

## **A2 Ways of thinking about disability KS2 Activity**

Watch the extract and reading of the book 'Winnie the Witch'

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=O\\_f95a4MX7M](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=O_f95a4MX7M)

### **Social Model of Disability**

The social model of disability says that disability is caused by the way society is organised, rather than by a person's impairment or difference. It looks at ways of removing barriers that restrict life choices for disabled people. When barriers are removed, disabled people can be independent and equal in society, with choice and control over their own lives. An impairment is defined as the limitation of a person's physical, mental or sensory function on a long-term basis.

Barriers are not just physical. Attitudes found in society, based on prejudice or stereotype (also called **disablism\***), also disable people from having equal opportunities to be part of society.

Disabled people developed the social model of disability because the traditional medical model did not explain their personal experience of disability or help to develop more inclusive ways of living.

### **Medical model of disability**

The medical model of disability says people are disabled by their impairments or differences.

Under the medical model, these impairments or differences should be 'fixed' or changed by medical and other treatments, even when the impairment or difference does not cause pain or illness.

The medical model looks at what is 'wrong' with the person and not what the person needs. It creates low expectations and leads to people losing independence, choice and control in their own lives.

When they created 'Winnie The Witch', Korky Paul as illustrator and Valerie Thomas as author produced a fun way for children to learn about colour. They also created a unique and valuable tool for teaching children and many adults, about different ways of thinking about the social model of disability.

\*- "discriminatory, oppressive or abusive behaviour arising from the belief that disabled people are inferior to others"

Here's how the story goes. In this reading of the story:

- Winnie represents society
- the house represents the environment

- Wilbur represents people with impairments or differences
- the birds represent attitudes of everybody else in society

Winnie finds Wilbur a problem because his black fur can't be seen in her black house. He gets in the way.

**Society finds disabled people a problem.**

Winnie uses her skills to change Wilbur a little, thinking a green Wilbur will be less trouble in her black house. She doesn't ask if he wants to be green, because she thinks she knows best.

**Society tries to change or 'fix' individuals with impairments or differences, even when they are not ill or in pain.**

Wilbur is still a problem. Winnie makes another, bigger change to Wilbur but makes Wilbur very unhappy because he wants to be himself. Winnie has created an attitude that lets even the birds think they can laugh at Wilbur.

**People with impairments or differences don't want to be changed to fit in to "normal" society. They want to be themselves, taking part and contributing to society. The wrong change creates social attitudes that lead to individuals being treated disrespectfully, just as the right change can make sure everyone is equal and respected.**

Winnie decides to change her house and keep Wilbur as he is. They can both live happily in the colourful house.

**Changes in society remove barriers to everybody living in equality and independence. The moral of the story is it is better to change our environment and attitudes rather than try to change people with impairments or differences!<sup>1</sup>**

**Drama Activity. Devise another story way of showing how society needs to change rather than the disabled person. In your group work out how you will show this to the rest of the class. After sharing your story discuss, how this approach could change your school to make it more friendly for disabled people.**

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<sup>1</sup> From Scope website <http://www.scope.org.uk/campaigns/inclusion-and-participation/disabled-children-books/social-model-disability>