MASTERARBEIT / MASTER'S THESIS

Titel der Masterarbeit / Title of the Master's Thesis

"So I Guess We are Who We are for a Lot of Reasons": Teaching Character Education in the EFL Classroom through Young Adult Literature

verfasst von / submitted by

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"We never know them well, do we?"
"Who?"
"Real people."
"What do you mean, 'real people'?"
"As opposed to people in books," Paola explained. "They're the only ones we ever really know well, or know truly. […] Maybe that's because they're the only ones about whom we get reliable information. […]. Narrators never lie."

Donna Leon, A Sea of Troubles

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And last but not least, I would like to acknowledge all the wonderful authors who create storyworlds with protagonists that inspire, and all the wonderful teachers who bring those storyworlds into their classrooms.

1   Introduction

For centuries, societies have found themselves asking the following questions[1]: How do we shape good characters? What does it take to become a morally responsible citizen? How can we be conscious of the right things to do? Wherever individuals coexist, each one of them needs a moral compass to guide their behaviour and help them to make decisions based on principles that allow for peaceful coexistence. Especially nowadays, the issue of shaping good characters frequently appears in the educational context since educational establishments perceive themselves as being in charge of fostering students' moral awareness in addition to teaching a variety of subjects. The concept of character education is therefore a form of education that aims at fostering moral development in young people. Upon closer consideration of current research, it becomes evident that especially in the teaching and learning of languages character education can be implemented effectively through literature. Novels do not only enrich students' language skills and cultural understanding but also open a door to topics which are relevant for the learners' life experience and personal development. Teaching literature can be perceived as an intersection between literature and the students' lives, and teachers ought to take advantages of this. By learning about character strengths through stories, students are provided with the opportunity to take a glimpse into other people's lives. Hence, literature can be seen as a medium for debate, development and personal reflection. Considering the advantages of teaching literature, the diminishing importance of literary studies and its lack of appearance in the Austrian curriculum is concerning. As character education is a central point in any educational institution, may it be intentional or not, the connection between fostering students' moral development and studying literature presents a cogent reason to promote an increased use of literature in the EFL classroom.

This thesis suggests not only placing more importance on integrating literature in the language classroom but also combining it with a profound analysis of the characters of young adult literature novels. The protagonist in these novels then help students to understand and identify moral behaviour, particularly focusing on the relevant categories of 'identity', 'courage', and 'alterity'. Considering those aspects, the present thesis aims at answering the following research questions:

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[1] Title Quotation: Chbosky 228

- In what way does character education help students to meet the requirements of the "Allgemeine Bildungsziele" (BMBWF 8-12)?
- How can young adult literature represent a prompt for adolescent to reflect on contemporary societal structures and aspects, such as courage, alterity or identity?
- How can character education be successfully implemented in the upper secondary EFL classroom by means of the use of young adult literature?
- How does Alan Palmer's theory of the 'Fictional Minds' give us a deeper understanding of the characters in the young adult novels *Normal People* by Sally Rooney, *The Outcast* by Sadie Jones and *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky?

The first part of the thesis approaches the concept of 'Character Education' by explaining the notion 'character'. As the terms 'moral' and 'character' need to be treated with caution since numerous definitions and ideas exist, the present thesis considers these concepts from an educational angle. This contributes to the definition of moral principles and a good character on the basis of the "Allgemeine Bildungsziele" (see BMBWF 9), the general educational objectives, which represent a relevant section in the Austrian curriculum. From this part, significant extracts were taken in order to serve as a basis for the analysis. These elements are then found to be prominent features in the chosen novels. Following the theoretical exploration of character education, the outline of Alan Palmer's theory of the 'Fictional Minds', a narratological approach on how to read the minds of characters in novels, is presented. Palmer's approach includes and focuses on the exploration of the functioning of the minds of characters in the novel sotyworld and claims itself to be a cognitive approach to literature. This theory, which was chosen in order to gain a deeper and more precise understanding of the fictional characters under analysis, is then discussed in relation to the educational context. In the second half of the thesis, Palmer's concept is applied to the three young adult novels *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Steven Chbosky (2008), *Normal People* by Sally Rooney (2018) and *The Outcast* by Sadie Jones (2008). These books were chosen as they are frequently used in the Austrian upper secondary EFL classroom and provide a diverse range of characters who undergo various moral developments.

Examining the research conducted on character education, there has not been any research that has combined the concept of character education with young adult lit-

erature and analysed those aspects through the lens of Alan Palmer's theory of the 'Fictional Minds'. This implementation of character education in language teaching and the application of established literature theory provides a prolific intersection for innovative research. For the sake of completeness, it needs to be stated that the chosen books are aimed at advanced learners of the English language. Thus, the ultimate aim of the thesis is to assist teachers by providing ideas on how students can draw instructive, relatable and valuable conclusions from the world of fictional characters, and how they might successfully implement those insights into their own lives.

2 Character Education and Moral Principles

Throughout time, societies have recognised the need to educate future generations not only academically but also in terms of strengths and values as to ensure a responsible, harmonious and equitable coexistence. As character education is a broad field of research, for the purposes of the present thesis, it has been narrowed down and approached from a specific angle, focusing on the Austrian school context and combining it with the study of literature. In general, as this thesis particularly considered character education in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, it addresses students who are non-native speakers of English and who learn this language in a country where English is not the dominant language.

2.1 Exploration of the Target Group

In scientific explorations of character education, upper-secondary students who are on average between the age of 14 and 19 in particular find themselves frequently excluded from research. This stems from a prevailing perception in those years, that learners are required to primarily focus on the preparation of their final exams. While creative, thematic and integrated units are usually part of the lower secondary classes, in higher years of education, lessons tend to turn their focus to more sophisticated and rigorous topics. Character education, therefore, finds itself to be largely incorporated into primary or lower secondary education. However, this should not be the case as especially adolescents "need an approach to character education that helps them to develop a lasting moral compass" (Bohlin 3) and build formative experiences within this significant age range.

The advanced language skills of upper-secondary students allow EFL teachers to embed novels, in which the complexity of a character's moral growth emerges to a complex extent, into their lessons. The later adolescent years do not only come with their own social and emotional challenges but also with greater cognitive capability (see FitzSimons 42). Additionally, adolescents frequently deal with similar factors to those found in the young adult literature novels, including identity, courage, alterity or friendship. Those themes that seem to be representative for the age in question will be explored in further chapters of this thesis.

2.2 Definition of Character

The term 'character' derives from the Greek word 'kharaktḗr' which means "to engrave" (O'Sullivan 640). Having its roots in the Greek language, the study of character has a long tradition dating back to Plato and his student Aristotle as well as Socrates in ancient Greece (see Berkowitz and Bier, *Research-Based Character Education* 72). The determination of its meaning highly depends on the historical as well as the cultural context it is found in and can, thus, itself be seen as a social process and not merely an individual one (see Arthur 3; 11). While having a good character was defined by the aforementioned Greek philosophers through the virtues of prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude, many Christian intellectuals specified the notion of 'character' according to values advocated in Christianity, amongst them good temper, self-sacrifice or the manner of helping others (see Arthur 125). In the popular mind, people often describe character by using dichotomies, such as good vs. bad, stable vs. unstable etc., thus presenting the suggestion of desirable and undesirable character traits which can furthermore even be evaluated (see Arthur 10). The inherent understanding of a good character which develops over life is predominantly shaped in our childhood and adolescence (see Berkowitz and Bier, *Research-Based Character Education* 74). Although upbringing has a great impact on the evolvement of character, schools can also be a "developmental force" (Berkowitz and Bier, *Research-Based Character Education* 74) in this process, as will be made clear in the following chapter.

But how can 'character' now be defined precisely? Since authors in their research do not cease to highlight its complex nature, a large number of different definitions exist. For this thesis, however, particularly Berkowitz' and Bier's (*Research-Based Character Education* 73) definition of character seems beneficial and useful. They state that

character is "the complex set of psychological characteristics that enable an individual to act as a moral agent" (*Research-Based Character Education* 73). Thus, character "comprises the moral side of a person" (Berkowitz and Bier, *Research-Based Character Education* 74). What is important is that character is not only the accumulation of psychological attributes and personality traits, it also has a civic dimension. According to Baehr (1153), living well and incorporating good virtues "often involves engaging in civic activities like caring for shared spaces, keeping informed about issues affecting one's local community or broader society". These civic virtues include community awareness, neighbourliness, and tolerance. Baehr does not only explain civic virtues, but also mentions moral dimensions of character which include traits that enable us to act well in situations that require an ethical response. Those traits include courage, honesty, justice and respect (see Baehr 1153). These are all factors that will play an essential part when discussing the educational dimension of character since they are included in the Austrian curriculum, which will be explained in more detail in further chapters. For the purposes of this thesis, having a good character is therefore a combination of the civic and the moral dimensions of character. It is mainly defined by one's contribution to the needs of a community while showing loyalty, kindness and courage. In order to do so, students are required to not only examine the behaviour of the novels' characters but also explore how they view themselves. The concept of identity together with courage, loyalty and alterity thus form the central points in this definition of a good character. The individual points will be explained in more detail in chapter 2.5

2.3   Character in the Educational Context

After having defined the virtues that shape a good character, they now need to be embedded in the educational context. Generally speaking, the ultimate aim of character education is to nurture and educate young generations' characters which, in turn, leads to a healthy and stable future society (see Arthur 2). Although character education is not a new phenomenon, as it dates back to Aristotle and Socrates (see Berkowitz and Bier, *Research-Based Character Education* 72), it began to gain popularity in the 1980s and 1990s (see Bohlin 1; Berkowitz and Bier, *Research-Based Character Education* 73). Moreover, the interest in the field and the effectiveness of its implementation in the classroom have been steadily increasing, and the research character education has become more extensive (see Berkowitz and Bier, *Research-*

Based Character Education 72-73). While McGrath (23) still talks about a "lack of definition clarity", Berkowitz and Bier object to this claim by collecting definitions of various concepts concerning this subject. For instance, they consider character as "a psychological construct. That is, the outcome of effective character education is the psychological development of students" (Berkowitz and Bier, *What Works in Character Education* 30). They proceed to explain that character education "targets a subject of child development" and is the "composite of those psychological characteristics that enable and motivate the child to function as an effective moral agent (i.e., to be socially and personally responsible, ethical and self-managed)" (Berkowitz and Bier, *What Works in Character Education* 30), a claim that is also made in the 'Allgemeine Bildungsziele. The underlying question of character education is: "What sort of person should I become?" (Lapsley and Yeager 150). It is intertwined with the habits, traits and virtues a person, in this case a student, incorporates (see Lapsley and Yeager 150-151).

Character education comes in a variety of forms and its effectiveness is usually measured by the improvements seen in youth behaviour (see Berkowitz and Bier, *Research-Based Character Education* 82; McGrath 23). McGrath, who goes so far as to describe "any program intended to increase prosocial behaviors or resistance to negative behaviors" (23) as possible examples of character education, attempts to determine a prototypical description of the field in one of his studies. He discovered that there is little consensus amongst scholars. Some researchers consider the focus of character education to be on the enhancement of moral functioning, which includes the awareness and knowledge of morally correct behaviour, while others deem the focus to be on the performance functioning, which addresses the actual execution of those actions. Others argue that students themselves should decide what elements of character they wish to focus on (see FitzSimons 24). FitzSimons (24) describes character education as a way to foster an "individual's sense of self, cultivating character strengths and promoting resilience". Additionally, character education wants to help students identify their own beliefs and find their place in society while making them better critical thinkers (see Arthur 133-134). Bohlin (157) even defines the concept as a "lifelong and often messy project", while FitzSimons (2), on the other hand, highlights its importance as she claims that people who are aware of their strengths are "happier, higher achieving, more resilient and more satisfied with their lives". She furthermore states that it has a positive impact on academic perfor-

mance and achievement (see 23). This claim was supported by recent study conducted in 120 Californian elementary schools which reported a significant relation between the quality of character education and positive results in standardised test scores (see Berkowitz and Bier, *Research-Based Character Education* 78-79). Berkowitz and Bier (*Research-Based Character Education* 80) claim the following:

> Character education has been demonstrated to be associated with academic motivation and aspirations, academic achievement, prosocial behavior, bonding to school, prosocial and democratic values, conflict-resolution skills, moral-reasoning maturity, responsibility, respect, self-efficacy, self-control, self-esteem, social skills, and trust in and respect for teachers.

The success of character education depends on its quality and certain characteristics. Multiple factors, such as reflection, parent involvement, trust in teachers, or appropriate role models play an integral role in this form of education (see Berkowitz and Bier, *Research-Based Character Education* 79-82). Although some teachers believe that educating children's or adolescents' character is the duty of their parents and therefore opt for a "non-interference policy" (Bohlin 3), I agree with Bohlin (4) when she argues that "[w]hether we believe that character education is simply not [the teachers'] job or whether we believe it is a dangerous form of indoctrination, the 'non-interference' policy leaves students without a road map, vulnerable to any number of competing amoral ideas about what will make them happy". Hence, being involved in discussing moral values and leaving behind the hands-off approach as a teacher, does not only help young people to find their way in life but also equips them with the tools they need in order to develop moral standards. Although family and especially parents serve as the main character educators of a child or a young adult, this responsibility needs to be shared between home and school. Moreover, it is nearly unavoidable that teachers shape students' character, whether it happens intentionally or unintentionally, as learners usually spend a high number of hours with their teachers, building an intense relationship with them. Therefore, with this in mind, it can be argued that character education is not optional at schools but rather unavoidable. This inevitability gives teachers an even more legitimate reason to integrate character education actively into their lessons despite the frequent lack of time and resources.

A problem that might arise when introducing this important concept in schools is that many initiatives do not focus on the desires and aspirations of young people, but rather they try "[stamp] out problem behaviors or [prepare] an honest and efficient fu-

ture workforce to secure a more robust economy" (Bohlin 2). This clearly shows the delicacy of the issue. The notion of character education discussed in this thesis is neither superficial and profit-seeking nor does it short-sightedly wish to 'fix' adolescents Bohlin (2) argues that "[t]hese approaches miss the mark and fail to inspire real moral improvement in young people". It needs to be added that, naturally, parents play an important role when it comes to character education, yet the school and its staff is also able to support children or adolescents in understanding the core values of society by critically reflecting on and discussing them in order to foster moral growth and the development of a good character

Considering the points in this chapter and the definition of character established in chapter 2.2, the character education model used in this thesis will include three aspects which are relevant for adolescents. Those elements are taken from the curriculum section 'Allgemeine Bildungsziele' of upper secondary schools (in German: 'allgemeinbildende höhere Schulen (AHS)). This section is particularly relevant to students' moral development and requirements.

2.4   Character Education and the Austrian Curriculum

As discussed in the previous chapters, educational institutions and their staff can indeed have an impact not only on students' academic knowledge but also on their character development. In order to provide optimal support for children and young adults, educators need to devise guidelines and moral values. These principles should then be applied effectively in the classroom. Schools should ask themselves what type of conception of person they want to work towards and what values this conception incorporates. In this case, the general educational guidelines of the Austrian curriculum can serve as a basis. For the purposes of this thesis, the curriculum of the 'Oberstufe' elaborated by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, was chosen. It contains the section "Allgemeine Bildungsziele". These general educational objectives are not subject-related but function as an outline of general values all subjects should adhere to. Especially interesting for this thesis is the subsection "Bildungsbereich Mensch und Gesellschaft" (see BMBWF 11-12), the educational field regarding people and society. This paragraph presents the following aspects:

- Knowledge and understanding of social (especially political, economic, legal, social, ecological and cultural) relations is an essential requirement for a conscious and responsible life and for constructive participation in societal duties.

- The support and encouragement of students – regardless of their social, religious and cultural background – to critically deal with the causes of the structures of inequality in society, especially gender inequality and role stereotypes in order to broaden their own scope of action and life prospects. Moreover, students should be supported in developing attitudes and competencies that are conducive to equal opportunities and the dismantling of gender-hierarchical role norms.

- Students should be made aware of the interconnectedness of all individuals in multiple forms of community; appreciation of oneself and others as well as respect for the different human ways of finding meaning are to be encouraged.

- It must be emphasised that social phenomena are historically conditioned and created by people, and that it is possible and useful to exert a constructive influence on social developments. The tasks and working methods of social institutions and interest groups are to be communicated and possible solutions for conflicts of interest are to be worked out and weighed up.

- Teaching must actively contribute to a democracy committed to human rights. The ability to judge and criticise as well as decision-making and action skills are to be promoted; they are crucial for the stability of pluralistic and democratic societies. In an increasingly international and multicultural society, students are to be taught an openness to the world that is based on an understanding of the existential problems of humanity and on shared responsibility. In this context, humanity, solidarity, tolerance, peace, justice, gender equality and environmental awareness are guiding values.

- Preparation for private and public life (especially the working and professional worlds) must be oriented toward economic performance, social cohesion, equal participation for both genders in all areas of society (i.e. in family and educational work as well as in the world of work and civic engagement), and ecological sustainability. In this context, the development of digital competencies should enable the autonomous, reflective use of information and communication technologies and support individual learning processes.

- The examination of religious and philosophical attempts to explain and justify the origin and meaning of one's own existence and the existence of the world is an important duty of schools.

It is evident that the human image drawn in these guidelines relies predominantly on fundamental, universal virtues. For example, the Declaration of Human Rights (see United Nations), a point of reference that can be characterised as international, neutral and ideology-free, supports similar values. This declaration is a result of international consensus that is based on "inherent dignity" and "equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family" as "the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world" (United Nations). This universal moral norm can serve as an appropriate supporting system for the guidelines presented in the Austrian curriculum. Fundamentally, the Declaration of Human Rights is concerned with the interaction between human beings and provides guiding principles, all of them pursuing the aim of organising those social interactions (see Spini 3). Human rights imply individuals' responsibilities towards one another and foster mutual understanding. The thirty articles of the Declaration present values such as equality, freedom, tolerance, dignity, anti-discrimination, freedom of opinion and expression or security (see United Nations). These principles do not only create the ideal human image for societies of different nations, peoples and countries, but also for each and every individual. Supported and validated by the aspects they have in common with the Human Rights, the points given in the section "Bildungsbereich Mensch und Gesellschaft" in the Austrian curriculum can serve as a basis for character education, and as a basis for the analysis presented in this thesis.

2.5 Essential Values that Shape a Moral Compass

With regard to the novels under analysis and the topics dealt with in their plots, three main categories can be established considering the "Allgemeine Bildungsziele" of the Austrian curriculum and the incorporation of the definition of a good character: identity and self-discovery, loyalty and courage, alterity and otherness. It is necessary to keep in mind, however, that these categories do not stand on their own but are intertwined and related. As this thesis analyses young adult literature, all of the presented categories find themselves in the context of growing up, including the development of identity, the process of establishing healthy relationships and the courage to stand up

for oneself and others. These categories also aim at covering struggles teenagers frequently face and should offer insights into the array of emotions they experience.

2.5.1 Identity and Self-Discovery

Identity formation is a process that might never be fully completed throughout our lives, which makes the search for it a prevailing topic, especially in adolescent years. It plays a significant role in the process of self-discovery and contributes to preparing young people for possible challenges in adulthood (see Qashmer 13). Teenage years constitute the time in a human being's life in which finding out about who they are and who they identify with are highly prominent. Adolescents experience a shift from being rather self-focused to becoming more and more ideological (see Qashmer 22), a welcome transition which is also evident in the general educational objectives of the Austrian Federal Ministry. According to Moshman (90), this process includes "[e]stablishing concrete self-other distinctions", "[e]stablishing a behavior style", "[e]stablishing the self as an individual" and "[c]oordinating the self-esteem". Identity as part of one's character or, in other words, as part of the self includes multiple facets such as emotions, judgement or commitment (see Qashmer 20).

Interestingly, Moshman (89) explains the concept of identity as "an explicit theory of oneself as a person". In this sense, young people need to create this "theory" of themselves, a process in which character education may serve as a facilitation tool. According to Bohlin (see 14-15), teenagers attempt to form their identity not only based on role models or social ideals but also based on several narratives that surround them in their daily lives. They deduce what it means to be successful, happy, mature or acknowledged by looking at different forms of behaviour (see Bohlin 15). As teenagers mature, they "want to forge an identity of their own making, to become a particular kind of person [but at] the same time, it is a challenge for them to examine the range of possible ideals for their lives and determine which ones are most worth embracing" (Bohlin 15). Literary texts that provide adolescents with exemplary role models and topics that encourage them to look beneath the surface can contribute significantly to the development of their identity and the process of self-discovery. Identity and its construction do not exist in a vacuum but are influenced by a variety of aspects such as gender, culture or society in general (see Moshman 93). This manifests itself not least in the general pedagogical objectives of the Austrian Federal Ministry. Many aspects that require students to contemplate their identity, for instance

reflecting upon their own existence, the responsibility one has in society, or working towards the dismantling of gender-hierarchical role norms can be found in those principles (see BMBWF 9-12). Addressing identity formation through character education with the help of literature clearly relates to the general pedagogical objectives an educational institution should meet.

2.5.2 Friendship, Loyalty and Courage

Learning how to stand one's ground, fighting against prejudice and stereotypes, and defending loved ones - these are virtues that are crucial yet certainly not easy to live by as an adult, let alone in adolescent years. Therefore, it is even more important to learn about these values as soon as possible, both at home and as part of education at school. As will become evident over the course of the analysis, friendships can be central to a person's moral growth and can further facilitate finding the right path in life as well as one's social position. The "Allgemeine Bildungsziele" demand that students be aware of the responsibility they have in society and require mutual respect and understanding towards various ways to find meaning in life (see BMBWF 9). It can be argued that these requirements do not only apply to the public space but also to students' personal lives. Being loyal, respecting other people's opinions and looking after each other are qualities that need to be fostered. Particularly in adolescent years, facing fear with bravery can be hard but learned when being introduced to role models who lead healthy and fulfilling relationships, stand up for their friends and show courage in difficult situations while at the same time critically reflect on their behaviour.

2.5.3 Subverting Traditional Role Model – Embracing Otherness and Alterity

The desire to belong to and be accepted by a peer group is remarkably strong in adolescence. Oftentimes, young people feel that they have to change their personality merely to fit in. Living outside the norm, which is defined by society and which has created stereotypes and unrealistic role models, often entails living on the margin of society or even being excluded from a community. Valuing particularities and accepting otherness should be part of the moral understanding of individuals as it guarantees a peaceful coexistence. The "Allgemeine Bildungsziele" state that it is the duty of an educational institution to support and encourage students to critically reconsider and question social constructs such as gender roles, or hierarchy and learn to em-

brace diversity, may it be cultural, social or economic (see BMBWF 9). Through character education, students should learn how to live their own lives rather than conforming to stereotypes and imposing discriminatory measures. To do so, they should be supported in order to develop actions and competences that effectively aim towards establishing equal rights and challenging gender normative gender normative stereotypes as well as cultural cliches (see BMBWF 11). Alterity, thus, is an aspect that students should be taught to embrace rather than neglect in order to foster mutual understanding.

2.6 Character Education and Young Adult Literature

Having elaborated on the essential aspects of character education, it is now necessary to clarify its connection to literature. In the EFL classroom, reading literary novels does not only enrich students' language learning process, provide them with authentic material and enhance their cultural understanding and reading proficiency (see Floris 2-3), but it also equips them with the ability to change their perspective and foster their understanding of the social world (see Floris 3-4). O'Sullivan (644) argues that "infusing literature study with character education is more a matter of a slight change of emphasis rather than a new topic" and finds the idea of guiding children towards developing a loving and good character as perhaps "the most important work" (645) of a teacher. Through literature, pupils are provided with the chance to see moral choices linked to an individual and ideally understandable story rather than being confronted with a rigid set of rules. EFL teachers are certainly not able to entirely control their students' character development and how they put moral values in practice in the outside world. However, they have the chance to guide and equip them with a "moral compass" (Bohlin 27). Additionally, they are able to function as coaches or instructors who help their students to unfold their personality (see Bohlin 26). Bohlin (27) also explains that "literature teachers can give students the practice they need to become connoisseurs of vicarious experience, sensitive readers able to make distinctions among choices […] that lead fictional characters toward flourishing and those that lead them to a less than fully human life".

Especially beneficial for character education are narratives that manage to reveal "the moral contours of a life" (Bohlin 27), thereby enabling students to develop personally. In fact, "[t]he deeper and richer the literature, and the stronger the characters, the easier it will be to include character education naturally in literature study"

(O'Sullivan 641). When selecting appropriate literary texts, it is crucial that they can "stimulate the kind of personal involvement and arouse the learners' interest" as well as are in accordance with the learners "ideas, experiences and needs" (Floris 6). As soon as they find the texts relatable and meaningful, they will enjoy working with them and find the necessary motivation to do so. Although literature might offer certain difficulties, it will be rewarding when wisely chosen.

As this paper focusses on the analysis of young adult literature novels, a more detailed outline of the genre is needed. Although Cart (3) claims that young adult literature is difficult to define since the term is "inherently slippery and amorphous", there are still several common characteristics that can be found. These characteristics include the prevalence of topics that are of interest for young people, or language that parallels the language young adults use in real life (see Bushman, Parks Haas 2). Moreover, the protagonists of the texts are usually adolescents who face problems that typically appear in teenage years. Crowe (121) defines literature for young adults as "all genres of literature published since 1967 that are written for and marketed to young adults" while for him, a 'young adult' is a person who is "old enough to be in junior high or high school" (Crowe 121). The genre has gained in popularity over the years and its target group and readership continues to expand and is becoming a "crossover" (Cart *Preface* x), meaning that it is read by more groups than the target group it was initially intended for. Thus, nowadays not only adolescents read young adult literature but also adults (see Cart *Preface* x), a phenomenon which is causing a general growth in "sophistication of [young adult] books in both subject and style" (Cart *Preface* x). This growth can also be beneficial within the school context as it causes a rise in standard and level of the novels.

Why young adult literature is particularly appealing an effective amongst teenagers explains Crowe (122) as follows: "[young adult literature] can be used to accomplish the same English and language arts objectives as traditional literature; however, [it] has the added advantage of being more relevant to the lives of teenagers and is therefore more likely to overcome the resistance to 'school books' and reading that afflicts too many teenagers these days". Particularly for young people it is vital that the books they read in school contain characters that are relatable (Kelley, Wilson, and Koss 84), thus facilitating perspective-taking and provide an authentic reading experience. Kelley, Wilson and Koss (see 84) additionally found out that students prefer characters in books that are their own age and claim that stories should "cap-

ture the readers' interest relatively early in the reading process" (84). Glasgow (54) argues that "[w]e must create for students democratic and critical spaces that foster meaningful and transformative learning. If we expect students to take social responsibility, they must explore ideas, topics, and viewpoints that not only reinforce but challenge their own". A classroom concerned with the aim of educating students' character can represent such a "critical space" (Glasgow 54) in which students are provided with the possibility to share, think and explore. Young adult novels discuss a variety of topics and can thus help young people to explore their own values and give them an understanding of the world in general. They "don't just reaffirm everything we already know" (Glasgow 54), instead aiming to motivate, unsettle and challenge initial assumptions. This invites the students to incorporate what they learn into their own "developmental journey" (Glasgow 60). Considering the mentioned aspects, young adult literature is highly appropriate for the use in the EFL classroom and simultaneously beneficial as a tool to integrate character education.

3   Fictional Minds

Literary theories do not only help to understand and criticise literary texts, they also assist the readership to reflect in depth on the broader meaning and the message conveyed by the author. To do so, however, a thorough exploration of the fictional characters is of essence, especially for the purposes of this thesis. Retracing the way of thinking and understanding a fictional character's emotional state provides the reader with the opportunity to appreciate he story to a fuller extent and allows them to gain beneficial insights for the real world. This recognition leads to the questions as to what aspects can be observed when attempting to predict other people's behaviour and thoughts, and how this is represented and observable in fictional texts. In order to answer these questions, Alan Palmer's theory of the 'Fictional Minds' serves as a basis for the subsequent analysis as he focuses on fictional characters in all their entirety. He does not only consider the characters' thoughts and feelings but also their social environment and the settings they find themselves in. This perspective on the fictional mind including all aspects enables learners to fully understand the inner life of a fictional character, a necessary procedure to identify with the protagonists. In the preceding chapters, a parallel is often drawn between fictional characters and people in the real-world. Observable behaviour in the real world is indeed the

primary source of gathering data since access to other people's thoughts and feelings is extremely limited.

In fictional texts, readers are suddenly able to go beyond the surface and gain knowledge of the inner workings of fictional people. This being said, the verbalisation of thoughts and the depiction of conscious and unconscious processes in the brain in fiction is also limited to a certain extent and varies from page to page. Learning how to read between the lines, view the bigger picture and eventually reach a full understanding of the character's development is a journey of discovery for students, which should ideally be accompanied by teachers. As discussed, a variety of fundamental differences between real people and characters presented in books can be found. Still, there is a common ground shared between them and ways of acting, ideas, choices and personality traits the reader can identify with. Nevertheless, characters can be compared to chess pieces (see Auinger 34) as they do not act autonomously but are played with by the author (see Auinger 34). Although the reader has the power to draw conclusions beyond the written word, the author of the novel is in charge of determining the course of the story and the way in which the selection of cognitions is presented. Additionally, the obvious fact that fictional characters are by no means real should be addressed and discussed in the EFL classroom. A profound analysis of fictional characters can be beneficial for students' understanding of various aspects of life. Other than real people in the students' social circle, they show the necessary distance to serve as meaningful examples. Importantly, this process needs guidance since teachers cannot require their students to read books and simply hope that the message is received. With specific aspects of Alan Palmer's literary theory, to which I have devoted the upcoming chapters, the present thesis aims to show how fictional characters can be understood in their complexity and in a way in which students are able to relate to the matter in question.

3.1 Exploration of Alan Palmer's Theory

The majority of characters in novels are diverse and complex. If they are not profoundly understood, the story itself cannot be fully appreciated. The characters are the driving force of a narrative text and carry great responsibility as they advance and shape the plot. Unlike classical narratological approaches, Palmer's theory of the 'Fictional Minds' sees literary characters through the lens of a variety of disciplines such as history, linguistics, pragmatics, philosophy and psychology and intends to

comprehend a fictional character's mind considering all its facets. In the first chapter of his book, he states that "disciplines mature, and when they do, the heuristic and pedagogic tools that have been historically useful have to be reconsidered and, if necessary, remoulded. In the case of fictional minds, the time has come for the map to be redrawn" (Palmer, *Fictional Minds* 28). Nevertheless, Palmer does not entirely neglect different narratological approaches but combines existing concepts towards fictional minds and goes beyond them to establish a holistic framework that represents the fictional mind in its complexity and allows a dynamic interaction of different models. For this reason, his ideas provide the possibility of an in-depth study of character which can then be applied to the young adult novels discussed in the analysis part of the thesis.

Taking a closer look at his theory, the fictional character's mind is clearly in the centre of attention. The author is convinced that readers understand novels first and foremost by paying close attention to the functioning of fictional minds that are presented in the novels' storyworld. He even claims that "narrative is the description of fictional mental functioning" (Palmer, *Fictional Minds* 12) and tries to show how this functioning might contribute to the reader's better understanding of a character in a novel. This is achieved by applying parts of the research conducted on real minds by psychologists, philosophers or cognitive scientists (see Palmer, *Storyworlds* 176) to fictional ones. According to him, this approach to literature provides the reader with the prospect of capturing as much information as possible from fictional texts (see Palmer, *Fictional Minds* 4). He aims at showing that "fictional minds are seen not as private, passive flows of consciousness, but as engaged, social processes of mental action" (Palmer, *Fictional Minds* 246), an aspect that traditional narrative theory devotes too little attention to. In a further explanation, the scholar describes his theory as follows:

> A character's name is a space or a vacuum into which readers feel compelled to pour meaning: characteristics, dispositions, states of mind, causations. Readers take even the most apparently uninformative references to characters as cues to construct attributes. However, much of this process can only be theorized by defamiliarizing, labeling, and so making visible some of the hitherto neglected devices that enable readers to understand how fictional minds function within the context of their storyworlds. (Palmer, *Fictional Minds* 207)

Filling the above described "vacuum" (Palmer, *Fictional Minds* 207), can consist in following a character's behaviour, decisions and emotions as well as the way they

interact with the environment. As Palmer puts it, "events in the storyworld are of little importance unless they become the experiences of characters. We follow the plot by following the workings of fictional minds" (Palmer, *Lydgate* 156). Under the term 'mind' he understands the whole inner world of a character; in other words, the 'mind' is a concept that covers all internal states and actions. Readers form their opinions and their impressions on the basis of the behaviour, actions and thoughts of a fictional character and not merely by analysing their inner speech since "[m]uch of the thoughts that occur in novels is a purposeful, engaged social interaction rather than a private, passive flow of thought" (Palmer, *Construction* 32). For this reason, Palmer prefers the term 'mind' for his theory rather than 'thought' since it represents "a much wider and more inclusive term" (Palmer, *Construction* 32) and emphasises the similarities between real minds and fictional ones. He claims that a variety of cognitive techniques can be applied in both spheres (Palmer, *Fictional Minds* 3) which leads back to him using a variety of disciplines in his approach.

As above mentioned, and when presenting an outline of his theory, Palmer frequently talks about the concept of storyworlds. According to him, storyworlds "are possible worlds that are constructed by language through a performative force that is granted by cultural convention" (Palmer, *Storyworlds* 179). While reading, readers compare the fictional worlds to their own real world and thus apply the rules, norms and ideas that comprise their real-world perception to the worlds represented in the story (see Palmer, *Storyworlds* 180). Moreover, the storyworld of a novel is 'aspectual', meaning that "it is different depending on the various aspects under which it is viewed" (Palmer, *Storyworlds* 182). This fact clearly affects the comprehension of the entire storyworld and inevitably leads to an imbalance: while the characters in the plot are restricted in their limited knowledge of the fictional world, the reader can make use of their numerous points of view of various characters and extract extra information from the narrative discourse. In the educational context, the idea of a storyworld and its perception teaches learners to construe their own point of view on the story and ideally brings them to identify with the worlds the protagonists live in. They are required to collect isolated references, connect consciousness with social surroundings and eventually construct a storyworld considering aspectual points of view.

Another term that needs to be explain when discussing Palmer's theory is the 'social mind'. In his book *Fictional Minds*, the author explains the purpose of his approach as "the attempt to theorize a part of the block of prose that remains undifferentiated: the

aspect of narrative fiction that is concerned with the whole of the social mind in action" (Palmer, *Fictional Minds* 7). The 'social mind' represents the whole mind seen through an externalist perspective (see Palmer, *Social Minds* 211) and considers the social elements in the individual consciousness. In other words, it is the collective consciousness of a group of people who share the same space at a certain time, for instance a society. This external understanding of a fictional character and their social life enables or constrains the perception of students' experiences in the real world and might significantly influence how they interpret and view social minds in their actual surroundings.

Furthermore, the readers themselves play an essential role in Palmer's theory, a fact that makes it highly suitable to apply in the educational context. In their positions as readers, students are continuously required to construct and interpret any fictional mind through deriving aspects of the character from different parts of the literary text. The process of reading a novel thus perpetually asks the reader to ascribe mental states to the characters in a story as it is done in real life. Humans are highly proficient in decoding fellow human beings' thoughts and intentions, a crucial social skill for communication in real life. For this reason, the reader is in some way familiar with the construction process by using fundamental aspects of their real-world knowledge: "Just as in real life the individual constructs the minds of others from their behavior and speech, so the reader infers the workings of fictional minds and sees these minds in action from observation of characters' behavior and speech" (Palmer, *Fictional Minds* 11). Considering this, Palmer's narratological concept particularly serves the purpose of the present thesis as it helps students to gain a more detailed understanding of the characters in the young adult novels under analysis. To do so, elements of Palmer's theory are used as a 'toolbox' for discussing fictional characters and constitute a vital foundation in order to explore the protagonists' intentions, beliefs, emotions, and their character development and moral growth.

Eventually, several concepts emerge from Palmer's research, from which the most suitable ones were selected and illustrated for the purposes of the present thesis, - namely the continuing-consciousness frame and its subcategories: the embedded narratives, the dichotomy of thought and action, and the intermental thought. As will be made evident, they entail applications of fundamental aspects of real-world knowledge to the process of reading fictional minds and are tools to help students understand characters in fictional texts more profoundly. However, the concepts out-

lined in this thesis are by far not the only ones established and discussed by Palmer, yet they are arguably the most significant and applicable regarding the frame and purpose of the thesis.

3.2   The Continuing-Consciousness Frame

To provide a theoretical background to the fact that readers are capable of interpreting the processes in fictional minds, Palmer proposes the continuing-consciousness frame, which is best understood as an illustration of how a reader comprehends a fictional text (see Palmer, *Fictional Minds* 175-183). In general, frames are social products that facilitate people's everyday lives and "capture the essence of concepts of stereotypical situations" (Palmer, *Lydgate* 153). These structures are applied to various daily life scenarios, such as visiting a restaurant or going to the hairdresser, and tell people what to do in specific situations, including anticipations, expectations, or experiences. People only need to improvise when the frame they have in mind has proved wrong (see Palmer, *Lydgate* 153). Readers, however, do not only apply their assumptions to the real world but also to the storyworld, especially with novels that do not contain magical or mythical beings, superpowers or other fictional elements such as, for instance, travelling in time. According to Palmer (*Lydgate* 154), cognitive frames are especially helpful for readers "to fill gaps in storyworlds". Nevertheless, readers need to keep in mind that "storyworlds differ ontologically from the real world because they are incomplete" (Palmer, *Lydgate* 154) since representing them in their completeness is simply impossible. Readers can merely have a glimpse into the fictional characters' emotions, daily lives, relationships and so on and will never know their entire surroundings. To be able to follow the characters' minds besides the aforementioned obstacles, readers apply what Palmer calls the 'continuing-consciousness frame', a cognitive frame that "comprises the ability to ascribe consciousness to narrative agents" (*Lydgate* 155). He further explains that "[t]he reader uses existing or pre-stored knowledge of other minds in the actual world in order to process the emergent knowledge that is supplied by fictional mind presentations" (Palmer, *Lydgate* 155). The knowledge people gain from their everyday practice of constructing the minds of real people is then applied to constructing fictional minds. The continuing-consciousness frame, thus, supports the explanation of the processes that go beyond the text, described by Palmer (*Fictional Minds* 176) as follows:

> Because fictional beings are necessarily incomplete, frames, scripts, and pref-
> erence rules are required to supply the defaults that fill the gaps in the story-
> world and provide the presuppositions that enable the reader to construct con-
> tinually conscious minds from the text. […] We frequently finish novels with a
> strong sense of the individual personality of a particular character. However, if
> we were to take the trouble to count up the specific references to that charac-
> ter in the text, we might be surprised at how little there is in the text on which
> we have based our vivid impressions.

Astonishingly, readers create a whole story in their imagination as well as forming their own image of a character merely on the basis of a small number of sentences. According to Palmer (see *Lydgate* 155), it is the continuing-consciousness frame that enables the readers to do so. In the educational context, students should be made aware of the frames they have and how they can apply them in order to gain a de-tailed understanding of the characters. Learners are required to establish an overall impression of a character and fill the gaps by adding interpretations and specula-tions, knowing that the character continues to exist in the storyworld even if the narra-tive turns to focus on another person's consciousness.

3.2.1 (Doubly) Embedded Narrative

Once the readers apply the strategies subsumed by the continuing-consciousness frame notion to the discourse, the result is an embedded narrative for the character under analysis. According to Palmer (*Fictional Minds* 15), an embedded narrative represents "the whole of a character's various perceptual and conceptual viewpoints, ideological worldviews, and plans for the future" and counts as a "key tool" (*Lydgate* 158) for the study of fictional minds. This form of narrative, thus, is an "individual nar-rative that is embedded in the whole fictional text" (Palmer, *Fictional Minds* 15). Palmer explains the approach by stating that it draws attention to the fact that narra-tive is, in essence, "the presentation of fictional mental functioning" (*Lydgate* 153) and highlights aspects such as goals and memories of the characters, the public and social nature of their mental functioning, or the "network of causal mental events" (*Fictional Minds* 185) that supports their actions. The notion of embedded narrative is related to the continuing-consciousness frame in that the latter is the tool by which readers are able to construct fictional minds in the narrative, while the embedded nar-rative is the result of this process (see Palmer, *Fictional Minds* 183). In other words, embedded narratives offer plenty of possibilities of interpretation to the reader by providing them with fragments of information that could be used to judge the charac-

ters' minds. The embedded narrative approach allows the reader to draw a "complete picture of an aspectual, subjectively experienced storyworld" (Palmer, *Fictional Minds* 184). It counts as aspectual since the same event, object or turning point in the story will be experienced in a different way by another character under different circumstances and at a different time (see Palmer, *Fictional Minds* 184). This approach once more views the whole of a fictional character and predominantly highlights the role of the reader who "constructs the plot by means of a series of provisional conjectures and hypotheses about the embedded narratives of characters" (Palmer, *Fictional Minds* 185).

In order to gain a better understanding of this idea, Palmer (*Fictional Minds* 193) illustratively outlines the process of constructing embedded narratives as follows:

> [We] construct a story out of our own life. We have to form stories in order to make our lives coherent. It is by these stories that we live. Our lives are narratives that are embedded in the social context within which we function. Specifically, there is the context of other narratives. Our lives do not just consist of the single embedded narrative that we construct for ourselves. In addition, we are burdened, or blessed, with the knowledge that alternative embedded narratives exist for all of us within the embedded narratives of all of us who know us.

As the last lines of this quote show, Palmer (*Fictional Minds* 184) expands the concept of the embedded narrative by coining the term 'doubly embedded narratives', an idea that describes "the overlapping and intertwining of narratives" as well as "the representations of characters' minds that are contained within the minds of other characters" (Palmer, *Fictional Minds* 205). A doubly embedded narrative therefore represents the link between the relationship of different minds in literary texts and can be seen as a 'storyworld within the storyworld'. In the plot, doubly embedded narratives oftentimes tend to be the source of misunderstandings as they entail a character's incorrect interpretation of another person's mental representation and yet they reveal additional information about the characters, which makes them vital to the research focus of this thesis.

3.2.2 Thought and Action

The construction of fictional minds is highly intertwined with the characters' actions which already provide the reader with numerous pieces of information about the fictional person's character. When reading narrative through the lens of Palmer's

framework, it is inevitable to notice the artificial division between action and thought being shattered, a fact that leads to an essential link between the mind and its environment. This idea functions as a central aspect of Palmer's theory and can be perceived as an expansion of the basic conceptual framework for analysing fictional minds and a suggestion to explore a more complete view of the mind (see Palmer, *Fictional Minds* 205).

In a fictional text, actions (A did B, Y did B) do not stand on their own but are usually accompanied by an action description such as 'A chose to do B' or 'Y wished to do B' in order to explicitly signal the person's or group's mental state. Choosing and wishing are thus "the mental events and states that provide the causal network behind the physical events, and they are just as much a part of the storyworld as the physical environment, events, and happenings" (Palmer, *Fictional Minds* 211). To convert this general explanation into a concrete example, Palmer uses the sentence "The three statesmen hid themselves" as the basis of the following observations:

> This is a description of an action, but it goes further in identifying the accompanying mental processes than a statement such as 'They stood behind the curtain,' that leaves more work for the reader to do in deciding why they are standing there. It can be decoded in consciousness terms as follows: the three agreed that it was in their interest to conceal themselves from someone, realized that it was possible for them to do so, and decided together to take the action of hiding. In this way, the reader as part of the process of understanding narratives has to translate passages of action description into mind description in the manner of a 'psychological' novel. (Palmer, *Fictional Minds* 212)

Here, the presupposed reader clearly considers the motives behind the actions of the character. Furthermore, when an action is explained, it is frequently retold by being put into context. In these situations, the descriptions of the physical context uncover the causal network behind the fictional character's behaviour, as is the case in the following sentence: "People had crowded into the Underground station for shelter from the rain" (Palmer, *Fictional Minds* 211). However, statements also exist that do not immediately reveal the mental functioning of the fictional characters. Here, again, the readers are challenged to uncover the meaning of the sentence by reading between the lines, taking a closer look at the context and considering the relationship between thought and action in order to gain deeper understanding of perceptions, thoughts, or feelings of the characters within the storyworld in question.

According to Palmer, (*Fictional Minds* 212), "[m]ental functioning is always present however oblique the explicit reference to it". In a multitude of cases, however, the reader might detect instances in which the complex connection between a thought and an action cannot be precisely separated. Palmer calls this the 'thought-action continuum', an idea which basically represents a "large gray area" (Palmer, *Fictional Minds* 212) between thought and action where the reader has difficulties to differentiate between the behaviour of a character and his or her state of mind. In these cases, the reader is even more challenged to pay detailed attention to the context and thus shed light on this penumbra. By outlining the thought-action continuum, Palmer intends to show that there is no clear-cut connection between thought and action as narrative theorists have assumed so far (see Palmer, *Lydgate* 160) but instead an immediate connection between the two areas. Being aware of the thought-action continuum and the related decoding of actions allows readers to construct fictional minds and explore their mental functioning. With the guidance of a teacher, students might thus be able to better understand the protagonists' actions and interactions that mirror the characters' thoughts. Mental networks such as purposes, motives, intentions or reasons for actions underlie the actions taken by the characters (see Palmer, *Storyworlds* 177). Through the process of observing, students are able to achieve a rich delineation of the characters' mental functioning, their intentions and desires, with Palmer even going as far as to claim that these processes are the essence of the plot and thus of the narrative itself (see Palmer, *Storyworlds* 177).

3.2.3 Intermental Thought

Not only do novels provide their readers with instances of action, interaction and thought, they also portray the dominant ways of thinking in the storyworld of the narrative in question. Another highly interesting subframe of the continuing-consciousness frame occupies itself with exactly this matter. The concept of 'intermental thought' represents the counterpart of individual thinking, the 'intramental thought'. In fact, "a large amount of the subject matter of novels is the formation, development, maintenance, and breakdown of these intermental units" (Palmer, *Storyworlds* 184). The concept includes the idea that the majority of our thoughts are public and social in nature as "a good deal of our cognition, action and even identity is socially situated or distributed amongst other individuals" (Palmer, *Lydgate* 160). Intermental thoughts present a collection of the intramental consciousness. However,

the ideas and solutions this aggregate produces are oftentimes superior to the ones an individual mind is capable of accomplishing. Palmer (*Storyworlds* 184) depicts intermental thoughts as "socially distributed, situated, or extended cognition, and also, especially in literary studies, as intersubjectivity", and points to the shared awareness between two or more conscious minds. In this concept, the term 'group' includes entities such as families, couples, friends, and small peer groups, but also large organisations and other intermental units (see Palmer, *Storyworlds* 184). Specific interest lies in the third-person plural narratives ('they') instead of first-person plural ('we') narratives as well as in intramental thoughts in informal small groups rather than formal large organisations (see Palmer, *Fictional Minds* 219), a fact that directly applies to young adult literature as in these narratives mainly informal group structures occur. Palmer describes the concept as a "very fluid and flexible notion of a group as any aggregate of characters, including a pair and even including people who may not be particularly close, but who are, for however short a period, thinking intermentally" with a specific focus on "negative group dynamics of conflict and fragmentation as [well as] positive dynamics of group solidarity and joint identification" (*Fictional Minds* 219-220). This can be particularly well observed in the novels under analysis as each of them features meaningful group structures that do not only shape the narrative but also the protagonists' characters. The belonging to a certain group or the state of being outcast frequently unveils valuable information about the characters themselves and their moral journey.

Interestingly, an individual character can never be analysed to the point of full comprehension without his or her social environment first being examined. Considering this, the examination of protagonists' intermental thoughts represents a central component to and an enrichment for a profound character analysis performed in the EFL classroom. Students are provided with a depiction of not only what is perceived as the shared consciousness of the characters but are also granted an insight into the various components of their social surroundings. This exploration might then lead to a form of identification with the storyworld as in real life people inevitably become part of intermental systems as well.

In a group, however, conflicts might arise as soon as social norms are challenged. Not all groups are intermental, as sometimes individuals share beliefs or feelings that have not been discussed or worked out together within the group (see Palmer, *Fictional Minds* 224). Palmer additionally explains that "[d]escriptions of the shared per-

ceptions and states of mind that cause and emerge from joint actions such as emotions, feelings, and sensations are very common" in novels (Palmer, *Fictional Minds* 223-224). He compares the concept of intermental thinking to the concept of synergy, an idea that "specifies that a combined effect is greater than the sum of the parts and that increased effectiveness and achievement are produced by combined action and cooperation" (Palmer, *Fictional Minds* 224-225). Consequently, a character can be explored in much greater depth when not only his or her thoughts are analysed in isolation, but when the whole social background and context they find themselves in is also taken into consideration.

To summarise and recapitulate, the three subframes of the continuing-consciousness frame, the sentence "The three statesmen hid themselves" that has been used in section 3.2.2 and which can be analysed considering all three subcategories serves as an example. Regarding the relationship between thought and action, and once again highlighting its complex and frequently indistinct connection, at first glance this sentence might be categorised as an action. However, it goes further since it accompanies a mental process that reveals the fact that it was in the three salesmen's interest to hide and they most likely agreed to do so.

Concerning the intermental thought, the joint decision to hide made by the three subjects is an intermental one, as mental functions can be applied to an individual as well as a social form of activity, in larger as well as smaller groups (see Palmer, *Lydgate* 160). In this situation in which they had to make the decision, the three salesmen became an intermental unit.

Moreover, the decision to hide involves the creation of an embedded narrative of the statesmen simultaneously with the creation of a doubly embedded narrative for other characters in the story who might have wished to find and catch them but cannot do so because of their joint decision to hide. The combination of the outlined elements of Palmer's theory with the established concept of character education based on the Austrian curriculum will provide a comprehensive framework for the analysis and will equip students with the necessary tools to fully understand characters in young adult literature.

3.3   Fictional Minds in the Classroom

No matter how complex the theoretical outlines and ideas of Palmer's fictional minds may appear, they are suitable to be applied in an EFL upper secondary classroom

precisely because they provide a wide range of possibilities for interpretation and analysis. When students read fiction, they constantly amend mental models of characters and build their imagined representation of a social net around them. This process of collecting information while simultaneously drawing on existing world knowledge should without question be used to the advantage of the learning process. To remedy faulty teaching approaches and awaken students' desire to learn more about characters in books, topics such as identity, friendship and alterity are in the centre of analysis in this thesis. In this way, the teacher might draw the learners' attention to the advantages of literature and additionally shape their character. The elements explored in chapter 3 constitute meaningful literary theory which can be applied in order to develop, highlight and support the upcoming analysis. The various aspects that comprise the fictional mind also assist the students in tracking the challenges which the characters face, while showing that the protagonists experience a transformation throughout the story. Auinger (84) states that "[b]oth understanding the reasons for change and debating the extent to which characters have changed involve the process of reading fictional minds". Depending on the complexity of the character, teachers need to assist students and guide their reading experience accordingly, thus demonstrating that reading narrative fiction can be enriching and empowering.

In the following chapter, the process of analysing the chosen young adult literature with regard to the aforementioned aspects will be outlined in further detail.

4 Methodology

This thesis seeks to answer the question as to how character education can be successfully implemented in an upper secondary EFL classroom. To this end, three works of young adult literature are analysed through the lens of the theory of the 'Fictional Minds'. As many students struggle to produce a profound in-depth analysis of characters in books, this theory is additionally linked to the fact that students are equipped with the right tools to successfully overcome superficial explorations and thereby gain a better understanding not only of the characters' storyworlds but also of the world they themselves inhabit. By applying the concept of the continuing-consciousness frame and its subcategories, they are required to notice that not only the explicit reproduction of consciousness but each and every characters' actions might implicitly reveal valuable information about the characters' inner lives. Conse-

quently, the overall objective is to demonstrate the effectiveness of appropriate literary texts in order to support adolescents by shaping their character in a positive way while immersing them into the minds of the novels' protagonists. This immersion should then make the three prevailing topics of identity, loyalty, and alterity more accessible and identifiable for students. By experiencing the protagonists' way of acting and thinking, students are given guidance to apply the mentioned factors to their own lives.

Thus, the following analysis consists of a selection of passages from three young adult literature novels that highlight the evolving of the moral development of the protagonists: *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky, *Normal People* by Sally Rooney and *The Outcast* by Sadie Jones. The discussed text passages present either a crucial event in the protagonists' character development, a meaningful encounter or conversation, an emotional turning point or an instance of moral growth. Questions such as "How do they develop?", "What conclusions can be drawn from the novel about the pride they feel, their self-hate, ambitions or self-consciousness?" and "How does this influence students' character and judgement?" will be addressed, always focusing on the topics of identity, loyalty and alterity and elaborated with the categories of the 'Fictional Minds' theory. Due to the limited scope of the present thesis, the main focus of the analysis lies on the protagonists of the books. However, as was outlined in chapter 3, an individual mind can never be fully understood without considering its environment and the social norms it needs to adhere to. This construction process can be compared to the process of piecing together a jigsaw puzzle. Like real people, the readers encounter fictional characters at a certain point in their lives in which they have already developed certain character traits, habits and dispositions. However, their "moral baggage" (Bohlin 47) is responsible for shaping the characters' decisions, reactions and choices, which will prove to be an essential aspect in the analysis.

The literary analysis of the three novels will be conducted in the following manner: Each book is introduced by a brief commentary on the book's literary significance and context. After that, selected text passages are displayed and analysed considering the subject matter of character education and the elaborated elements of the literary theory. Although the following chapters are titled after the three different aspects of character education, the analysis tools derived from the literary theory 'Fictional Minds' are of equal importance. Furthermore, despite the fact that the analysis part is

categorised, it must be added that in literature the themes, situations and text passages are intertwined to a certain extent as they form a complex narrative together. What is more, only a limited number of situations, quotes or incidents can be discussed in this thesis due to its scope. Although the analysis part of this thesis strives to deal with the most significant passages and situations from the novels regarding the prevailing themes, a reasonably higher number of representative extracts could doubtlessly be found in the rich stories of the novels in question.

As has already been mentioned, a subchapter containing a brief explanation of the plot of each book precedes the actual analysis. This course of action does not only serve to frame the context of the books but also aims to facilitate the understanding of the text passages which are oftentimes not analysed chronologically but rather in a way that considers the topic or title of the chapter they are allocated to.

5 Analysis

5.1 The Perks of Being a Wallflower

5.1.1 Introducing the Book

Written in letter form, the novel *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Steven Chbosky provides an excellent basis for discovering and reading a fictional person's mind. In this coming-of-age story, Charlie, an introverted fifteen-year-old boy in his freshman year of high school, is the wallflower referenced in the title of the novel. The perspective chosen by the author is highly interesting considering the fact that the reader gets to know exactly as much as the protagonist does in any given situation. Through his letters, the readership is capable of experiencing Charlie's daily struggles concerning friendship, love or drugs. The readers are given the chance to accompany him on his journey of emotional maturing, in which he turns from a wallflower into a self-confident young adult who is aware of his qualities and talents while at the same time overcoming a traumatic event in his childhood.

The book begins with Charlie entering high school and dealing with the recent death of his only close friend from middle school who committed suicide. Although the protagonist feels nervous when starting this new chapter of his life, he soon finds acceptance by several people. Amongst them is his English teacher, who soon recognises that Charlie has a special talent in literature, and Patrick and his stepsister

Sam, a girl with whom Charlie immediately falls in love with. Charlie experiences worlds he has not been part of so far. He has a relationship, plays a role in a theatre play, experiences drug abuse at a house party and finds out about personal struggles of his peers and friends. Moreover, Charlie's family life becomes more and more complicated. Especially the holiday season is difficult for his family since it always evokes memories of his Aunt Helen's death. At the end of the novel the readers find out that this aunt used to molest Charlie sexually when he was a little child. a variety of relevant topics, such as drug abuse, sexual harassment, homophobia, death and gender stereotypes, *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* represents a significant piece of work in the genre of young adult literature.

5.1.2 Charlie & Identity

Identity and self-discovery are doubtlessly prevailing and recurring themes in *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*. The challenging question "Who am I?" accompanies the reader throughout the entire story. As teenage years are the primary time in which a human being struggles with who they are and who they are supposed to be (see Qashmer 22), Charlie strives to find and strengthen his identity while entering another world, a world full of different people, social events and formative experiences. The epistolary style of the novel allows students to directly explore Charlie's inner pro-cesses and dive into his consciousness, which is considered a significantly unique feature of fiction. Learners are not only able to lead someone else's life but are given the chance to subjectively follow someone else's perceptions and ambitions. This experience can only be offered by fictional narratives and additionally supports young adults in forming a notion of their own identity, though not without considering the author-centeredness of each and every work of fiction.

At the beginning, the protagonist Charlie merely offers his imaginary friend insights into his individual, intramental thought process. This is evident in passages such as the following: "So, this is my life. And I want you to know that I am both happy and sad and I'm still trying to figure out how that could be" (Chbosky 3). In the course of the novel, however, his thoughts become increasingly shared amongst his new friends, especially Patrick and Sam.

Filtering out instances of intermental thought in a first-person narrative seems at a first glance like an impossible task, yet not to a close reader (see Palmer, *Middle-march Mind* 430). Students are thus required to read between the lines and might

quickly discover the various instances of intermental thought occurring in the young adult novel. As the title already anticipates, Charlie is initially perceived as a wallflower, which is explicitly stated by his friend Patrick when they attend a party:

> 'He's something, isn't he?' Bob nodded his head. Patrick then said something I don't think I'll ever forget. 'He's a wallflower.' And Bob really nodded his head. And the whole room nodded their head. And I started to feel nervous […], but Patrick didn't let me get too nervous. He sat down next to me. 'You see things. You keep quiet about them. And you understand.' (Chbosky 40-41)

In this situation, the group of friends clearly share a joint perception of Charlie. All of them ascribe the term 'wallflower' to him, a metaphor attributed to a shy and oftentimes lonesome person who finds themselves staying in the background instead of participating actively in social interactions. Sometimes perceived as being surrounded by a certain sense of mystery, a wallflower tends to merely observe a situation rather than finding themselves in the centre of attention. The group draws an honest but appreciative picture of Charlie's identity, and their shared view on the protagonist is conveyed by the reassuring action of nodding their head to indicate the members' agreement to Patrick's statement. Taking note of the group's uniform opinion, Charlie suddenly begins to feel visible and bewilderedly tells his imaginary friend: "I didn't know that other people thought things about me" (Chbosky 41). His self-perception gradually changes, a fact that is related to the intermental unit's mind consisting of the intramental minds of his friends who support him.

However, the influence of intermental units and the pressure they are able to exert on those who do not belong to them can prove to be life-changing. Although Charlie's friends doubtlessly play a pivotal role in the development of his identity, in a significant situation of the narrative his identity is highly challenged or even partly lost. Charlie finds himself to be in love with Sam, but at the same time is aware that she will not return his affection. Due to these unfortunate circumstances, he begins to date Mary Elizabeth, an old friend of Sam's, and they eventually become a couple. However, her bubbly personality and the relationship as a whole overwhelms the reserved protagonist and he feels increasingly unhappy and constricted. To change the stressful situation, Charlie's sister offers him advice and recommends to honestly say how he feels. The storyline reaches a turning point when one night, in which the friends gather and play truth or dare, Charlie's frustration over his girlfriend erupts. Patrick dares Charlie to kiss the most beautiful girl in the room. Putting in action the

advice his sister gave him, Charlie directly walks up to Sam and kisses her instead of Mary Elizabeth. Consequently, everybody present is in shock as Charlie's behaviour deviates from people's social expectations and the frame of rules typical of a monogamous relationship. What follows is Sam's indignant rhetorical question, "What the fuck is wrong with you?" (Chbosky 145), and Charlie's subsequent exclusion from the friend group as Patrick advises him to "keep away for a while" (Chbosky 146), an opinion shared by the intermental unit of which Charlie is temporarily no longer part. His peer group shifts from a 'we'-perception to a 'they'-perception and Charlie internalises the group's joint perspective, which is expressed in one of his letters when he states: "Something really is wrong with me" (Chbosky 147). Noticing the enormous importance his friends have for the process of his identity building, Charlie is once more left alone with his thoughts and observations. The process of establishing "concrete self-other distinctions" (Moshman 90) which helped him to shape his identity suddenly shifted into another crucial part of identity building, namely "[e]stablishing the self as an individual" (Moshman 90). Charlie takes responsibility for his actions, gradually begins to acknowledge his self-worth and eventually finds his way back to his friends. As teenagers often intend to form their identity not only based on social ideals but also on narratives they are surrounded by in their daily lives and the different forms of behaviour fictional characters display (see Bohlin 15), the way Charlie integrates himself into his group of friends after a delicate situation, can serve as a valuable example of a form of behaviour that is, in this case, rewarded.

Towards the end of the first part of the novel, Charlie experiences an emotional outburst after a situation in which all of the present people at a party cheer to him and celebrate his extraordinary personality:

> I was sitting on the floor of a basement of my first real party between Sam and Patrick, and I remembered that Sam introduced me as her friend to Bob. And I remembered that Patrick had done the same for Brad. And I started to cry. And nobody in that room looked at me weird for doing it. And then I really started to cry. (Chbosky 41)

In the first time in the history of his school life, Charlie feels respected and appreciated by a group without feeling the need to change his personality. The relief and joy the protagonist is experiencing is made evident in the text passage, with Charlie also expressing his emotions by starting to cry, touched by the realisation that a person who matters to him officially introduces him as a friend. Although the readers are

well-informed about Charlie's thoughts and emotions, he does not explicitly word the possible reason for his tears. Students are challenged to deduce from the action of crying and the context the situation is embedded in that he must be immensely moved by his friends' behaviour. By exposing himself to a social environment and circumstances he has never experienced before, Charlie accelerates the process of the discovery of himself as an individual. The introverted freshman is celebrated as a wallflower and receives the first chance in the course of the book to blossom, thereby entering a state that Moshman (90) refers to as "[t]ransforming the labile self". Discussing this situation supports students in developing their sense of empathy and their understanding of emotional growth. Identifying the interplay between thought and action uncovers Charlie's mental functioning and opens his complex interiority to the outside.

The protagonist's letters serve as a mirror of his identity which helps the students to follow the fictional mind. They further represent a tool for the freshman to reflect on his own existence and the way he perceives himself in society, a crucial competency for students to learn. This competency is included in the 'Allgemeine Bildungsziele', where it is stated that students need to be aware of the responsibilities and the place they take in society (see BMBWF 9). Operating under the protection of anonymity, Charlie is able to utter his feelings and thoughts without restriction. This lack of constraint and temporary change of identity can be discovered later in the book when Charlie is asked to play Rocky in the *Rocky Horror Picture Show*, an iconic cult movie in which normative role models are challenged (see BMBWF 11). The eccentric appearance of the character he plays represents the exact opposite of Charlie's wallflower identity. However, it becomes evident that he feels liberated through immersing himself in the role of another person and consequently is able to forget about the traumatic events, at least momentarily. In the school context, changing one's identity can be a tool to encourage adolescents to experience life from a different angle and open up new perspectives, a process which contributes to moral growth. Charlie's mental health problems caused by the sexual abuse he experienced through his beloved Aunt Helen impedes the protagonist's process of finding his identity and self-worth. The letters he is writing constitute a means to escape his identity and his past so as to eliminate the suicidal thoughts and traumatic memories of his aunt he continues to have. Charlie even goes as far as to avoid calling characters in his letters by their real names since he does not want his unknown friend to find out about him. By

symbolically neglecting his identity and taking on a pseudonym, Charlie is given the chance of a new start, especially concerning his mental problems and social life. The epilogue that begins with the sentences "I've been in the hospital for the past two months. They just released me yesterday" (Chbosky 225) marks a drastic action in the protagonist's life. Being admitted to hospital and staying there for two months represents a significant milestone in his identity development. Students will soon notice Charlie's change of character and perspective. He states that he is "glad to have been born" (Chbosky 227) and that everyone has the power to "choose where [they] go" even "if [they] don't have the power to choose where [they] come from" (Chbosky 228). Charlie highly appreciates the life he has and the people who surround him. The following extract functions as key scene in which his character development and identity-discovery are clearly displayed by the protagonist's actions:

> But mostly, I was crying because I was suddenly very aware of the fact that it was me standing up in that tunnel with the wind over my face. Not caring if I saw downtown. Not even thinking about it. Because I was standing in the tunnel. And I was really there. And that was enough to make me feel infinite. (Chbosky 230)

When discussing the ending of the story with students, they should have observed Charlie's noticeable change of the identity as a wallflower which he discloses when talking about the start of a new school year: "And believe it or not, I'm really not that afraid of going. I'm not sure if I will have the time to write any more letters because I might be too busy trying to 'participate'" (Chbosky 230-231). His identity, which he had always been aware of, did not change entirely but rather it improved, a process that helped him grow as a person. Charlies journey to maturity, his self-discovery and the resolving of identity diffusion, his healing, his growth through writing as well as his continual flourishing contribute to the theme of identity in the young adult literature novel. Since many of Charlie's struggles are likely to be similar to their own, teenagers are able to bond with the protagonist and see him as an exemplary role model.

5.1.3 Charlie and Loyalty

Forming part of a group and being accepted by that group might be one of the deepest wishes every human has as a social being. Especially in adolescent years, friends play a central role in a person's moral growth, as is the case in *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*. Although much of the protagonist's characterisation is a product

of his surroundings, his family and his friends, it is particularly the friends who play a significant role in the protagonists' development. They support, accept and most importantly show him a new perspective on life by helping him overcome his social misgivings. Charlie's initial idea of the way a loyal friend should behave, manifests itself in a bizarre act of friendship. Patrick's secret boyfriend Brad has been sent to rehab and is thus no longer able to see him. Left heartbroken and lonely, Patrick tries to find comfort in Charlie:

> We didn't do anything other than kiss. And we didn't even do that for very long. After a while, his eyes lost the glazey numb look from the wine or the coffee or the fact that he had stayed up the night before. Then, he started crying. Then, he started talking about Brad. And I just let him. Because that's what friends are for. (Chbosky 173)

Decoding Charlie's actions, the reader might view the situation as a reflection of Charlie's incapability to actively stand up for himself. The absence of action in this case reveals as much of the fictional character's mind as a deliberate action does. In the EFL classroom, the students can be invited to deduce Charlie's idea of a loyal friend and challenge this image by asking themselves questions such as 'How would I have reacted in this situation?'. Charlie's actions represent his character at this stage of the novel appropriately. His role as a wallflower who is not aware of his self-worth continues to put him into positions in which he passively endures unpleasant situations. The protagonist is firmly convinced that a good friend needs to be present in whichever form, sacrificing both his own choices and his free will. This self-harming behaviour is recognised by Sam towards the end of the book when she approaches Charlie, telling him the following: "it's like you're not even there sometimes. It's great that you can listen and be a shoulder to someone, but what about when someone doesn't need a shoulder. What if they need the arms or something like that? You can't sit there and put everybody's lives ahead of yours" (Chbosky 214). Without precisely knowing Charlie's thoughts, Sam deduced information from what Charlie's actions reveal to her. The protagonist loyally intends to be the best friend possible but learns through Sam that this is not always the most satisfactory solution, neither for himself nor for the people who surround him. Listening and observing without taking control is Charlie's definition of friendship at this stage. As he does not understand immediately what Sam intends to explain, she puts emphasis on her message:

> 'Charlie, you're missing the point. The point is that I don't think you would have acted different even if you did like Mary Elizabeth. It's like you can come to Patrick's rescue and hurt two guys that are trying to hurt him, but what about when Patrick's hurting himself? Like when you guys went to that park? Or when he was kissing you? Did you want him to kiss you?' I shook my head no. 'So, why did you let him?' 'I was just trying to be a friend,' I said. 'But you weren't, Charlie. At those times, you weren't being his friend at all. Because you weren't honest with him.' (Chbosky 215)

Throughout the novel, Charlie's definition of friendship becomes increasingly challenged. He describes his experience of being excluded from the friendship group as follows: "I don't know how much longer I can keep going without a friend. I used to be able to do it very easily, but that was before I knew what having a friend was like. It's much easier not to know things sometimes" (Chbosky 155). However, his exclusion later ceases with a decisive event. Brad, the football quarterback and Patrick's former secret lover, returns to school after having spent various weeks in rehab. Twice that day, Patrick attempts to approach and start a conversation with him. First, Brad ignores him and eventually yells "Faggot!" as Patrick turns away (Chbosky 162). Patrick immediately punches him, an action that marks the beginning of a fierce fight. Brad's friends gang up on Patrick. Soon, Charlie becomes involved and miraculously manages to stop Brad's friends. Charlie summons all his courage and says loudly so that everyone can hear it: "If you ever do this again, I'll tell everyone. And if that doesn't work, I'll blind you" (Chbosky 163).

In the process of analysing this passage, students form their opinion on the basis of Charlie's behaviour and might consider his actions to be a direct indication of a change of character. Although the protagonist's inner dialogues are made visible to the reader through the letters he writes, many of the decisive events that advance the plot are "purposeful, engaged social interaction[s]" (Palmer, *Construction* 32) instead of monologic inner thoughts. Students might soon perceive that Charlie gradually begins to understand the importance of participation and contribution in life. By courageously defending his friend, Charlie's definition of friendship fundamentally changes as he understands the value of showing responsibility and mutual respect. Fostering these virtues amongst students is a clear statement included in the 'Allgemeine Bildungsziele' (see BMBWF 8-12), for which Charlie sets an illustrative example. While discussing the aforementioned situation, students are also made aware of the fact that in life there is the possibility of making amends for misbehaviour when taking the

right actions. In the book, Charlie and Sam soon become reconciled after Charlie stands up for Patrick at school, demonstrated in a rather simple but sincere dialogue:

> 'So, we can be friends now?'
> 'Of course,' - was all she said.
> 'And Patrick?'
> 'And Patrick.'
> 'And everyone else?'
> 'And everyone else.' (Chbosky 165)

Considering Charlie's closest relationships in the novel, he especially gains trust in Sam and Patrick. The step-siblings form an extremely strong unit, for instance, displayed in the climactic scene when Patrick, Sam and Charlie leave a party and drive home in Sam's pickup. Shortly before they approach a tunnel, Sam climbs into the back of the pickup while Patrick accelerates the car. A beautiful song comes on the tape player while the three teenagers feel the wind from the ocean on their faces. Charlie writes: "When we got out of the tunnel, Sam screamed this really fun scream, and there it was. Downtown. Lights on buildings and everything that makes you wonder. Sam sat down and started laughing. Patrick started laughing. I started laughing. And in that moment, I swear we were infinite" (Chbosky 42). Merely through the act of Sam climbing into the back of the pickup, Patrick understands perfectly what is expected of him. The readers immediately know that no words between the two of them are needed. Their collective consciousness is unquestionable and vividly depicts their closeness. Although Charlie does not form part of this mental unit in the beginning, he clearly does towards the end of the book in a similar scene: "After we left, we got in Sam's pickup truck, and just like Sam promised, we drove to the tunnel. About half a mile from the tunnel, Sam stopped the car, and I climbed in back. Patrick played the radio really loud so I could hear it, and as we were approaching the tunnel, I listened to the music" (Chbosky 230). Charlie has now access to Patrick's and Sam's joint thoughts and thus belongs to the intermental unit, which additionally symbolises the strong connection established in the course of the narrative.

Not only does Charlie find real friends in Sam and Patrick, but the reader is also allowed to follow the development of a special bond between the protagonist and his English teacher Bill, who has always been loyal to Charlie. This bond ultimately turns into a friendship as Bill utters the following words: "So, when the school year ends, and I'm not your teacher anymore, I want you to know that if you ever need anything,

or want to know about more books, or want to show me anything you write, or anything, you can always come to me as a friend. I do consider you as a friend, Charlie" (Chbosky 195). Charlie's answer is a meaningful action: he cries. Here, students can merely hypothesise about the protagonist's mental state and the emotions he is experiencing as he does not clearly put his thoughts into words. However, students need to understand the continuous presence of mental functioning even if its explicit outline in the fictional text is omitted (see Palmer, *Fictional Minds* 212). Being aware of the development of Charlie's and Bill's relationship, the learners might ascribe the feeling of joy and the pain of separation to the protagonist's reaction when decoding his actions. Teachers can encourage students to take this scene as an opportunity to reflect on their own relationships with role models and the meaning and value these relationships have in their lives, since being supported by people who set a positive example and valuable advisors in adolescent years also provides an integral form of character education (see Berkowitz and Bier, *Research-Based Character Education* 79-82).

The different notions of friendship that Charlie experiences in the course of the story serve as an educative example for adolescent students. They learn that a close bond might be formed rapidly; however, it takes courage and participation to develop and strengthen long-lasting relationships. Additionally, students could be asked to draw parallels to their own friendships in real life and discuss problematic situations they have experienced in the past in order to identify with the protagonist. While Charlie's thoughts and actions are the most decisive ones in the plot, teachers should make students aware of the fact that throughout the story they are presented with a rather one-sided perception of the storyworld. Due to the aspectual nature of the storyworld through which certain situations or turning points are experienced differently by different characters and Charlie as the first-person narrator, readers partly lack Sam's or Patrick's view on their friendship with the protagonist, for instance, and are thus required to apply assumptions to the storyworld in order to see events of the narrative from different angles.

5.1.4 Charlie and Alterity

The balance between finding one's identity, being loyal to your friends and having the desire to be part of a stable peer group is a complex matter. Especially in the adolescent years, which often mark a turbulent period of life, the wish for acceptance is

strong. However, being considered as part of a group oftentimes requires adaption, which entails conforming to certain standards in looks or forms of behaviour. Standing outside society's norm almost automatically leads to exclusion or trouble. Students will soon notice that in *The Perks of being a Wallflower* Chbosky gives a voice to people who normally find themselves on the margin of society and positively highlights tolerance and inclusivity. In the beginning of the novel, Charlie's existence as a wallflower predominantly shapes the plot of the story. His otherness is reflected in his initially shy and inaccessible personality that is partly caused by the various traumatic events he has experienced throughout his life. After the suicide of his best friend Michael, he "keeps quiet most of the time" and "only one kid named Sean really seem[s] to notice [him]" (Chbosky 8). Additionally, "[s]ome kids look at [him] strange in the hallways because [he] doesn't decorate [his] locker" (Chbosky 9). In a broader sense, "some kids" (Chbosky 9) form an intermental unit of which Charlie is not part. They all share the thought and opinion that Charlie is different and strange, which puts the protagonist into the position of 'the outsider'. Through Charlie's rational narrative style, the reader is challenged to decipher the fictional character's emotions and interpret whether Charlie suffers as a result of the situation. However, confessions such as "I was hoping that the kid who told the truth could become a friend of mine, but I think he was just being a good guy by telling" (Chbosky 10) indicate his wish to meet a friend in high school and abandons his role as an invisible wallflower. When Charlie meets Sam, an intelligent and beautiful girl with whom he immediately falls in love, and her step-brother Patrick, an eccentric and extravagant homosexual senior, it seems that he has found a group of people who understand his otherness as they do not fit into social standards themselves. When Patrick even praises Charlie's wallflower qualities at a party (see Chbosky 40-41), the protagonist notices that his friends do not only make him feel comfortable with his otherness, they even teach him to embrace it. This situation in particular illustrates Charlie's first steps taken in an appreciative social environment and provides a chance for teachers in the EFL classroom to challenge their students' viewpoint while questioning social constructs.

As the narrative continues, the strength of the link between the fictional mind and its environment increases. Consequently, Charlie feels less and less like an outsider, a change in which his English teacher Bill also plays a significant role. Bill makes Charlie feel special, he supports his talent, gives him confidence in his intellectuality and shows him that he is different from his other students. Towards the end of the school

year, Bill even invites Charlie to his apartment, where they have a conversation in which the teacher expresses his gratitude for having had the "wonderful experience" (Chbosky 194) of teaching Charlie. Additionally, Bill touchingly commends Charlie by stating: "I just want you to know that you're very special… and the only reason I'm telling you is that I don't know if anyone else ever has" (Chbosky 194-195).

Taking into account not only Charlie's alterity but also that of the people he is surrounded by, particularly Patrick catches the reader's attention from the very beginning. Patrick is not only a character who substantially contributes to the decrease of normative role models (see BMBWF 11) but also embodies the struggles that members of the LGBTQ community sill continue to face. The extroverted senior is openly gay and constantly expresses his flamboyant character. Although he is a self-confident young man, he clearly perceives himself and his peers as outsiders, which becomes evident when he talks to Charlie about the cast of the *Rocky Horror Picture Show*: "You ever think, Charlie, that our group is the same as any other group like the football team? And the only real difference between us is what we wear and why we wear it?" (Chbosky 166). Reading between the lines, students might deduce a sense of bitterness from these rhetorical questions and infer Patrick's occasional wish to be 'normal'. However, when performing on stage playing a main character in the *Rocky Horror Picture Show*, Patrick feels entirely accepted and can be his full self without being judged, as the show mainly includes eccentric characters and so-called misfits. In contrast to Patrick, his secret lover Brad hides his homosexuality, leaving Patrick painfully struggling with their relationship. The quarterback of the high school football team is desperately afraid to reveal his homosexuality to the outside world. His fear is primarily fuelled by his ultra-religious father and the image of masculinity perpetuated by societal structures. Additionally, Brad appears to be the only gay member of the football team and thus represents a sharp contrast to the stereotypical heteronormative males he is surrounded by. The secrecy he tries to maintain manifests itself in the following passage:

> When I got out of the bathroom, I heard a noise in the room where we left our coats. I opened the door, and I saw Patrick kissing Brad. It was a stolen type of kissing. They heard me in the door and turned around. Patrick spoke first. 'Is that you, Charlie?' 'Sam's making me a milkshake.' 'Who is this kid?' Brad just looked real nervous and not in the Bob way. 'He's a friend of mine. Relax.' Patrick then took me out of the room and closed the door. He put his hands on both of my shoulders and looked me straight in the eye. […] 'Listen, Charlie.

> Brad doesn't want people to know. I need you to promise me that you won't tell anyone. This will be our little secret.' (Chbosky 39-40)

When this passage is decoded, Palmer's concept of the intermental thought provides the students in the EFL classroom with a deeper understanding of the situation. Although the reader has not been informed about Patrick's and Brad's secret love affair prior to this point, the extract clearly shows the intimacy between them. The fictional characters evidently share intermental thoughts since Patrick immediately and fully understands what Brad expects him to do after Charlie has become a witness to their secret. The present situation along with the increasingly strong connection he feels with Patrick give rise to Brad's fear of being openly confronted with his otherness. In Brad's case, the feeling of being different leads to a dangerous suppression of emotions as well as a repression of his true identity. After talking to Charlie and asking him to not tell anyone about their love affair, Patrick positively highlights the protagonist's ability to "see things", "keep quiet about them" and "understand" (Chbosky 41). This passage demonstrates that Charlie's otherness is not necessarily a weakness but a strength, and that his friends together as an intermental unit perceive his introverted personality in this situation as positive rather than negative. By attentively reading and reflecting on this situation, students learn that the notion of alterity is not automatically attached to pejorative connotations but rather presents a chance to highlight and embrace diversity.

Interestingly, the characters depicted in *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* position themselves outside of the prevailing norms in society. Within their own group, however, they all share similarities. Their individual alterity stems from traumatic events, violence, the fear of intimacy, and on oftentimes painful experience of growing-up, yet all they wish for is love and acceptance. Towards the end of the novel, Charlie's happiness to have finally found a group of like-minded people who he forms part of becomes evident in the following extract:

> In the silence, I remembered this one time that I never told anybody about. The time we were walking. Just the three of us. And I was in the middle. I don't remember where we were walking to or where we were walking from. I don't even remember the season. I just remember walking between them and feeling for the first time that I belonged somewhere. (Chbosky 213)

Reading about different lifestyles and paths people have chosen, students are able to experience a change of perspective, consequently enhancing their understanding of

social issues such as death, trauma or solidarity (see Floris 3-4). By following Charlie as he meets a variety of extraordinary individuals in the storyworld, students should be encouraged to appreciate diversity and reflect on different life journeys "from which they can draw both inspiration and insight" (Bohlin 25). The representation of diverse characters in *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* offers a chance for educational institutions to support students' critical reconsideration of stereotypes they find them-selves continuously confronted with and thus foster open-mindedness and curiosity. Charlie and his social surroundings challenge and even reject those stereotypes by drawing attention to people who are frequently not heard in society.

5.2 Normal People

5.2.1 Introducing the Book

Dramatically funny, Sally Rooney's *Normal People* tells the complex story of two people who find themselves deeply damaged by their upbringing and society in gen-eral. While the story takes place in a small West Irish town named Carricklea, the experiences the characters have are certainly similar to those of young people in the Western world in general. Taking place over a timespan of four years, the novel ad-dresses and explores the problems of the young generation in the 21st century by telling the story of a special bond between two people who come from different social backgrounds, Connell and Marianne. Their relationship can be perceived as a realis-tic portrayal of a connection between two people who struggle to overcome the dif-ference of social classes they come from. Located in a small town in the west of Ire-land, the story begins with the characters still attending high school. While Connell strives to be popular and desires to be socially accepted, which he achieves, Mari-anne represents his direct counterpart. She is introverted, does not care about what other people think of her, and is perceived as odd and different by her classmates. Although they go to school together, their paths mainly cross in private as Connell's mother Lorraine is the housekeeper of Marianne's mother and Connell happens to help his mother every now and then. Their relationship starts as a friendship but very soon becomes a romantic one. As a result of their differences, however, Connell is too ashamed to date in public and openly stand by Marianne. This ends in Connell asking out another girl to the prom, which causes the end of their relationship.

They see each other again as they start college in Dublin. Miraculously, their social lives have changed enormously by that point. While Marianne seems to be everybody's darling, Connell struggles to find his place in a world with wealthy peers. When they meet, they start a friends-with-benefits relationship. They need to part ways once more when Connell loses his job and returns home for the summer. The young adults then encounter each other again at Marianne's father's anniversary mass. At this time, Marianne is dating an abusive man named Jamie. Connell, on the other hand, starts dating a girl named Helen, a fellow student who is agreeable but just not Marianne. While the protagonists do not see each other very often, they consistently keep in touch via email. Throughout all this time, they are each other's confidants. Thanks to a scholarship, the next summer Connell is able to travel with Marianne, her boyfriend and some other friends through Europe. In Italy, Marianne and Connell kiss after her boyfriend physically abuses her and she breaks up with him. Eventually, the protagonists find their way back together when they both return home. He saves her from her abusive brother, and they settle for a more functional relationship. In the end, Connell is eagerly involved in the writing community and receives an offer for a writing programme in New York. Marianne encourages him to go and he decides to do so, leaving open to the reader how their relationship will proceed after this turn of events.

While the story lacks spectacular moments and plot twists, it is the intense and detailed language used to tell the story as well as the interesting and polarising conversations between two people who cannot let each other go that make it particularly interesting for a profound analysis. In a close exploration of the character's feelings, Rooney manages to provide the readers with a detailed portrayal of the protagonists by letting them into their minds. In the classroom and with regard to character education, it would be interesting to investigate the extent to which students are capable of taking Connell's as well as Marianne's perspectives and understanding their actions. What is more, comprehending and exploring the different backgrounds and upbringings the protagonists experience is another challenge for young readers. This complexity leaves the teacher with the task of helping the learners navigate the tangled web of conversations, situations and events happening in the novel, figuring out predominant feelings and thoughts, and diving into the fictional characters' minds in a way that enables the students to take away important learning lessons for their own lives.

5.2.2 Connell, Marianne and Identity

Unlike *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, which allows the reader a glimpse into the protagonist's identity construction over one year, Rooney's *Normal People* covers a broader time span. The readers accompany the two main characters from the beginning of their last school years until the end of their first years of young adulthood. In those four years, both Connell and Marianne experience continuous turbulent struggles regarding their identities, which find themselves to be dependent on one another. Although he seems to be shy and rather reserved, in school Connell personifies the good-looking, popular athlete everybody wishes to be friends with. His identity is largely shaped by others, which is why he behaves precisely the way his peers expect him to in order to fit in. Initially, Connell passively accepts the pictures others draw of him and does not question his identity. Marianne, on the contrary, seems to be highly aware of who she is and does not allow other people's views to shape her self-perception. The reader, however, learns about Marianne's personality through Connell's thoughts:

> She exercises an open contempt for people in school. She has no friends and spends her lunchtime alone reading novels. A lot of people hate her. Her father died when she was thirteen and Connell has heard she has a mental illness now or something. It's true she is the smartest person in school. (Rooney 2-3)

This passage, which initially seems to be a mere description of the female protagonist, becomes a much more complex and interesting discussion when being viewed in the light of the discussion on intermental thought. Students might soon notice that the description does not only refer to the way Connell perceives Marianne but also how other fictional minds think about her. Connell forms part of an intermental unit which in this case most likely consists of Marianne's and Connell's classmates, or in general the people in school. Thus, students see Marianne from Connell's perspective, which simultaneously represents the opinion of a collective, and thereby learn that "our own goals and actions are necessarily influenced by the expectations of others" (Palmer, *Fictional Minds* 232). Due to Marianne's extreme unpopularity, Connell tries everything to avoid people finding out that he secretly meets her and appreciates her presence, which could threaten his own popularity. He fears that their relationship could jeopardise and destabilise the identity he has forged over the years, no

matter how much he desires to bring the two worlds together, which the following illustration of his inner conflict shows:

> For a moment it seems possible to keep both worlds, both versions of his life, and to move in between them just like moving through a door. He can have the respect of someone like Marianne and also be well liked in school, he can form secret opinions and preferences, no conflict has to arise, he never has to choose one thing over another. With only a little subterfuge he can live two entirely separate existences, never confronting the ultimate question of what to do with himself or what kind of person he is. This thought is so consoling that for a few seconds he avoids meeting Marianne's eye, wanting to sustain the belief for just a little longer. He knows that when he looks at her, he won't be able to believe it anymore. (Rooney 27-28)

Here, Connell's passivity in his process of identity construction is striking. Instead of standing up for himself, he rather changes his identity, adapting to the situations he finds himself in.

Connell's struggle with feeling torn between the two identities strains him; he wishes to find a way out of this difficult situation but is not yet ready to find the right path. Only through the time spent with Marianne, does he gradually notice his increased desire for autonomy and a deeper yearning to find out who he really is. Whereas Connell initially fails to understand the significance of their relationship, Marianne indeed notices the value and impact he has on her life and the way she views herself:

> Connell seemed to understand how she felt about school; he said he liked hearing her opinions. You hear enough of them in class, she said. Matter-of-factly he replied: You act different in class, you're not really like that. He seemed to think Marianne had access to a range of different identities, between which she slipped effortlessly. This surprised her, because she usually felt confined inside one single personality, which was always the same regardless of what she did or said. She had tried to be different in the past, as a kind of experiment, but it had never worked. If she was different with Connell, the difference was not happening inside herself, in her personhood, but in between them, in the dynamic. (Rooney 13-14).

This passage illustrates successfully that the storyworld is aspectual as readers first experience Marianne through the eyes of Connell, who describes her as having various personalities and perceives her to be different in school than in her private space. What follows, however, is a description of Marianne herself, who negates Connell's perceptions and allows the reader insight into her fictional mind. Here, students need to disentangle the various descriptions in order to obtain an accurate picture of the protagonists' characters.

While Connell constantly struggles to find his identity and lets his self-perception frequently be determined by others, Marianne never pretends to be someone she is not. The application of Palmer's concept of the embedded narrative to the passage, once again confirms that "a fictional character's identity consists not just of his or her own embedded narrative, but of all the doubly embedded narratives of which he or she is the subject" (*Fictional Minds* 231). Marianne takes notice of Connell's embedded narrative of her as a person who has "access to a range of different identities" (Rooney 14), an idea that does not correspond to her self-perception. This presents a substantial discrepancy between the two protagonists' mutual perceptions. Through the perspective-taking in the novel, students are able to "examine the distance between a character's view of their own embedded narrative and the doubly embedded narratives of others relating to that character" (Palmer, *Fictional Minds* 233) and are afforded the great possibility to learn more about Marianne and Connell by deeply immersing themselves in the functioning of their fictional minds. Their mutual perceptions complete each other and provide the learners with an ever more holistic picture. The drastic role reversal that takes place after Connell and Marianne graduate from high school and start college presents a pivotal point in the story which immensely challenges their identities. At Trinity College, Connell feels alienated and lonely, whereas Marianne suddenly becomes popular and is surrounded by people who adore her. Especially the line "[n]ot having friends to eat with, he reads over lunch" (Rooney 68) paradoxically illustrates the far-reaching change of roles, as at the beginning of the novel Marianne was the person sitting alone in the cafeteria. In his first days at Trinity during which he experiences a profound sense of estrangement in his surroundings, Connell observes that

> [b]ack home, [his] shyness never seemed like much of an obstacle to his social life, because everyone knew who he was already, and there was never any need to introduce himself or create impressions about his personality. If anything, his personality seemed like something external to himself, managed by the opinions of others, rather than anything he individually did or produced. (Rooney 70)

By discussing this turning point in the classroom, students discover that social structures can be as easily destabilised as identities can. How unreal and difficult their switch of identity is for them is shown in the following scene: "That makes her laugh, and it's like everything is fine between them, like they live in a slightly different universe where nothing bad has happened but Marianne suddenly has a cool boyfriend

and Connell is the lonely, unpopular one" (Rooney 73). Here, Rooney depicts Marianne's doubly embedded narrative of Connell. Unemotionally, the female protagonist comments on the new situation, in which she suddenly finds herself in a better position, and describes Connell as an unhappy loner. However, when Marianne meets an artist in her Erasmus year in Sweden, her self-confidence begins to decrease. The man, with whom she becomes sexually involved, manipulates and abuses her. Still suffering from self-destructive thoughts, which probably emerge from her family situation that is in ruins, Marianne argues that "[m]aybe I want to be treated badly […]. I don't know. Sometimes I think I deserve bad things because I'm a bad person" (Rooney 133). Marianne falls back into an old pattern; she lets herself be humiliated and degraded. The reader notices that although she lives a popular life now, her old, self-sabotaging identity still resides within her.

As is the case in *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, writing letters, or in this novel writing emails, serves as outlet for emotions and a tool through which crucial events and underlying emotions can be expressed. While Connell is on a trip to Europe, he continues to stay in contact with Marianne by writing her long, poetic emails. Connell perceives the writing process as the "expression of a broader and more fundamental principle, something in his identity, or something even more abstract, to do with life itself" (Rooney 156). Redrafting emails appears to be an activity which offers him the opportunity to contemplate his identity and strengthen his character. Towards the last chapters of the novel, students are able to see considerable in the protagonists' identity formation. In their teenage years, the protagonists find themselves to be constantly in the process of figuring out what they want in their adult lives by testing their own and other people's limits. The reader leaves the fictional characters four years later when they seem to have found their place in the world and are now ready to pursue their dreams. Discussing this progress in the EFL classroom, students learn that while at the beginning of the novel the idea of identity is illustrated as socially determined and class-dependent, the story successfully concludes with the depiction of identity as a highly individual product, regardless of background, class or gender.

5.2.3 Connell, Marianne and Friendship

Although the highly complex relationship between the protagonists begins as a fluctuating romance including secret sex and shared intimacy, the novel is clearly a tribute to friendship. During the four-year-period period in which the reader follows Mari-

anne's and Connell's path, their relationship undergoes various stages, among them a clandestine love affair, a sexual relationship, and an intimate and deep friendship. Knowing about their mutual attraction, students witness a situation in which Marianne assures Connell that renewing their sexual relationship would entirely ruin their friendship. This action of actively deciding to maintain their friendship shows the students how valuable and precious the characters' friendship is for both of them and unveils that Connell's and Marianne's special bond cannot be destroyed by any kind of life event, as unpleasant as it may be, since they are unable to "leave one another alone" (Rooney 261-262). Thus, the action they take makes the motives behind the characters' actions obvious. Through the perspective-taking in the novel, students see the storyworld from both of the protagonists' points of views.

Although the novel contains instances in which Marianne and Connell see each other accurately, much of *Normal People* consists of intimate situations in which things are left unsaid, a fact that frequently leads to an instability of knowledge and interpretation between them. Assumptions highly influence their individual decisions, and they are occupied with constantly inferring the other's thoughts and attitudes. Although the reader obtains the impression that while their relationship advances, Connell's and Marianne's minds becomes increasingly intermental, there are still instances of uncertainty, as Marianne expresses when she says to Connell: "I don't find it obvious what you want" (Rooney 235). In this statement, the discrepancy of thought becomes evident as the fictional characters are dependent on obvious actions and understanding, which their interactions frequently lack.

Regarding the protagonists' social surroundings numerous supporting characters can be found in the story. However, not one of them appears to have as significant an impact on Marianne's and Connell's life as they do on each other. In the novel, many instances that represent the protagonists' deep connection can be found, such as a situation where the two talk about Marianne's appearance while holding each other tightly. The author allows the reader to follow the functioning of Marianne's mind: "Most people go through their whole lives […] without ever really feeling that close with anyone" (Rooney 37). Here, "[t]he description of the physical context and the causal network behind the fictional behaviour are […] identical" (Palmer, *Fictional Minds* 211) as Marianne's thoughts correlate with her action. She does not only feel emotionally close to Connell but also physically.

While the majority of the characters in their peer groups seem superficial, arrogant and an obstacle to their love story, some of them are decisive for the plot as they initiate necessary and intense interactions between the protagonists. When they start attending Trinity College, Marianne helps Connell to join her social group. Even though he perceives himself as a merely peripherical member, she intends to ensure that Connell does not feel lonely, another sign of the love and care she feels towards him. Through actions such as Connell's aforementioned inclusion in Marianne's social group, students continue to learn about their special relationship. As illustrated in prior chapters, the protagonists need one another to feel authentic, real and, above all, seen. They can show each other their human fragility in every aspect without shame or judgement. Only with their mutual support that stems from their intimate friendship are the protagonists able to become strong and independent adults, a fact that demonstrates the power that loving relationships have in opposition to destructive and superficial ones. As the novel continues, the reader is given the impression that the protagonists are indeed aware of their precious friendship as Connell expresses in the following quote:

> He's not someone who feels comfortable confiding in others, or demanding things from them. He needs Marianne for this reason. This fact strikes him heavily. Marianne is someone he can ask things of. Even though there are certain difficulties and resentments in their relationship, the relationship carries on. This seems remarkable to him now, and almost moving. (Rooney 135)

This statement reveals Connell's perception of their friendship and facilitates the students' process of decoding his mind.

A highly remarkable aspect of their friendship is the extent of the profound impact they do not only have on each other's personalities but also on each other's major life decisions. Towards the end of the book, Connell draws this exact conclusion when he addresses Marianne with the following realisations: "It's funny the decisions you make because you like someone […] and then your whole life is different. I think we're at that weird age where life can change a lot from small decisions. But you've been a very good influence on me overall, like I definitely am a better person now, I think. Thanks to you" (Rooney 233). Two decisions mark this significant impact in particular, one at the beginning of the story and the other at the end. In the third chapter, Marianne encourages Connell to apply to study English at Trinity, a plan that he eventually implements and that changes his life. Due to his outstanding writing

talent, Connell is offered a place on a creative writing programme in New York, and by telling Marianne about this opportunity, he concludes that he "wouldn't even be here" if it was not for her (Rooney 265). Contemplating their relationship, the reader can follow Marianne's stream of thoughts:

> It's true, she thinks, he wouldn't be. He would be somewhere else entirely, living a different kind of life. He would be different with women even, and his aspirations for love would be different. And Marianne herself, she would be another person completely. Would she ever have been happy? And what kind of happiness might it have been? (Rooney 265)

While he does not seriously consider moving to New York, she encourages him to go by saying: "It's just a year. I think you should do it" (Rooney 265). However, he puts the decision in her hands: "To be honest, I don't know what to do, he says. Say you want me to stay and I will" (Rooney 265), to which Marianne eventually answers with "You should go […]. I'll always be here. You know that" (Rooney 266). On the last pages of the novel, the characters reflect on their extraordinary relationship and realise the immense impact they have had on other's lives. Their mutual doubly embedded narratives eventually coincide and cease to diverge. They finally discover what they both want and how to maintain their relationship in such a way that both of them feel loved and accepted. Although they come from entirely different backgrounds, they metaphorically represent "two little plants sharing the same plot of soil, growing around one another" (Rooney 265). Emphasising once again the enormous impact a companion can have on one's life, Marianne draws the following conclusion at the end of the novel: "He brought her goodness like a gift and now it belongs to her. Meanwhile his life opens out before him in all directions at once. They've done a lot of good for each other. Really, she thinks, really. People can really change one another" (Rooney 266).

In the end Marianne understands that "[n]o one can be independent of other people completely, so why not give up the attempt […], go running in the other direction, depend on people for everything, allow them to depend on you, why not" (Rooney 262). Students are able to follow Marianne's development from a teenager who avoids relying on other people to a young woman who eventually realises the beneficial impact other people can have on her life if she allows them to do so. Additionally, students witness the author's destruction of the ideal of the independent individual in the modern society. Although the protagonists face multiple obstacles throughout the years,

their relationship equips the learners with valuable life lessons regarding the respectful treatment of other people and the multiple and the numerous notions love can have. Marianne's and Connell's relationship exemplifies that a healthy amount of mutual dependence and support can lead to positive outcomes and should be fostered, especially in a capitalist, modern society. At the same time, however, the story might challenge the frames of relationships students have in mind and question their understanding of their ideas of friendship. Learners see that throughout the time period in which they are allowed to accompany Marianne and Connell, the protagonists learned to face their fear and replaced it with bravery, leading to their eventually becoming inseparable as friends. In the EFL classroom, students could compare the different stages of Marianne's and Connell's relationship and incorporate their insights by discussing their own developmental journey. By doing so, students might be encouraged to build deeper and more meaningful friendships and relationships.

5.2.4 Connell, Marianne and Alterity

By choosing the title *Normal People*, Rooney has already made an ironic statement, highlighting the arbitrary nature of what normalcy means in contemporary society. The title sets grounds for students to fundamentally discuss what the term 'normal' means for them and might open a debate about the dichotomies that recur in the novel, such as 'popular' and 'unpopular', and 'normal' and 'unnormal'. Reading between the lines, students soon discover that the protagonists' definition of 'normal' includes the belonging to a social group, popularity, freedom and happiness. In the first part of the story, Connell finds himself to be popular and part of a group of friends. His fine reputation and social acceptance are essential for him as he feels an obsessive need to be perceived as normal. Paradoxically, he is the one who engages in a relationship with Marianne, who is generally known as an unpopular, rebellious loner. Although he soon notices that he can finally be his authentic self in her presence, he avoids every instance of speaking to her in public because if people found out about their love affair he would lose his face. He witnesses Marianne's misery as a person whose alterity is so obvious to their peers, but continues to ignore her as he is driven by the fear of being socially outcast. Connell's self-perception is primarily directed by others. His reliance on other people's opinions comes to light when later in the story, directly before the funeral of his friend Rob, he reflects on his schooldays:

> Nothing had meant more to Rob than the approval of others; to be thought well off, to be a person of status. He would have betrayed any confidence, any kindness, for the promise of social acceptance. Connell couldn't judge him for that. He'd been the same way himself, or worse. He had just wanted to be normal, to conceal the parts of himself that he found shameful and confusing. (Rooney 212)

Towards the end of their time at school, their relationship even falls apart since Connell chooses fitting in and being normal over happiness and loyalty towards the person he loves.

Moreover, in an instance of silence offering him the possibility to contemplate the fact that he ignores Marianne in school for the sake of his reputation, he thinks despairingly: "If people found out what he has been doing with Marianne, in secret, while ignoring her every day in school, his life would be over" (Rooney 27). Especially at the beginning of the novel, students witness that the protagonists' social position strongly determines their relationship and Connell avoids Marianne at school to avoid risking damage to his reputation. As the readers are allowed to follow the fictional character's mind, they learn that Connell does not see Marianne as an outsider but instead describes her as "independent-minded" (Rooney 21) and secretly admires the "drastically free life" (Rooney 25) she is living, which marks how trapped he must feel to constantly conform to social expectations.

Whereas Connell lets himself be guided by the opinions of other people, Marianne seems to act more autonomously in her self-perception. For the most part, the reader views Marianne through the depiction of Connell's mind. However, students can find instances in the book in which Marianne's elder brother Alan bullies her, giving the reader an impression of the way Alan perceives Marianne:

> Yeah, Alan says. She did well, yeah. Not as well as yourself! Fifty-nine she got. Do you want me to put her on to you? Marianne looks up. Alan is joking. He thinks Connell will say no. He can't think of any reason why Connell would want to speak to Marianne, a friendless loser, on the phone […]. (Rooney 60)

This situation represents Marianne's outsider position in her family and offers the reader an insight into Alan's doubly embedded narrative of his sister, whom he describes as "friendless loser" (Rooney 60). The passage confirms Palmer's belief that "a fictional character's identity consists, not just of his or her own embedded narrative, but of all the doubly embedded narratives of which he or she is the subject" (*Fic-*

tional Minds, 213). Students learn about Alan's perception of Marianne and view her through his eyes. The comparison of Alan's impression of his sister with Connell's makes it evident how aspectual the storyworld of *Normal People* is.

As mentioned in previous chapters, a complete role reversal takes place after the protagonists' graduation. Connell suddenly struggles to be accepted by a social group and his deep fear of not belonging becomes reality. In Dublin, he feels invisible among a group of students who share an upper-class background and deride his language and place of origin as they "often mention the west of Ireland in this strange tone of voice, as if it's a foreign country, but one they consider themselves very knowledgeable about" (Rooney 69). In this short instance, readers notice that the group of people which Connell refers to as "[p]eople from Dublin" form an intermental unit in which they share the same opinions about inhabitants of the west of Ireland. One evening, Connell meets a girl from Dublin, who represents the thoughts of this intermental unit when she replies: "Yeah, you look like it" (Rooney 69) in response to Connell telling her the name of his home-town. Connell feels lonely among his peers, whom he describes as being "not stupid people, but […] not so much smarter than him either" (Rooney 68). Their different perception of the world leaves him with the sense of being misunderstood as "[t]hey just move through the world in a different way, and he'll probably never really understand them, and he knows they will never understand him, or even try" (Rooney 68). Connell begins to doubt his background and existence, which allows him to relate to the way Marianne must have felt during their schooldays. In order to fit in, Connell would have to change himself to an extent that is unattainable. Although he has never felt insecure about his appearance, his clothes and looks now distinguish him from his fellow students, another aspect that puts him into the role of an outsider, resulting in a decrease of self-esteem:

> Though his physical appearance has not changed, he feels objectively worse-looking than he used to be. He has become self-conscious about his clothes. All the guys in his class wear the same waxed hunting jackets and plum-coloured chinos, not that Connell has a problem with people dressing how they want, but he would feel like a complete prick wearing that stuff. At the same time, it forces him to acknowledge that his own clothes are cheap and unfashionable. His only shoes are an ancient pair of Adidas trainers, which he wears everywhere, even to the gym. (Rooney 70)

For the reader, this short passage emphasises Connell's new position as an outsider and shows the various aspects it entails. From this passage, students might deduce

that Connell's thoughts indicate that he has already accepted his new role since he does not show any intention to change his way of dressing. The quote allows students to obtain a rich delineation of Connell's mental functioning through observing his thoughts and actions.

The crucial importance of the topic of alterity and belonging in the novel is illustrated in a presentation of Marianne's thoughts towards the end of the novel: "Marianne is neither admired nor reviled anymore. People have forgotten about her. She's a normal person now. She walks by and no one looks up. She swims in the college pool, eats in the Dining Hall with damp hair, walks around the cricket pitch in the evening" (Rooney 254). The female protagonist is finally perceived as 'normal', a state that the author mentions specifically through the female protagonist's thoughts in order to highlight its significance.

As they mature, Marianne and Connell increasingly cease to struggle with internalised ideas concerning the dichotomy of being normal vs. abnormal. Eventually, they reach the conclusion that alterity is insignificant in relationships which are founded on mutual acceptance, vulnerability and authenticity, which represents a valuable insight for character education. From individual parts of the story such as monologues or dialogues that frequently occur in the novel, students form a picture of Marianne and Connell as vivid people by ascribing them consciousness and making informed guesses about their characters. By decoding crucial passages in *Normal People*, students understand that although they might have a certain perception of what other people might feel or think, this is frequently not the case. Fiction and its characters can thus remind them that people can act or think surprisingly unexpectedly. This insight can lead to a stronger feeling of empathy, promote mutual respect among students, and help students to understand various ways of finding meaning in life (see BMBWF 11).

5.3 The Outcast

5.3.1 Introducing the Book

In contrast to the other two books under analysis, *The Outcast* by Sadie Jones does not take place in the twenty-first century. It is narrated over a time span of about ten years, from the late nineteen fifties to the late nineteen sixties. The protagonist, Lewis Aldridge, a nineteen-year-old Englishman from Waterford, returns home after spend-

ing two years in prison. A decade prior, his father Gilbert comes home from war and finds his wife and son resisting the stuffy routine of post-war Britain that he quickly gets used to. Just as they did in wartime days, Lewis and his mother Elizabeth escape into the woods to picnic there. However, as the boy returns home without his mother, the whole community is shocked as they find out that Elizabeth has tragically drowned in a lake. After that, a dramatic story unfolds in which Gilbert remarries only a few months after his wife's death. Neither him nor Alice, his new wife, are capable of providing support to the shattered child. Consequently, the boy is sent to a boarding school where he becomes a troubled teenager, never having had the chance and the help to come to terms with the traumatic event he experienced. He escapes by way of dangerous and self-harming behaviour, eventually leading to a crime he commits against the inhabitants of his hometown Waterford. Without any support from Gilbert and Alice, he is sent to prison. After returning home he is treated like an outcast, once again finding himself in a position where he is faced with the feeling of unworthiness. Lewis is the town's scapegoat, and the conservative and patriarchal society of post-war England drives him to engage in self-harm and self-destructive behaviour. Only Kit Carmichael, who fell in love with Lewis years prior, continues to see his potential and the image of the boy who repaired her bike and protected her from bullies in childhood days. Kit suffers under the iron fist of her father, a family tyrant, and seems to be Lewis' duty to rescue her by showing extreme courage and sacrificing his own reputation. With her love and her personality, however, Kit, in return, is able to rescue Lewis in a different sense by helping him overcome his trauma and finally find the peace and respect he deserves in his life.

The story contains shocking climaxes and events while dealing with topics such as violence, love, abuse, hypocrisy and patriarchy. Although the narrative takes place several decades ago, it interestingly and suspensefully touches upon values and topics that are still relevant and identifiable in today's society, a fact that upper-secondary students need to be made aware of.

5.3.2 Lewis and Identity

In *The Outcast* readers face rather subtle yet no less significant aspects of identity. Although it seems as if Lewis frequently acts as a victim of his circumstances, his formation of identity is an active process. In order to understand his process of growing up and the actions connected to it, students need to gain a clear picture of his

childhood years. For this reason, Jones allows the reader to become acquainted with Lewis' childhood personality in the first part of the novel. Due to the fact that his father Gilbert has to serve in war and thus does not appear as a present attachment figure, Lewis is deeply dependent on his mother, who profoundly shapes his identity as a child. The reader soon detects parallels between Lewis and his mother, who is described by her husband as follows: "She had her own way of looking at things and […] was […] clever and lovely" (Jones 44). This instance supports students in their process of decoding Lewis' mind as they understand the similarities between him and his mother. His dreamy and sensitive personality as well as the close resemblance between him and his mother reveals itself again in the school context:

> The boys at Lewis's prep school played rugby in deep snow in the spring term and the snow and mud mixed together. […] Lewis captained the cricket team. His games master told him it wasn't because he was the best, but to teach him team spirit; he had a tendency to daydream and wasn't much concerned with beating the other boys at things. He was the sort of boy who was popular because he was easy to be around and not demanding particularity. You often had a sense with Lewis that the real business of his life was elsewhere and that was attractive to people, they didn't feel the responsibility of his presence too much. Where he was, actually, was in his head, and in that he was like Elizabeth. (Jones 51)

In the first part of the story, students might gain knowledge about Lewis' high sensitivity. The boy is capable of feeling nuances of distance and closeness and is especially prone to sensing the mood of a situation, which becomes especially evident after his father returns from war. Threatened by Gilbert's presence, Lewis perceives a change of "the balance of the house" (Jones 32). The third-person narrator reveals a significant part of Lewis' state of mind in this context by directly referring to his thoughts regarding himself: "Lewis thought he would explode with boredom" (Jones 23), or regarding others: "Lewis thought his father should be everyone's boss" (Jones 29). However, when discussing *The Outcast* in the EFL classroom, students are still required to go beyond the surface and read between the lines in order to extract more information about the protagonist and gain a deeper understanding of his personality, which can be achieved by decoding Lewis' actions. Throughout the novel, Palmer's concept of thought and action prevails as particularly Lewis' actions presented in the discourse serve as valuable indications for his character and the way his identity develops. A drastic change in Lewis' personality is witnessed by the reader as the plot reaches a crucial turning point. The protagonist becomes the spectator

of his mother's tragic death, which results in a complete change of his entire life. His responses in dialogues with policemen who wish to investigate Elizabeth's death or in conversations with his father are brief and monosyllabic. To the reader, it seems as if a part of him died alongside his mother. Neither his father, who himself is unable to cope with his deep grief, nor anybody else talks to him openly about the tragic loss. As a consequence, Lewis totally withdraws from the world around him. In order to express his feelings, he tries to find outlets for his pain, for instance, when he breaks the window in his room, a scene that his father comments on as follows:

> 'Are you feeling better?' Gilbert asked, and he made his voice gentle, so as to reach him, but Lewis didn't move. 'A lot of fathers would thrash you for a thing like this. You are my little boy and I want you to make me proud of you, not ashamed. Are you a bad person, to do a thing like this? Is that what you want to be?' (Jones 93)

Gilbert has a certain idea of how he wants his son to behave. Acting out of the norm is not included in this picture and he is overwhelmed with his son's violent outburst. While Gilbert was unable to cope with Lewis' sensitivity at the beginning of the novel, he now finds his son seeking violent outlets to display his suppressed emotions. Lewis finds himself to be the subject of his father's doubly embedded narrative, a narrative in which the boy is wishfully perceived as someone strong who must not show feelings. Students need to discover that Gilbert manipulatively forces his doubly embedded narrative onto his son, an action that results in the outburst of unarticulated causes and in a change of Lewis' identity. His childhood friend Kit, who has always admired Lewis as she herself feels trapped in the stiff society of the post-war period, describes him as being quiet. She explains that "Lewis seemed older […], he was as tall as Ed and didn't have all the things wrong that fourteen-year-old boys often did, but if he wasn't awkward physically, he certainly was in every other way. He was so quiet and odd, and no-one really had anything to say to him any more" (Jones 131). Becoming increasingly reserved, Lewis' behaviour worsens and leads to another violent act. After being deliberately provoked by a boy from his village, Lewis aggressively defends himself. When he returns home to his father and his stepmother after the incident, Gilbert desperately shouts at him.

> 'Lewis! This is absurd – you have done a violent, horrible thing and you have taken pleasure in it. And you have no explanation? What's wrong with you?' There was always that, the thing that was wrong with him; he didn't know what it was, either, but he knew there was something. 'Why can't you get on with

people? Do you see how hard it is to look after you?' Lewis kept quiet and his quietness made his father worse, he seemed determined to break him in some way, but Lewis didn't know what he wanted from him. He sat and listened and couldn't think clearly enough to find a way to please him. When he was finally sent upstairs he hadn't been able to stop walking up and down the room. He couldn't remember what had happened, or why he'd done what he'd done, only that his father hated him and he thought he was right to. (Jones 143-144)

Feeling out of place since his mother's death, Lewis is does not receive support from his father. On the contrary, Gilbert confirms and emphasises Lewis' impression that the boy is abnormal, reinforcing self-hatred and the feeling of unworthiness. This allows students to understand the young man's conviction that people are right to hate him as he has "a black heart" (Jones 227). The passage illustrates that Lewis' self-perception is utterly shaped by the tragic circumstances which the reader needs to consider. He expresses the desperate struggle with his identity as he frequently wishes to "get away from himself" (Jones 14). He as a person gradually vanishes in a surrounding that does not allow any instance of grief or other negative emotions. Growing up in a cold and bleak domestic environment, Lewis is provided with little opportunity to develop his identity as other children or adolescents are.

After being accused of arson, Lewis is sent to prison. Since the narrator does not reveal any details about the two years he spends incarcerated, students can merely speculate about Lewis' development in this time period. As the extent to which it affects his identity becomes unveiled later in the story, Palmer's claim regarding the necessity to fully understand a character proves true. Even if the two years in prison are omitted in the plot, various indications are provided which enable students to form a mental model of the character's development during this time. Before starting to read the following chapter, students can be asked to collect ideas of what Lewis might have thought about and experienced in prison. Through Gilberts' view, students learn that Lewis is "[e]ager to make a fresh start" (Jones 240) and Lewis' actions confirm his father's impression. Surprisingly, the young man suddenly appears "stronger" (Jones 239) and makes an effort to fit in, please his father and behave the way society expects him to. He even ceased to hurt himself with a razor, a habit he developed before he was sent to prison. To the reader it seems as if Lewis used the time in prison to figure out who he wants to be, which is expressed in the novel by Lewis assuring that "[i]t would be different. He would do anything to make it that way and not let all the bad things find him again" (Jones 241). However, one night at dinner, his old uncontrollable aggressions return, and he smashes a wine bottle on the

dining table. Highly desperate and disappointed with himself, all his dreams and good intentions are once again shattered: "He seemed to glimpse it dimly, an idea of himself he had made while he was shut away, which now was ruined and he would never be able to do it" (Jones 296). Discussing the motives behind Lewis' action in this passage, students might conclude that he is regressing to old behaviour patterns and is unable to preserve his new identity, evidently being in high need of emotional support and professional help.

Towards the end of the novel, students find themselves confronted with the key scene regarding Lewis' identity development which involves Kit's confession of her father physically abusing her. After all the years Lewis had thought that he was wrong, as soon as he hears about Kit's misery, he realises that his assumptions about society's standards he was forced to conform to had been correct, causing a sense of freedom in the protagonist: "[H]e valued the night and being alone and the feeling of freedom that was new to him still. He hadn't felt it when he came out of prison. He hadn't felt it until now" (Jones 408). Strengthened by this powerful emotion, he seeks out Kit's father, Dicky Carmichael, and confronts him. One Sunday, Lewis interrupts Sunday service to show the whole community that Dicky, a respected man, heavily abuses his daughter. Students might view this scene as a symbol of Lewis' liberation. He has finally managed to demonstrate the cruel injustice and hypocrisy that fundamentally shape the town's community and regains his identity with nothing to lose.

> When he was in jail, and letting his mind go, he would think of the lives he had seen or heard about: businessman, barman, musician, cleaner, prison officer, policeman; but when he looked at the future, he didn't exist. There was no place for him. He was a wrecked person. The difference now was that all his life he had thought his father and Dicky and Alice and Tamsin and all of the people who managed in the world weren't wrecked people, and now he knew they were. It looked like everybody was in a broken, bad world that fitted them just right. (Jones 394)

By bringing justice to the hypocritical community, he eventually finds his authentic self again and is able to leave his stiff home as he is called to join the navy; "[w]ith his faced all messed up" (Jones 441) he waits for his train and wonders "how you could be damaged like that and be so pleased with it" (Jones 441).

Lewis' journey of self-discovery offers a wide range of topics to be discussed in the EFL classroom. Teachers should draw their students' attention particularly to Lewis' actions, which strongly unveil aspects of his character and the journey to discover his

true identity. Additionally, learners understand that a wide range of reasons and motives might underlie an action, and that the path to finding one's identity is often winding. Eventually, however, Lewis exemplifies that even a man with a tragic family background is able to find peace, an outcome that provides an especially rewarding context for character education. While students might occasionally find it difficult to empathise with Lewis. due to the considerable differences in time period and lifestyle, they can still reflect on his thoughts and desires, which do not differ greatly from those which adolescents have today.

5.3.3 Lewis and Friendship

The friendship between Lewis and his childhood friend Kit represents a central point in the novel and provides valuable moral insights that can be addressed in the classroom. Kit is a character that shares Lewis' defensive attitude towards strict rules and acts as a keen observer not only of her friend's life but also of all the self-righteous acts performed in the town. Kit is younger than Lewis and leads a life between an absent-minded mother and an abusive father. From the very beginning, readers are able to subtly draw parallels between Lewis and Kit. The family tragedies and miseries of life they experience lead to a sincere and strong friendship based on a deep mutual understanding. However, while Kit has always been aware of how much Lewis means to her, it takes the boy many years more to realise the true strength of their friendship.

As early as in their childhood years, Kit admires Lewis, as the reader witnesses in the following passage:

> Kit couldn't remember all that far back, but as far back as she could, she had wanted to be Lewis. He looked just right to her. He looked how people should look. She remembered seeing him in the summer holiday when she was trying to join in with the boys who were climbing trees in the woods behind her house. She was five then and couldn't manage. Lewis was there and he, at nine, was so grown-up – grown-up first and then heroic – because he had stopped a boy teasing Kit and taken her to the edge of the woods so that she could find her way home. He hadn't talked to her or anything; it was that he was kind. She wanted to be him, and knowing that he was coming to the party had been a good thing that came into her mind sometimes and made her smile and feel nervous in case he wouldn't be as nice as she'd thought. (Jones 46-47)

As literature gives students privileged insights into fictional characters' minds and their moral journeys, students can follow Kit's thought process along with Lewis'. In this passage, the perspective-switching allows learners to detect Kit's doubly embedded narrative of Lewis, which reveals her perception of his personality. The description she presents of her childhood friend differs entirely from the one the majority of all the other characters share. She idolises him and states that even in her earliest childhood years Lewis "had been a hero to her and not distinguishable from the ones in books; she used to muddle him up with them, pointing him out to her nanny, 'There's Lewis!'" (Jones 148). In contrast to Kit, the protagonist is seemingly unaware of his affection towards her, but like Kit he unceasingly defends and helps his friend and helps Kit whenever she is in need. Unlike the other children, Kit is the only one who is pleased to see Lewis after his mother's death and immediately notices his change in character.

Despite the overall menacing atmosphere of the novel, Kit's unwavering friendship represents a brief but much needed respite from the burdens of her life. Every single one of the rare situations in which Lewis experiences happiness include Kit:

> He smiled at her, and Kit forgot to speak. Ed Rawlins crossed the hall and passed them, going into the drawing room, and Kit started to laugh. Ed ignored them and Lewis started to laugh too, and they stood laughing at him until he'd gone. 'Isn't he noble-looking?' said Kit, and they were laughing and leaning against the wall, not looking at each other. (Jones 150)

By sharing an intermental thought in this odd situation, the fictional characters become connected, a feeling that contributes to the intensification their relationship once again. Towards the end of the novel, Lewis even admits to himself: "It was stupid to feel happy thinking about her, but when he saw her in his mind he did, or at least could imagine happiness" (Jones 368).

After Lewis' return from prison, the entire town is filled with suspicion and prejudice towards the young man. Once again, Kit is the only person who is delighted to welcome Lewis:

> She waited, looking at him. She was waiting for him to speak, and he needed to speak and he needed to tell her something of himself. 'Sometimes…' He struggled. 'I feel like I'm falling away from everything, like the world's just far away from me. And dark. And I'm dark too. Just recently I don't know if I can get back… Have you ever felt like that? He was frightened by saying it. Kit regarded him briefly. 'Of course,' she said, and he saw she knew exactly. (Jones 298)

In this passage, students witness another intimate instance of their friendship. Throughout the story, Lewis never openly expresses his feelings; his explaining his emotions to Kit at this moment presents a rare exception and marks a turning point in their friendship. Although Lewis struggles to find the right words to describe the complexity of his emotions, Kit understands perfectly. They are united through their joint thoughts and know each other so well that merely a brief glance and abbreviated explanations lead to mutual understanding. Palmer's concept of the intermental thought unveils once more their special relationship, enabling students to gain a profound insight into the fictional characters' minds. As the story continues, Lewis eventually notices how much he can rely on Kit and how much "she had always made him smile" (Jones 299). Nevertheless, as a result of his self-hatred and his fear of failure, he tells her that he is and never will be good enough for her, to which Kit replies: "'But Lewis I can see.' Her look was steady and she didn't seem young. 'I see you. You think you're dark, and there's all this darkness around you, but when I look at you… you're like a shining thing. You're light. You just are. You always were'" (Jones 339-340). Here, Lewis is blessed with the knowledge that in Kit's mind an alternative narrative of himself exists which enables him to change his negative self-perception. In return, Kit, who herself endures a life as the daughter of an abusive father and a passive mother, finds comfort in her friendship with Lewis, who reassures her of her value and worth: "'you're something else. Kit. Listen. You're the only thing I've ever seen that's right. Just the way you see things makes them better'" (Jones 424).

The morally pivotal point of the story is reached when Lewis discovers that Kit is exposed to physical abuse at home and firmly decides to call her father to account. Driven by the love he feels for Kit and the wish for revenge, Lewis makes a scandalous appearance at church. In order to let the entire community know about Kit's father physically abusing her, Lewis intends to display Kit's bruises. He "grasped her top, pulled her blouse out from her waistband and yanked it up to show her body, and she closed her eyes" (Jones 421). Here, students are required to decode Lewis' mind in order to recognise that the underlying cause of his actions might be the will to protect his lifelong friend and to put an end to the town's hypocrisy.

As a consequence of his actions, Lewis must leave to join the army and Kit is sent to a boarding school in Switzerland. Although they are unable to be together in the end, their strong bond helps them to finally escape the stifling community. Kit's last words when seeing off Lewis, which are "We're saved!" (Jones 440), highlight their joint

achievement of personal freedom. Through Kit's and Lewis' special friendship, students learn about the importance of solidarity and unconditional love. With the assistance of classroom discussion, students can engage in a broader debate about the meaning of outstanding courage and unswerving loyalty, and find instances of these virtues in their own lives. This activity encourages empathic perspective-taking and heightens students' excitement about Lewis and his development as they are invited to incorporate their own experiences.

5.3.4 Lewis and Alterity

Considering the novel's title, it is to be expected that students might already speculate about a possible outcast as central figure in the story. Once they immerse themselves in a book, they will recognise the title's reference to Lewis, who is perceived as an outcast not only by himself but also by the people surrounding him. In order to fully grasp the dimension of Lewis' position in society, teachers should draw their students' attention to his environment, mainly consisting of the English village Waterford and its community. By reading closely, students detect that Waterford functions as an intermental unit that forms a mind of its own. Taking this into consideration, students find it easier to follow the fictional characters' minds, including the motivations behind their actions, and notice a considerable difference between the village and Lewis, who evidently does not share the same beliefs and values. By precisely observing Lewis' thoughts, students learn that Waterford constantly causes him a "suffocating feeling" (Jones 160). They additionally learn about his impression of the village in the following passage: "It had started like any other Sunday. Like any other desperate, hate-filled, pointless Sunday in the stream of Sundays as long as he can remember. Everybody was out, everybody playing their parts in a play he didn't understand and didn't want any part of" (Jones 212). Clearly, Lewis does not show any interest in the community he has been born into and in the society that turns away from him. As the scapegoat of the town, the protagonist feels helpless and does not know how to express his strong feelings, being caught in a spiral of self-hatred and violence. He fails to understand the life of the people who surround him:

> Lewis looked around the people he had grown up with and thought of their childish lives and of their mothers and sisters and birthdays and lunches, all pleasant, with games, manners, rules you could understand. He wanted to make everybody feel what he felt. None of these children knew anything, and they thought tiny things important and cried over test results and cricket

scores. He was locked out of it. He couldn't even remember when he'd had any idea how to live like other people seemed to live. (Jones 212-213)

Students soon realise that the communal thoughts, including the shared values and beliefs, are predominantly determined by the businessman Dicky Carmichael, who seems to orchestrate everything and subliminally imposes the rules the community should live by. As Lewis does not behave according to these expectations, Dicky Carmichael does not miss a single opportunity to harass him:

David said something, but Lewis didn't hear it, and then somebody else spoke and Dicky coughed, loudly enough for It to make silence, and said, 'Just watch yourself, Lewis, we've all got our eyes on you, boy. I was talking to the vicar earlier; he agrees. It's best out in the open how everybody feels about you' (Jones 214). In this passage, Dicky functions as a representative of Waterford's shared perception of Lewis, and the latter's alterity becomes increasingly obvious to the reader. Waterford's community describes Lewis as "uncomfortable" (Jones 223) and after Ed and Tom, two of the town's boys, falsely accuse him of stealing at a party, at which the host yells "[n]obody wants you here!" at Lewis (Jones 219), a conflict between the three of them arises. Eventually, Ed and Tom are celebrated as "the heroes of the afternoon" because "[t]hey had faced up to the evil" and "had found it and cast it out" (Jones 223). Lewis is referred to as "troublemaker" (Jones 255) and Dicky even explains at one point that "[t]here was a collective sigh of relief" (Jones 255) when Lewis was sent to prison, thus voicing once more the communal thought of the village.

Driven by fierce anger towards his surroundings and the incapability of expressing his emotions, Lewis commits arson. Considering the fictional character's thoughts and the misery he finds himself in, students might interpret these actions as a desperate cry for help. Lewis becomes even more ostracised, not only by society but also by his own family. Although his young stepmother Alice clearly makes an effort to bond with the boy, she soon learns that Lewis does not allow anyone to be close to him. Alice desperately wishes to become pregnant and build a "proper family" (Jones 195) with her husband Gilbert, which once again illustrates Lewis' position as an outsider, even in his own family.

In the storyworld, each character pertaining to the intermental unit of Waterford acts as one would expect and keeps up appearances until the point in which the grim secrets hidden behind a hypocritical façade are exposed. One exception is Kit, whose defiance and strength differentiates her from the rest of Waterford's population. While

her mother and her sister are occupied with superficialities, she does not take any interest in such things: "They had been up and down to London buying things and even going for cocktails, and the thought of that was death to Kit and she wouldn't have gone even if she'd been old enough" (Jones 132). Kit is fascinated by Lewis and is the only person who is able to thoroughly understand his inner state, as has been described in the previous chapter.

As the readers are only granted revealing insight into Lewis' and Kit's mind, they can merely speculate about the processes taking place in the other characters' minds. If students perceive the village as an intermental unit, however, they would be right to assume that everyone in the village lives according to their conservative values. This being said, as the story continues, the plot entails various instances of mental health issues, drinking problems and domestic violence, aspects that highlight the village's pretence. Especially Dicky is concerned with hiding his violent behaviour, thus maintaining the high reputation he enjoys amongst his community. By exposing Kit's bruises in church, Lewis brings Dicky's true personality to light and changes the embedded narrative of Dicky's life constructed by the people in the community. The drastic action Lewis takes unveils once more what he thinks about the society he was born into. Lewis takes advantage of his exceptional position in society and uses it to uncover injustice and hypocrisy as he feels he has nothing to lose. Eventually, Lewis benefits from his position as Waterford's outcast and uses it as an opportunity to rebel against the people that had marginalised him. While students may or may not grow angry under the same circumstances, Palmer's concepts allow them to nonetheless understand the processes in the fictional characters' minds. An examination of Lewis' mind and his environment provides students with an illustration of injustice in society. They can be asked to reflect on the various instances in which the protagonist finds himself to be ostracised and find alternative solutions for the events. Critically reflecting on the processes in fictional characters' minds improves students' understanding of prosocial values, conflict-resolution as well as a sense of justice, which are crucial aspects of character education (see Berkowitz and Bier, *Research-Based Character Education* 75).

6 Conclusion

Although character education is a life-long process, educational institutions can substantially contribute to students' moral development. Especially in upper-secondary

language teaching, teachers are provided with the opportunity to incorporate novels that contain literary figures the students are able to identify with. Thus, the aim of the present thesis was to demonstrate the significance of literature in the moral development of upper-secondary students. Considering the Austrian background, the character education model used in this thesis was drawn from the 'Allgemeine Bildungsziele' from which the categories 'identity', 'friendship' and 'alterity' were deduced, as these topics are especially relevant for the target group. The analysis of various text passages from three young adult novels clearly showed the suitability of the chosen books for helping students to engage in a reflection process on the aforementioned aspects. The moral journeys, choices, decisions and actions of fictional characters provide a rich source of moral knowledge, which has been demonstrated by the in-depth analysis of the fictional characters Charlie, Marianne, Connell and Lewis Discussing the extracts with the help of the chosen concepts of Palmer's theory on 'Fictional Minds', the research illustrated that instances of doubly embedded narratives, the interplay between thought and action as well as the idea of intermental thought can support students' deeper understanding of the fictional characters' minds. Palmer's concepts presented the opportunity to carry out a more detailed exploration of the protagonists' moral journey and uncovered facets that would otherwise have remained opaque. By using this approach, teachers are provided with a tool to long-lastingly implement character education in the EFL classroom.

By demonstrating the considerable yet diminishing importance of literature in the EFL classroom, the thesis aimed to give an insight into a field that offers a valuable setting for young adults to contemplate and discuss vital curriculum-related issues. Literature should be more integrated into the English curriculum and the EFL classroom, as students can benefit considerably from it. This being said, the described literary approach in the EFL classroom is not intended to replace the work on linguistic elements of English literature. Additionally, literature-based character education does not promise to form fully well-rounded virtuous people after reading three young adult literature novels. Nonetheless, it can at least make a notable contribution, always focusing on the learners as developing human beings in all facets. Character education should certainly not naively aim at changing students but should enable them to be more responsive to ethical topics and inner conflicts for which fictional minds build a solid basis for discussion.

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8 Abstract German

Charakter und dessen Bildung beschäftigt die Menschheit schon seit Jahrhunderten. Vor allem der Schulkontext bietet einen Rahmen, in dem Kinder und Jugendliche durch Lehrpersonen Unterstützung in ihrer Charakterentwicklung erfahren können. Der Literaturunterricht als Teil des Fremdsprachenunterrichts schafft hierbei Möglichkeiten, anhand von fiktiven Charakteren Aspekte wie Freundschaft, Loyalität oder Andersheit zu diskutieren. Die vorliegende Masterarbeit hat zum Ziel, Charaktererziehung in der Sekundarstufe mit dem Genre der Jugendliteratur zu verbinden und somit Schülerinnen und Schülern einen Raum zu geben, in dem sie sich mit den fiktiven Charakteren auseinandersetzen sowie identifizieren können. Auszüge der Jugendromane *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, *Normal People* und *The Outcast* dienen als Analysematerial, das mithilfe der Literaturtheorie ‚Fictional Minds' von Alan Palmer detailliert diskutiert wird. In dieser suggeriert Palmer, einen Roman hauptsächlich dann holistisch erfassen zu können, wenn die Leserschaft den Gedanken der fiktiven Charaktere folgt. Für diese Analyse wichtige Elemente der Theorie, nämlich ‚Intermental Thought', ‚Thought and Action' sowie ‚(Doubly) Embedded Narrative' wurden ausgewählt und zusammen mit den obengenannten Wertaspekten verknüpft. Der Inhalt der Masterarbeit soll außerdem aufzeigen, wie wichtig Literaturunterricht in der Schule ist und dafür plädieren, diesem einen größeren Stellenwert im österreichischen Curriculum einzuräumen.