



## Global Issues in the EFL Classroom

*Forum für kulturelle Diversität & Gender  
in Lehre und Beratung*

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### **Global Issues in the EFL Classroom and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages**

‘However meaningful the careful evaluation of skills and sub-skills may be, however lucid the demands of standards may be, the allotment to levels like A1 or C2 does not in itself make a language speaker successful in his or her striving for communication with members of other cultures; these levels do not say anything about empathy, sensitivity or intercultural understanding. Understanding the other, however, is one of the main problems we encounter when we learn or teach a foreign language, and it cannot be solved by teaching reading as a merely informative skill.’ (Burwitz-Melzer 2012: forthcoming).

### **Why study global issues in the EFL classroom?**

Estimation of English speakers (Graddol 1997):

375 million L1 speakers of English

375 million L2 speakers of English

750 million EFL speakers of English

## Suggestions and exemplars for the scope of global issues

### 1. Racism and xenophobia:

Greder, Armin (2007) *The Island*. Crows Nest: Allen and Unwin.

### 2. Gender issues:

Cole, Babette (1987) *The Trouble with Gran*. London: Harper Collins.

Wild, Margaret, illus. Julie Vivas (1994) *Our Granny*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Willhoite, Michael (1990) *Daddy's Roommate*. Boston: Alyson Publications.

### 3. Class issues:

Mahy, Margaret (2009) *Setting Words Free*. In: Amnesty International, **FREE? Stories Celebrating Human Rights**. London: Walker Books.

### 4. Ecocriticism:

Van Allsburgh, Chris (1986) *The Stranger*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

## Education for Global Citizenship is ...

- asking questions and developing critical thinking skills
- equipping young people with knowledge, skills and values to participate as active citizens
- acknowledging the complexity of global issues
- revealing the global as part of everyday local life, whether in a small village or a large city
- understanding how we relate to the environment and to each other as human beings.

*Education for Global Citizenship: A Guide for Schools* (Oxfam 2006)

Accessed at [www.oxfam.org.uk/education/gc/](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/gc/) on 13.09.2011.

### Why study children's literature in education?

'Clearly, then, there's some truth in the common assumptions... Children do in this sense become what they read about. ...

If that's true, then the narratives children see on TV or read in books play an important part in making them who they believe themselves to be. In offering subject positions, **fictional texts for children work to construct their readers' subjectivity.**' (Nodelman and Reimer 2003: 178)

### Why study children's literature in the EFL classroom?

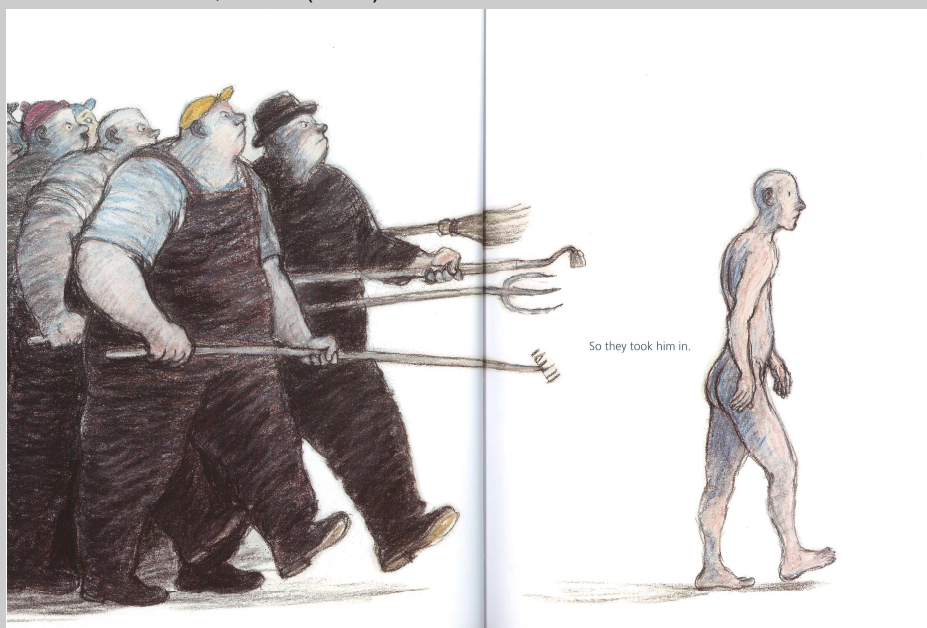
'Aside from North America, Australia, Great Britain, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, and Japan, most countries do not have funds to devote to the publication of children's literature.' (Stewart 2008: 97)

### Why study children's literature for intercultural learning?

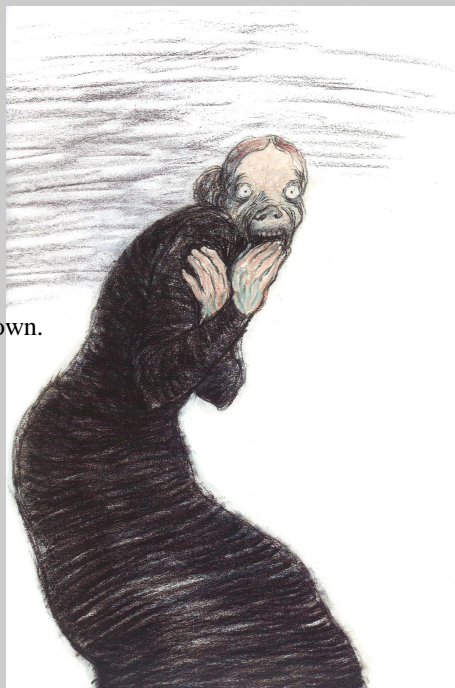
'Nation as a concept resides in the hearts and minds of those who live in a particular place at a particular time.' (Stewart 2008: 98)

## 1. Racism and xenophobia:

Greder, Armin (2007) *The Island*.

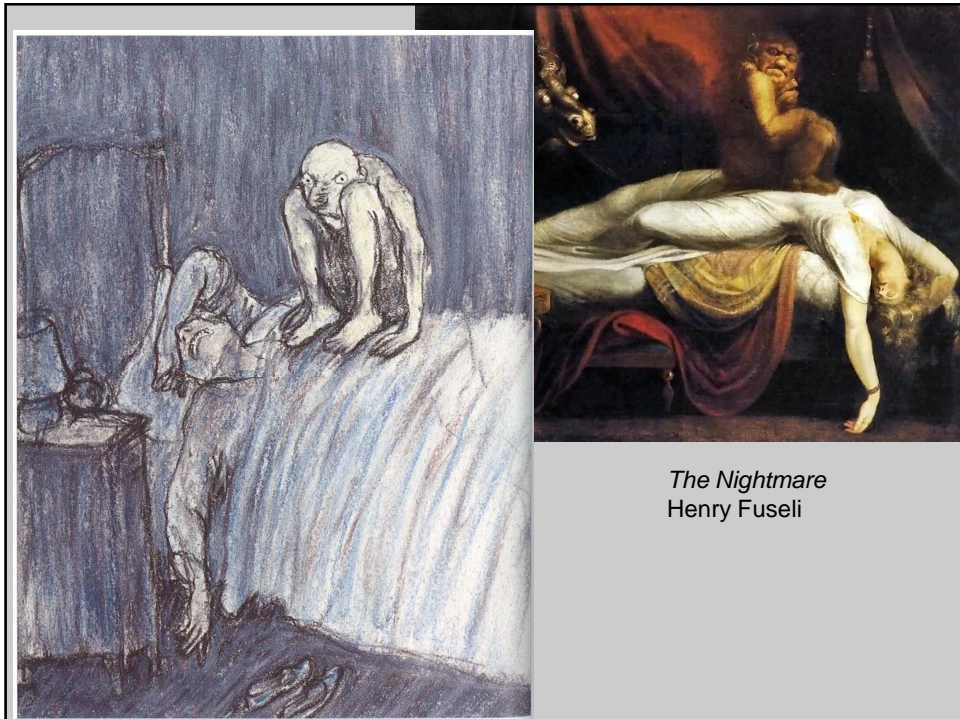


Then one morning the man appeared in town.

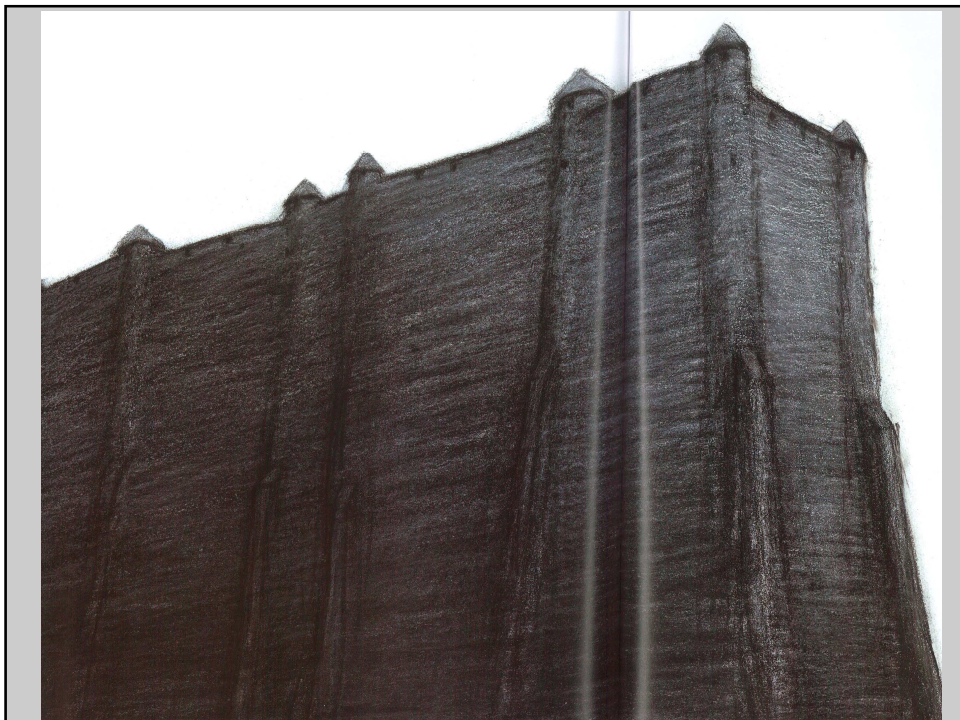


And the priest was very sorry, but the stranger's voice would clash with the rest of the choir.





*The Nightmare*  
Henry Fuseli

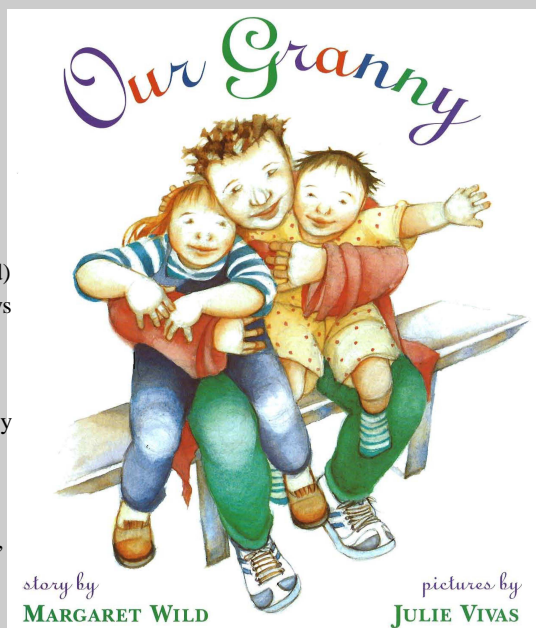


## 2. Gender issues:

'Textbooks and other **teaching materials are gendered** in the way they represent female and male characters.

Gender in the *people* sense refers broadly to the socially-shaped (as opposed to the biologically-determined) characteristics of women and men, boys and girls.' (Sunderland 2004)

'... gender studies, adhering to a strictly anti-essentialist stance, focus on the conceptualisation of gender as a **culturally and socially constructed** and thus historically variable category.' (Allrath and Gymnich 2005)



Some grannies have...

thin legs

fat knees

bristly chins

interesting hair

crinkly eyes

friendly smiles

or big soft laps.

Our granny has a wobbly bottom.

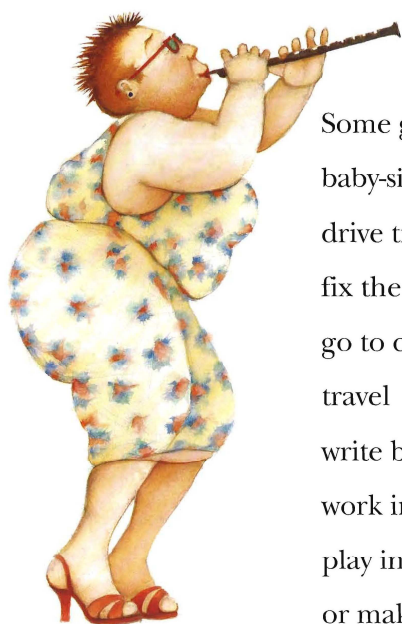


**Sensory anchoring...** (a picture) can be physically present as you think and talk, providing an anchor over a prolonged period of exploration.

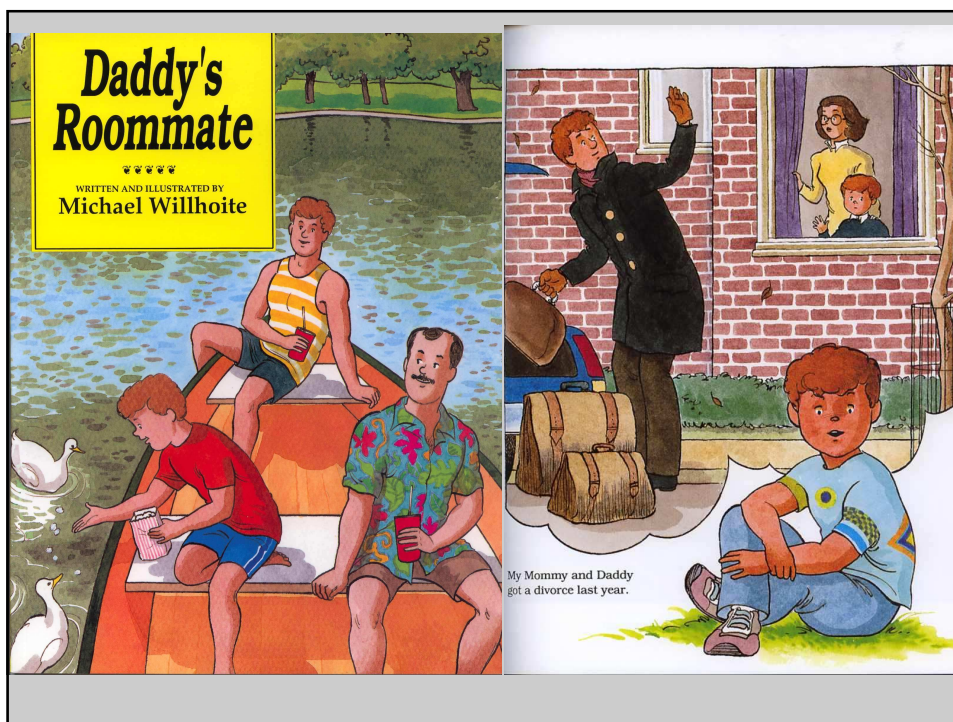
**Instant access...** You can check something with a glance, point with a finger.

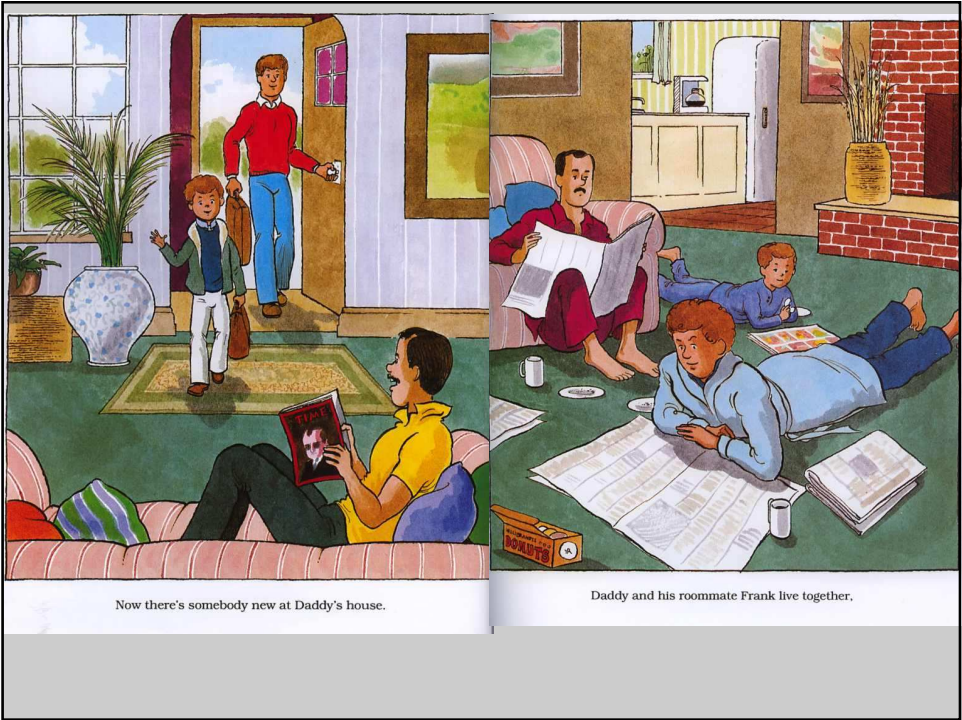
**Personal engagement.** Works of art invite and welcome sustained involvement. (Perkins 1994: 83 – 85)





Some grannies . . .  
 baby-sit  
 drive trucks  
 fix the plumbing  
 go to college  
 travel  
 write books  
 work in an office  
 play in a band  
 or make sick people better.

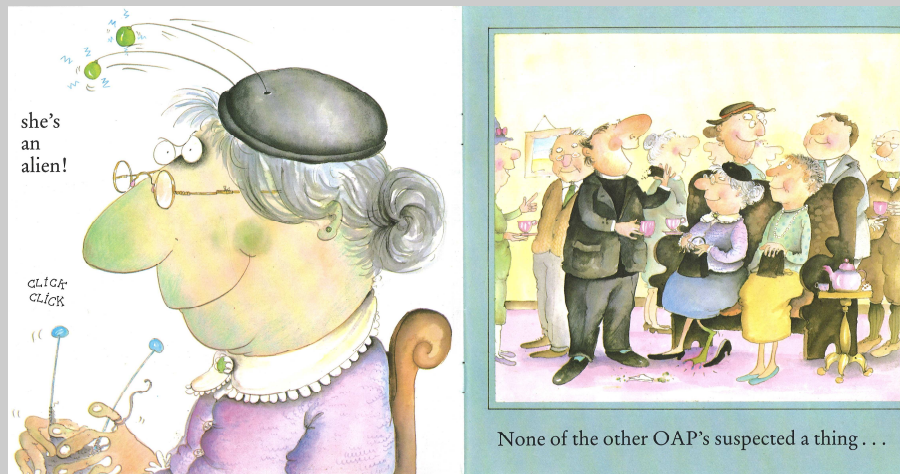
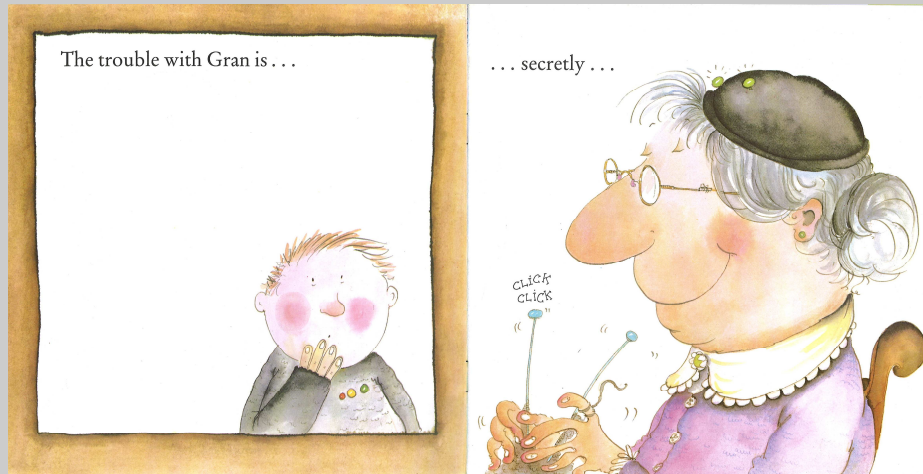


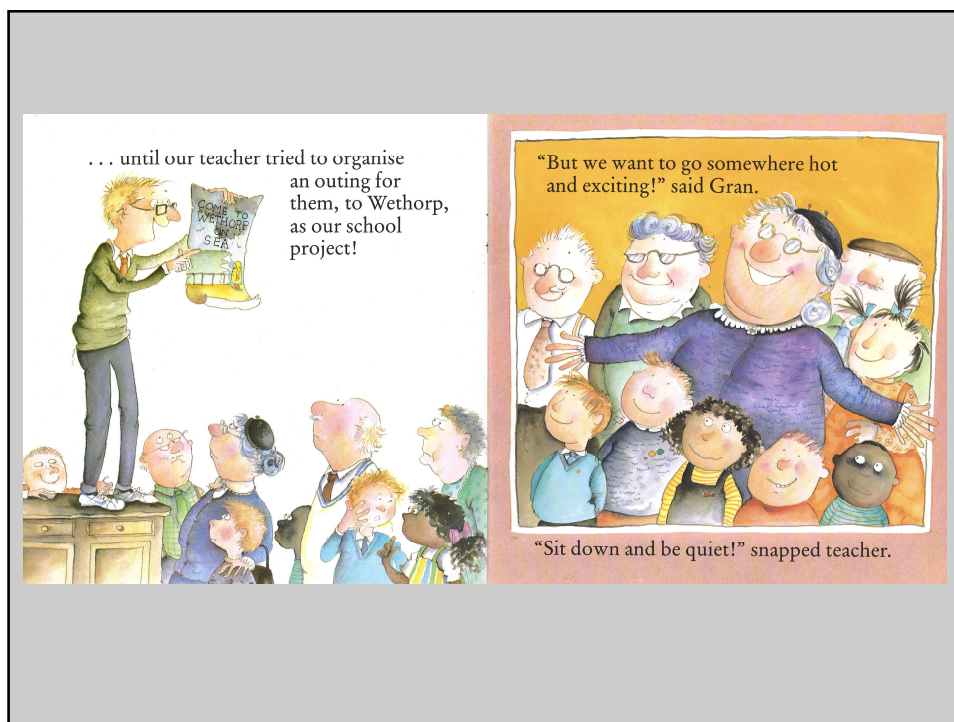




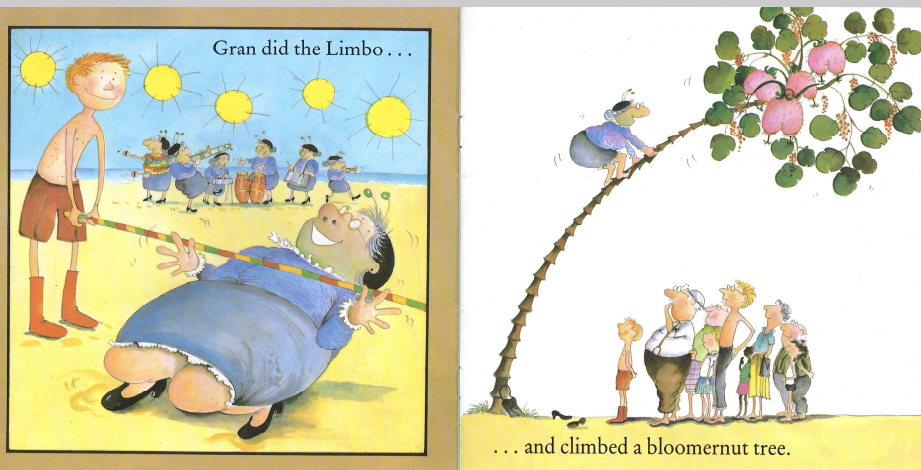
## The Trouble with Gran

Babette Cole









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### 3. Class issues: Mahy, Margaret (2009) *Setting Words Free*

from: Amnesty International *FREE? Stories About Human Rights*. London: Walker Books.

#### *FREE? Stories About Human Rights*

- No Anglocentricism, Eurocentricism (see Thiong'o 1986), Exoticism or Orientalism (see Said 1978).
- British authors write about human rights transgressions that take place in UK
- American authors write about human rights transgressions that take place in the US
- Further continents represented by major writers: Meja Mwangi (Kenya), Ibtisam Barakat (Palestine), Jamila Gavin (India), Margaret Mahy (New Zealand) and Rita Williams-Garcia (Jamaica)



'Of special significance for intercultural understanding are post-colonial **and minority texts**, because these often dramatise intercultural conflicts and reveal causes for misunderstanding and misrecognition of others.' (Bredella 2004, my emphasis)

#### 2011 England riots

Socio-economic causes focusing on:

- Unemployment
- Social division and cuts to services (Haringey Council, which includes Tottenham, where the rioting began, closed eight of its thirteen youth clubs in 2011)
- Reduced education funding (abolition of the Education Maintenance Allowance and trebling of university tuition fees)

'Daniel knew that his father had once lived in the Marley Street part of town, and had worked hard to leave it – along with that blue school uniform – far behind. His father was proud of the fact that these days he drove a smart car, and lived in a house with a beautiful view. **It was almost as if he had crossed over into a different country.**' (Mahy 2009: 150, my emphasis)

#### 4. Ecocriticism:

'In most literary theory "the world" is synonymous with society – the social sphere. Ecocriticism expands the notion of "the world" to include the entire ecosphere.' (Glotfelty and Fromm 1996: xix)

'Beginning with the idea that all entities in the great web of nature deserve recognition and a voice, an ecological literary criticism might explore how authors have represented the interaction of both the human and nonhuman voices in the landscape.' (McDowell 1996: 372)

'...classic children's literature has long been preoccupied with natural history, ecology, and human-animal interaction.' (Dobrin and Kidd 2004: 4)

Van Allsburgh, Chris (1986) *The Stranger*

