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"If we insist on telling children that everything in the garden is lovely, we're doing them a disservice" (Browne quoted in Crown, 2009, p. 12). Analyse the work of illustrators and, particularly, author illustrators who tackle difficult, sensitive, and sometimes shocking themes.

When creating work that is marketed towards children, you must be able to understand how a child's brain works. Children perceive and process information and images very differently to fully developed adults. An article on this says "Well before children can read for themselves they are able to learn from books. Looking at and listening to books increases children's general knowledge, understanding about the world, and promotes language acquisition." (Horst and Houston-Price, 2015). It's an important role illustrators play in how children develop through pictures books. I believe a lot of psychology goes behind the process of creating specific books meant to help children.

Quentin Blake has illustrated some of the most popular, well known children's books, for the author Roald Dahl. Some of these books include 'Matilda', 'The Twits' and 'Fantastic Mr Fox'. Visualising an author's words must be a challenging process, especially when it might possibly shape someone's childhood. On his website, he speaks about how he collaborated with 1800 French speaking school children on a book. He says, "I used as many of the children's ideas as possible, and much of the text was stitched together from the children's writings." (Blake, 2021). Using real life sources to create work for children would heavily impact the performance of the books purpose. Seeing from a first-hand perspective how children think and visualise would benefit any illustrator when creating art targeting children. Quentin Blake illustrates more care-free, fun books rather than sensitive, but that doesn't mean they cannot create a lasting impression.

The book 'Corduroy' by Don Freeman raises questions about broad and important issues that we encounter such as friendship, belonging and materialism. This book is interesting as Don Freeman wrote and illustrated it, which gives a more personal touch to the drawings in the book. Corduroy is about a teddy bear that waits in the store every day for someone to buy him, but he is missing a

button on his overalls. "Corduroy serves as a classic example of the materialism that is ingrained in society. Although children do not need toys to survive, they still desire them and go out of their way to acquire them." (Freeman, 2021). This is a quite challenging and complex topic for a child to understand, but with the help of this book it simplifies and makes the topic easier to understand. I think this book is good at holding the child's attention with the intriguing story, whilst also subliminally getting the point across of what the teddy symbolises. The illustrations of Corduroy are simple with a lot of primary colours whilst still depicting a lot of emotion and information through them. The simplicity of the illustrations helps kids understand what is going on and visualising the story.

Humpty Dumpty is a famously well-known children's riddle/story that can be dated back to 1797. It can be seen as a short poem or has also been made into longer stories. There are many depictions of humpty dumpty and many people have illustrated books for this story. The illustrations always seem to have a simple take on them as they are intended for kids. "According to a number of military historians, Humpty Dumpty was the name of a cannon used by the Royalists during the English Civil War. The conflict raged from 1642 to 1649, and in June of 1648, Humpty Dumpty was stationed on the walls of Colchester. It was one of several cannons erected to try and keep Parliament's army from taking the city. The next month, however, the Parliamentary forces heavily damaged the walls beneath Humpty Dumpty with their own artillery. You can guess where this is going: Humpty Dumpty had a great fall, and broke into pieces." (Littlechild, 2019). This suggests Humpty Dumpty could have a darker meaning to the story than what people think. Like a lot of old folk tales, there is a historical background to the rhymes which are about sensitive themes. Sir John Tenniel illustrated the original Humpty Dumpty and is also famous for illustrating Alice in Wonderland. He is one of the most recognizable Victorian illustrators and drew in black and white. His illustration for Humpty Dumpty has an almost eerie feel to it, with Humpty looking strange and scared. Tenniel's illustrations would have been seen by children in the 1800's which is very different to what we see and think nowadays. Modern illustrations for children's books have more thought behind who the audience is. They are bright and easy to grasp whilst also being encapsulating. We have so much more information on child psychology and how children learn now that I think it would be difficult to not think about it whilst creating an illustration. There has been a lot of progress towards children's book and how important they are towards learning and understanding more complex topics.

One author illustrator that uses their books to convey deeper meanings is Theodore Geisel (Dr. Seuss). Dr Seuss has used a lot of children's books to create fun and quirky stories with lots of meaning behind them such as 'The Lorax', 'Horton Hears Who!' and 'How the Grinch Stole Christmas!'. "This book takes as its premise the notion that Dr Seuss's works have much more to them, and that they are worth taking seriously" (Nel, 2005). The illustrations in his books are colourful and unique which contrasts the stories well. The story 'The Lorax' is about deforestation and how you should support and speak about the environmentalism movement like the lorax does in the book. Dr Seuss is very good at creating intriguing and unique books that are very recognisable like in the Lorax. This book teaches kids early on the effects of deforestation and how we treat the world which is good to be taught at a young age. The story of 'Horton Hears a Who!' also has a deep meaning. The plot is about a whole society that lives on a speck of dust, with an elephant trying to protect them in a jungle. The illustrations do a good job of portraying how the elephant is such a big creature anyway and how the dust he's protecting is so small in comparison to him. The books deeper meaning was commentary on the U.S occupation of Japan after World War 2 (1945-1952).

The subliminal message to the book would target older audiences as younger children wouldn't know this, however the book still shows how no matter how small you are in the world you still matter. The book 'How the Grinch Stole Christmas!' touches on topics like consumerism and the importance of community. With all of Dr Seuss' books, the story and illustrations are always enjoyable and light-hearted on the surface, but you can always take an important lesson from them. The Grinch also shows how people can isolate you for being different, but it isn't a bad thing. I like how Dr Seuss decided to portray the Grinch too, with obvious differences to the other characters in the book so you can easily realise why he has always been left out. Children would catch on quickly that the happy ending shows how we should all be equal despite our differences which is a good lesson to learn, especially at a young age.

An interesting book I found was 'Where the Wild Things Are'. This book was written and illustrated by Maurice Sendak and was first published in 1963. This book is interesting as it has many controversies around it and was banned in the U.S in the 1960s as it was deemed as too upsetting. The book tells the story of the main character Max, who is sent to bed without dinner. When he falls asleep, he lands on a mysterious island and meets strange creatures. "Readers believed Where the Wild Things Are was psychologically damaging and traumatizing to young children due to Max's inability to control his emotions and his punishment of being sent to bed without dinner" (Cleveland, 2015) The illustrations of this book have an almost creepy look to them as the creatures Max meets aren't normal looking animals but unique. The book has controversy surrounding it due to children reading about a young boy not getting dinner. The book also has no big happy ending like most children's books do and there is no resolution in the end to why he never got fed. Parents wouldn't want children reading perhaps neglecting scenes as a child over educational piece. However, it still could be beneficial to show children that not everyone has the luxury of food every day and a loving parent who would care for them no matter how they acted. Sometimes children need to be shown it is not always happy and easy in the world and that they should be extremely grateful with what they have. Also, in the book in Max's dream world each creature represents an emotion he is feeling which he needs to overcome. This also stems into how it shows him feeling sad or angry about his mother not feeding him.

Another book that has been banned in the past was 'The Giving Tree' by Shel Silverstein. Who wrote and illustrated it. This book is about a boy and apple tree who develop a connection with each other. In the book the boy gets older and older until he is an elderly man, and the tree constantly gives to the boy pieces of itself to make the boy happy. In the book, the boy is always called the 'boy' even when he grows up. The apple tree might represent a parent who constantly gives out of selflessness until they have nothing else to give and are empty. The book was banned in a public library in Colorado in 1988 because it was interpreted as sexist, with the boy taking from a female tree and not giving anything back in return. There has been debate on whether this book is bad or not as it portrays a mother who is still happy in the end when she is just a stump left because she helped the boy without any help in return. Some people think it is irresponsible teaching kids that they should just give without any love in return, and it doesn't show equality and a balance between two people. The illustrations Silverstein chose are very simple. The cover is mainly green, but the pages are black and white. "Every line is fraught with emotion, whether it's the innocence of an untied shoelace or the stunned vacancy of The Boy's lined face as he ages, or teeny bare toes wrapped around a tree trunk. From trench coat to crudely carved initials to that final, powerful image of a tiny broken man on a tiny broken tree, Shel's illustrations speak louder than words. And considering how he writes,

that's saying something. You know, by not really saying something." (Collins, 2014) Whitney Collins puts well how Shel Silverstein illustrates specifically to provoke an emotion in the reader. His simple black and white line work illustrations show a lot of depth in them and help you visualise well what he wants you to take from the book. I think this book is good at showing selflessness between a parent and child, but also could show kids they can ask for anything they want, and they can get it. It could add to selfishness in children as the book doesn't talk about how there should be a limit but shows the tree at the end as just a stump.

'The invisible boy', wrote by Trudy Ludwig and illustrated by Patrice Barton is about how small acts of kindness can help children flourish and feel included. In the book, Brian is left out in his class, but the more children are nice to him and include him he becomes happier and more confident. The illustrations in this book are very good at conveying this message. Patrice Barton uses soft colours for her illustrations, but most importantly she made Brian black and white. Overtime, Brian slowly turns into colour the more someone shows an act of kindness. I think this is a very smart idea as children will pick up on this very quick and it'll make sense to them. It also teaches them a valuable lesson that will encourage them to do the same. This book has some sensitive topics like bullying and being left out, but it does a good job at resolving these issues and showing children if they are kind, they can help situations like this. This book is a good representation of exposing children to sensitive topics but showing them a resolution at the same time. "Seeing characters act with kindness and respect in stories will have a positive effect, as well as seeing the hurt feelings and consequences of other characters being unkind or disrespectful. This is also a good opportunity to teach children about "not judging a book by its cover"" (Children's books can help when talking about sensitive topics, 2020).

Going back to the question, a lot of people would agree with the statement that we shouldn't show children the world is just a happy place but should teach them through books and other forms of teaching, core life lessons and values they will need. Sometimes there should be a line to what we make our children read and learn, as their minds aren't fully developed, and a literal take on morals could confuse and scare them. A lot of books do a good job of disguising lessons and sensitive topics in fun, light-hearted stories and drawings which helps children focus. Illustrations have a very important role in keeping a child entertained as it wouldn't stimulate them to read a book of just words. Teaching kids' important life lessons without making it seem daunting helps them process it in their own way. "Children's literature is a great vehicle for allowing us to engage our students in discussions of social justice and diversity, studying sensitive topics, and learning about equity. Whether we approach the topics in a "gentle" way through the reading of a picture book, or encourage students to share ideas and understandings through their own stories, we can strive to create a working relationship of comfort, acceptance and understanding with culturally relevant teaching practices." (Swartz, 2020, p.15) creating safe spaces for children to learn about these topics, such as schools, the house, with family and friends helps normalise them and teach kids how they should act in a safe environment. With the help of picture books and illustrations, children will find it enjoyable and easier to learn and then act out these life lessons in their everyday routines. Illustrations in children's book create a significant difference to how much a child remembers and takes away from books, linking text to pictures they can easily see and remember will help stick to their minds.

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