. We are committed to developing our LEGO City sets in a way that ensures they are representative of the world in which children are living. We will continue to include minifigures that portray people with diverse ages, professions, genders, and characteristics"*



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# In the classroom



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## Favazza and colleagues (2017)

Looked at the representation of disabled people in school resources in 32 infant classrooms.

They found that two classrooms had some representation, 22 classrooms had low representation, and eight classrooms had no representation of disabled people



# Representative Toys

Representative toys promote positive friendship intentions in line with a social model of disability

Our research has shown this in the context of disabled people and immigrants using Playmobil

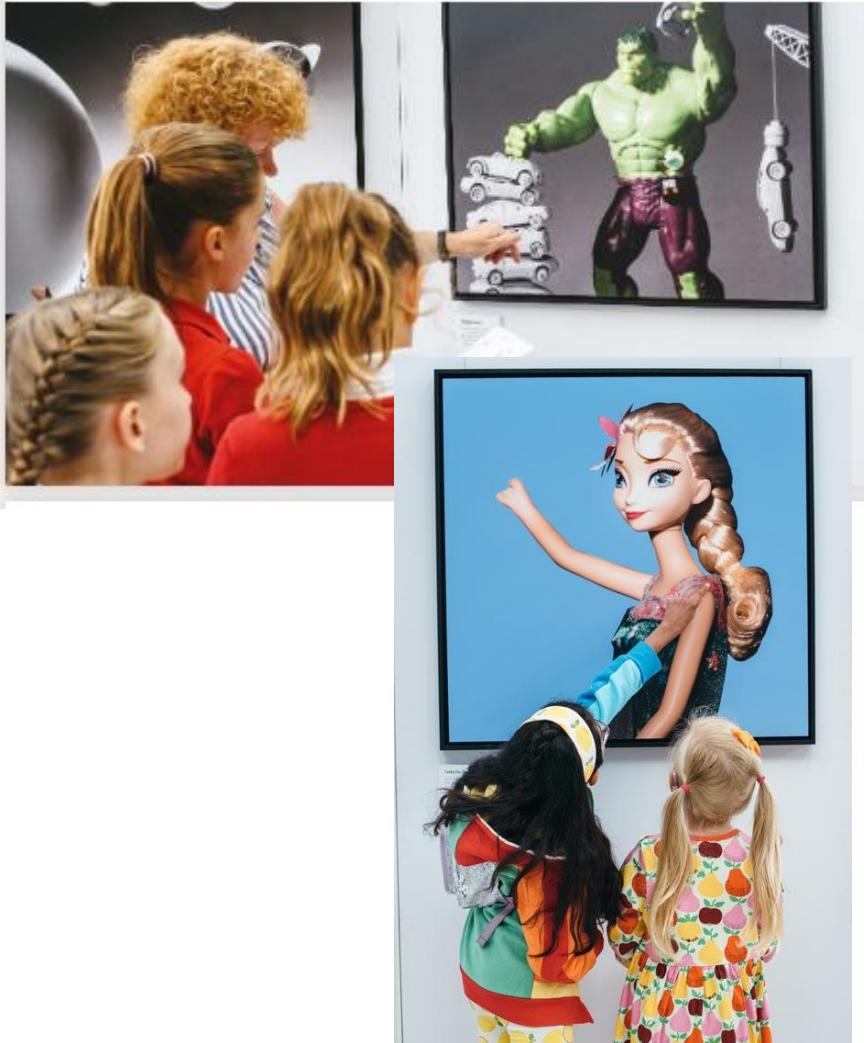


# Yorkshire Pilot

Data from  $N = 145$  children, aged 5 – 11 years, in three Yorkshire primary schools

Schools recruited through ToyLikeMe

- Children engaged with the ToyLikeMe Exhibition at their school, completing pre and post exhibition tasks.
- Due to Covid restrictions this was entirely teacher led using resources provided by us
- **Research Question: Does engaging in this form of imagined contact have any impact on responses to dis/ability?**



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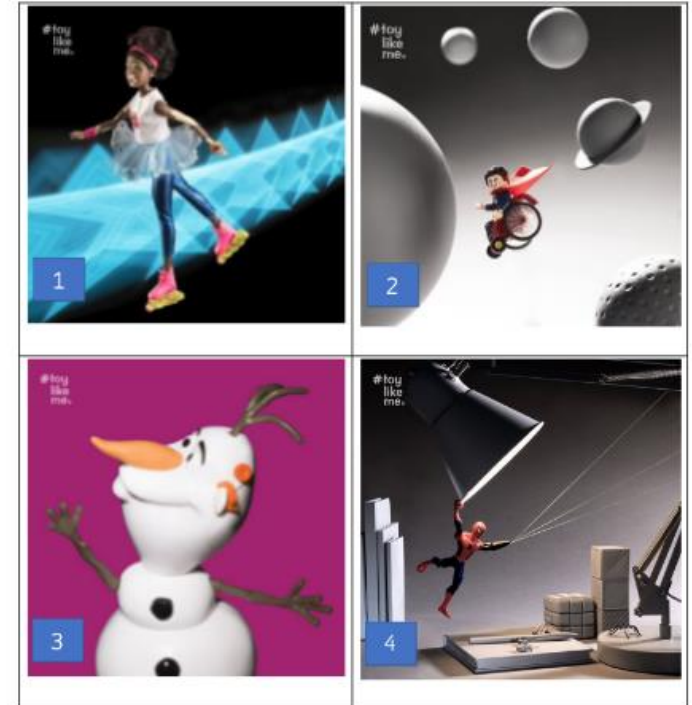


# Methodology

- Asked to write a story about one of the characters in the exhibition, from choice of four, before and after the pop-up exhibition visits.
- Story stem: *Imagine that you are going on a really fun day out with them. Write a story about the adventure that you have...*
- Story Stem Completion tasks have been used to explore attitudes and perceptions in a variety of settings but very much a novel method (so this is exciting!)

## Pre-Exhibition: First Story Writing Task

Here are some of the characters in the exhibition.



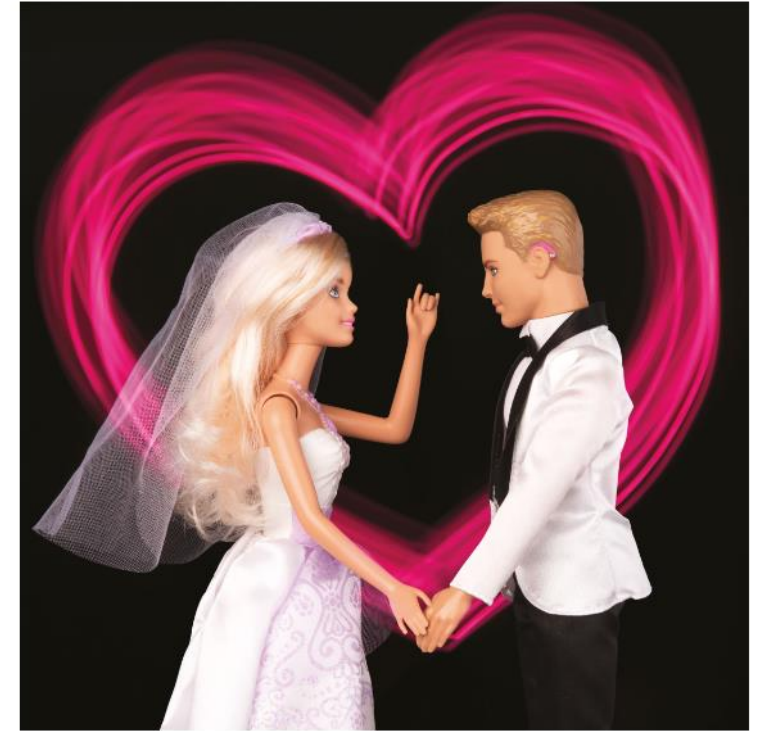
I am \_\_\_\_\_ years old

Which is your favourite?

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# 12 exhibition posters with Talking Points



# Chatty Pack – Activities and Discussion

## Class challenge

You can use these challenges to get your learners thinking about adaptation and problem solving within society so that everyone can be included.

- Consider a whole room of deaf sign language users chatting animatedly. A hearing man walks in. He can't sign. He tries to make conversation but cannot make himself understood. Who is disabled?
- How could a deaf cinema-goer understand the story of a film if they can't hear any of the words being spoken? How could the film be adapted so they can understand the story? The answer is very simple!
- What objects in daily life require two hands or two feet to operate? A tin opener needs two hands. One to hold the handle and one to turn the wheel. A car needs two feet to drive. Think about how you could adapt these objects to make them accessible for people who have just one hand or one leg. Remember, there is always another way to do nearly everything! It's all about adapting and thinking creatively.

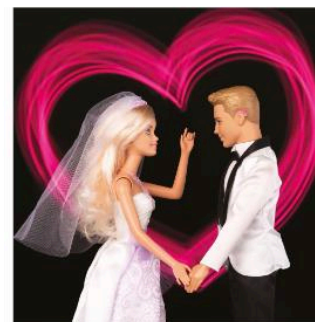
## Talking about deafness

Print these two images and pass them around your learners. Larger versions of them can be found at the end of this pack. Cut off or hide the text beneath the picture as you don't want to give any clues away!

Ask the class:

- What do you **notice** in these images?  
*Guide towards* – Olaf has a cochlear implant hearing device and Ken has a hearing aid. There are 45,000 D/deaf and hard of hearing children in the UK.
- What is a **cochlear implant**?  
*Guide towards* – a cochlear implant is a hearing device used by people to help them hear more sounds. You have a little operation to have a cochlear implant as it involves a magnetic plate under the skin and a little wire that goes into the inside part of your ear called the cochlear. On the outside of your head you wear a processor which is held in place by the magnet through your skin.
- Why might someone need a **cochlear implant**?  
*Guide towards* – Some people are born with no hearing at all (although total deafness is rare) others are born with some hearing but not the full range of sounds. This can vary. There is not one way to be deaf – different people can hear different amounts. They might use either hearing aids or a cochlear implant to enable them to hear more sounds. Some people choose to use neither, they are happy without sound. Everyone is different.
- Does anyone in the class use a **cochlear implant** or hearing aid or know someone who does?

*Go further* – for a tactile conversation starter you could purchase a Lottie doll with a cochlear implant from [www.amazon.co.uk/shop/toylikeme](http://www.amazon.co.uk/shop/toylikeme)



## Get creative

Explore disability and design further with these hands on activities.

- Use the colouring sheets at the back of this pack to explore wheelchair or hearing aid design in a fun way.
- Find an old toy and turn it into a #ToyLikeMe. Try to avoid hospitals or older people disability stereotypes, instead create fun fantasy characters. Be stereotype busting! Use your imagination and go wild! Give a fairy a hearing aid? Make a guide dog or a diabetic line for a wizard. You could use an old lolly stick to create a white cane or FiMo or plasticine to create a hearing aid. Lots more images of toy makeovers are available on [toylikeme.org](http://toylikeme.org)
- Design a fantasy building that is wheelchair accessible. Will it be a tree-house with a platform hoist? Will it be a space ship with eye gaze remote control doors and ramps? Let your imagination run wild!



# Results

All stories were transcribed (with some difficulty!) and coded thematically for components of attitude.

Superordinate themes including:

Activity

Relationship (+ve/-ve)

Disability (+ve/-ve)

Social Model

Medical Model

Affective response

Which character are you going to write about?

The fairy \_\_\_\_\_

Start your story here:

One day I was on my way to school and... I was thinking thinking  
are fairys real? Suddenly, I said to my mummy... "My mummy  
are fairys real?" "Yes lola I think so but I'm not really sure  
because no one has ever seen one. maybe one day" Said my lovely  
mummy her real name is Lily but I don't call her that I was  
just walking through the door when I found a  
flitter in my locker then I opened it and I saw a fairy! After that  
I gasped I was so amazed! Then finally the words came out of my mouth  
"Hi What is your name?" I shouted "Shhshh be quiet my name is  
mary and I need your help my sister has been captured by a evil witch!  
please come and help me I can not do this on my own!" And by the  
way my name

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# Results: Pre-Exhibition

Once Upon a time me and my friend Superman were playing at school and suddenly he tripped over at this time he was only two so he started bawling his eyes out but I didn't think it was when he fell that made him cry. There was a small orb in his hand blue and magical. From that day he has had no power so I think that orb has got something to do with it. The next day I asked Superman to meet me at the park at 12:00 PM so he did when he got there I said **“why are you in a wheelchair?”** then he looked around to see if anybody was watching and he put his hand to his mouth and said “it's a disguise”. “why” I said in surprised voice “well” he explained “you know how I lost my powers?” “yeah” I said “well this wheelchair can fly”, “but how?” I asked “that's a secret” he said **“OK” I said very annoyed of course then I said “hop out of the wheelchair” he said “why” “just do it” “OK “so he did and he toppled to the floor like a blob of Jelly “are you OK” I said “no” “I should take you to the hospital” so I did and they said they need to take him to a scientist the end**

(Aged 7 and  $\frac{3}{4}$ )



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# Results: Post Exhibition

On the weekend I saw a friend called Alice. Alice was a professional swimmer And **sadly she does not have an arm but that does not stop her from following her dream.** Anyway it's now Monday and Alice is coming to my school and I'm going to sit next to her. Alice is a kind and helpful amazing swimmer / bff. She said her favourite lesson is art pe and English. **Later I bumped into my other friends at playtime. They said I should not be friends with her because of her arm but I don't care what they think of her because I think she is amazing so I'm gonna be BFF with her forever.**

(Aged 8)

# Summary

- Playing with toys offers an exciting and engaging way to provide children with an opportunity for imagined contact with people who have a range of disabilities
- This has the potential to positively impact their attitudes towards disability, including peer relationships.
- By integrating these resources into the school curriculum, this contributes to the development of a more inclusive environment in the school.



# Thank you for listening



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- Please follow our progress on Twitter @QMU\_Toy\_Research
- With thanks to the QMU Innovation Fund, especially Miriam Smith.
- to Rebecca Atkinson and Karen Newell at ToyLikeMe, <https://www.toylikeme.org/>;
- to the students in our ToyBox Research Group for their hard work in transcription and analysis;
- And to our fantastic participants for all their stories



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*“What happened to your leg?”*

## Using Story Stem Completion to Examine Children’s Changing Representations of Disability

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