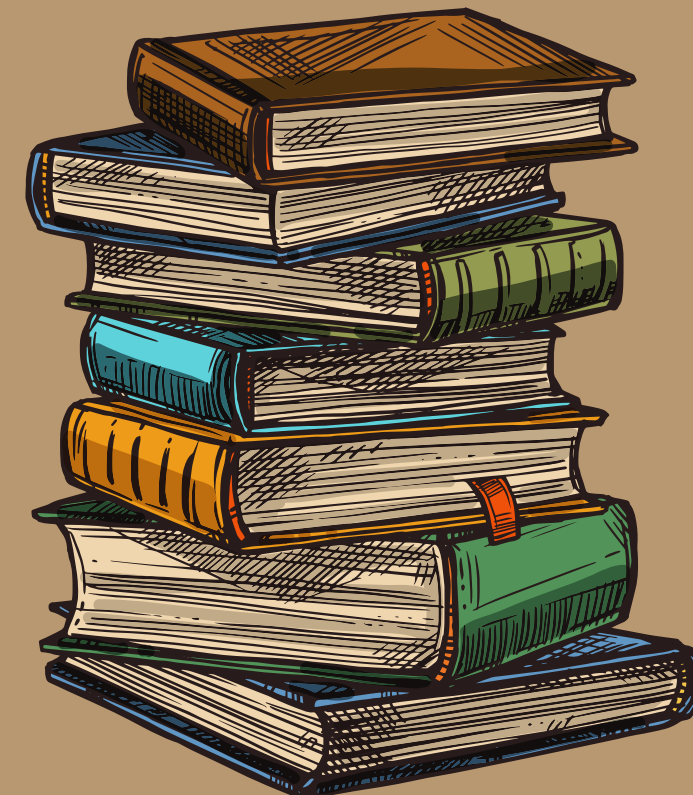




THE DANGERS OF A SINGLE STORY

The Power of Narratives - Which Stories Are We Choosing?



WHY SHOULD YOU CARE?

The shadows of misrepresentation that loom over minorities in Western culture cast a spell on all of us, regardless of our belonging to a minority group.

Misrepresentation creates a distorted and skewed map we use to navigate a world that does not resemble it.

The results of this can be truly catastrophic. Those who find themselves represented within this map find it difficult and scary to reconcile what they see with what they experience, while those who are excluded or misrepresented are condemned to walk in a world that refuses to acknowledge their existence.

Will you continue to follow this wrong map blindly, or will you become part of the change?

The first step is the awareness to recognise the power of the stories we tell and how they shape our society. Only then can we hope to create a new map, one that reflects the true diversity of our world and invites everyone to walk freely upon it.

AIM OF THE PROJECT

The project analyses how the Eurocentric literary canon, that fills Western traditions and classrooms, has affected African American children's literature. The focus is on children's literature because this audience is viewed as more adaptable to biases and stereotypes than adults.

METHODOLOGY

I selected 5 books that won the Coretta Scott King Award, which celebrates works that capture the African American identity. I then consulted secondary readings and research papers on identity, postcolonial literature, and children's literature, particularly the fantasy genre, to better understand how the selected books approached these themes.

FINDINGS

In my research, I've observed a consistent trend of victimisation in the portrayal of Black characters in Western entertainment. The selected books I examined make a deliberate effort to challenge this narrative, emphasising the agency and voices of their characters, ultimately teaching readers to be resilient fighters. Despite attempts to subvert the narrative, I noted a lack of the creation of a new one, as the analysed texts were either historical or hyper-realistic, deviating from the magical escapism typically found in children's books. This observation raises questions about the privilege of childhood. Books for Black children often accelerate the process of growing up, exposing them to the harsh realities of the world, both in reality and fiction. Preserving the right to dream is crucial not only for providing a safe place of light-heartedness but also for contributing to the development of a more just and equal society.

"We won't try to change this world unless we are able to imagine another reality. One could say all change starts with fantasy."